Editors
Editorial

We have a soft spot for people, for the humanity of people. We learn to nurture this soft spot through art, through philosophy, through democracy, through our notions of justice or the rights of humans. We learn about the good in the things that are done by the people, for the people, through the people, in the name of the people.

But it's getting cold out there. Something in this setup is shifting below our feet. Something is making the image of the people fuzzy, increasingly vague—a floating signifier missing its referent. Now militants who might have once fought for an idea are increasingly self-interested. Artworks are starting to function more like investment vehicles that no longer need to be seen by people. And some say that our most recent stage of planetary evolution—our current geological epoch—is distinguished mainly by the permanently destructive effects of human industry on the biosphere, in species extinction, deforestation, pollution, radiation, and so on. Which is to say that humanity can no longer be taken as the solution to anything. On the contrary, and from the perspective of the earth, humanity looks increasingly like the problem.

So how can the humanistic tradition of art continue when humans are turning the biosphere into a place uninhabitable by humans themselves? An artist today may now suddenly find the only addressee to be a future of despair, of catastrophic human extinction, of death. What does art look like when it is made without any future to look forward to?

We may be able to look at this another way. Because even though this apocalyptic view of the world sees the end of humanity, it also sees humans as the super-authors of their own doom, and even as authors of the collapse of the planet's ecosystem. Humans may be eradicated soon, but at the same time this scenario understands humanity as more supremely powerful than at any time since the Enlightenment, even though this power is purely negative.

So the artist working under these conditions may discover a certain pleasure in the violent spectacle of annihilation. In the sheer scale of its consequences, she may understand the megalomaniac thrill of having a stake in the architecture of planetary despair. Incapable of modesty, the artist in this situation might only find the means to abandon a bloated humanist positivism for a turbocharged death drive. But we should be careful not to get too excited here. Because in this situation we are not really witnessing the death of humanism so much as the thrill of seeing what it might do in reverse.

One can imagine a full shift of attention towards survival technologies. An artist must find ways to harness nuclear energy, to build better bunkers, to financialize everything possible by hoarding abstract capital that can only be spent on symbolic capital. Do we know what this art looks like? It might in fact look like nothing at all—hidden away inside a bunker, or appearing as a mirror that shows you

your own image, but turned up a notch. Purged of positivist fantasies, it might only appear as money does: as an uncannily base dumb material like a stone or iron ore, but one that comes with a ghostly promise of eventually being exchanged for something better that may never come to pass.

—Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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There is no harmony in the universe. We have to get acquainted to this idea that there is no real harmony as we have conceived it.
—Werner Herzog[1]

In the experience of deep sadness, the world itself seems altered in some way: colored by sadness, or disfigured … [This originates] in desolation, in the sense that the world is frozen and that nothing new is possible. This can lead to terrible paroxysms of destruction, attempts to shatter the carapace of reality and release the authentic self trapped within; but it can also lead away from the self altogether, towards new worldly commitments that *recognize the urgent need to develop another logic of existence, another way of going on*.
—Dominic Fox[2]

Irmgard Emmelhainz

Conditions of Visuality Under the Anthropocene and Images of the Anthropocene to Come

The Anthropocene is the era in which man's impact on the earth has become the single force driving change on the planet, thus giving shape to nature, shifting seas, changing the climate, and causing the disappearance of innumerable species, including placing humanity on the brink of extinction. The Anthropocene thus announces the collapse of the future through "slow fragmentation towards primitivism, perpetual crisis and planetary ecological collapse."[3] Instead of being conceived as speculative images of our future economic and political system, the Anthropocene has been reduced to an apocalyptic fantasy of human finitude, world finitude, and the manageable problem of climate change. In the last decade, films about the end of the world have been characterized by an apocalyptic and doomsday narrative that may end with moral redemption—from *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), and *2012* (2009), to Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) and *World War Z* (2013). In parallel, we have seen in the mass media a narrative presenting climate change as a fixable catastrophe, just like any other (such as the 2008 financial crisis, or the 2010 BP gulf oil spill). Neither our condition of finitude nor the world after the human has been imagined, and the massive environmental impact from the industrial era onward, with its long-term geomorphic implications, has become unintelligible.

The Anthropocene has meant not a new image of the world, but rather a radical change in the conditions of visuality and the subsequent transformation of the world into images. These developments have had epistemological as well as phenomenological consequences: while images now participate in forming worlds, they have become forms of thought constituting a

This object was on display in Jean-Luc Godard's "Voyage(s) en utopie" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris 2006. Photo: Michael Witt.

new kind of knowledge—one that is grounded in visual communication, and thereby dependent on perception, demanding the development of the optical mind.[4] The radical changes in the conditions of visuality under the Anthropocene have brought a new subject position, announced by the reformulating trajectories between impressionism and cubism, and those between cubism and experimental film. While cubism culminated with the antihumanist rupture of the picture plane and converted the visual object, along with surrealism, into "manifestation," "event," "symptom," and "hallucination," experimental film introduced a mechanical, posthuman eye conveying solipsistic images at the sensorimotor level of perception. The consequence of these developments is that images, as opposed to being subject to our "beliefs," or being objects of contemplation and beauty, came to be perceived as "the extant." This involves a passage from representation to presentation, that is, instead of showing a perpetual present in a parallel temporality in order to make the absent partially present, the image has become sheer presence, immediacy: the here and now in real time. Made up of particles of time, wrested out of sensation and turned into cognition, the image deals more with concepts and saying than with intuition and showing.

With its break from the Renaissance point of view, cubism decomposed anthropomorphism. Based on linear perspective, Renaissance perspective had normalized a viewing position as a centered, one-eyed static entity within a mathematical, homogenous space. Creating the illusion of a view to the outside world, Renaissance perspective made the pictorial plane analogous to a window. Images constructed with traditional perspective bestow identities and subjects given *a priori*, configured by the point of view provided by the picture plane. Cubism, in contrast, turned space, time, and the subject upside down, redefining spatial experience by rupturing the picture plane.[5] If classical representation conveys a continuous space, cubism invented discontinuous space by subverting the relations between subject and object, making identity and difference relative, questioning classical metaphysics. The cubist image renewed the image of the world by dissociating gaze, subject, and space, but without estranging them from each other, bringing about a new, antihumanist subject position.[6] Moreover, with cubism, temporality—duration—and a multiplicity of points of view became embedded in the picture plane.

With North American experimental (or structural) film in the 1960s and 1970s, notably influenced by Andy Warhol's filmic work, duration became a key component of aesthetic experience, grounded in an exploration of the filmic apparatus and seeking to make it analogous to human consciousness. By creating cinematic equivalents or metaphors of consciousness, experimental film brought about a prosthetic vision giving way to solipsistic visual experiences.[7] A futuristic technoscape, Michael Snow's experimental film *La Région centrale* (1971) is exemplary in this regard. In the film (as in all of his work), Snow explores the genetic properties of the filmic apparatus, using it to intensify and diminish aspects of normal vision. *La Région centrale* shows images from the wilderness collected by a machine specifically designed to shoot the film (De La). The machine was able to move in all directions, turn around 360 degrees, and zoom in and out, reaching places no human eye could perceive before. The resulting footage was independent of any human decisions and framing vision: a three-and-a-half hour topological exploration of the wilderness, a "gigantic landscape."[8]

Because De La extracts gravity from the situation as well as human (preconstructed or given) referential points of view, *La Région* hypostazises the cubist relativization of identity and difference and its rejection of *a priori* space. Furthermore, the film puts forth an experience of matter within, decentering the subject, which is constituted by the experience of the work itself. To paraphrase Rosalind Krauss on minimalism, the film subverts the notion of a stable structure that could mirror the viewer's own self—a self that is completely constituted prior to experience. That is to say, the film formulates a notion of self that exists only at the moment of externality of that particular

experience.[9] By presenting every possible position of the framing-camera in relationship to itself, *La Région* releases the subject from its human coordinates, creating a "space without reference points where the ground and the sky, the horizontal and the vertical inter-exchange."[10] The references to human coordinates are the screen's rectangular frame and the breaks made by the intermittent appearance of a big glowing yellow "X" against a black screen. Every time the X comes up, it fixes the screen and transfers the movement in a different way or direction; thus, the Xs are the point of view *embodying* the *apprehension of the passage from chaos to form*. In viewing the film, the present is experienced as immediacy, a pure phenomenological consciousness without the contamination of historical or *a priori* meaning; the world is thus experienced as self-sufficient, pure presence, foregrounding an awareness of the presence of the viewer's own perceptual processes. As Snow stated:

> My films are experiences: real experiences ... The structure is obviously important, and one describes it because it's more easily describable than other aspects, but the shape, with all the other elements, adds up to something which can't be said verbally and that's why the work *is*, why it exists.[11]

In general, experimental film sought to posit alternatives to the mimetical inscription of lived experience into simulacral images (signs) by artistic neovanguardist practices that came to be embedded within the logic of spectacle—not in order to dislodge subjectivity (early modernism) or to constitute subjects by mapping out signs (postmodernism), but by exploring through film the conditions of cognition and perception. And while there is something in the image delivered by *La Région* that shares something with the condition of thought, it yields a solipsistic subject at the genetic level of perception; beyond auditory or optical perceptions, it delivers motor-sensory perceptions.[12] Therefore, the machine delivers a posthuman, prosthetic enhancement of vision, inaugurating three important developments in the history of perception.

First, the machine introduces the incipient normalization of perception as augmented reality and the solipsistic visualization of data. Second, as Donna Haraway posited, the prosthetic enhancement of vision brings about the notion of limitlessness and an "unregulated gluttony" that desires to see everything from nowhere, spreading the assumption that anything can and is seen.[13] Third, with *La Région*, machinic vision becomes an epistemological product of a centered human point of view (with the Xs) without stable reference points, foregrounding the conditions of contemporary visuality. While cubism embodies the antihumanist scission of the subject and the

possibility of the construction of many psychical planes, *La Région* embodies the displacement of the human agent from the subjective center of operations.[14] Both epitomize modernity's fragmentation by mechanization, its alienating character, its inability to give back an image or to serve as a reflective mirror—it can never do this because the antihumanist image is *indifferent to me*.[15] And yet, this was always going to be the fate of an image and of art based on contemplation. These works also attest to the fact that the foundational experience of modernity is to refuse, in advance, the "given" as a ground for thought.[16]

The Transformation of Everything into Data-Images

As previously explained, the Anthropocene era implies not a new image of the world, but the transformation of the world into images. Humanity's alteration of the biophysical systems of earth is parallel to the rapid modifications of the receptive fields of the human visual cortex announced by cubism and experimental film. This alteration is also accompanied by an unprecedented explosion in the circulation of visibilities, which are actually making the outcome of these alterations opaque.[17] For instance, the exhaustive visualization and documentation of wildlife is actually rendering its ongoing extinction invisible. Aside from having become shields against reality, images are not only substitutes for first-hand experience, but have also become certifiers of reality, and, as Susan Sontag points out, they have extraordinary powers to determine our demands on reality.[18] In discussing the democratization of tourism in the 1970s, Sontag further described tourists' dependence of photographic cameras for making real their experiences abroad:

> Taking photographs ... is a way of certifying experience, [but] also a way of refusing it—by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir ... The very activity of taking pictures is soothing, and assuages general feelings of disorientation that are likely to be exacerbated by travel.[19]

Almost forty years later, posing for, taking, sharing, liking, forwarding, and looking at images are actions that are not only integral to tourism; they actually *give shape* to contemporary experience. Arguably, representation has ceased to exist in plain view and manifests itself as experience, event, or the appropriation and sharing of a mediatic space. Instead of representation, we have media objects (i.e., a twitterbot) that purport to provide vague participatory representational events that ground our cultural and social experience. Thus, as Stephen Shaviro points out, in the contemporary world, the opposition between reality-based and image-based modes of
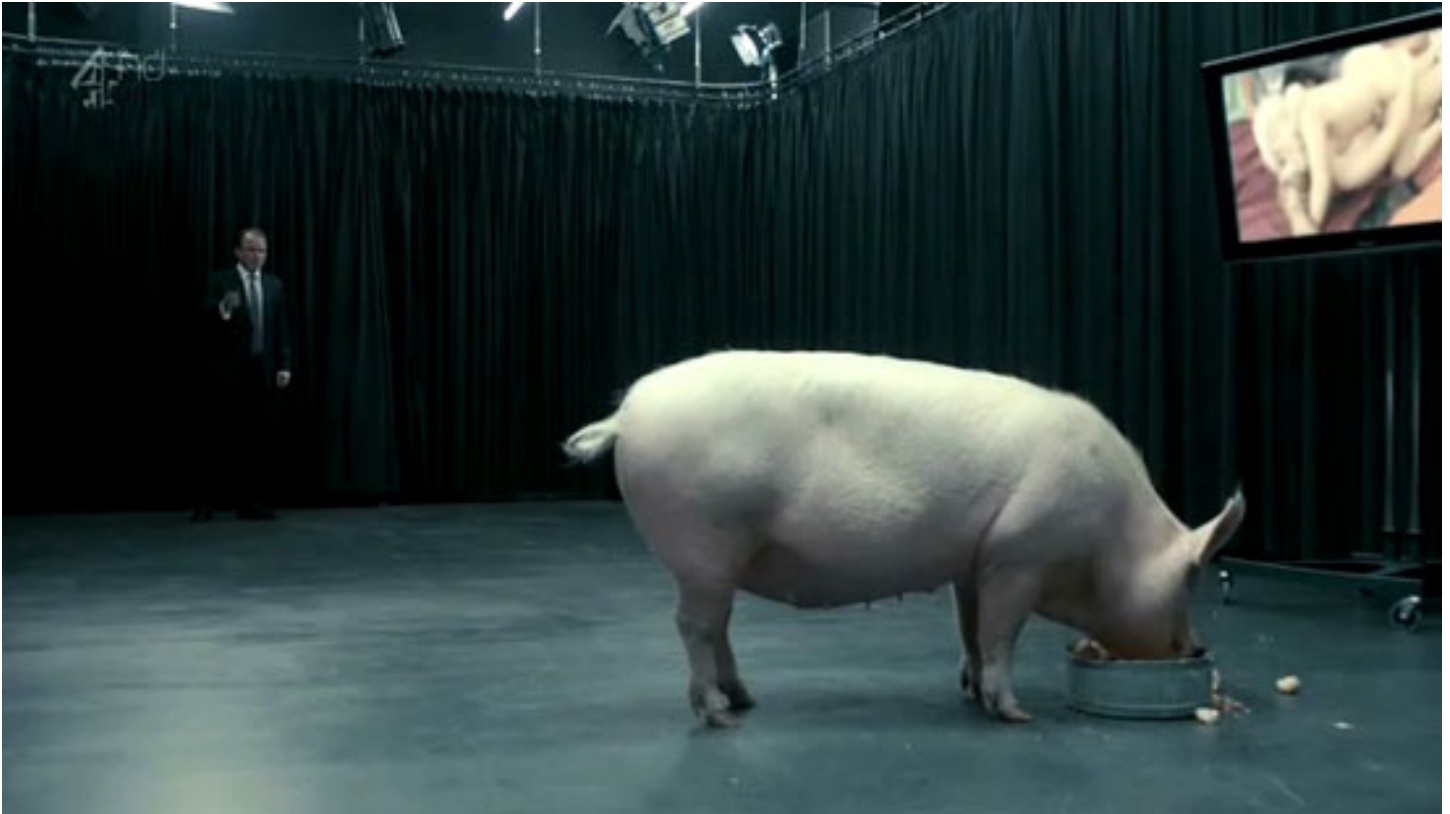
In the British Channel 4 series Black Mirror, episode "The National Anthem," the prime minister is blackmailed into raping a pig live on television.

presentation breaks down, and the most intense and vivid reality is precisely the reality of images.[20]

In other words, images have in themselves become opaque cognitive and empirical experiences. Each episode of the recent British science-fiction television series *Black Mirror* explores the implications of this precise phenomena—of images becoming not only an intrinsic part of our empirical experience but also our cognitive experience at large. The "black mirror," then, is nothing other than the LCD screen through which we give shape to reality.

One of the show's early episodes, "The Entire History of You" (2011), imagines a world in which almost everyone has a "grain" implanted behind their ear. This grain has the capacity to transform human eyes into cameras that record reality and projectors that can reproduce it, thereby amalgamating lived experience, memory, and image. In a later episode, "Be Right Back" (2013), a woman is able to revive her dead partner with a program that rebuilds him—first his writing habits, then speech patterns, and eventually his very self via a cloned, synthetic body—solely from the proliferation of information he uploaded on the internet when he was alive. The deathless and bodiless information, images, and signs—the inert map of a life—becomes embodied by an avatar that exists in actual, not virtual, reality, and that has the (albeit limited) capacity to exist and interact directly with humans. In the episode,

the fabrication of subjectivity from data—which implies the automatization of subjectivity—foreshadows the relationship between determinist automatisms and cognitive activity, which, according to Franco Berardi, is the core goal of the Google Empire: to capture user attention and to translate our cognitive acts into automatic sequences. The consequence is the replacement of cognition by a chain of automated connections, seeking to automatize the subjectivities of users.[21]

Aside from the fact that images and data are taking the place of or giving form to experience, automating our will and thought, they are also transforming things into signs by welding together image and discourse, bringing about a tautological form of vision. With the widespread use of photography and digital imaging, all signs begin to lead to other signs, prompted by the desire to see and to know, to document and to archive information. Thus the fantasy that everything is or can be made visible coexists with the increasing automation of cognition, which, following Franco Berardi, is the basic condition of semiocapital (the valorization and accumulation of signs as economic assets).[22]

In the pilot episode of *Black Mirror*, "The National Anthem" (2011), an alleged terrorist group kidnaps a nationally beloved British princess in the early morning hours. In order to free her, the anonymous group demands that the prime minister have sex on live television with a

pig at four o'clock that same afternoon. The video in which the princess announces the "price" of the ransom goes viral and the whole nation pressures the prime minister to fulfill the kidnappers' demands. At the end of the episode, postcoitus, it is revealed that the kidnapping was a singular artist's gesture, intended in its successful implementation to point critically to the obscenely inflated role the media has in shaping public opinion and official policy. The artist's action, in other words, illuminates the highly visceral shift in power brought on almost instantaneously by the ransom video's circulation in the infosphere. Insofar as the episode unfolds montages of the whole nation glued to televisions in the pub, workplace, and waiting room at four o'clock, the artist highlights how connective interfaces actually govern, as they have the direct capacity to manipulate and coordinate behavior on almost every level.[23]

Under the conditions of semiocapitalism, images and signs acquire value and/or power by means of being seen, largely through "likes" and retweets. The fact that sign-value has supplanted exchange-value means moreover that we no longer consume material things, but rather swallow cognitive signs embedded in and around them. Aside from consuming "experiences" or "moods," we buy immaterial commodities (in the name of lifestyle and branding) and consume signs for "equality," "happiness," "wellness," and "fulfillment." In Don Delillo's *White Noise* (1985), Jack Gladney describes a trip to the supermarket and makes clear how the signs found in the brands and labels of products that he and his wife buy have the power to relieve them of the mysteries and anxieties brought about by everyday life:

> It seemed to me that Babette and I, in the mass and variety of our purchases, in the sheer plenitude those crowded bags suggested, the weight and size and number, the familiar package designs and vivid lettering, the giant sizes, the family bargain packs with Day-Glo sale stickers, in the sense of replenishment we felt, the sense of well-being, the security and contentment these products brought to some snug home in our souls—it seemed we had achieved a fullness of being that is not known to people who need less, expect less, who plan their lives around lonely walks in the evening.[24]

What becomes evident in this paragraph is Baudrillard's assertion that objects are no longer commodities whose message and meaning we can appropriate and decipher, but rather, tests that interrogate us. For him, commodities are a referendum, the verification of a code, circularity as well as sameness and homogeneity: here the commodities bring a well-being that reflects the well-being of the consumer and his or her lifestyle.[25] Furthermore, the acceleration in proliferation of cognitive signs since the

time of Delillo's novel is another of the features of communicative capitalism's subjugation, submitting the mind to an ever-increasing pace of perceptual stimuli, and in so doing generating not only panic and anxiety, but also destroying all possible forms of autonomous subjectivation.[26] Under communicative capitalism, images transformed into signs embody the current concatenation of knowledge and machines—that is, the technological organization of capitalism to produce value. With the enabling of the visualization of data by machines, images have become scientific, managerial, and military instruments of knowledge, and thus of capital and power.[27] In this context, *seeing* means the accelerating perception of the fields of everyday experiences, or rather, the field of trivial visual analogies of experience: a kind of groundless, *accelerated tautological vision* derived from passive observation. This is for Berardi another of communicative capitalism's forms of governance, as this kind of vision generates technolinguistic automatisms by carrying information without meaning, automating thought and the will.[28]

An astronaut floats off in space in this film still from Cuarón's 2014 movie Gravity.

Images as Cognition and thus Forms of Power

Images circulating in the infosphere are also charged with affect, exposing the viewer to sensations that go beyond everyday perception. Hollywood cinema, for instance, delivers pure sensation and intensities that have no meaning. In Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013), the main characters try to survive in outer space by solving practical and technical problems. The movie repudiates a point of view and a ground for vision in favor of immersion, transforming images into physical sensations mobilized by the visual and auditory (especially in its 3-D version), and thus into affect. The becoming-affect of images derives from communicative capitalism's ruthless conversion of sensation and aesthetic experiences into cognition: its transformation of these experiences into information, sensations, and intensities without meaning is precisely what enables them to be exploited as forms of work and
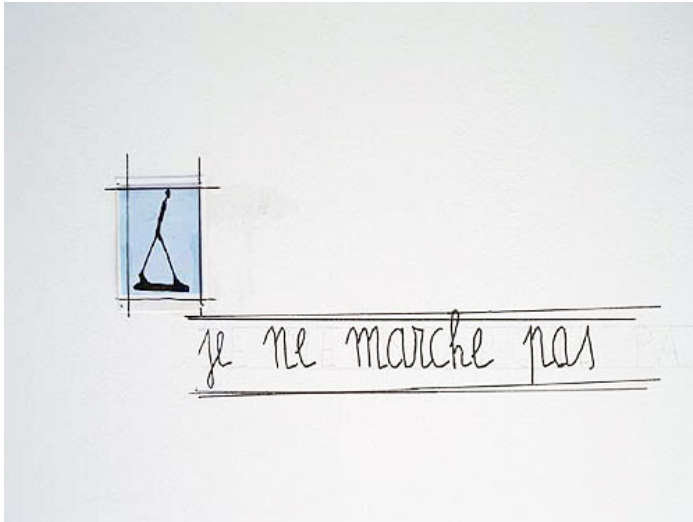
Installation view of "Voyage(s) en utopie" at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2006. Photo: Michael Witt.

sold as new experiences and exciting lifestyle choices.[29] One of the problems that arises is that affect cannot be linked to a larger network of identity and meaning. *Gravity* also presents itself as a symptom of the normalization of a groundless seeing brought about by modernity's decentering of the subject parallel to our exposure to aerial images (for example, Google Earth). The hegemonic sight convention of visuality is an empowered, unstable, free-falling, and floating bird's eye view that mirrors the present moment's ubiquitous condition of groundlessness.[30]

According to many thinkers, this groundlessness characterizes the Anthropocene. The current fragmentation and transience of sociopolitical movements attests to the fact that we are first of all lacking ground on which to found politics, our social lives, and our relationship to the environment. Second, as Claire Colebrook put it, with the Anthropocene we are facing human extinction, as well as causing other extinctions, thereby annihilating that which makes us human. We are thus all thrown into a situation of urgent interconnectedness, in which a complex multiplicity of diverging forces and timelines that exceed any manageable point of view converge.[31] In this context, criticality is both in trouble and spinning on its head. Many questions arise: How do we redefine the ground of deterritorialized subjectivation beyond the subsumption of subjectivity by the modes of governance of accelerated tautological forms of vision and communicative capitalism? How can we transform our relationship to the indeterminacy of deterritorialization and the multiplicity of diverging points of view in order to provide a heightened sense of place, giving way to the possibility of collective autonomous subjectivation and thus a new sense of politics and of the image?

In an era of ubiquitous synthetic and digital images dissociated from human vision and directly tied to power and capital, when images and aesthetic experience have been turned into cognition and thus into empty sensations or tautological truths about reality, the image of the Anthropocene is yet to come. The Anthropocene is "the age of man" that announces its own extinction. In other words, the Anthropocene thesis posits "man" as the end of its own destiny. Therefore, while the Anthropocene narrative keeps "man" at its very center, it marks the death of the posthuman and of antihumanism, because there can be no redeeming critical antihumanist or posthuman figure in which either metaphysics or technological and scientific advances would find a way to reconcile human life with ecology. In short, *images* of the Anthropocene are missing. Thus, it is necessary to transcend our incapacity to imagine an alternative or something better. We can first do this: draw a distinction between *images* and imagery, or pictures. Although it is related to the optic nerve, the picture *does not make an image*.[32] In order to make images, it is necessary to make *vision* assassinate perception; it is necessary to *ground vision*, and then *perform* (as in artistic activity) and *think vision* (as in critical activity).[33]

Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, The Old Place, 2001. Film still.

Images to Come

Following Jean-Luc Godard, who operates in his work between the registers of the real, the imaginary, and art, only cinema is capable of delivering images as opposed to imagery, conveying not a subject but the supposition of the subject and thus the verb (substance).[34] Alterity is absolutely necessary for the image, as the *image* is an *intensification of presence*—this is why it is able to hold out against all experiences of vision.[35] In this light,Godard's cinematic project can be interpreted as a conception of the image as a promise of flesh. For Godard,

the image is incertitude, it is "trying to see" and the possibility of "giving voices back to their bodies." For the filmmaker, *images do not show*; rather, images are a matter of belief and a *desire to see* (which is different from the desire *to know* or *to possess*).

An essay-film Godard made with Anne-Marie Miéville, *The Old Place* (2001), addresses the Anthropocenic concerns of life after the extinction of man, the current groundlessness of vision, and the lack of *images* of the world and of humanity. While we see images from outer space, Miéville and Godard discuss "CLIO," the archaeological bird of the future, a microsatellite sent into space in 2001. The satellite is supposed to come back to earth in five thousand years to inform its future inhabitants about the past. Aside from carrying traditional human forms of knowledge, the bird will deliver messages written by the current inhabitants of the globe addressed to its future inhabitants. Miéville and Godard ponder whether humanist messages such as "Love each other," or "Eliminate discrimination against women," will be included in the satellite (they doubt it). Later on, they conclude:

> We are all lost in the immensity of the universe and in the depth of our own spirit. There is no way back home, there is no home. The human species has blown up and dispersed in the stars. We can neither deal with the past nor with the present, and the future takes us more and more away from the concept of home. We are not free, as we like to think, but lost.

Here Godard and Miéville paint the termination of a world, its exhaustion and estrangement from its conditions of possibility. As they underscore the lack of a home for the spirit, they highlight the loss of a sense of origin and destination, implying that the active principle of the world has ceased to function.[36] The last line is spoken while we see the image of a mother polar bear staring at her dead cub, followed by an image of Alberto Giacometti's sculpture *L'homme qui marche* (Walking Man, 1961): life persists irrationally, not given form by imagination, ceasing to cohere into a higher truth.[37]

In *The Old Place*, Godard and Miéville explore the image of humanity throughout the Western history of art, underscoring the fact that for two thousand Eurocentric, Christian years, the image was sacred. We also see images of violence, torture, and death juxtaposed with beautiful sculpted and painted figures and faces created throughout all the ages of humanity: people by turns smiling, screaming, or crying.

For Godard and Miéville, the image is also something related to the origin that reveals itself as the new but that had been there all along: an originary landscape always present and inextricable from history. Marking the

Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, The Old Place, 2001. Film still.

passage to the current regime of communicative capitalism, where images are permeated by discourse and tautological truths about reality, they state: "The image today is not what we see, but what the caption states." This is the definition of publicity, which they further link to the transformation of art into market and marketing represented by both Andy Warhol, and by the fact that "The last Citroën will be named Picasso," which has as a consequence that "The spaces of publicity now occupy the spaces of hope." And yet, in spite of the ubiquity of communicative capitalism, for them there is something that resists, something that remains in art and in the image. Meanwhile, we see a blank canvas held by four mechanical legs moving furiously.[38] This evokes the resisting image to come; this resisting image is a question of (sensible, un-automated) purity and, in post-Christian secular sense, of the sacred and redemption, of an ambivalent relationship between image and text, foreign to knowledge and intrinsically tied to belief. At the end of *The Old Place*, the filmmakers posit the Malay legend of A Bao A Qu as the paradigm of the image of these times in which "we are lost without a home," as they state. "The text of A Bao A Qu is the illustration of this film." The legend is rewritten by Jorge Luis Borges in his *Book of Imaginary Beings*:

> To see the most lovely landscape in the world, a traveler must climb the Tower of Victory in Chitor*.* A winding staircase gives access to the circular terrace on top, but only those who do not believe in the legend dare climb the tower. On the stairway there has lived since the beginning of time a being sensitive to the many shades of the human soul known as A Bao A Qu. It sleeps until the approach of a traveler and some secret life within it begins to glow and its translucent body begins to stir. As the traveler climbs the stairs, the being regains consciousness and follows at the traveler's heels, becoming more intense in bluish color and coming closer to perfection. But it achieves its ultimate form only at the topmost step, and only when the traveler is one who has already attained Nirvana, whose acts cast no shadows.

Otherwise, the being hesitates at the final step and suffers at its inability to achieve perfection. As the traveler climbs back down, it tumbles back to the first step and collapses weary and shapeless, awaiting the approach of the next traveler. It is only possible to see it properly when it has climbed half the steps, as it takes a clear shape when its body stretches out in order to help itself climb up. Those who have seen it, say that it can look with all of its body and that at the touch, it reminds one of a peach's skin. In the course of the centuries, A Bao A Qu has reached the terrace only once.[39]

In their film, Godard and Miéville explore the imprint of the quest of what it means to be human throughout the history of images. Humanity transpires as a mark that is perpetually reinscribed in a form of an address. A Bao A Qu is an inhuman thing activated by the passage of humans wishing to see the most beautiful landscape in the world. The act of vision is a unique event, and what delivers the vision of the landscape and of the creature are the purity and desire of the viewer. A Bao A Qu is an image of alterity; it stares back with all of its body. A Bao A Qu is an antidote to the lack of imagination in our times: an inhuman vision that undermines the narrative that holds the human as the central figure of its ultimate form of vision and destruction.

In the voiceover of his most recent film, *Adieu au langage* (Farewell to Language, 2014), Godard quotes Rilke: "It is not the animal which is blind, but man. Blinded by consciousness, man is incapable of seeing the world." With a strident palette and saturated sound, the film evokes abstract, fauvist, cubist, and impressionist painting, and is Godard's most radically experimental film (as in the genre, because all his work is experimental and radical) to date. Rilke's quote, together with an aphorism he attributes to Monet, frame Godard's quest in this film: "It is not about seeing what we see, because we do not see anything, but [it is about] painting what we cannot see." In parallel, Godard revives the romantic poet's wish to "describe" immediate reality, to hit the viewer with electroshocks that make a real visible and audible world emerge from language. In the film, as a way to enable a new form of communication beyond tautological digital communication (Godard points out that with texting there is neither the chance to interpret a code nor room for ambiguity) and to reestablish harmony between the couple in the movie who can no longer communicate face to face, Roxy Miéville's dog appears. Roxy becomes the metaphor for the possibility of an "other" post-anthropocentric language "between" humans. In the movie, the dog asks, "What is man? What is a city? What is war?" Rocky's comings and goings between the couple bear the possibility of giving back freedom to the face-to-face encounter. Godard compare's Roxy's "other" language to the lost language of the poor, the excluded,

animals, plants, the handicapped—those who are out of the frame. In sum, the movie is a giant mirror that reflects a grammar of thought that no longer resides in enunciation (and this is the farewell to language): marking the absence of a relationship between the characters by using Roxy—the third person, the post-anthropocentric "other"—as a vehicle of communication.

In both *The Old Place* and *Adieu au langage*, Godard addresses spectacular modernity's (semiocapitalism's) crisis of visuality, which causes a lack of imagination, or even blindness. He also posits alternatives: an inhuman vision beyond a humanist-centered view, a post-anthropocentric "other." In contrast to post-humanism, the filmic camera and technology are not what enable vision in these films. Rather, vision is enabled by a mythical being (A Bao A Qu) and by Roxy the dog, which, at the end of *Adieu*, barks in unison with the cry of a newborn baby, announcing the new to come.

X

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McKenzie Wark

Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene (On Alexander Bogdanov and Kim Stanley Robinson)

Marx: "All that is solid melts into air."[1] That effervescent phrase suggests something different now. Of all the liberation movements of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one succeeded without limit. It did not liberate a nation, or a class, or a colony, or a gender, or a sexuality. What it freed was not the animals, and still less the cyborgs, although it was far from human. What it freed was chemical, an element: carbon. A central theme of the Anthropocene was and remains the story of the Carbon Liberation Front.

The Carbon Liberation Front seeks out all of past life that took the form of fossilized carbon, unearths it and burns it to release its energy. The Anthropocene runs on carbon.[2] It is a redistribution, not of wealth, or power, or recognition, but of molecules. Released into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, these molecules trap heat, they change climates. The end of prehistory appears on the horizon as carbon bound within the earth becomes scarce, and liberated carbon pushes the climate into the red zone.[3]

Powerful interests still deny the existence of the Carbon Liberation Front.[4] Those authorities attentive to the evidence of this metabolic rift usually imagine four ways of mitigating its effects. One is that the market will take care of everything. Another proposes that all we need is new technology. A third imagines a social change in which we all become individually accountable for quantifying and limiting our own carbon "footprint." A fourth is a romantic turn away from the modern, from technology, as if the rift is made whole when a privileged few shop at the farmer's market for artisanal cheese.[5] None of these four solutions seems quite the thing.

The first task of critique is to point out the poverty of these options.[6] A second task might be to create the space within which very different kinds of knowledge and practice might meet. Economic, technical, political, and cultural transformations are all advisable, but at least part of the problem is their relation to each other. The liberation of carbon transforms the totality within which each of these specific modes of thinking and being could be practiced. That calls for new ways of organizing knowledge.

Addressing the Anthropocene is not something to leave in the hands of those in charge, given just how badly the ruling class of our time has mishandled this end of prehistory, this firstly scientific and now belatedly cultural discovery that we all live in a biosphere in a state of advanced metabolic rift. The challenge then is to construct the *labor perspective* on the historical tasks of our time. What would it mean to see historical tasks from the point of view of working people of all kinds? How can everyday experiences, technical hacks and even utopian speculations combine in a common cause, where each is a check on certain tendencies of the other?

Technical knowledge checks the popular sentiment toward purely romantic visions of a world of harmony and butterflies—as if that was a viable plan for seven billion people. Folk knowledge from everyday experience checks the tendency of technical knowledge to imagine sweeping plans without thought for the particular consequences—like diverting the waters of the Aral Sea.[7] Utopian speculations are that secret heliotropism which orients action and invention toward a sun now regarded with more caution and respect than it once was. There is no other world, but it can't be this one.[8]

What the Carbon Liberation Front calls us to create in its molecular shadow is not yet another philosophy, but a poetics and technics for the organization of knowledge. As it turns out, that's exactly what Alexander Bogdanov tried to create. We could do worse than to pick up the thread of his efforts. So let's start with a version of his story, a bit of his life and times, a bit more about his concepts, from the point of view of the kind of past that labor might need now, as it confronts not only its old nemesis of capital, but also its molecular spawn—the Carbon Liberation Front. Here among the ruins, something living yet remains.

Red Star and The Philosophy of Living Experience

It is notable that in his 1908 science fiction novel *Red Star*, Bogdanov already has inklings of the workings of the Carbon Liberation Front and its relation to climate. He anticipates the possibility of Martian (and hence of human) generated climate change at a time when the theoretical possibility was starting to occur to climate scientists, even though the *infrastructure* did not exist yet for measuring or computing climate models.[9] The Martians of *Red Star* already possess a global knowledge concord, frictionless data gathering, and computational power that Earthly climate science would finally acquire by the late twentieth century. With that infrastructure in place, the Martians found then what humans have found only now—that collective labor transforms nature at the level of the totality.

In his book *The Philosophy of Living Experience* Bogdanov is not really trying to write philosophy so much as to hack it, to repurpose it for something other than the making of more philosophy. Philosophy is no longer an end in itself, but a kind of raw material for the design and

Vladimir Lenin plays chess with Alexander Bogdanov during a visit to Maxim Gorky, Capri, Italy, 1908.

organizing, not quite of what Foucault called discourses of power/knowledge, but more of practices of laboring/knowing.[10] The projected audience for this writing is not philosophers so much as the organic intellectuals of the working class, exactly the kind of people Bogdanov's activities as an educator-activist had always addressed. Having clearly read his Nietzsche, Bogdanov's decision is that if one is to philosophize with a hammer, then this is best done, not with professional philosophers, but with professional hammerers.

Science, philosophy, and everyday experience ought to converge as the proletariat grows. Bogdanov: "When a powerful class, to which history has entrusted new, grandiose tasks, steps into the arena of history, then a new philosophy also inevitably emerges."[11] Marx's work is a step in this direction, but only a step. Proletarian class experience calls for the integration of forms of specialized knowledge, just as it integrates tasks in the labor process. More and more of life can then be subject to scientific scrutiny. The task of today's thought is to integrate the knowledge of sciences and social sciences that expresses the whole of the experience of the progressive class forces of the moment.

Bogdanov: "The philosophy of a class is the highest form of its collective consciousness."[12] As such, bourgeois philosophy has served the bourgeoisie well, but the role of philosophy in class struggle is not understood by that class. It wanted to universalize its own experience. But philosophies cannot be universal. They are situated. The philosophy of one class will not make sense to a class with a different experience of its actions in the world. Just as the bourgeoisie sponsored a revolution in thought that corresponds to its new forms of social practice, so too organized labor must reorganize thought as well as practice.

The *basic metaphor* is the naming of relations in nature after social relations.[13] It can be found "at work" in the theory of *causality*, the centerpiece of any worldview. *Authoritarian causality* had its uses: it allowed the ordering of experience, and reinforced authoritarian cooperation in production. Worldviews that assume authoritarian causes when none were observed usually invoke invisible spirit authorities as causes. Horatio obeys Hamlet; Hamlet obeys his father's ghost. Matter is subordinated to spirit. Thus the slave model of social relations became a whole ontology of what is and ever could be.

Bogdanov makes the striking argument that religion was the scientific worldview of its time. The old holy books are veritable encyclopedias, somewhat arbitrarily arranged, on how to organize farming, crafts, sexuality or aged-care. This was a valid form of knowledge so long as an authoritarian organization of labor prevailed. But as technique and organization changed, "religious thinking lost touch with the system of labor, acquired an 'unearthly' character, and became a special realm of faith."[14] There

was a detachment of authority from direct production. Religion then becomes an objective account of a partial world.

Bogdanov thinks it no accident that the philosophical worldviews that partially displaced religion and authoritarian causation arose where mercantile exchange relations were prevalent—among the Greeks.[15] Extended exchange relations suggest another causal model, *abstract causality*. Buyers and sellers in the marketplace come to realize that there is a force operating independently of their will, but operating in the abstract, as a system of relations, rather than acting as a particular cause of a particular event.

Rather than such a contemplative materialism, Bogdanov, like Marx, wants an active one, an account based on the social production of human existence. Bogdanov: "Nature is what people call the endlessly unfolding   eld of their labor-experience."[16] Nature is the arena of labor. Neither labor nor nature can be conceived as concepts without the other. They are historically coproduced concepts.

Later in his life, Bodganov was to found a research institute for blood transfusion. Here, an unrelated image documents arm-to-arm blood transfusion.

The being of nature is not something a philosophy can dogmatically claim to know. It is not void, or matter, it is whatever appears as resistance in labor. Bogdanov changes the object theory from nature in the abstract to the practices in which it is encountered and known: "The system of experience is the system of labor, all of its contents lie within the limits of the collective practice of mankind."

Take thermodynamics as an example. Industrialization runs on carbon. Demand for carbon in the form of coal meant that miners dig deeper and deeper. Pumping water out of deep mines becomes an acute problem, and so the

first application of steam power was for pumping water out of mines. Out of the practical problem of designing steam-driven pumps arises the abstract principles of thermodynamics as a science.[17] Thermodynamic models of causation then become the basic metaphor for thinking about causation in general, extended by substitution to explain all sorts of things.

There are at least two levels of labor activity: the technical and the organizational. Both have to overcome resistance. Technical labor has to overcome the recalcitrance of matter itself. Organizational labor has to overcome the emotional truculence of the human components of a laboring apparatus. Its means of motivation is *ideology*, which for Bogdanov has a positive character, as a means of threading people together around their tasks. What the idealist thinker unwittingly discovers is the labor-nature of our species-being—ideology as organization and the resistance to it—a not insignificant eld of experience, but a partial one.

Before Marx, neither materialists nor idealists oriented thought within labor. The materialists thought the ideal an attribute of abstract matter; the idealists thought matter an attribute of an abstract ideal. Both suffer from a kind of *abstract fetishism*, or the positing of absolute concepts that are essences outside of human experience and that are its cause. Bogdanov: "An idea which is objectively the result of past social activity and which is the tool of the latter, is presented as something independent, cut off from it."[18] This abstract fetishism arises from exchange society. Causation moves away from particular authorities, from lords and The Lord, but still posits a universal principle of command.

This is why Bogdanov takes his distance even from materialist philosophy before Marx, for it still posits an abstract causation: matter determines thought, but in an abstract way. Whether as "matter" or "void," a basic metaphor is raised to a universal principle by mere contemplation, rather than thought through social labor's encounters with it. The revival in the twenty-first century of philosophies of speculative objects or vitalist matter is not a particularly progressive moment in Bogdanovite terms.

The labor point of view has to reject ontologies of abstract exchange with nature.[19] Labor finds itself *in and against* nature. Labor is always firstly in nature, subsumed within a totality greater than itself. Labor is secondly against nature. It comes into being through an effort to bend resisting nature to its purposes. Its intuitive understanding of causality comes not from exchange value but from use value. Labor experiments with nature, finding new uses for it. Its understanding of nature is historical, always evolving, reticent about erecting an abstract causality over the unknown. The labor point of view is a monism, yet one of plural, active processes. Nature is what labor grasps in the encounter, and grasps in a way specific to a given situation. Marx: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing

materialisms ... is that the thing, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively."[20]

The basic metaphor, the one which posits an image of causality, is just a special instance of a broader practice of thought. All philosophies explain the world by metaphorical *substitution*.[21] A great example in which Marx himself participates would be the way *metabolism* moves between fields, from respiration in mammals to agricultural science to social-historical metabolism. Substitution extends from the experience of either nature or labor as resistance (materialism or idealism). But in either case, progress in knowledge is limited. The result tends to be the thought of activity without matter or of matter without activity. This is the problem which "dialectical materialism" imagines itself to have solved, although it has done so only abstractly.

The labor point of view calls for a thought which embodies its ambitions. Bogdanov: "Dialectical materialism was the first attempt to formulate the working-class point of view on life and the world."[22] But not the last. Strikingly, the labor point of view implies a new understanding of causality. The apparatuses of both modern science and machine production generate new experiences of causation. As in modern chemistry, labor can interrupt and divert causal sequences. Matter is not a thing-in-itself beyond experience, but a placeholder for the not-yet-experienced.

Bogdanov's example is the concept of energy, which is neither substance nor idea but whose discovery emerges out of the practical relationship of the labor apparatus to a nature which resists it. Energy is not *in* coal or oil, but an outcome of an activity of labor on these materials. Bogdanov: "Labor causality gives man a program and a plan for the conquest of the world: to dominate phenomena, things, step by step so as to receive some from others and by means of some to dominate others."[23]

Return to Red Mars

Alternative futures branch like dendrites away from the present moment, shifting chaotically, shifting this way and that by attractors dimly perceived. Probably outcomes emerge from those less likely.

—Kim Stanley Robinson

"Arkady Bogdanov was a portrait in red: hair, beard, skin"—and red politics, although it will turn out that there is another kind entirely.[24] He is a descendant of Alexander Bogdanov, and he is on his way to Mars, together with ninety-nine other scientists and technicians. Or one hundred others, it will turn out, when the stowaway surfaces. This First Hundred (and one) are the collective

Mars One Mission is a not-for-profit independent organization that has put forward plans to bring the first humans onto Mars and establish a permanent colony there by 2025.

protagonist of Kim Stanley Robinson's famous *Mars Trilogy*: *Red Mars*, *Green Mars,* and *Blue Mars*, published in the early 1990s.

If Bogdanov's 1908 novel is a détournement of pop science fiction, then Robinson's first part, *Red Mars*, is a détournement of the *robinsonade*, a version of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* story. If we were to pick just one book as the precursor to capitalist realism, *Crusoe* might well be it. What makes it so characteristic of the genre is that it lacks any transcendent leap toward the heavens or the future. It is as horizontal as a pipeline. It is about making something of this world, not transcending it in favor of another. It makes adventure into the calculus of arbitrage, of the canny knack of buying cheap and selling dear.

In *Robinson Crusoe*, the shipwrecked Robinson does not depend on God or Fortune for help, he helps himself. He sets himself to work, as if he were both boss and laborer. There's no spontaneous bravery, no tests of honor, no looking very far upwards or very far forwards. Robinson's labors are nothing if not *efficient*. What is useful is beautiful on the island of capitalist realist thought, and what is both beautiful and useful is without waste. There is no room for Platonov's fallen leaf. The world is nothing but a set of potential tools and resources.

Defoe organizes the bourgeois worldview with a

forward-slanting grammar in which time is segmented and arranged serially. Robinson confronts this, does that, attains this benefit. Here's a characteristic sentence: "Having mastered this difficulty, and employed a world of time about it, I bestirred myself to see, if possible, how to supply two wants." Moretti: "Past gerund; past tense; infinitive: wonderful three part sequence."[25] It's the "grammar of growth." Bourgeois prose is a rule-based but open-ended style.

This grammar creates a whole new visibility for *things*. In Defoe, things can be useful in themselves. They are connectable only sideways, in networks of other things. With this you get that, with that you make this, and so on. Things are described in detail. Everything appears as a potential resource or obstacle to accumulation. What is lost is the totality. The world dissolves into these particulars. The capitalist realist self sees a world of particular things as if they were there to be the raw materials of the work of accumulation, for it knows no other kind of work.

In *Red Mars*, Robinson bends the robinsonade to other purposes. There is neither heaven nor horizon, but the practical question of how various ideologies overcome the friction of collaborative labor. It is not a story of an individual's acquisition and conquest. It's a story about collective labors. The problem here is the invention of

forms of organization and belief for a post-bourgeois world. Robinson's ambition is the invention of a grammar that might come after that of capitalist realism.
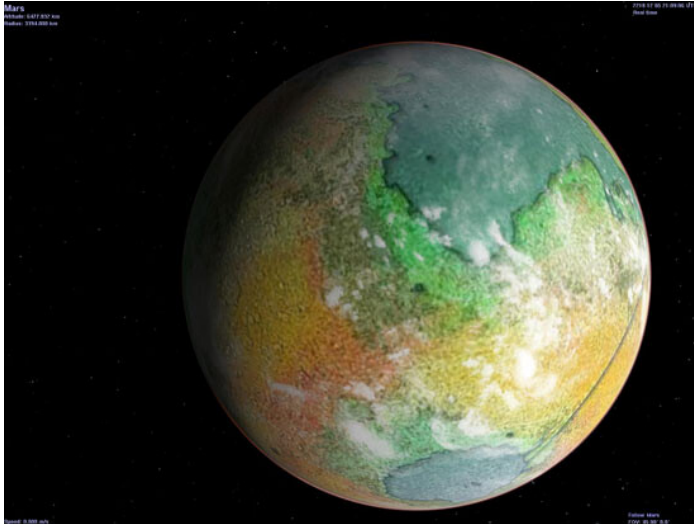
A fan representation depicts Kim Stanley Robinson's terraformed planet from the Red, Green, and Blue Mars trilogy.

In *Red Star*, Bogdanov's voyager to Mars is a single representative of the most technically skilled and class-conscious workers, out to see the utopian society of labor as an already existing form. In *Red Mars*, on the long and dangerous voyage from Earth to Mars, and in the early days of their arrival, the First Hundred debate just exactly what it is they have been sent to organize on the "New World" of Mars. Several positions emerge, each an unstable mix of political, cultural, and technical predispositions. As in Platonov, characters each bear out a certain concept of what praxis could be. Over the course of the three books, which are in effect one big novel, these positions will evolve, clash, collaborate, and out of their matrix form the structure not just of a new polity but of a new economy, culture, and even nature.

The leaders of this joint Russian-American expedition are Maya Toitovna and Frank Chalmers, experienced space and science bureaucrats. Frank and Maya are different kinds of leaders, one cynical the other more emotive. They quickly find their authority doubled, and troubled, by more committed and charismatic potential leaders, Arkady Bogdanov and John Boone. Bogdanov and Boone *overidentify* with the political ideologies of their respective societies, Soviet and American, the Marxist and the liberal.[26] They actually believe! Chalmers and Toitovna find this especially dangerous to their more pragmatic authority.

These four could almost form a kind of "semiotic rectangle," an analytic tool used by both Fredric Jameson

and Donna Haraway.[27] It's tempting to reach into the bag of tricks of formal textual analysis and run the *Mars Trilogy* through the mesh of such devices. The problem is that Robinson already includes such devices within the text itself. The character of Michel the psychiatrist is particularly fond of semiotic rectangles, for example. The usual "innocence" of the text in relation to the formal critical method no longer applies here—Robinson did, after all, study with Fredric Jameson. Perhaps that's why Robinson always seems to want his stories to exceed the formal properties of such a schema. Rather, his characters form loose networks of alliance and opposition, always making boundaries and linkages. The novel tracks one possible causal sequence in a space of possibilities. There's no single underlying design.

Complicating the four points of the semiotic rectangle of Maya and Frank, Arkady and John, are three outlier figures: Hiroko Ai, who runs the farm team; the geologist Ann Claybourne; and Saxifrage Russell, the physicist. Hiroko, Ann, and Sax are different versions of what scientific and technical knowledge might do and be. Hiroko's shades off into a frankly spiritual and cultish worship of living nature. Ann's is a contemplative realism, almost selfless and devoted to knowledge for itself. Sax sees science not as an end in itself but a means to an end—"terraforming" Mars.

Robinson did not coin the term "terraforming," but he surely gives it the richest expression of any writer.[28] While there is plenty in the *Mars Trilogy* on the technical issues in terraforming Mars, Robinson also uses it as a Brechtian estrangement device to open up a space for thinking about the organization of the Earth.[29] On Mars, questions of base and superstructure, nature and culture, economics and politics, can never be treated in isolation, as all "levels" have to be organized together. Maya: "We exist for Earth as a model or experiment. A thought experiment for humanity to learn from."[30] Perhaps Earth is now a Mars, estranged from its own ecology.

Of the First Hundred, Arkady Bogdanov has the most clearly revolutionary agenda, and one straight out of proletkult. He objects to the design for their first base, Underhill:

> with work space separated from living quarters, as if work were not part of life. And the living quarters are taken up mostly with private rooms, with hierarchies expressed, in that leaders are assigned larger spaces … Our work will be more than making wages—it will be our art, our whole life … We are *scientists*! It is our job to think things *new*, to make them new![31]

There are many actually existing, contemporary or historical societies that for Robinson exude hints of utopian possibility: the Mondragon Co-ops, Yugoslav

self-management, Red Bologna, the Israeli kibbutz, Sufi nomads, Swiss cantons, Minoan or Hopi matriarchies, Keralan matrilineal land tenure. One of the more surprising is the Antarctic science station. This he experienced first-hand in 1995 on the National Science Foundation's Artists and Writer's Program.[32]

Robinson imagines the first Mars station at Underhill as just like a scientific lab—and just as political. As Arkady would say, ignoring politics is like saying you don't want to deal with complex systems. Arkady: "Some of us here can accept transforming the entire physical reality of this planet, without doing a single thing to change ourselves or the way we live ... We must terraform not only Mars, but ourselves."[33] Thus the most advanced forms of organization can be a template for the totality.

A field station like Underhill is not only an advanced social form, for Arkady it connects to a deep history:

> This arrangement resembles the prehistoric way to live, and it therefore feels right to us, because our brains recognize if from three million years of practicing it. In essence our brains grew to their current configuration in response to the realities of that life. So as a result people grow powerfully attached to that kind of life, when they get a chance to live it. It allows you to concentrate your attention on the *real work*, which means everything that is done to stay alive, or make things, or satisfy our curiosity, or play. That is utopia ... especially for primitives and scientists, which is to say everybody. So a scientific research station is actually a little model of prehistoric utopia, carved out of the international money economy by clever primates who want to live well.[34]

Not everyone has ever got to live such a life, even at Underhill, and so the scientific life isn't really a utopia. Scientists carved out refuges for themselves from other forms of organization and power rather than work on expanding them. The crux of the "Bogdanov" position in the *Mars Trilogy* is making the near-utopian aspect of the most advanced forms of collaborative labor a general condition.

This Arkady Bogdanov, not unlike the real Alexander Bogdanov a century before him, is a kind of sacrifice to the revolution. Nearly all of the early leaders fall, in one way or another, and not least because they are too much the products of the old authoritarian organizational world. Mars has to transform its pioneers, or nurture new ones, on the way to another kind of life. A new structure of feeling has to come into existence, not after but before the new world. This is what Alexander Bogdanov thought was the mission of proletkult. Overcoming the logic of sacrifice

is not the least of its agenda.[35]

John Boone, meanwhile, finds many of Arkady's ideas wrong, and even dangerous. John Boone is a charismatic, hard-partying Midwesterner. He is politically cautious, but acknowledges that "everything's changing on a technical level and the social level might as well follow."[36] His mission, at first, is to forget history and build a functioning society. But while dancing with the Sufis, he has his epiphany: "He stood, reeling; all of a sudden he understood that one didn't have to invent it all from scratch, that it was a matter of making something new by synthesis of all that was good in what came before."[37] Bogdanovists are modernists who start over; Booneans are détourners of all of the best in received cultures. Boone practices his own style of détournement, copying and correcting, and tearing off enthusiastic speeches:

> That's our gift and a great gift it is, the reason we have to keep giving all our lives to keep the cycle going, it's like in eco-economics where what you take from the system has to be balanced or exceeded to create the anti-entropic surge which characterizes all creative life ... [38]

The crowd cheers, even if nobody quite understands what Boone is talking about.

Saxifrage Russell is a more phlegmatic kind of scientist, entranced by the this-ness, the "haecceity," of whatever he happens to be working on.[39] For Sax, the whole planet is a lab, and when John Boone asks him, "who is paying for all this?" Sax answers: "The sun." Sax quietly ignores the heavy involvement of metanational companies, for whom the whole Mars mission is a colonization and resource extraction enterprise. When John later uses this same answer to Arkady, the latter won't have it: "Wrong! It's not just the sun and some robots, it's human time, a lot of it. And those humans have to eat ..."[40] Like Arkady, Sax sees science as a component of a larger praxis of world building, but for Arkady there's still more. There's the question of what kind of world and who it is for—the question of the labor component of the cyborg apparatus.

For Sax, science is creation. "We are the consciousness of the universe, and our job is to spread it around, to go look at things, to live wherever we can." Ann the geologist disagrees. "You want to do that because you think you can ... It's bad faith, and it's not science ... I think you value consciousness too high and rock too little ... Being the consciousness of the universe does not mean turning it into a mirror image of us. It means rather fitting into it as it is."[41] But what does it mean, to "fit in," when the fitting changes what it is in? Is it not metaphorically more like a refraction?

Ann's is the most "flat" ontology of the First Hundred.[42] Human subjectivity has no privilege in her world, and neither does life. The real for her is this: "The primal planet, in all its sublime glory, red and rust, still as death; dead; altered through the years only by matter's chemical permutations, the immense slow life of geophysics. It was an old concept—abiologic life—but there it was, if one cared to see it, a kind of living, out there spinning, moving through the stars that burned ..."[43] If the basic metaphor for Hiroko is that life is spirit, and for Sax that life is development, for Ann it is at best selection, the lifeless life of impacts and erosions of the geological eons.

Later, Robinson compares Ann's relation to Mars to that of a caravan of itinerant Arab miners: "They were not so much students of the land as lovers of it; they wanted something from it. Ann, on the other hand, asked for nothing but questions to be asked. There were so many different kinds of desire."[44] For the miners, nature is that which labor engages; for Ann, nature is that which appears to science only, shorn of any wider sense of praxis. Ann's worldview is not so entirely selfless, with its "concentration on the abstract, denial of the body and therefore of all its pain."[45] Nevertheless it does speak to an absolute nonhuman outside to knowledge, an outside that even Sax will eventually have to acknowledge.

While also technically trained, Hiroko is more of a mystic. She believes in what Hildegard of Bingen called *viriditas*, or the greening power. This is the key to her *aerophany*, her landscape religion. Hiroko: "There's a constant pressure, pushing toward pattern. A tendency in matter to evolve into ever more complex forms. It's a kind of pattern gravity, a holy greening power we call viriditas, and it is the driving force of the cosmos ..."[46] Arkady wants a kind of work beyond its alienation in wage labor; Hiroko wants work to be a kind of worship. As with Ann, Hiroko has a kind of ontology, but a vitalist and constructivist one, oriented to a practice that transforms its object.[47] In each case it's a substitution, which starts with a kind of labor and imagines a universe after its basic metaphor.

There's a constant play in the *Mars Trilogy* between what is visible and what it hidden. Hiroko hides Coyote, the stowaway, and herself goes into hiding, with her followers, on Mars. She asks Michel the psychotherapist to go with them when they leave the Underhill base and set up a secret sanctuary:

> We know you, we love you. We know we can use your help. We know you can use our help. We want to build just what you are yearning for, just what you have been missing here. But all in new forms. For we can never go back. We must go forward. We must find our own way. We start tonight. We want you to come with us."

And Michel says, "I'll come."[48]

When Hiroko, the Green Persephone, surfaces again, her actions require some justifying: "We didn't mean to be selfish ... We wanted to try it, to show by experiment how we can live here. Someone has to show what you mean when you talk about a different life ... Someone has to live that life."[49] This is another tension in the *Mars Trilogy*: between political struggle and the enactment of another life directly, in the everyday, as experiments in self-organization that create new structures of feeling.

In the color scheme of the books, Hiroko stands for Green and Ann for Red. To estrange us a little from what we think these colors mean, the Greens are those who favor one or other kind of terraforming, to artificially make a biosphere for life. For the Greens, nature is synonymous with life. For the Reds, nature is prior to life, greater than life. "Ann was in love with death."[50] The Red Mars isn't really a living one, and the Green one is more like a garden or a work of art—culture. Neither are an *ecology*, if by that one means some ideal model of a homeostatic, self-correcting world. For the Greens, nature is that with which one works; for the Reds, it is that which one contemplates.

Part of the problem is working up an organizational language adequate to techno-science, or as Boone says to Nadia Chernishevsky the engineer: "Muscle and brain have extended out through an armature of robotics that is so large and powerful that it's difficult to conceptualize. Maybe impossible." Life is a tektological problem, lived against external constraints, but as Frank despairs, "they lived like monkeys still, while their new God powers lay around them in the weeds."[51]

It is like Platonov's tragedy of nature and technology in a different mode. The *potential* of technical power far outstrips organizational forms or concepts, which remain narrowly acquisitive and instrumental. They are on Mars to prepare the way for corporate resource extraction, after all. This is the driving tension of the *Mars Trilogy*. All of the experiences of Mars, through study, work, or worship, are fragments of a new ingression, but they have to link together, overcome their boundaries, and form a new boundary against the exploitative and militarized forms of life that sent them all there. But crucially in Robinson, not only is a potential politics (Arkady and John) counterposed to an actual one (Frank and Maya), but a potential technics is counterposed to the actual one of the metanationals (with the Sax character moving from the one to the other). The struggle for utopia is both technical and political, and so much else besides.

The first Martian revolution—there will be three—is in a sense against "feudalism," against a residual part of the social formation based on self-reproducing hierarchies. It is a revolution against a world where the ruling class, like the Khans of Kiva, is impoverished by its distance from any real work—in this case an interplanetary distance. It arises out of the conflict that pits the First Hundred, leading the
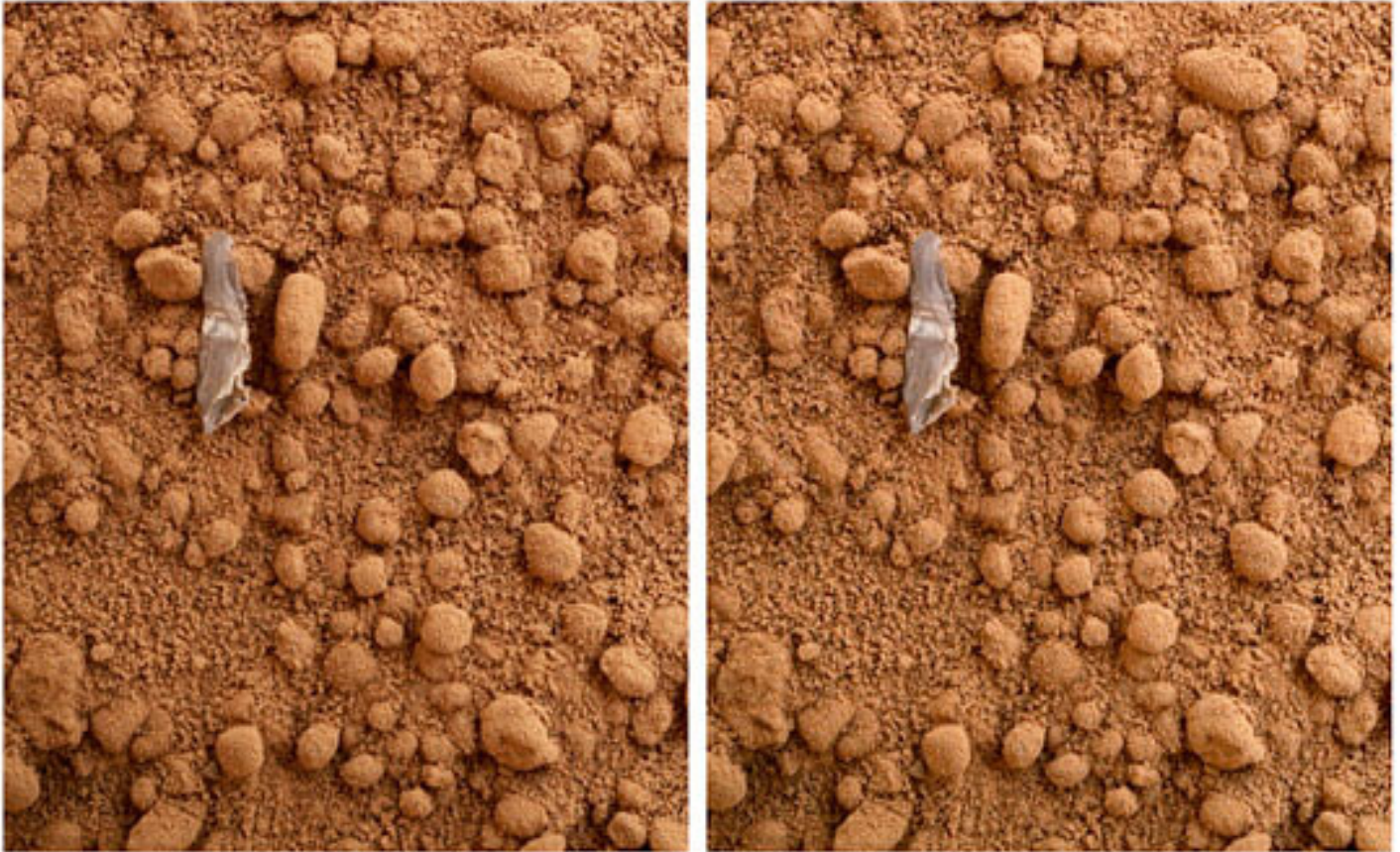
A stereo image shows a patch of pebbles, dust, and a scrap of distressed plastic—trash on Mars of unspecified origin—photographed using Curiosity's Mars Hand Lens Imager (MAHLI). NASA speculates that the plastic was part of the delivery vehicle, presumeably shredded during landing.

Martian working class, against the metanational corporations and their private armies. As Frank Chalmers says: "Colonialism had never died … it just changed names and hired local cops."[52] To the metanats, Mars has no independent existence. To the Martians, it's a place where the apparent naturalness of the old economic order is exposed as artifice, inequality, and fetishism.

The first revolution founders. It's vanguard is poorly coordinated, and relies too much on force, in a situation where the population in revolt is now heavily dependent on vulnerable infrastructure, which turns out to be egressive and fragile. The metanats and their goons need only shut down life support to bring refractory populations to heel. Bogdanov's law of the minimum applies here. The movement is forced underground. But perhaps this same technoscience can also support autonomous spaces outside the metanat order, where new kinds of everyday life and economic relation might arise.

The first revolution is perhaps their 1905 Russian Revolution, although as Frank says, "Historical analogy is the last refuge of people who can't grasp the current situation."[53] The first revolution results in a treaty of sorts, negotiated by Frank, the cynical and pragmatic politician.

For Frank, "the weakness of businessmen was their belief that money was the point of the game."[54] Sax at this point still wants metanat investment, but Frank wants to contain it. As Frank says to Sax: "You're still trying to play at economics, but it isn't like physics, it's like politics."[55] Science and capital, it is clear to Frank but not yet to Sax, are not natural allies.

In defeat, Arkady and the Bogdanovists will hide in plain sight, to continue the revolution of everyday life: "Why then we will make a human life, Frank. We will work to support our needs, and do science, and perhaps terraform a bit more. We will sing and dance, and walk around in the sun, and work like maniacs for food and curiosity." They will create the counter-spectacle of an underground as a "totalizing fantasy," onto which everyone projects their wants.[56] It is a matter of making extravagant proposals for another life with enough serious seduction to draw bored and disaffected labor into believing in it.[57]

Failure to spark a global revolution on Mars prompts a kind of theoretical introspection, not unlike the ones that happened after the failure of world proletarian revolution in early twentieth-century Earth, and which resulted in the theoretical reflections of Western Marxism.[58] It is neatly

captured in a dialogue between Frank Chalmers and his assistant:

> "How can people act against their own obvious material interests?" he demanded of Slusinki over his wristpad. "It's crazy! Marxists were materialists, how did they explain it?"

> "Ideology, sir."

> "But if the material world and our method of manipulating it determine everything else, how can ideology happen? Where did they say it comes from?"

> "Some of them defined ideology as an imaginary relationship to a real situation. They acknowledged that imagination was a powerful force in human life."

> "But then they weren't materialists at all!" He swore with disgust. "No wonder Marxism is dead."

> "Well, sir, actually a lot of people on Mars call themselves Marxists."[59]

Most Western Marxists thought ideology in its negative aspect, its misrecognition; Bogdanov was more interested in its affirmative aspect, in the way an ideology overcomes resistance to a given form of social labor.[60] From that point of view what matters in this exchange is the form of the dialogue between Frank and Slusinki—master and servant—rather than the content—a Marxisant critique of ideology. The Martians do not yet have a form of communication that express the organizational style of their emergent social formation. The problem is not with the language or the theory, its with the forms of organization and communication. The failure of this revolution does not call for the Western Marxist turn to the superstructures, but rather a Bogdanovite turn to evolving new forms of organization, including a new infrastructure.

The Martians are not ready for their revolution. Still, even an unsuccessful struggle can create powerful structures of feeling, which may have future uses. "Arkady answered them all cheerfully. Again he felt that difference in the air, the sense they were all in a new space together, everyone facing the same problems, everyone equal, everyone (seeing a heating coil glowing under a coffee pot) incandescent with the electricity of freedom."[61] As Platonov says, we are comrades when we face the same dangers.

This text is an edited excerpt from McKenzie Wark's book *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*, forthcoming in April 2015 from Verso.

McKenzie Wark (she/her) teaches at The New School and is the author, most recently, of *Love and Money, Sex and Death* (Verso, 2023), *Raving* (Duke, 2023), and *Philosophy for Spiders* (Duke, 2021).

X

1
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "'Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848* (London: Verso, London, 2010), 70. See also Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988). Of course, much of the resonance of this phrase is an artifact of translation: "Alles Ständische und Stehende verdampft": All that stands steams into statements.

2
Elmar Altvater, The Future of the Market, London: Verso, 1993. Altvater is also useful in showing why the Soviet planning system could not compete against the West, without in the process becoming the latter's cheerleader. In both cases, the attempt to make labor more "'efficient" was fossil-fueled.

3
For a quick review, see Kerry Emmanuel, *What We Know About Climate Change* (Cambridge, MA: Boston Review Books, 2007), or the poignantly titled "'Summary for Policymakers" to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3–32. For some context, see *The Global Warming Reader* , ed. Bill McKibben (New York: O/R Books), 2011. Naturally, the Carbon Liberation Front was articulated with other (non)social movements, methane liberation, for example. In the last chapter of *Gamer Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), I use methane as the molecular fulcrum for a critical theory of the totality.

4
On climate deniers, see Naomi Oreskes, *Merchants of Doubt* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011).

5
See Andrew Ross, *Bird On Fire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), for an excellent case study on "green" politics and consumerism which spatially displaces problems onto the less powerful without solving them.

6
See John Bellamy Foster, *The Eco logical Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009); Allan Stoekl's *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), is particularly effective on the carbon footprint measuring obsession.

7
This would map both my agreement and disagreement with the "accelerationists." See *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader* , eds. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014); *e-flux journal* 46 (June 2013), at e-flux.com; and *Dark Trajectories: Politics of the Outside* , ed. Gean Moreno (Miami, FL: [Name] Books, 2013).

8
"There is another world, and it is this one," was a slogan much used in the antiglobalization movement. It probably comes from Paul Eluard, *Donner à voir*, published in 1939, which can be found in his *Oeuvres completes*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 986.

9
See Paul N. Edwards, *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

10
Here I agree with a point Bernard Stiegler has made: Foucault privileges the study of military and religious practices of power/knowledge, but there are others, and indeed labor movement practices of worker education are a signal omission.

11
Alexander Bogdanov, *The Philosophy of Living Experience* , trans. David G. Rowley (forthcoming), ms, 9–10.

12
Ibid., 12.

13
Bogdanov adopted the concept of the basic metaphor from the philologist and Sanskrit scholar Max Müller. See the remarks by Goveli in *Alexander Bogdanov and the Origins of Systems Thinking in Russia* , eds. John Biggart et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 106.

14
Bogdanov, *The Philosophy of Living Experience* , ms, 32.

15
The relation between exchange relations and Greek philosophy was later developed, probably independently, by George Derwent Thomson, Benjamin Farrington, and Alfred Sohn-Rethel.

16
Bogdanov, The Philosophy of Living Experience, ms, 32.

17
See J. D. Bernal, *Science in History* , Vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 575ff.

18
Cited in K. M. Jensen, *Beyond Marx and Mach: Aleksandr Bogdanov's Philosophy of Living Experience* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978), 47.

19
See Alexander Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), which uses the work of François Laruelle for a critique of exchange with the other as a general model of philosophical thought.

20
Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach," in *Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 421. This is the most cited text of Marx or Engels in Bogdanov. See Vadim Sadovsky, "From Empiriomonism to Tektology," in *Alexander Bogdanov and the Origins of Systems Thinking in Russia* , eds. Biggart et al., 44.

21
On the evolution of the concept of substitution in Bogdanov, see Daniela Steila, "From Experience to Organization," in *Aleksandr Bogdanov Revisited* , ed. Vesa Oittinen (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2009), 151ff.

22
Cited in Jensen, *Beyond Marx and Mach* , 119.

23
Cited in ibid., 122.

24
Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 32; on Arkady and Alexander Bogdanov, see Kim Stanley Robinson, *Blue Mars* (New York: Bantam Books, 1996), 667. For a selection of key critical readings of Robinson's work as science fiction, see *Kim Stanley Robinson Maps the Unimaginable* , ed. William Burling (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009).

25
On Defoe, see Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (London: Verso, 2013), 25ff. I am rather bending his excellent formal analysis of *Crusoe* to my own purposes here.

26
On over-identification in theory and practice, see Alexei Monroe, *Interrogation Machine: Laibach and NSK* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

27
A. J. Greimas, *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). See the Foreword by Fredric Jameson. See also Robinson, *Red Mars*, 219; *Green Mars* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 368; *Blue Mars*, 53. See also Kim Stanley Robinson, *The M artians* (New York: Bantam Books, 2000), which contains not only chapters omitted from the *Mars Trilogy* , but intimations of quite different plot lines that could take place through the same literary space of possibility.

28
On Robinson's critical relation to the terraforming literature, see Robert Markley, *Dying Planet: Mars in Science and the Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 355ff.

29
There is a nod to Brecht in *Blue Mars* , 611ff. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on*

30
Robinson, *Green Mars*, 376. On science fiction and ecology, see *Green Planet: Ecology and Science Fiction* ,eds.Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 2014).

31
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 59–61.

32
Kim Stanley Robinson, *Antarctica* (New York: Bantam, 2002). On the study of actually existing utopias, see Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010).

33
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 89.

34
Ibid., 342, emphasis changed. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Cooperative Species:*

Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), assesses the social science that would support this view.

35
On the critique of sacrifice, see Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (London: Rebel Press, 2001). If the Chevengurians all ate the scapegoat to share the guilt, on this Mars, nobody knows who was really responsible for the death of John Boone, and guilt is free floating and diffused. Both Frank and Maya are widely regarded as the guilty ones. In Bogdanov there is much less emphasis on sacrificing the bourgeoisie than on the affirmative task of organizing labor. Given how one sacrifice led to another in Bolshevik thinking, and in *Chevengur*, it's a salient point.

36
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 257. See Carl Abbott, "Homesteading on the Extraterrestrial Frontier," *Science Fiction Studies* vol. 32 (2005): 240–64, which puts Robinson in the context of science fiction and other writing about homesteading the west.

37
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 314.

38
Ibid., 378.

39
Ibid., 293.

40
Ibid., 266, 343.

41
Ibid., 177–9.

42
See Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, Or What It Is To Be a Thing* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

43
Robinson, *Blue Mars*, 97. On metaphysical concepts of life, see Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

44
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 471.

45
Robinson, *Blue Mars*, 55.

46
Robinson, *Green Mars*, 9, see also 358–9 and *Red Mars*, 211, 332, 228–9.

47
Almost a "Deleuzian" one. See *Blue Mars*, 640.

48
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 230.

49
Ibid., 347.

50
Ibid., 221. See *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

51
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 323, 427.

52
Robinson, *Green Mars*, 223. One could read the three volumes, and the three revolutions, as being about David Graeber's three modes of social organization: hierarchy, exchange, communism, which incidentally could also be mapped onto Bogdanov's three basic metaphors. See David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011).

53
Robinson, *Red Mars*, 465.

54
Ibid., 395.

55
Ibid., 403.

56
Ibid., 457–8.

57
As in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets), 2006, 9.

58
One could relate this to Ray Brassier's invocation of Sellars's distinction between folk and scientific images of thought, although the differences will also become apparent. See Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

59
Bogdanov, *The Philosophy of Living Experience*, ms, 6.

60
Ibid., 12.

61
See David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002). Bogdanov derives the term "worldview" from Dilthey, although his understanding of their origins and purpose is quite different. Bogdanov is mentioned in Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1955), 331, as a forerunner to the sociology of knowledge, most likely for his organizational theory of worldviews.

Hito Steyerl
Duty-Free Art

Chapter 1: The National Museum

This is a file published in 2012 by WikiLeaks. It forms part of WikiLeaks's Syria files database.[1] The file is called "316787_Vision Presentation—Oct 30 2010 Eng.pptx," in PowerPoint format, dated October 2010.[2] It details Syrian First Lady Asma al-Assad's plans for the future of Syria's museums. Her foundation aims to establish a network of museums to promote Syria's economic and social development and strengthen national identity and cultural pride.[3] The French Louvre is listed as a partner in developing this plan.[4] Both the Louvre and the Guggenheim Bilbao are named as role models for a redesigned National Museum in Damascus.

A conference is planned to unveil the winner of an international competition for the design of this National Museum in April 2011.

However, three weeks prior to this date, twenty protesters were "reportedly killed as 100,000 people marched in the city of Daraa."[5] By then, invitations for the conference had already been issued to a host of prominent speakers, including the directors of the Louvre and the British Museum. On April 28, 2011, *Art Newspaper* reports that the conference has been cancelled due to street protests.[6] The winner of the architectural competition for the National Museum has never been announced.

A view from the outside of the Sumer Park Kültür Merkezi, Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

Chapter 2: Never Again

To build a nation, Benedict Anderson suggested that there should be print capitalism[7] and a museum to narrate a nation's history and design its identity.[8] Today—instead of print—there is data capitalism and a lot of museums. To build a museum, a nation is not necessary. But if nations are a way to organize time and space, so is the museum. And as times and spaces change, so do museum spaces.

The image above shows the municipal art gallery of Diyarbakir in Turkey. From June to September 2014, it hosts a show on genocide and its consequences, called "Never Again! Apology and Coming to Terms with the Past." Its poster shows former prime minister of West Germany Willy Brandt on his knees in front of the Warsaw ghetto memorial.

In September 2014, this museum became a refugee camp. It did not represent a nation, but instead sheltered people fleeing from national disintegrations.

After the Islamic State (IS) militia crossed and effectively abolished parts of the border between Syria and Iraq in August 2014,[9] between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand Yezidi refugees escaped the region of Shengal in northern Iraq. Most of them had trekked on foot across Mt. Shengal, assisted by Kurdish rebel groups, who had opened a safety corridor. While the majority stayed in refugee camps in Rojava, northern Syria, and several camps in northern Iraq, many refugees crossed into Turkey's Kurdish regions, where they were welcomed with amazing hospitality. The city of Diyarbakir opened its municipal gallery as an emergency shelter.

Once settled on mats within the gallery space, many refugees started asking for SIM cards to try to reach missing family members by cell phone.

This is the desk of the curator, left empty.[10]

Sumer Park Kültür Merkezi, Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

Chapter 3: Conditions of Possibility

According to the Google N-gram viewer,[11] the usage of the word "impossible" has steeply dropped since around the mid-twentieth century. But what does this tell us? Does it mean that fewer and fewer things are impossible? Does this mean that impossibility "as such" is in historical decline? Perhaps it just means that the conditions for possibilities as such are subject to change over time? Are both the possible and the impossible defined by historical

and external conditions?

According to Immanuel Kant, time and space are necessary conditions to perceive or understand anything. Without time and space, knowledge, experience, and vision cannot unfold. Kant calls this perspective "criticism." With this in mind, what kind of time and space is necessary for contemporary art to become manifest? Or rather: What does criticism about contemporary art say about time and space today?
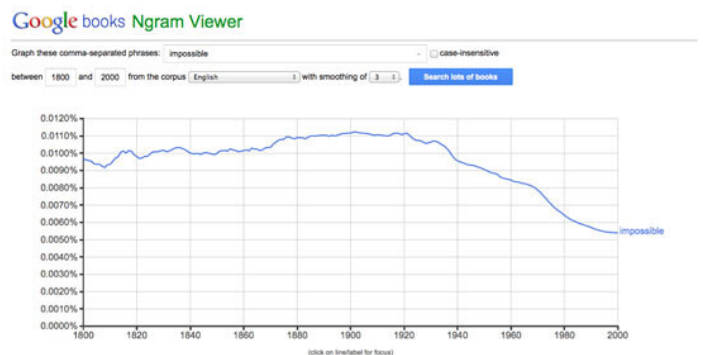
Google books' N-gram viewer tracks the word "impossible" in all the books on its database printed in between the years 1800-2000.

To brutally summarize a lot of scholarly texts: contemporary art is made possible by neoliberal capital plus the internet, biennials, art fairs, parallel pop-up histories, growing income inequality. Let's add asymmetric warfare—as one of the reasons for the vast redistribution of wealth—real estate speculation, tax evasion, money laundering, and deregulated financial markets to this list.

To paraphrase philosopher Peter Osborne's illuminating insights on this topic: contemporary art shows us the lack of a (global) time and space. Moreover, it projects a fictional unity onto a variety of different ideas of time and space, thus providing a common surface where there is none.[12]

Contemporary art thus becomes a proxy for the global commons, for the lack of any common ground, temporality, or space.

It is defined by a proliferation of locations, and a lack of accountability. It works by way of major real estate operations transforming cities worldwide as they reorganize urban space. It is even a space of civil wars that trigger art market booms a decade or so later through the redistribution of wealth by warfare. It takes place on servers and by means of fiber optic infrastructure, and whenever public debt miraculously transforms into private wealth. Contemporary art happens when taxpayers are deluded into believing they are bailing out other sovereign

states when in fact they are subsidizing international banks that thus get compensated for pushing high-risk debt onto vulnerable nations.[13] Or when this or that regime decides it needs the PR equivalent of a nip and tuck procedure.

But contemporary art also creates new physical spaces that bypass national sovereignty.

Geneva Freeport signage alerts visitors to its guard dogs. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

Let me give you a contemporary example: freeport art storage.

This is the mother of all freeport art storage spaces: Geneva freeport, a tax-free zone in Geneva that includes parts of an old freight station and an industrial storage building. The free-trade zone takes up the backyard and the fourth floor of the old storage building, so that different jurisdictions run through one and the same building, as the other floors are set outside the freeport zone. A new art storage space was opened last year. Up until only a few years ago, the freeport wasn't even officially considered part of Switzerland.

This building is rumored to house thousands of Picassos, but no one knows an exact number since documentation is rather opaque. There is little doubt though that its contents could compete with any very large museum.[14]

Let's assume that this is one of the most important art spaces in the world right now. It is not only not public, but it is also sitting inside a very interesting geography.

From a legal standpoint, freeport art storage spaces are somewhat extraterritorial. Some are located in the transit zones of airports or in tax-free zones. Keller Easterling describes the free zone as a "fenced enclave for warehousing."[15] It has now become a primary organ of global urbanism copied and pasted to locations worldwide. It is an example of "extrastatecraft," as

Easterling terms it, within a "mongrel form of exception" beyond the laws of the nation-state. In this deregulatory state of exemption, corporations are privileged at the expense of common citizens, "investors" replace taxpayers, and modules supplant buildings:

> [Freeports'] attractions are similar to those offered by offshore financial centres: security and confidentiality, not much scrutiny … and an array of tax advantages … Goods in freeports are technically in transit, even if in reality the ports are used more and more as permanent homes for accumulated wealth.[16]

The freeport is thus a zone for permanent transit.

Although it is fixed, does the freeport also define perpetual ephemerality? Is it simply an extraterritorial zone, or is it also a rogue sector carefully settled for financial profitability[17]?

The freeport contains multiple contradictions: it is a zone of terminal impermanence; it is also a zone of legalized extralegality maintained by nation-states trying to emulate failed states as closely as possible by selectively losing control. Thomas Elsaesser once used the term "constructive instability" to describe the aerodynamic properties of fighter jets that gain decisive advantages by navigating at the brink of system failure.[18] They would more or less "fall" or "fail" in the desired direction. This constructive instability is implemented within nation-states by incorporating zones where they "fail" on purpose. Switzerland, for example, contains "245 open customs warehouses,"[19] enclosing zones of legal and administrative exception. Are this state and others a container for different types of jurisdictions that get applied, or rather do not get applied, in relation to the wealth of corporations or individuals? Does this kind of state become a package for opportunistic statelessness? As Elsaesser pointed out, his whole idea of "constructive instability" originated with a discussion of Swiss artists Fischli and Weiss's work *Der Lauf der Dinge* (1987). Here all sorts of things are knocked off balance in celebratory collapse. The film's glorious motto is: "Am schönsten ist das Gleichgewicht, kurz bevor's zusammenbricht" (Balance is most beautiful just at the point when it is about to collapse).

Among many other things, freeports also become a zone for duty-free art, a zone where control and failure are calibrated according to "constructive instability" so that things cheerfully hang in a permanently frozen failing balance.

Trezor is a digital wallet for bitcoin transactions. Image: CC by-SA 3.0

Chapter 4: Duty-Free Art

Huge art storage spaces are being created worldwide in what could essentially be called a luxury no man's land, tax havens where artworks are shuffled around from one storage room to another once they get traded. This is also one of the prime spaces for contemporary art: an offshore or extraterritorial museum. In September 2014, Luxembourg opened its own freeport. The country is not alone in trying to replicate the success of the Geneva freeport: "A freeport that opened at Changi Airport in Singapore in 2010 is already close to full. Monaco has one, too. A planned 'freeport of culture' in Beijing would be the world's largest art-storage facility."[20] A major player in setting up many of these facilities is the art handling company Natural Le Coultre, run by Swiss national Yves Bouvier.

Freeport art storage facilities are secret museums.

Their spatial conditions are reflected in their designs.

In contrast to the rather perfunctory Swiss facility, designers stepped up their game at the freeport art storage facility in Singapore:

> Designed by Swiss architects, Swiss engineers and Swiss security experts, the 270,000-square-foot facility

is part bunker, part gallery. Unlike the free-port facilities in Switzerland, which are staid yet secure warehouses, the Singapore FreePort sought to combine security and style. The lobby, showrooms and furniture were designed by contemporary designers Ron Arad and Johanna Grawunder. A gigantic arcing sculpture by Mr. Arad, titled "Cage sans Frontières," (Cage Without Borders) spans the entire lobby. Paintings that line the exposed concrete walls lend the facility the air of a gallery. Private rooms and vaults, barricaded by seven-ton doors, line the corridors. Near the lobby, private galleries give collectors a chance to view or show potential buyers their art under museum-quality spotlights. A planned second phase will double the size of the facility to 538,000 square feet. Collectors are picked up by FreePort staff at their plane and whisked by limousine, any time of day or night, to the facility. If the client is packing valuables, an armed escort will be provided.[21]

The title "Cage Without Borders" has a double meaning. It not only means that the cage has no limits, but also that the prison is now everywhere, in an extrastatecraft art withdrawal facility that seeps through the cracks of national sovereignty and establishes its own logistic network. In this ubiquitous prison, rules still apply, though it might be difficult to specify exactly which ones, to whom

Containers in the yard of Natural Le Coultre, Ports Francs, Geneve. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

or what they apply, and how they are implemented. Whatever they are, their grip seems to considerably loosen in inverse proportion to the value of the assets in question. But this construction is not only a device realized in one particular location in 3-D space. It is also basically a stack of juridical, logistical, economic, and data-based operations, a pile of platforms mediating between clouds and users via state laws, communication protocols, corporate standards, etc., that interconnect not only via fiber-optic connections but aviation routes as well.[22]

Freeport art storage is to this "stack" as the national museum traditionally was to the nation. It sits in between countries in pockets of superimposing sovereignties where national jurisdiction has either voluntarily retreated or been demolished. If biennials, art fairs, 3-D renderings of gentrified real estate, starchitect museums decorating various regimes, etc., are the corporate surfaces of these areas, the secret museums are their dark web, their Silk Road into which things disappear, as into an abyss of withdrawal.[23]

Think of the artworks and their movement. They travel inside a network of tax-free zones and also inside the storage spaces themselves. Perhaps as they do, they do not ever get uncrated. They move from one storage room to the next without being seen. They stay inside boxes and travel outside national territories with a minimum of tracking or registration, like insurgents, drugs, derivative

financial products, and other so-called investment vehicles. For all we know, the crates could even be empty. It is a museum of the internet era, but a museum of the dark net, where movement is obscured and data-space is clouded.

Movements of a very different kind are detailed in WikiLeaks's Syria files.

----- Original Message -----
From: xy@sinan-archiculture.com
To: xy@mopa.gov.sy
Sent: Wednesday, July 07, 2010 4:06 PM
Subject: Fw: Flight itenary OMA staff
AMENDMENT**

Dear Mr. Azzam,
This is to confirm the arrival of Mr. Rem Koolhaas and his personal assistant Mr. Stephan Petermann on this coming Monday July 12th. We need visa for them as we spoke before (both are Dutch). Their passport photos are attached. They are arriving separately and at different times. Mr. Koolhaas coming from China through Dubai on Emirates airlines (arriving in Damascus at 4:25 PM), while Mr. Stephan Petermann is coming from Vienna on Austrian airlines (arriving in Damascus before Mr. Koolhaas at 3:00 PM).

They are staying at the Art House or at the Four Seasons hotel until their departure on Thursday (at 4:00 pm).[24]

Artist Saif al-Islam Gaddafi stands beside his painting War (2001), which depicts NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

WikiLeaks's Syria database comprises around 2.5 million emails from 680 domains, yet the authenticity of these documents was not verified by WikiLeaks. It can be verified, however, that the PR company Brown Lloyd James was involved in trying to enhance the image of the Assad family.[25] In early 2011, shortly before the start of the Syrian civil war, a *Vogue* story, presciently photographed by war photographer James Nachtwey, portrays Asma al-Assad as the "Rose of the Desert," a modernizer and patron of culture.[26]

In February 2012, one year into the war, Anonymous and affiliated organizations hacked into the email server of the Syrian Ministry of Presidential Affairs, in solidarity with Syrian bloggers, protesters, and activists.[27] The inboxes of seventy-eight of Assad's aides and advisers were accessed. Apparently, some used the same password: "12345."[28] The leaked emails included correspondence—mostly through intermediaries—between Mansour Azzam, the Minister of Presidential Affairs, and the studios of Rem Koolhaas (OMA), Richard Rogers, and Herzog and de Meuron regarding various issues.[29] To paraphrase the content of some emails: Rogers and Koolhaas were being invited to speak in Damascus and, with Koolhaas, these visits extended to project discussions including the National Parliament.[30] Herzog de Meuron offered a complimentary concept design proposal for the Al-Assad House for Culture in Aleppo, and expressed interest in the selection process for the parliament project.[31] A lot of this

correspondence is really just gossip about the studios by way of intermediaries. There is also lots of spam. No communication with any of the studios is documented after the end of November 2010. With protests starting in January 2011, a full-blown uprising began in Syria by the end of March of that year. All conversations and negotiations between officials and architects seem to have stopped as scrutiny of the Assad regime increased in the buildup to actual hostilities. The authenticity of none of these documents[32] could be confirmed independently, so for the time being, their status is that of unmoored sets of data, which may or may not have anything to do with their presumed authors and receivers.[33] But they most definitely are sets of data, hosted by WikiLeaks servers that can be described in terms of their circulation regardless of presumed provenance and authorship.[34]

Above is Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's painting, *War* (2001). Saif is the son of the late head of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi and was a political figure in Libya prior to his father's deposition by rebel forces backed by NATO airstrikes in 2011. This painting was exhibited as part of a show called "The Desert is not Silent" in London in 2002.

War depicts NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.
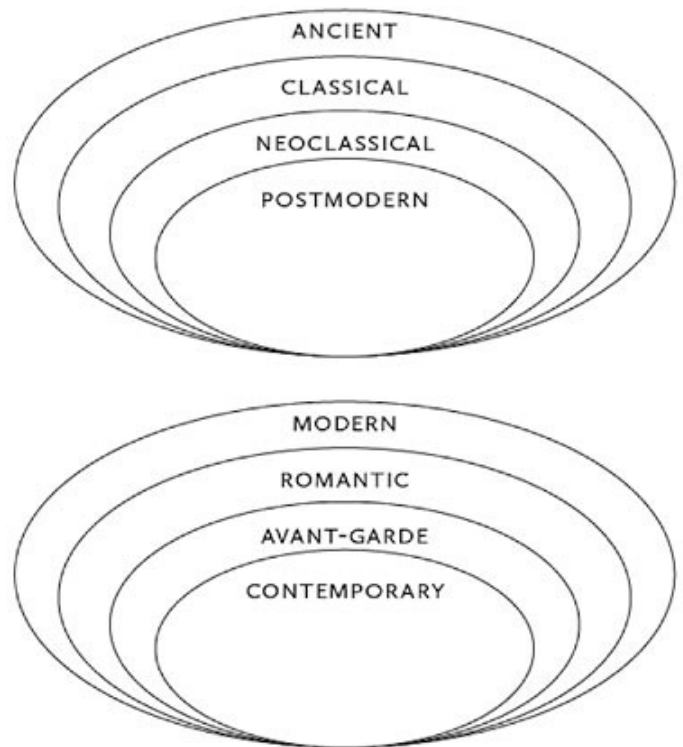
Here, a genealogy of contemporary art is represented diagrammatically by philosopher Peter Osborne.

29

The artist writes: "A civil war broke out in Kosovo, which shattered the picture and its theme. The sea unleashed itself, anger fell from the sky, which came up against a stream of blood."[35]

Saif al-Islam said in a statement at the time: "Not only do we buy weapons and sell gas and oil, but we have culture, art and history."[36]

In September 2010, OMA expresses the desire to work in Syria.[37] A subsequent email from Sinan Ali Hassan—a local architect who acts as an intermediary—to Mansour Azzam flaunts the advantages of such a collaboration: "Rem was the previous supervisor and boss of Zaha Hadid in addition to the fact that he is considered to be more important (if not much more important) than Lord Richard Rogers, in terms of celebrity and professional status."[38]

From the conversation between OMA and Sinan Ali Hassan, it becomes clear that OMA's proposal might be based on a project realized in Libya previously: "This would be a similar scope to the Libyan Sahara vision we showed you, and the one that Rem discussed with the President."[39]

In an interview in June 2010, Koolhaas states that people close to Saif al-Islam Gaddafi approached him.[40]] son there who want to pull the country toward Europe'"   .] At the time, he is widely seen as a reformer. OMA's project in Libya revolves around preservation and is exhibited at the Venice Biennale.[41] The project is later mentioned as a

possible precedent for a project proposal for the desert region around Palmyra, Syria. Since the uprising in early 2011, this area has been deeply affected by the ensuing civil war.

At present, the International Criminal court has requested Saif Gaddafi's extradition from Libya, where he remains imprisoned.[42]

Chapter 5: A Dream

WARNING: THIS IS THE ONLY FICTIONAL CHAPTER IN THIS TALK

To come back to the original question: What happened to time and space? Why are they broken and disjointed? Why is space shattered into container-like franchising modules, dark webs, civil wars, and tax havens replicating all over the world?

With these thoughts in mind, I fell asleep and started dreaming ... and my dream was pretty strange. I dreamt about some diagrams in one of Peter Osborne's recent texts.

They describe a genealogy of contemporary art; I wasn't focusing on their content, but instead on their form. The first thing I noticed was that the succession of concentric circles seemed to indicate a dent, or a dimple, in any case,

OMA

Dr. Bashar al-Assad
President of the Syrian Republic

Rotterdam, 15th November 2010

Dear Mr. President,

Following our meeting in July and the subsequent request that we prepare an outline OMA/AMO approach for the strategic development of Al Badia, I am pleased to present you with the Al Badia Vision proposal for your review.

Our approach to this study begins with the conception of Al Badia as a unified entity within Syria. We envisage the region to act as a powerful resource for the benefit of the entire country while preserving its unique heritage. The Al Badia Vision creates a plan of action and of preservation for a set of subjects that are crucial to the region.

I am looking forward to meeting with you again to discuss the study as outlined in the attached proposal, which we trust demonstrates both our sincere interest in Syria and our capabilities to consider various challenges to the development of the region.
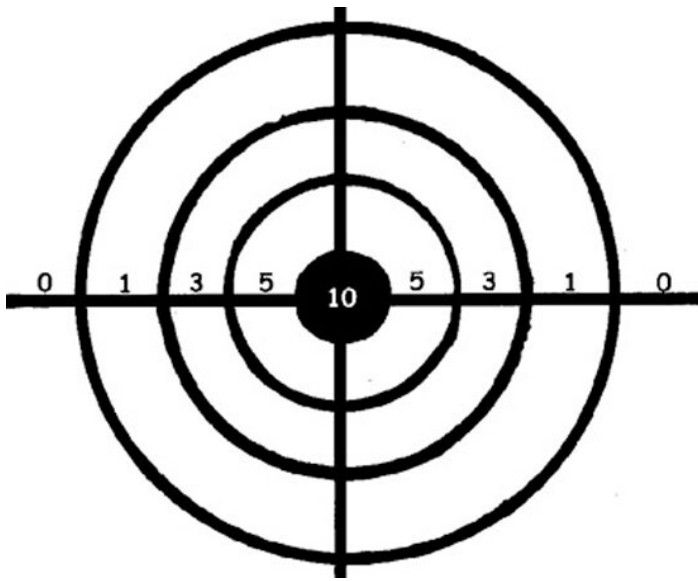
I will be visiting Syria during the fourth week of November for the purpose of giving a Public lecture in Damascus as well as to expand my knowledge and experience of your country. It would be a great pleasure to elaborate further with you on our prospective engagement with Al Badia and other projects such as the National Parliament and other national and cultural projects during my stay.

Yours sincerely,

Rem Koolhaas

cat GIFs, tear gas—all of which are all completely dismantling and rewiring the sensory apparatus and potentially also human faculties of reasoning and understanding by causing a state of shock and confusion, of permanent hyperactive depression.

You don't know what's going on behind the doors of the freeport storage rooms either, do you? Let me tell you what's happening in there: time and space are smashed and rearranged into little pieces like in a freak particle accelerator, and the result is the cage without borders called contemporary art today.

—AND THIS IS WHERE THE FICTIONAL PART ABRUPTLY ENDS—

I woke in shock and found myself reading this .pdf document aloud.

Chapter 6: And Now to Justin Bieber

This is the Twitter feed of E! Online on May 4, 2013, which has someone posing as Bieber triumphantly blurting out: "I'm a gay."

As you can see, the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) has hacked the Twitter account.

Who is the SEA? It is a group of pro-Assad regime hackers. They also hacked *Le Monde* in France a few weeks ago. Previously, the SEA had commandeered: the websites of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the recruitment division of the US Marine Corps. The group also hacked the Twitter feed of the Associated Press and sent out a false report about a bombing at the White House.[43]

The above diagram shows the consequences of this tweet on Wall Street. In three minutes, the "fake tweet erased $136 billion in equity market value."[44]

Anonymous Syria and its multiple allies had hacked the Syrian Electronic Army and dumped coordinates of alleged members onto the dark web.[45]

The data-space of Syria is embattled, hacked, fragmented. Moreover, it extends from the AP to Wall Street to Russian and Australian servers, as well as to the Twitter accounts of a celebrity magazine.

It extends to WikiLeaks's servers, where the Syria files are hosted, and which had to move around quite a lot previously, being ousted from Amazon in 2010.

It was once rumored that WikiLeaks tried to move its servers to an offshore location, an exterritorial former oil platform called Sealand.[46] This would in fact have replicated the freeport scenario from a different angle.

a 3-D cavity. But why would time and space start sagging, so to speak? Could there be an issue with gravity? Maybe a micro–black hole could cause these circles to curve? But then again, it is much more likely that something else caused this dimple.

Suddenly, I found the answer to the question. I started losing gravity and flying up towards space. Peter Osborne was floating around there too, and with an unlikely Texas accent, he pointed down and showed me this sight.

Crosshairs aiming at a target.

Seen from above, Peter's diagram transformed into a sight.

If you look at it from above, the slight cavity vanishes. It becomes a flat screen. From here on, people just ended up seeing the genealogy of contemporary art in Peter's diagrams instead of a depression indicating that the target had been hit already and that a gaping crater had opened at the site of impact.

Seen from above, the genealogy of contemporary art was acting as a proxy or a screen: a sight to cover the site of impact.

Behind his astronaut's visor, Peter croaked:

This is the role of contemporary art. It is a proxy, a stand-in. It is projected onto a site of impact, after time and space have been shattered into a disjunctive unity—and proceed to collapse into rainbow-colored stacks designed by starchitects.

Contemporary art is a kind of layer or proxy which pretends that everything is still ok, while people are reeling from the effects of shock policies, shock and awe campaigns, reality TV, power cuts, any other form of cuts,

An ad promotes Duty Free Shopping in Hong Kong.

The Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey, here represented, is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. Photo: Hito Steyerl

But to ask a more general question: How does the internet, or more precisely networked operations between different databases, affect the physical construction of museums—or the impossibility thereof?

Chapter 7: An Email Sent From Switzerland and its Reply

From: Hito Steyerl **mailto:xy@protonmail.ch**

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 8:05 PM
To: Office Reception
Subject: Request for confirmation of authenticity

Dear Sirs,

I would like to kindly ask you to confirm the authenticity of various email communications between OMA/AMO and Syrian government officials and intermediaries published by Wikileaks as part of their "Syria files" in 2012.

I am a Berlin-based filmmaker and writer working on a lecture about the transformations of national museums under conditions of civil war, both in data- and 3D physical space.

There is no intent to scandalize the communication between OMA and the Syrian Ministry of Presidential Affairs. The intent is to ask how both internet communication and the (near-) collapse of some nations states affect the planning of contemporary museum spaces.
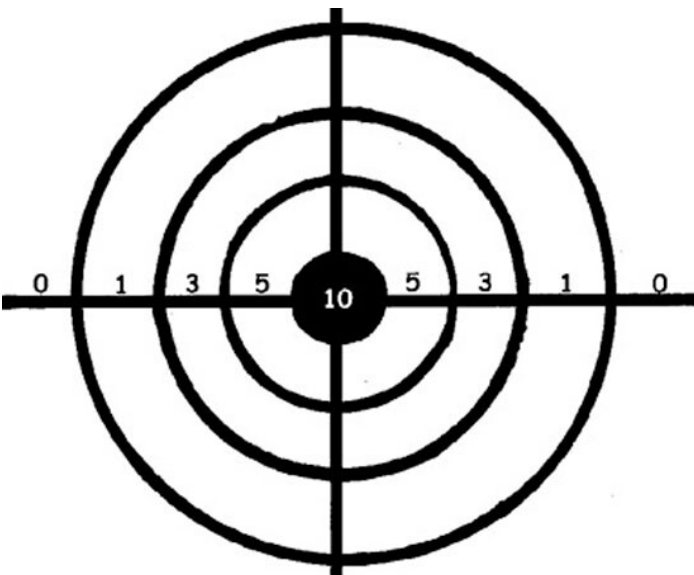
In this context it would be interesting to know more about the circumstances that led to the end of project discussions in Syria. I am sure that your office had its reasons for this and it would be great to be able to include these in the discussion.

Pls find below a list of links I plan on quoting.

Best regards,
Hito Steyerl

https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2089311_urgent.html

https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2092135_very-important.html

https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2091860_fwd-.html

http://bit.ly/18jZeWr

Sent from ProtonMail, encrypted email based in Switzerland.

RE: Request for confirmation of authenticity
From: Jeremy Higginbotham
To: Hito Steyerl xy@protonmail.ch
CC: Legal xy@oma.com, xy xy@oma.com
At 26/02/2015 7:13 am

Dear Hito Steyerl,

Thank you for your email. We are not able to confirm the authenticity of the documents linked below.
However, we wish you good luck with your work.

Best regards,
Jeremy Higginbotham
Head of Public Affairs
OMA

(contact address redacted)

After the Edward Snowden leaks, I started using ProtonMail, an initiative by Cern researchers, who are graciously providing a free encrypted email platform. This is how they decribe their project, using the map of Switzerland:

> All information on the ProtonMail servers is stored under the jurisdiction of the Cantonal Court of Geneva, taking advantage of the privacy laws of Switzerland and the Canton.

But OMA/AMO's friendly response is not stored in a freeport, it is just stored under "regular" Swiss jurisdiction in a former military command center deep inside the Swiss alps.[47] This is the jurisdiction and encryption I use to try to make any potential government interference with some of my data just a tiny bit more cumbersome. I am in fact taking advantage of legal protections that have enabled tax evasion and money laundering through Swiss banks and other facilities on an astounding scale.[48] On the other hand, the mere usage of privacy-related web tools flags users for NSA scrutiny, thus effectively reversing its desired effect.[49] The screen of anonymity turns out to be a paradoxical device.

The ambiguous effect of policies destined to increase anonymity also figures into a different level of freeport activity.

On February 25, 2015, Monaco prosecutors arrested Yves Bouvier—the owner of Natural Le Coultre, the company involved with the Luxemburg, Geneva, and Singapore freeports—for suspected art fraud: "The investigation is believed to centre on inflating prices in very big art transactions in which Bouvier was an intermediary."[50] Bouvier allegedly tookadvantage of the fact that most artworks held in freeports are owned by what are called "sociétés écran" (literally "screen companies"). Since transactions were made through these anonymous proxies, buyer and seller were not able to communicate and control the amount of commission fees charged. The screen that was supposed to provide anonymity for owners may also have worked against them. Invisibility is a screen that sometimes works both ways—through not always. It works in favor of whoever is controlling the screen.

Chapter 8: Shooting at Clocks—The Public Museum

To build a nation, Benedict Anderson suggested there should be print capitalism and a museum. Nowadays, it is not impossible to build a museum without a nation.

We can even look at it more generally and see both nations and museums as just another way to organize time and space, in this case, by smashing them to pieces.

But aren't time and space smashed whenever a new paradigm for a museum is created? This indeed happened in France's July Revolution of 1830, of which Walter Benjamin tells a story.[51] Revolutionaries were shooting at clocks. They had previously also overturned the calendar, renaming months and changing their duration.

And this is the period when the Louvre was stormed yet again—as during every major Paris uprising in the nineteenth century. The prototype for a public museum

This image is intentionally repeated: The Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey, here represented, is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. Photo: Hito Steyerl

was created when time and space were smashed and welded anew. The Louvre was created by being stormed. It was stormed in 1792 during the French Revolution and turned from a feudal collection of spoils—a period version of freeport art storage spaces—into a public art museum, presumably the first in the world, introducing a model of national culture. Afterwards, it turned into the cultural flagship of a colonial empire that tried to authoritatively seed that culture elsewhere, before more recently going into the business of trying to create franchises in feudal states, dictatorships, and combinations thereof.

But the current National Museum of Syria is of a different order. Contrary to plans inspired by the "Bilbao effect," the museum is hosted online, on countless servers in multiple locations.

As Jon Rich and Ali Shamseddine have noted, it is a collection of online videos—of documents and records of innumerable killings, atrocities, and attacks that remain widely unseen.[52] This is the de facto National Museum of Syria, not a Louvre franchise acquired by an Assad foundation. This accidental archive of videos and other documents is made in different genres and styles, showing people digging through rubble, or Twitter-accelerated decapitations in HD. It shows aerial attacks from below, not above. The documents and records produced on the ground end up on a variety of servers worldwide. They are available—in theory—on any screen, except in the locations where they were made, where the act of uploading something to YouTube can get people killed. This spatiotemporal inversion is almost like a reversal of the freeport aggregate art collections.

But the entirety of this archive is not adapted to human perception, or at least not to individual perception. Like all large-scale databases—including WikiLeaks' Syria files—it takes the form of a trove of information without (or with very little) narrative, substantiation, or interpretation. It may be partly visible to the public, but not necessarily entirely intelligible. It remains partly inaccessible, not by means of exclusion, but because it overwhelms the perceptual capacity and attention span of any single individual.[53]

Chapter 9: Autonomy

Let's go back to the examples at the beginning: the freeport art storage spaces, and the municipal gallery of Diyarbakır, which had become a refugee camp. One space withdraws artworks from the world by hoarding them, while the other basically sheltered the escapees of collapsing states. How and where can art be shown publicly, in physical 3-D space, without endangering its

This image is intentionally repeated: The Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey, here represented, is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. Photo: Hito Steyerl

authors, while taking into account the breathtaking spatial and temporal changes expressed by these two examples? What form could a new model of the public museum take, and how would the notion of the "public" itself change radically in the process of thinking though this?

Let's think back to the freeport art storage spaces and their stock of duty-free art. My suggestion is not to shun or belittle this proposition, but to push it even further.

The idea of duty-free art has one major advantage over the nation-state cultural model: duty-free art ought to *have no duty*—no duty to perform, to represent, to teach, to embody value. It should not be indebted to anyone, nor serve a cause or a master, nor be a means to anything. Duty-free art should not be a means to represent a culture, a nation, money, or anything else. Even the duty-free art in the freeport storage spaces is not duty free. It is only tax-free. It has the duty of being an asset.

Seen like this, duty-free art is essentially what traditional autonomous art might have been, had it not been elitist and oblivious to its own conditions of production.[54]

But duty-free art is more than a reissue of the old idea of autonomous art. It also transforms the meaning of the battered term "artistic autonomy." Autonomous art under current temporal and spatial circumstances needs to take

these very spatial and temporal conditions into consideration. Art's conditions of possibility are no longer just the elitist "ivory tower," but also the dictator's contemporary art foundation, the oligarch's or weapons manufacturer's tax-evasion scheme, the hedge fund's trophy,[55] the art student's debt bondage, leaked troves of data, aggregate spam, and the product of huge amounts of unpaid "voluntary" labor—all of which results in art's accumulation in freeport storage spaces and its physical destruction in zones of war or accelerated privatization. Autonomous art within this context could try to understand political autonomy as an experiment in building alternatives to a nation-state model that continues to proclaim national culture while simultaneously practicing "constructive instability" by including gated communities for high-net-worth individuals, much like microversions of failed states. To come back to the example of Switzerland: this country is so pervaded by extraterritorial enclaves with downsized regulations that it could be more precisely defined as a *x*-percent rogue entity within a solid watch industry. But extrastatecraft can also be defined as political autonomy under completely different circumstances and with very different results, as recent experiments in autonomy from Hong Kong to Rojava have demonstrated.

But autonomous art could even be art set free both from its authors and owners. Remember the disclaimer by

OMA? Now imagine every art work in freeports to be certified by this text: "I am not able to confirm the authenticity of this artwork."

This is the Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey. It is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. It is not a coincidence that the autonomous entities in Rojava are called cantons: they have been modeled after Swiss cantons, to emphasize the role that basic democracy played in initially establishing them.[56]

After the attack on the Kobanê canton by fighters from the so-called IS in September 2014, the Cultural Center was temporarily turned into another refugee camp, hosting several hundred people who fled from the besieged region around Kobanê. One of the refugees watched circling bombers through binoculars as the cultural workers and I discussed the role of culture and art.

But why am I showing you this?

Remember the top-down view of contemporary art?

In my dream—and perhaps also in reality—contemporary art was a layer that served to screen out the smashing of time and space on the ground. It served to project a disjunctive unity onto a geography marked by systems constructively "failing" to increase profitability, nation-states engulfed in civil war, fragmented time, and vast and major inequality. But a screen has two sides and potentially very different functions. It can decrease but also enhance visibility, protect and reveal, project and record, expose and conceal.

And now please edit this image: it shows the same situation from below, from under the screen.

It points very literally at a bottom-up model from a ground zero where time and space, and in some cases borders and nation-states, are smashed, as during the time when the first public museum was founded, creating not only junk space—a term coined by Rem Koolhaas that deeply influenced my work—but also junk time.[57]

When we look at this screen from above, we see a model of contemporary art, which has created the secret museum as one of its most important spaces, a model of terminal impermanence, of privacy and concealment, of constructive instability.

If we only knew what the guy with the binoculars sees from below, we might see its future public counterpart.

Hito Steyerl is a filmmaker, moving-image artist, writer, and innovator of the essay documentary. Her principal topics of interest are media, technology, and the global circulation of images. Through her writing practice, films, and performative lectures, Steyerl considers the status of the image in an increasingly global and technological world.

X

1
See https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/ .

2
The PowerPoint file is attached to an email sent to the Ministry of Presidential Affairs with the subject line "Presentation on the New Vision for the Syrian Museums and Heritage Sites," Oct. 30, 2010, Email-ID 2089122 https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2089122_presentation-on-the-new-vision-for-the-syrian-museums-and.html .

3
In the foundation's own words: "Under the patronage of The First Lady, Asma Al-Assad, the Syrian Government is launching a cultural initiative of exceptional ambition—the transformation of its museums and the conservation of its heritage sites. To celebrate and inform this initiative, Cultural Landscapes 2011, a new annual forum, will bring together an international assembly of thought leaders and experts from the worlds of heritage, contemporary culture, academia and business. This inaugural edition will take the Syrian experience as a starting point for a discussion global in reach and conclusion," Feb. 7, 2011, Email-ID 765252 (see attachment entitled "About Cultural Landscapes") https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/765252_cultural-landscapes-forum-10-12april-2011-.html .

4
However, on June 26, 2011, partner museums call for a dismantling of the initiative's institutional framework, the Syria Heritage Foundation. Earlier that month, the *Financial Times* reported that the organization had suspended operations. See Lina Saigol, "First lady struggles to live up to promises," *Financial Times* , June 9, 2011 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/71e5db5c-92c9-11e0-bd88-00144feab49a.html#axzz3QIKKB6wM .

5
Peter Aspden, "The walls of ignorance," *Financial Times*, June 9, 2012 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/b5042170-afea-11e1-ad0b-00144feabdc0.html .

6
Anna Somers Cocks, "Syria turmoil kills Mrs Al-Assad's forum," *The Art Newspaper*, Apr. 28, 2011 https://web.archive.org/web/20120722021121/https://www.theartnewspaper.com/article

s/Syria-turmoil-kills-Mrs-AlAssads-forum/23669 .

7
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* , revised and extended ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 224.

8
Anderson, "Census, Map, Museum," excerpt from *Imagined Communities* , available at http://www.haussite.net/haus.0/SCRIPT/txt2001/01/a_censu.HTML .

9
The exodus of Yazidis from Shengal is described in Liz Sly, "Exodus from the mountain: Yazidis flood into Iraq following U.S. airstrikes," *Washington Post*, Aug. 10, 2014 http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/exodus-from-the-mountain-yazidis-flood-into-iraq-following-us-airstrikes/2014/08/10/f8349f2a-04da-4d60-98ef-85fe66c82002_story.html .

10
His name is Baris Seyitvan.

11
Wikipedia: "The Google 'Ngram' Viewer is an online viewer, initially based on Google Books, that charts frequencies of any word or short sentence using yearly count of n-grams found in the sources printed since 1800 up to 2012 in any of the following eight languages: American English, British English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, and Chinese" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Ngram_Viewer .

12
Osborne argues that contemporary art expresses the "disjunctive unity of present times ... As a historical concept, the contemporary thus involves a projection of unity onto the differential totality of the times of human lives ..." Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), 22.

13
As in the case of the relation between Germany (or EU-taxpayers) and Greece. Eighty-nine percent of the so-called bailout funds have gone to international banks. Only the remaining 11 percent has reached the Greek national budget. Even if only a fraction of this money ends up at auction, how would auctions nowadays fare without the constant subsidies from public funds that

mysteriously end up as private assets?

14
"Suffice it to say, there is wide belief among art dealers, advisers and insurers that there is enough art tucked away here to create one of the world's great museums." David Segal, "Swiss Freeports Are Home for a Growing Treasury of Art," New York Times, July 21, 2012 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/business/swiss-freeports-are-home-for-a-growing-treasury-of-art.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 .

15
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Benjamin Bratton, "On the Nomos of the Cloud: The Stack, Deep Address, Integral Geography," Nov. 2011: "The Stack, the megastructure, can be understood as a confluence of interoperable standards-based complex material-information system of systems, organized according to a vertical section, topographic model of layers and protocols. The Stack is a standardized universal section. The Stack, as we encounter it and as I prototype it, is composed equally of social, human and 'analog' layers (chthonic energy sources, gestures, affects, user-actants, interfaces, cities and streets, rooms and buildings, organic and inorganic envelopes) and informational, non-human computational and 'digital' layers (multiplexed fiber optic cables, datacenters, databases, data standards and protocols, urban-scale networks, embedded systems, universal addressing tables). Its hard and soft systems intermingle and swap phase states, some becoming 'harder' or 'softer' according to occult conditions. (Serres, hard soft). As a social cybernetics, The Stack that we know and design composes both equilibrium and emergence, one oscillating into the other in indecipherable and unaccountable rhythm, territorializing and de-territorializing the same component for diagonal purposes" http://web.archive.org/web/20150611224927/http://bratton.info/projects/talks/on-the-nomos-of-the-cloud-the-stack-deep-address-integral-geography/ .

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An extremely intelligent remark from an audience member in

Moscow added that this was to be seen as a huge benefit, as a lot of shoddy "market art" would get safely quarantined without anyone having to see it. I sympathize very much with her point of view.

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See https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2089311_urgent.html .

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The emails can be accessed here https://www.wikileaks.org/syria-files/ .

30
See the email here https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs//2104601_important-follow-up.html .

31
See the email here https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2094815_fwd-al-asad-house-for-culture-in-aleppo.html .

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See https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/ .

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Studio Herzog de Meuron has been contacted for comment but has not replied as of the time of publication. For the answer from Rem Koolhaas's studio, OMA, see below.

34
See https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2104601_important-follow-up.html .

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Martin Bailey,"Gaddafi's son reveals true colours," *The Art Newspaper* , March 2, 2011 https://web.archive.org/web/20141127134944/https://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Gaddafis-son-reveals-true-colours/23343 .

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"Rem Koolhaas is very keen to visit Damascus with strong interest to participate in public sector and urban gentrification and regeneration of the city, and trying to keep away from commercial developments and suburban master plans, yet we wanted to sense and feel the current conditions of architectural and urbanization in the city before establishing any commitment . I also wanted to engage Rem in Damascus architectural school and establish internship program with OMA and the university." See the full email here https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2092135_very-important.html .

37
"Rem Koolhaas is very keen to visit Damascus with strong interest to participate in public sector and urban gentrification and regeneration of the city, and trying to keep away from commercial developments and suburban master plans, yet we wanted to sense and feel the current conditions of architectural and urbanization in the city before establishing any commitment. I also wanted to engage Rem in Damascus architectural school and establish

internship program with OMA and the university." See the full email here https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2092135_very-important.html .

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Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. See the full email here https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2091860_fwd-.html .

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Suzie Rushton, "The shape of things to come: Rem Koolhaas's striking designs," *The Independent* , June 21, 2010. "An unlikely new client is Libya, specifically 'a subtle group of people around the [Gaddafi

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OMA's exhibition at the 2010 Venice Biennale, entitled CRONOCAOS, included a section on the Libyan desert. The exhibition was based around "critical preservation stories" http://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_ed_columns_e/eNKuyiF4XhoACUBZjrb9/ .

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A warrant for Saif Gaddafi's arrest was issued by the ICC on June 27, 2011 https://www.icc-cpi.int/court-record/icc-01/11-14 .

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Max Fisher, "Syrian hackers claim AP hack that tipped stock market by $136 billion. Is it terrorism?," *Washington Post* , April 23, 2013 http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/04/23/syrian-hackers-claim-ap-hack-that-tipped-stock-market-by-136-billion-is-it-terrorism/ .

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Hunter Stuart, "Syrian Electronic Army Denies Being Attacked By Anonymous," Huffington Post Sept. 4, 2013 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/04/anonymous-syrian-electronic-army_n_3

867802.html .

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http://foreignpolicy.com/author/joshua-keating , "WikiLeaks to move to Sealand?," *Foreign Policy*, Feb. 1, 2012 http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/01/wikileaks-to-move-to-sealand/

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Information under the heading "Swiss Security" on the the ProtonMail website https://proton.me/mail .

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One recent example http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/feb/18/hsbc-swiss-bank-searched-as-officials-launch-money-laundering-inquiry .

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This ambiguity characterizes popular web tools that are supposed to safeguard anonymity, such as Tor. The Edward Snowden leaks revealed that the mere usage of Tor, or even searching the web for privacy-enhancing tools, actually flags people for NSA scrutiny (see http://daserste.ndr.de/panorama/aktuell/nsa230_page-2.html). A software designed to screen out surveillance actually ends up attracting it.

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Angelique Chrisafis, "Leading Swiss art broker arrested over alleged price-fixing scam," *Guardian* , Feb. 26, 2015 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/26/leading-swiss-art-broker-arrested-over-alleged-price-fixing-scam . Bouvier has rejected these allegations, putting the blame on the allegedly defrauded Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev.

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Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," thesis XV, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 261–62.

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Ali Shamseddine and John Rich, "An Introduction to the New Syrian National Archive," *e-flux journal* 60 (Dec. 2014) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/60/61055/an-introduction-to-the-new-syrian-national-archive/ .

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Note the different strategies for publicizing massive leaks employed by, on the one hand, WikiLeaks, and on the other, Edward Snowden, Laura Poitras, Glenn Greenwald, and their

numerous collaborators.

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Most pronouncedly expressed by
Peter Bürger, *Theorie der
Avantgarde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp
Verlag, 1974). English translation:
Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans.
Michael Shaw (Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press,
1984): 90.

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Which might fulfill the traditional
role of a "financial tombstone"—a
gadget that commemorates
concluded transactions http://en.
wikipedia.org/wiki/Deal_toy .

56
However limited basic democracy
may have been in Switzerland,
given that general female
suffrage was not established until
1971, and in Appenzell
Innerrhoden not until 1990.

57
A term invented by Sven
Lütticken.

Bepey tazetirîn polîn, Kurdekan

According to recent classification
Kurds belong to the species of birds
Look at them. Here they are! On the slowly
disappearing and torn pages of history
They are the migrants that are only recognized over
the long distances their caravans travel.
—Keyal Ahmed[1]

Jonas Staal

To Make a World, Part III: Stateless Democracy

In one of the many streets of Qamishli, full of seemingly unfinished, concrete, and tarnished buildings, I'm guided down a small flight of stairs into a basement. Printing house Algad is stacked with machinery, some of which is reminiscent of a time when they were used for political posters stenciled by hand. In the neon-lit space I meet Yahiyu Abdullah, who is busy feeding data into a five-meter-wide plotter through a small built-in computer. A young boy is sitting in front of it, trying to keep up with the feed of images emerging from the printer, cutting out the pictures from the large, plasticized printed surface.

I recognize some of the imagery from the posters and banners on the streets: young men and women, surrounded by logos of their militia, each of them portrayed before they joined their comrades on one of the many battlefields of the region. They look straight into the lens, occasionally smiling or with a raised fist, but more often with a defiant look, calm, determined in their controlled anger. I observe the feed of silent gazes merging into each other.

Celebrated as heroes, the looks of these martyrs defy glorification. They belong to a collective body of resistance: the Rojava Revolution. And against the losses of this revolution, the printer runs: it is a feed of history being made at the very moment. The front line is only a few kilometers away, and here, in the basement, the printer runs against time; against forgetfulness.

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution—Rojava, 2014. Printing house Algad in Qamishli produces the martyr images for the autonomous regions of Rojava.

1. The Rojava Revolution

We are in the independent canton Cizîre in Rojava, which means "west" and refers to the western part of Kurdistan. It's one out of three territories in the northern part of Syria which are currently under the control of a transitional, autonomous government consisting of all ethnic components in the region. The social movement of Rojava in the form of self-organized academies, cooperatives and peoples councils, is allied in the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) with the the prominent Democratic Unity Party (PYD) as its driving force. In order to secure a balanced political representation of the region, Kurds, Arabs and Assyrians, which form the largest communities in the region, are limited to a quota of 30 percent political representatives. Smaller communities are tied to a quota of 10 percent political representatives. Political representation thus attempts to reflect directly the diverse social texture of the region. The other two cantons are Afrin and Kobanê; the latter acquired fame as the most important front in the Kurdish resistance against the Islamic State. Whereas Cizîre borders on the east with Turkey and Iraq, Afrin and Kobanê border only with Turkey: from the Syrian side they are surrounded by forces of the Islamic State and the Assad regime.[2] They are thus territorially isolated. The total Kurdish territory is about two-thirds the size of Belgium, and according to recent estimates, the population has grown to a 4.6 million due to the many refugees from the Syrian civil war[3]; there are large-scale refugee camps such as Kampa Newroz that host, among others, Yazidi communities that the YPG and YPJ saved from massacre by the Islamic State.[4]

The Rojava Revolution runs parallel to what became known as the Arab Spring of 2012, although its roots in recent Syrian history go back to the 1960s, when Syrian Kurds were massively stripped of their citizenship.[5] An even more recent precedent for the Rojava Revolution

was the Qamishli uprising in 2004, during which the ruling regime of Bashar al-Assad killed dozens of Kurds who displayed their flags and other signs of national and cultural identity. So when the Arab Spring hit Syria in 2012, they were ready. Dilar Dirik, academic and activist of the Kurdish Women Movement, describes the foundation of the Rojava Revolution as follows:

> The Assad regime engaged in heavy clashes with the Free Syrian Army, the main opposition group, in areas like Damascus and Aleppo. As a result, the regime withdrew from the Kurdish areas in the northern part of the country, and the Kurds took their chance to take over: they at once seized control of the cities; they got rid of the institutions of the regime and established their own system. On July 19, 2012 this was declared as the Rojava Revolution.[6]

In early 2014, the Geneva II Conference on Syria was announced in an attempt to stabilize the Syrian war. Dirik recalls:

> The situation grew increasingly difficult, as the whole world was being dragged into the war: the US, Europe, Russia, the Gulf Countries, Turkey, Iran ... It became something of a second Cold War. Assad fighting the rebels was just a microcosm of all the international interests that were invested in the region.[7]

In the context of this "second Cold War," representatives of the Rojava Revolution were not invited to join the convention, as the Turkish government was afraid of the effect Kurdish autonomy in Syria would have on the large—and historically severely repressed—Kurdish community and their revolutionary forces in Turkey, which are directly linked to those in Rojava. The Syrian Opposition Coalition was invited, but the Rojava Revolution refused to partake in this alliance, as they feel that Kurdish rights are not clearly acknowledged in coalition's political aims, and fear that the coalition is vulnerable to being used as a Western proxy. Instead, the three interlinked but independent cantons declared themselves fully autonomous. As Dirik points out, in the face of the states gathering in Geneva, the Rojava Revolution displayed an act of autonomy that took the form of "living without approval."[8]

Despite the fact that the Rojava Revolution is led by Kurds, the political institutions that they have developed resist an ethnic monopoly over the region. The three autonomous cantons of Rojava are founded on what on January 29, 2014 was officially announced as "The Social Contract"—in reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

famous text from 1762—cowritten by all peoples living in the region: Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arameans, Turkmen, Armenians, and Chechens. Its opening lines state:

> In pursuit of freedom, justice, dignity and democracy and led by principles of equality and environmental sustainability, the Charter proclaims a new social contract, based upon mutual and peaceful coexistence and understanding between all strands of society. It protects fundamental human rights and liberties and reaffirms the peoples' right to self-determination. Under the Charter, we, the people of the Autonomous Regions, unite in the spirit of reconciliation, pluralism and democratic participation so that all may express themselves freely in public life[9]

"The Social Contract" features a series of ideological principles that are fundamental to understanding the politics of the three autonomous cantons of Rojava. From the contract and related texts that I will discuss later in this essay, I have distilled the following six defining points:

The first is that of a radical secular politics, meaning that religious interests are separated fully from governance affairs.

The second is the requirement that presidencies over public institutions are always occupied by representatives of different ethnicities in order to avoid cultural hegemony.

The third is the principle of gender equality, enforcing a minimum of 40 percent participation of both women and men in political life, and the demand for co-presidencies of one woman and one man in all public institutions.

The fourth is that of communalist self-government, meaning that centralized structures of administration are reduced to the absolute minimum, whereas local councils and cooperatives that are self-governed are given maximum political agency.

The fifth is the principle of confederalism: the cantons are defined as "autonomous" because they are self-governed by their radically diverse communities. Most stunning is that rather than forming a "reformist" attitude towards the nation-state and its politics of cultural unification and centralist administration, the Rojava Revolution rejects the model of the nation-state all together. The model of "democratic confederalism" and its aim of establishing "democratic autonomy"—two concepts central to the Rojava Revolution—strive to *practice democracy without the construct of the nation-state*.

The sixth is the principle of social ecology: the idea that the organization of power based on secularism, gender

equality, communalist self-government, and confederalism represents an egalitarian model capable of self-rule without a dictatorship of minorities over majorities or the other way around. This last notion of social ecology attempts to define an understanding of power based on principles of coexistence and radical diversity, instead of unification and assimilation—it forms the fundament of the politics of the Rojava Revolution.

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution—Rojava, 2014. Entry of a training camp of the People's Defense Forces (YPG) and Women's Defense Forces (YPJ) after crossing the border from Iraqi-Kurdistan to Syrian-Kurdistan into the autonomous canton of Cizîre.

Whereas the world in 2012 was mainly concerned with toppling Assad, today its eyes have focused on the rise of the so-called Islamic State, which holds large pieces of territory under its control in both Syria and Iraq.[10] The rise of the Islamic State has allowed Assad to rebrand himself as a supposed "lesser evil" in a region over which the international community is clueless about how to maintain control. This situation, of course, is deeply tied to the history of colonialism and military intervention by that very same community: the history of the British mandate in Iraq, its instrumentalization in the Iran-Iraq War, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the dismantling of Hussein's Sunni-led government in favor of the Shia majority, the CIA blacksites where Iraqi citizens were tortured and Islamic State militants recruited, and so on.[11]

The Islamic State stands in stark opposition to the only three-year-old Rojava Revolution and its stateless democracy. The Islamic State's ambition for an endlessly expanding caliphate—its *total state*—in its terrifying conquest and brutal patriarchal policies of cultural assimilation, subjection, and enslavement of women seems to form the bizarre mirror image of the total state of the security apparatus of the Coalition of the Willing's never-ending War on Terror and its radical and violent disregard for other states' and peoples sovereignty.

Against the state terror of both Islamic State and the Coalition of the Willing, the Rojava Revolution forms an alternative that it has termed its "third way," in an echo of the project of Third Worldism, not as a source of tragedy to be scavenged by governments' oil, mineral, and state-building projects masked as "development," but as an actual, radically new political and internationalist—transnationalist—paradigm.[12]

Anthropologist and political activist David Graeber compares this ideological clash to the 1936 Spanish revolution in Catalonia: "If there is a parallel today to Franco's superficially devout, murderous Falangists, who would it be but Isis? If there is a parallel to the Mujeres Libres of Spain [the anarcho-feminist movement], who could it be but the courageous women defending the barricades in Kobane?"[13] Graeber rightfully points to a parallel with the anarchist, "libertarian-socialists" of Catalonia, who for two years were able to maintain a communalist autonomous region while squashed between the armies of Franco and the Soviets, which they both opposed while being severely critical of the Republican government.[14] In a similar manner, the Rojava Revolution and its coalition of multiethnic, multireligious peoples criticize the Western coalition as much as they resist Assad and the militants of the Islamic State. And in both revolutions—that of 1936 and that of 2012—women militants, ideologues, and politicians formed a key role in redefining the revolutionary project. Rojava is the battlefield for the question of whether the very concept of democracy can be recuperated as a radical, emancipatory political and cultural practice. In order to understand why and how, we need to understand the specific anatomy of the revolution as it is found in the decades-long—if not centuries-long—struggle of the Kurds for their right to self-determination.

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution—Rojava, 2014. Classroom for ideological education of the People's Defense Units (YPG).

2. Anatomy of a Revolution

Kurdistan, which covers part of the Mesopotamian region, was divided in the seventeenth-century by the Ottoman and Persian Empire. In the early twentieth century the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and European governments and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's army fought over the remainders. The subsequent Sykes-Picot Agreement drew harsh borders across the region, creating different spheres of influences controlled by the British and French colonial powers. This partition of the region after the First World War led to the fragmentation of the Kurds across four different states: Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The Kurds had hoped to gain cultural and political rights in the newly founded Republic of Turkey, but these were never granted. This denial was later repeated when the Kurds of Iran joined the 1979 revolution but were afterward confronted with a fatwa against them. In each of these states, under different conditions, the Kurds faced severe repression. While culturally acknowledged in Iran, political organization has continuously been punished by imprisonment and torture, if not outright murder; in Syria and Iraq, the Kurds were faced with the policies of forced Arabization of the Ba'athist regimes of Assad and Hussein. After the Ottoman Empire crumbled, the Turkish Republic took on the task of constructing its national identity, and thus erroneously designated the Kurds as "mountain Turks," repressing their language, culture, and all forms of political organization. From the very first Kurdish uprisings during the years 1925–38 in the southeastern part of the country, the Turkish Republic engaged in violent crackdowns buttressed by special terror laws that allowed all references to Kurdish language, culture, or history to be prosecuted as "separatism" and "terrorism." Kurdish uprisings were explained by the Turkish government in terms of economic deprivation and educational backwardness, never as a cultural and political resistance.

In the 1970s, the international rise of anticolonial resistance and socialist movements resonated with the Kurdish community. The fact that the Turkish left was unwilling to make Kurdish cultural and political rights a priority provided the foundation for the "largest people without a state" to imagine the establishment of an independent progressive nationalist state of their own. In the course of the '70s, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries group emerged from a fragmented left consisting of Kurdish Socialist, Maoist, and Leninist parties, and in 1978 it was officially declared the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The first six key points of its founding manifesto were as follows:

a. Our era is the era of transition from capitalism to socialism and proletarian revolutions.

b. Kurdistan is an inter-state colony.

c. A national liberation struggle is an unavoidable duty in order to gain the freedom and independence of the Kurdish people.

d. The Kurdistan revolution shall be a *national and democratic* one, and the ultimate end would, in long term, be the *socialist revolution* with an uninterrupted transition to a "classless and non-exploitative" society.

e. The revolution's political objective is to establish an *independent, united and democratic Kurdistan*.

f. The revolution must be led by a revolutionary party of the proletariat which needs to be initiated by a "minority" composed of patriotic youth and intellectuals (enlightened) who are disassociated from material production.[15]

The founders and driving organizers of the PKK hailed from university circles, through which they had direct access to revolutionary liberationist theory. As Sakine Cansiz—one of the early PKK founders, who was shot dead in Paris on January 9, 2013 along with two other female Kurdish activists, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez—recalled the years preceding the PKK:

> In a short time, our movement became a political power, it went beyond a youth movement in '75, '76 and '77. At first, our movement had mainly an influence on the student youth movement, then the qualified and militant youth at schools and in all areas we were active in. It changed the environment at schools … We grounded our movement on ideological and political struggle and revolutionary violence. Necessary defense was actually a way of struggle that our movement [was] based on since the very beginning.[16]

The guiding force and most prominent representative of the PKK was Abdullah Ocalan, who had arrived in Ankara from a humble background at the edge of the Kurdish region in southeast Turkey. During his studies he became involved in Turkish and Kurdish leftist groups. In 1972, he was arrested for participating in a protest and imprisoned for several months. In prison, he was exposed to discussions with several key organizers of the revolutionary left, and once out, he worked toward the establishment of the PKK, which after its founding in 1978 soon became the leading revolutionary Kurdish party.

Only one year after founding the PKK, Ocalan moved to Syria, aware of a pending new military coup that would take place in 1980 as a response to the threat posed by the Kurdish leftist militants to the monocultural Turkish project, as well as in reaction to a devastating economic recession. While the military government engaged in a

violent crackdown—arresting, torturing, and killing many of the members of Kurdish leftist factions—Ocalan established a safe haven for the PKK in Syria, building an international network in order to prepare his militia. The PKK cadre was trained by Yasir Arafat's Fatah, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Samir Ghosheh's Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, and the Lebanese Communist Party in the basic techniques of guerrilla warfare. In 1984, Ocalan declared the party ready to reenter Turkish territory in order to establish a new revolutionary Kurdish government in the southeast. This was the beginning of the war between the PKK and the Turkish Republic, which would continue until the first substantial truce in 1999.[17]

The mountains of southeastern Turkey formed the perfect terrain for a guerrilla war, and from an elite cadre the PKK transformed into a mass movement. Many Kurds from rural areas joined as fighters or as civil militia that provided hiding places, food, and information. By 1992, "PKK rebels numbered about 10,000 total … and they claimed to have about 60,000 armed civilian *milis,* about two thirds the strength of the Turkish soldiers normally stationed in the region (excluding police, special forces, and village guards)."[18] At this high point of the movement, it had established a parallel government including security forces, an information network, newspapers, a taxation system, training camps in neighboring states, and a well-organized diaspora.[19]The PKK had been transformed into a transnational movement.

Drawing from Leninist avant-garde theory, the cadres of the PKK had been structured rigorously and hierarchically. Ocalan's leadership was absolute, and militia members were prohibited from having any private property, engaging in any sexual relationships, and having partners or children. Under the conditions of harsh repression by the Turkish state, loyalty to the party and discipline in the ranks needed to be absolute.

This absolute loyalty and hierarchical structure, however, became mitigated by the internal rise of the Kurdish women's movement. Already within the original group of students that founded the PKK there had been important female members. According to Sakine Cansiz, the party had been "giving an ideological struggle from the very beginning against denial, social chauvinistic impression, primitive and nationalist approaches."[20] This related to the "feudal" conditions in which many Kurdish communities were forced to live and the nationalism of the Turkish Republic that kept Kurdish communities structurally underdeveloped. Women fighters standing equally amongst men became examples of self-determination and independence. For many young women, joining the PKK and its militant female ranks was a liberation.

According to many PKK members, the role of women in the movement became threatened in the years of the party's conversion to a mass movement, mainly due to

men from rural areas joining the fight but refusing to recognize women as equals.[21] Due to the daily pressure of the war, the goal of female emancipation risked becoming a secondary issue. However, in the 1990s, the women of the PKK, encouraged by Ocalan, started to actively organize themselves in order to put their liberation from patriarchy within the party on the agenda—as a demand equally as important as the acknowledgment of Kurdish history, culture, and language. This development ran parallel to a series of crises within the PKK, partly due to Turkey's wish to get rid of the semiautonomous PKK region as soon as possible: "By 1995, Ankara was spending as much as $11 billion a year to fight the war ... Turkey also deployed some 220,000 troops in the region—tying up a quarter of NATO's second largest army in a domestic battle."[22] By the time Ocalan was captured by Turkey in 1999, the PKK was on the defensive and lost much of its territorial control. But the PKK's guerrilla war was only the first part of a liberation movement that would be prominently directed, ideologically and militarily, by its women's militia.

3. The Kurdish Women's Movement

Dilar Dirik describes how this parallel process of autonomous women's organizing against male patriarchy within the party informed the growing critique of the very aim of establishing a nation-state as such:

> The PKK experienced many ups and downs, related to the guerrilla resistance against the Turkish army, the fall of the Soviet Union, the collapse of many leftist liberational movements, and Ocalan's capture in Kenya on February 15, 1999, organized by the Turkish National Intelligence Organization in collaboration with the Central Intelligence Agency of the US. It was in this context in the course of the late nineties that the PKK began to theoretically deconstruct the state, fueled by the Kurdish Women's Movement, coming to the conclusion [that] it is inherently incompatible with democracy.[23]

What is crucial here is that through the newly emerging autonomous women's movement, the PKK, which started with the aim of creating an independent Kurdish nation-state, was forced into a structural self-critique. Although many of the young women had joined the PKK in order to escape being forced into servitude, they were confronted with similar power structures within the hierarchies of the PKK.[24] In response to this, Ocalan theoretically strengthened the coherence between the emerging autonomous organization of the women's movement, the PKK's opposition to colonialism and capitalism, and its claim from the first manifesto that its

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution—Rojava, 2014. Special forces of the Women's Defense Unit (YPJ) look over their training camp situated near Qamishli.

resistance would be dedicated to a classless society.[25] According to Ocalan:

> The male monopoly that has been maintained over the life and world of woman throughout history, is not unlike the monopoly chain that capital monopolies maintain over society. More importantly, it is the oldest powerful monopoly. We might draw more realistic conclusions if we evaluate woman's existence as the oldest colonial phenomenon. It may be more accurate to call women the oldest colonised people who have never become a nation. Family, in this social context, developed as man's small state. The family as an institution has been continuously perfected throughout the history of civilization, solely because of the reinforcement it provides to power and state apparatus.[26]

Ocalan's argumentation is a further development of the resistance against chauvinism-primitivism-nationalism that Cansiz regarded as the foundation of the PKK, but through the autonomous development of the women's movement this analysis is brought to its full consequence: not just in the rejection of the nation-state as such, but in a rejection of the very nature of the power structures that support the nation-state:

> Firstly, family is turned into a stem cell of state society by giving power to the family in the person of the male. Secondly, woman's unlimited and unpaid labour is secured. Thirdly, she raises children in order to meet population needs. Fourthly, as a role model she disseminates slavery and immorality to the whole society. Family, thus constituted, is the institution where dynastic ideology becomes functional.[27]

The critique by the women's movement thus brings Ocalan to redefine the relation between family, state, and capital, concluding that the underlying patriarchal model of power can never be fully liberatory—not just for women, but for any constituency that challenges its normative paradigm. What needs to be overcome is the very articulation of power structures underlying the national liberation struggle.[28]

Ocalan's attempt to define a new historiography that redefines the very nature of power is what finally brings him and his party to the total rejection of the nation-state project as a whole:

> The nation-state needed the bourgeoisie and the power of capital in order to replace the old feudal order and its ideology which rested on tribal structures and inherited rights by a new national ideology which united all tribes and clans under the roof of the nation. In this way, capitalism and nation-state became so closely linked to each other that neither could be imagined to exist without the other … It is often said that the nation-state is concerned with the fate of the common people. This is not true. Rather, it is the national governor of the worldwide capitalist system, a vassal of capitalist modernity which is more deeply entangled in the dominant structures of capital than we usually tend to assume: It is a colony of capital.[29]

Ocalan's thoughts on women's liberation and the autonomous women's movement redefined the foundations of the PKK struggle, providing the basis for what today, after many different name changes, is known

as the Women's Communities of Kurdistan (KJK), founded in 2014. The KJK connected women's branches of political parties, cooperatives, and councils all over the region as well as internationally.

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution, 2014. A classroom in the Women's Academy Star in Ramelan, displaying portraits of women martyrs in the background. The slogan "sembola jinên şoreşger" translates as "symbols of women warriors," the portraits above depict revolutionaries Fidan Doğan, Clara Zetkin, Sakine Cansiz, Rosa Luxemburg and Leyla Şaylemez. Right above the Maria statue is Arin Mirkan, who detonated herself to cover her retreating comrades and avoid capture by Islamic State militants.

In prison, Ocalan's study was fueled by works such as that of philosopher Michel Foucault and political scientist Noam Chomsky. But the most important influence was Murray Bookchin, from whom Ocalan distilled the key aspects of the new power paradigm he envisioned. As Bookchin writes:

> A free ecological society—as distinguished from one regulated by an authoritarian ecological elite or by the "free market"—can only be vast in terms of an ecologically confederal form of libertarian municipalism. When at length free communes replace the nation and confederal forms of organization replaces the state, humanity will have rid itself from nationalism.[30]

What Bookchin describes as an "ecological society" and "social ecology" is what Ocalan translates into the notion of an "ecology of freedom," a new power paradigm that would take the Kurdish women's movement's rejection of the nation-state as its primary point of departure.[31] Ocalan not only borrows this general paradigm of power from

Bookchin, but also the foundational political principle of "communalism" (essentially decentralized communism, or communism without the state),[32] the organization model of "confederalism" (interrelated, coexisting, and mutually dependent but self-governed political entities), and the decision-making model of "direct democracy" (locally organized majority rule by confederal communities).[33] In 2005, Ocalan declared the conjunction of these concepts in the context of the Kurdish struggle as the project of "democratic confederalism."[34]

Essentially, Ocalan proposes a form of autonomy through practice, a series of interlinked structures of self-governance that operate independent of, but parallel to, existing states. The objective of the PKK thus switched from attaining recognition by Turkey and the international community, to self-recognition through practice.

While this theoretical shift was hard to communicate to the mass movement that had by now rallied behind the PKK[35]—thousands of whom had lost their lives in the exhausting years of guerrilla struggle driven by the ideal of an independent state—the solid, disciplined core of the movement and its absolute loyalty to its leader made it possible to reorient the struggle ideologically. The party itself started to restructure with an emphasis on autonomous democratic structures, and its affiliated political wings implemented so-called "co-presidencies" in the process: political positions, such as that of the mayor, were now required to have both a male and a female representative operating on the basis of absolute equality—a concrete achievement of the newly autonomously organized Kurdish women's movement.[36]

The fact that realizing this decentralized model of self-governance required highly disciplined, hierarchical, and militant cadres is not necessarily a paradox, but will possibly have to be explored as a prerequisite. The essential change was that the ideal of an ever-expanding cadre that would evolve into the leadership of an independent nation-state now became an instrument in service of a new emancipatory mass movement.[37] The full implementation of democratic confederalism and the practice of democratic autonomy would take hold with the start of the Rojava Revolution.

4. "Power is everywhere, but the state is not"

It's already evening when I visit the Star Academy in Ramelan, the ideological heart of the Rojava Revolution. The academy is organized by the Yekîtiya Star, the umbrella group of the women's movement in Rojava. I observe a silent classroom filled with young women soldiers and community organizers. The walls are covered with maps of Mesopotamia and Kurdistan, and images of past and present martyrs, including Arin Mirkan, who detonated herself to cover her retreating comrades and

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution, 2014. An old fountain of the Assad regime in Qamishli has been turned in to a monument to the Rojava Revolution, painted yellow-red-green – the colors of the flag of the independent cantons – carrying several martyr portraits of deceased revolutionaries from its defense forces.

avoid capture by Islamic State militants. The images are organized around a small wooden shelf, on which a Maria figure is placed—one of the very rare religious objects in the radically secular iconography of the Rojava Revolution.

In the lecture of the teacher, Dorsin Akif, I recognize the basic terminology that drives the revolution: democratic confederalism, democratic autonomy, communalism, women's liberation, cooperatives, councils—key terms that have been repeated to me by student organizers, teachers, soldiers, politicians, farmers, judges, and artists during my days travelling throughout the canton. Akif's speech is only interrupted for a brief moment by the sound of shots and an explosion. Later on I am told that the Islamic State has moved within three kilometers of the school, but the students don't flinch for a moment. Their revolution takes place both in ideological education and armed struggle. After at least thirty days of ideological training, many of these young women will join the fight against the Islamic State, but not before they know what political model they are fighting for. When I speak with Akif after class, she says:

> Women have progressed much. For example, during the revolution of the French commune, women had a prominent role. Women led that revolution, but in the end: who remains without rights? Women. The nation-state has organized itself as such that women rights are not recognized.[38]

In an extension of the rejection of the nation-state and its patriarchal foundations, the main task of the academy is to

break the ties between the state and science, not in a rejection of science as such, but of the specific power structure underlying it. The alternative takes the form of "jineology," meaning "women's science," - *logy* referring to the Greek "logos" (knowledge) and *jin* referring to the Kurdish word for woman.

Journalist and representative of the women's movement Gönül Kaya writes that "in history, rulers and power holders have established their systems first in thought. As an extension of the patriarchal system, a field of social sciences has been created, which is male, class-specific, and sexist in character."[39]Based on this analysis, Kaya calls for a "women's paradigm," described as a rejection of the relation between the woman-object (slave) and the male-subject (master), which she considers inherently intertwined with modern science and which has in turn had a severe impact on social life, with nurture or domestic work—framed as part of feminine "nature"—not considered "labor," but instead articulated in terms of "service" to the masculine master.

Jineology rejects these "natures" as social constructs, but without rejecting the difference between the male and female subjects—what it rejects is the premise of the social construct that articulates differences in the context of patriarchal society. Jineology explores feminine, colonized history and science as knowledge that can sustain Rojava's "ecology of freedom," as Ocalan adapted Bookchin's concept of "social ecology." On the curriculum are not only the works of Ocalan and Bookchin, but also those of Foucault and Judith Butler, forming philosophical pillars in this political and scientific struggle. As Kaya writes:

> Important tasks await us in the 21st century: the philosophical-theoretical and scientific framework of women's liberation, the historical development of women's liberation and resistance, mutual complementary dialogues within feminist, ecological, and democratic movements, the renewed description of all social institutions (e.g. family) according to liberationist principles ... The field of a new social science for all those circles that are not part of power and the state must be built. This is the task of all anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist, anti-power movements, individuals, women. We refer to these alternative social sciences as the sociology of freedom. Jineology can build and develop the ground base of these social sciences. It is a vanguard in this regard. It will both construct the sociology of freedom and be part of this sociology itself.[40]

Zılan Diyar, a female guerrilla fighter, ironically comments on Western media outlets that, rather than exploring the ideological dimension of the struggle, "are so inspired by

the clothes that the women are wearing, that they want to start a new fashion trend!"[41] Dilar Dirik considers this side-stepping of ideological struggle for the benefit of the orientalist, sensationalist imaginary as the very problem the Kurdish women's movement was founded to struggle against:

> Rather than trying to understand the phenomenon in all its complexity, these articles often resort to sensationalist statements to exploit the audience's astonishment over the fact that "the poor women in the Middle East" could somehow be militants. Hence, instead of acknowledging the cultural revolution that the actions of these women constitute in an otherwise conservative, patriarchal society, many reporters fall for the same used-up categories: while state media, especially in Turkey and Iran, portray female guerrilla fighters as "evil terrorist prostitutes," family-hating, brainwashed sex toys of the male fighters, Western media often refers to these women as "oppressed victims looking for an escape from their backward culture," who would otherwise face a life full of honor killings and child marriage.[42]

In other words, the patriarchic, mediatized gaze claims that Kurdish women guerrillas are not truly fighting for a new definition of political power for women and men alike (i.e., women's liberation entails the liberation of men, albeit from themselves), but are "forced" to behave as such because their chances for a peaceful, "regular" household life are impossible (and supposedly, this is what they really desire). When considered from this perspective, patriarchy is thus essentially a mechanism of the status quo: even when we show that things can be different, it allows them to be interpreted to the contrary. This brings us back to Sakine Cansiz's description of the necessity of revolutionary violence as self-protection: this self-protection turns out to be as much about survival as it is about safeguarding the possibility for a political imaginary to become reality, which would otherwise be historically, politically, and culturally negated.

This is why the pillars of the autonomous cantons of Rojava enforce secular politics, gender equality through quotas, and the reduction of centralized structures to a minimum. These pillars are not derived from the model of the nation-state; they are the pillars of a new political imaginary that has yet to be developed in full, a political imaginary aimed at transforming our very practice and understanding of power through a history that the Star Academy is writing as we speak: "Power is everywhere, but the state is not everywhere. Power can operate in different ways."[43] Stateless democracy is based on the profound processes behind the Kurdish movement's decades of struggle and sacrifice, with women in front. This struggle has not only made it possible for power to

operate in different ways; it has made *difference itself* possible.

Jonas Staal, from the series Anatomy of a Revolution—Rojava, 2014. Candidates from neighborhood councils and cooperatives present themselves to become co-chair of the People's Council of the city of Qamishli. The slogan "Her Tişt Jibo Jiyanek Azad û Avakirina Civakek Demokratık" translates as "Everything for a Free Life and the Foundation of a Democratic Society." On the right, a portrait of the founder of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan.

5. Theater of the Stateless

In October 2014, artist Hito Steyerl—whose works *November* (2004) and *Lovely Andrea* (2007) are situated around her friend Andrea Wolf, a human rights activist and sociologist who became a PKK fighter and martyr after she was killed in 1998 [44]—writes on the battles waged by the Rojava revolutionaries and the US air force against the Islamic State in the autonomous canton of Kobanê:

> Turkish armed forces fire flares to add to the confusing scene of giant smoke plumes, ambulance horns, and faces illuminated by mobile phone screens. At the Cultural Center, a brilliant, all-female group of culture workers and municipality officials discusses the role of art with me. I plan to frame resident refugees observing F-16 jets circling above. What is the task of art in times of emergency?[45]

Interestingly enough, Abdullah Abdul, an artist who I meet in Amude, answers this question by returning to the history of the region. His small studio is located next to his house, where his young children are climbing on and off an enormous archive of objects—sculptures—lined up alongside his wall and floors. An unsuspecting visitor

might think he had walked into an archeological exhibit. Instead, Abdul is creating a museum for a lost history: "Mesopotamia has a history of over five thousand years in which many peoples have lived here; there was a highly advanced civilization which was the source of world civilization."[46] Similar to the work that jineology does in recuperating a colonized science, Abdul is trying to retrieve the remnants of a colonized history of art and culture.

In the Mitra Hasake cultural center in Qamishli, among students practicing musical instruments and paintings mounted in the scarcely lit central hall, I have the chance to speak to Nesrin Botan, vocalist for the musical group Koma Botan—named after its founder, a musician who became a martyr in the armed struggle:

> We have an important role in the revolution ... This revolution gives us the opportunity to express our culture, art, and folklore that used to be suppressed. We are now working hard for our culture and identity ... Like a musician receives education from school, our fighters learn the art of fighting in the People's Defense Force (YPG). Like a teacher of art, our warriors show performance on the battlefield.[47]

Later on, in the guest house of the Democratic Unity Party (PYD), I see Botan appear in a music video on the Ronahi TV channel, the media outlet of the revolution which forms the permanent backdrop for those residing in the common room. Botan's video consists of a collage of film footage from PKK fighters as well as YPG and YPJ defense forces of Rojava surrounded by traditionally dressed singers; this is where both singer and soldier "show performance." I'm reminded of early media reports that repeatedly mentioned that fighters were singing in between their battles at the front.

The small cities and villages of concrete and brick buildings in the canton are separated by large swaths of farmland and oil fields, the jack pumps largely gone silent since the retreat of Assad, who took most of the crucial machinery for running them with him. The colors disrupting these sober landscapes are either those of the yellow, red, and green flag of the Rojava Revolution, or those of the martyr photos, which also display the names memorialized in the songs that fill the air wherever we go. Old monuments, fountains, and statues of Hafiz al-Assad, father of Bashar al-Assad, have been thrown off their pedestals. They have been repainted in the colors of Rojava, surrounded by flags of its defense forces and women's organizations, covered with martyr photos—all printed in a basement in Qamishli. These first monuments of the revolution bring a new memory into the public domain: that of those "performing" on the battlefield, the part of the collective revolutionary body that is

51

re-inscribing its history—bloodily erased, repressed, blacklisted—into the imaginary of a radically new and different present.

When I attend the people's council of Qamishli, candidates are presenting themselves to obtain the position of new co-chair. Each of the city's neighborhood councils and cooperatives have brought their candidates forward. A long strip of yellow-red-green cloth serves as backdrop upon which is written: "Everything for a Free Life and the Foundation of a Democratic Society." In the front, the candidates enter and leave the stage, next to two tables with the elected selection committee keeping track of procedure. To the right of the stage is a photo of Ocalan on a modest, draped pedestal. But most importantly—as I realize while observing the packed space—the people's council is a *theater*. It is a theater of the stateless, where the Rojava Revolution is condensed down to its ultimate performance: the practice of self-governance, of self-determination, performing life without approval. In the face of our global crises in politics, the economy, and ecology, Rojava's stateless democracy proposes a political horizon that concerns us all.

What is the task of art in times of emergency? The artists and educators of Rojava seem to provide an answer. To write, imagine, and enact history according to the stateless—not only peoples *forced* into statelessness, but in the case of Rojava, those who have *decided to live without the state*.

X

Jonas Staal is a visual artist whose work deals with the relation between art, propaganda, and democracy. His most recent book is *Propaganda Art in the 21st Century* (MIT Press, 2019).

1
Keyal Ahmed, "Benderı Bermûda" (1999).

2
Solid data regarding the changing territorial constellation of the war is generally hard to find due to its daily developments. This Wikipedia map was recommended to us by one of Rojava's administrators http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Syrian_Civil_War_detailed_map#Xorxor.C3.AE .

3
"Rojava's population has nearly doubled to about 4.6 million. The newcomers are Sunni and Shia Syrian Arabs who have fled the scorched wasteland that Assad has made of his country. They are also Orthodox Assyrian Christians, Chaldean Catholics, and others, from out of the jihadist dystopia that has taken up so much of the space where Assad's police state used to be." Terry Glavin, "In Iraq and Syria, it's too little too late," *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov, 14, 2014

4
"The unexpected and quick defeat of the Kurdish peshmerga forces in Sinjar, which was until recently populated mainly by followers of the ancient Yazidi Mesopotamian faith, prompted the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) to jump into the scene ... 'After IS stormed Sinjar and the peshmerga withdrew from there, a security vacuum emerged and the Yazidis faced the threat of a huge massacre. So, we decided to move in," said Redur Khalil, YPG's spokesman ... The YPG and PKK have even formed a special force, the Sinjar Defense Units, to defend Sinjar." Mohammed Sali, "PKK forces impress in fight against Islamic State," *Al-Monitor*, Sept. 1, 2014 http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/pkk-kurdish-fight-islamic-state.html#ixzz3Rx4Xf8ot .

5
"In the 1960s, some 120,000 Syrian Kurds were stripped of their citizenship, forcing them to live in a sort of grey zone where they could not own property, were banned from certain professions, could not own cars, and could not get passports to leave the country. Syria also banned Kurdish political parties and put limits, similar to its neighbor Turkey, on Kurdish-language publications and education." Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 61.

6
Interview conducted with Dilar Dirik in De Balie, Amsterdam on October 22, 2014.

7
Ibid.

8
Ibid.

9
"The Social Contract," January 29, 2014 https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/english-version_sc_revised-060314.pdf .

10
Exactly how much territory and how to define this in terms of monopolized violence—implied by the term "state"—is highly contested. The *New York Times* created this "visual guide to the crisis in Iraq and Syria" in an attempt to provide data on the origins of Islamic State fighters as well as the areas currently under their control http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps-photos-and-video.html?_r=0 .

11
A relevant article reconstructing the rise of the Islamic State consists of interviews with a senior official militant—nom de guerre Abu Ahmed—who was imprisoned in the US-led Camp Bucca, where the current leader of the IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was incarcerated as well, and where the main recruitment of his cadre took place. Martin Chulov, "Isis: The Inside Story," *The Guardian* , Dec. 11, 2014 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/-sp-isis-the-inside-story .

12
Curator Vivian Ziherl speaks of the term of "Thirld Worldism" as a history that has to be continuously rewritten, thus questioning dominant linear—modernist—narratives that laid the foundation for colonization as such. One such attempt at an alternative historical exploration of Third Worldism can be found in Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Thirld World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

13
David Graeber, "Why is the world ignoring the revolutionary Kurds in Syria?," *The Guardian*, Oct. 8, 2014 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/08/why-world-ignoring-revolutionary-kurds-syria-isis . See also "No. This is a genuine revolution," David Graeber interviewed by Pinar Oğünç about his travel to Rojava, *ZNET*, Dec. 26, 2014 https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/no-this-is-a-genuine-revolution/ .

14
On the 1936 Spanish revolution, see Murray Bookchin, *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1994); for a more extensive historical examination of the concept of libertarian socialism, see *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red* , eds. Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta, David Berry (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

15
Amil Kemal Ozcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 87.

16
"The PKK Foundation in Sakine Cansiz's words," written on November 25, 1978 http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=6832 .

17
This truce was far from permanent, and in fact marked the beginning of the dominance of armed struggle in the Kurdish liberational movement: "At the start of June 2004, KONGRA-GEL (the organizational name of the PKK at the time) declared the *undeclared* five-year unilateral cease-fire 'obsolete' as they claimed that Turkey's military operations against the limited remaining guerrilla forces within the borders had been accelerated since early spring. In fact, there existed no five-year ceasefire but an end to the 'armed struggle.'"Amil Kemal Ozcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 214.

18
Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 179.

19
Ibid., 230.

20
"The PKK Foundation in Sakine Cansiz's words."

21
Abdullah Ocalan recalls: "Young women fighters in particular, whose participation should have been understood as an important enrichment of the movement, were treated disparagingly as a burden, punished for their love of freedom and forced into the most primitive patriarchal relationships." A. Ocalan, *Prison Writings II: The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century* (London: Transmedia Publishing, 2011), chapter "The PKK."

22
Marcus, *Blood and Belief*, 249.

23
Interview conducted with Dilar Dirik in De Balie, Amsterdam on October 22, 2014.

24
Kurdish Women's Movement representative Fadile Yıldırım recalled on this issue that "the enemy is not just outside, we also have an enemy inside ... The Kurdish women's freedom movement started inside the national liberation movement." Fadile Yıldırım, "Women and Democracy: The Kurdish Question and Beyond," lecture at the first New World Summit, May 4, 2013, Sophiensaele, Berlin https://vimeo.com/65049118 .

25
Ocalan's most elaborate attempt to articulate a social, historical, cultural, and political analysis of the roots of the Kurdish Question—narrating the birth of subsequent tribalism, statism, capitalism, and patriarchy—in order to provide a viable scenario for an autonomous and democratic Kurdish movement can be found in his *Prison Writings: The Roots of Civilisation* (London: Transmedia Publishing, 2007).

26
Abdullah Ocalan, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution* (Cologne: International Initiative Edition/Neuss: Mesopotamian Publishers, 2013), 35.

27
Ibid., 36.

28
See Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012).

29
Abdullah Ocalan, *Democratic Confederalism* (London: Transmedia Publishing, 2011), 10.

30
Murray Bookchin, *The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct* Democracy (New York: Verso Books, 2015), 138.

31
Bookchin's most elaborate description of the ecological society is to be found in *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Palo Alto: Cheshire Books, 1982). Janet Biehl, a long-time collaborator with Bookchin, reported on the exchange between Ocalan and Bookchin during the conference "Challenging Capitalist Modernity," Feb. 3–5, 2012, Hamburg. See J. Biehl, "Bookchin, Ocalan, and the Dialectics of Democracy," *New Compass*, Feb. 16, 2012 http://new-compass.net /articles/bookchin-%C3%B6cala n-and-dialectics-democracy .

32
Bookchin defines this concept as following: "Communalism draws on the best of the older Left ideologies ... From Marxism, it draws the basic project of formulating a rationally systematic and coherent socialism that integrates philosophy, history, economics, and politics ... From anarchism, it draws its commitment to antistatism and confederalism, as well as the recognition that hierarchy is a basic problem that can be overcome only by a libertarian socialist society." Ibid., 15.

33
On the relation between confederalism and participatory democracy Bookchin writes: "A confederalist view involves a clear distinction between policymaking and the coordination and execution of adopted policies. Policymaking is exclusively the right of popular community assemblies based on the practices of participatory democracy. Administration and coordination are the responsibility of confederal councils which become the means for interlinking villages, towns, neighborhoods, and cities into confederal networks." Ibid., 75.

34
Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden distinguish three interrelated projects: "A democratic republic, democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism. The democratic republic seeks to redefine the Republic of Turkey, by disassociating democracy from nationalism; democratic autonomy refers to the right of people to decide on their own priorities and policies, to determine their own future; and the project for democratic confederalism is to serve as a model for self-government, its concrete realization sought through the political organization of society at four different levels, namely, communes in villages and districts, the organization of social groups (such as women and youth), organization on the basis of cultural and religious identities, and civil society organizations.," "Understanding Today's Kurdish movement: Leftist Heritage, Martyrdom, Democracy, and Gender," *European Journal of Kurdish Studies* 14 (2012).

35
Academic Amil Kemal Ozcan attributes the capacity of the PKK to communicate Ocalan's new ideas of radical democracy to its policies of "micro-education"—a tireless if necessary one-to-one model of communication with its constituency. Further, Ozcan states that "the PKK-led 'cause' of the Kurdish populace in the Republic of Turkey is not a national one but an archetype of '*identity* liberation movement' for which a nation-state is not *sine qua non* but a forthcoming peril. It is thus, in spite of Ocalan's bold 'surrender' (the total abandonment of aims and objectives of a classical nationalist movement such as independence, federalism or semi-autonomous rule, the unkind and undisguised opposition to the Kurdish autonomization in northern Iraq), that the undeniable majority of the Kurdish masses continue to back the PKK—under any name—and the 'president Ocalan.'" Amil Kemal Ozcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 219.

36
"Since 2005, the PKK and all affiliated organizations have been restructured on the basis of this project under the name of KCK (Association of Communities in Kurdistan-Koma Civakên Kurdistan) which is a societal organization presented as an alternative to the nation-state. The KCK has aimed to organize itself from the bottom to the top in the form of assemblies. 'KCK is a movement which struggles for establishing its own democracy, neither ground on the existing nation-states nor see them as the obstacle.' In its status, called KCK Contract, its main aim is defined as struggling for the expansion of radical democracy which is based upon peoples' democratic organizations and decision-making power." Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012).

37
"In the light of lessons we have learned from the latest international experiences, not being a party force which stands completely above the people but which becomes the servant of the people, and not being a dysfunctional assembly but an innovation of an assembly which is functioning and *determining everything* is the most fundamental—and distinguishing—task that we will fulfil for socialism. The success that we achieve in this respect will at the same time be the success of socialism." From a speech by Ocalan in 1995, quoted in Amil Kemal Ozcan, *Turkey's Kurds*, 140.

38
Interview with Dorsin Akif conducted in the Star Academy in Ramelan on December 23, 2014.

39
Kaya, "Why Jineology?"

40
Ibid. For a critical account, see Janet Biehl, "Impressions of Rojava: a report from the revolution," *ROAR Magazine*, Dec. 16. 2014 http://roarmag.org/201 4/12/janet-biehl-report-rojava/ ; and J. Biehl, *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 29.

41
Zılan Diyar, "The Whole World is Talking About Us, Kurdish Women," *Kurdish Question* https: //tendancecoatesy.wordpress.co m/tag/zilan-diyar/ .

42
Dilar Dirik, "The Representation of Kurdish Women Fighters in the Media," *Kurdish Question* https:// web.archive.org/web/201503312 05447/http://kurdishquestion.co m/index.php/woman/the-represe ntation-of-kurdish-women-fighter s-in-the-media/115-the-represent ation-of-kurdish-women-fighters-i n-the-media.html .

43
Janet Biehl, "Revolutionary Education: Two Academies in Rojava," *Ecology or Catastrophe* (blog), Feb. 7, 2015 http://www.bi ehlonbookchin.com/revolutionary -education/ .

44
Pablo Lafuente, "For a Populist Cinema: On Hito Steyerl's *November* and *Lovely Andrea*," *Afterall* 19 (Autumn/Winter 2008) http://www.afterall.org/journal/is sue.19/populist.cinema.hito.steye rls.november.and.lovely .

45
Hito Steyerl, "Kobanê Is Not Falling," e-flux.com, Oct. 10, 2014 https://www.e-flux.com/announc ements/30525/koban-is-not-fallin g/ .

46
Interview with Abdullah Abdul conducted in the artist's studio in Amude, December 18, 2014.

47
Interview with Nesrin Botan conducted in the Mitra Hasake cultural center, December 20, 2014.

When I was a child, I was told that when people died they became stars. I didn't really believe it, but I could appreciate it. We three Red Army soldiers wanted to become Orion when we died. And it calms my heart to think that all the people we killed will also become stars in the same heaven. As the revolution goes on, how the stars will multiply!
—Közö Okamoto, interview in Israeli prison[1]

The news item was nondescript.[2] In a four-sentence summary, a Japanese news service announced that Osamu Maruoka, "former Japanese Red Army member," died in the prison hospital at age sixty. A year earlier, he had unsuccessfully appealed for a suspension of his sentence on the grounds that he suffered from a serious heart condition.

Naeem Mohaiemen

All That is Certain Vanishes Into Air: Tracing the Anabasis of the Japanese Red Army

This portrait of Osamu Maruoka was used in a wanted police poster.

The report included a brief précis of his life achievements, mimicking bullet points in a resume: a) Conspired with Palestinian guerrillas in hijacking a Japan Airlines plane over Amsterdam in 1973, b) Hijacked a JAL jumbo jet over India with four accomplices and forced it to land in Bangladesh in 1977, and so on.

The circumstances of Maruoka's arrest were quotidian: he was apprehended in Tokyo in 1987, when he entered the country on a forged passport. I had been tracing the eleven JRA members who had been on board a hijacked plane that flew from Dhaka to Algiers in 1977, and nondescript finales were the norm. In the recordings of the negotiations between the lead hijacker (codename: "Dankesu") and the hostage negotiator (Air Force Chief A. G. Mahmud), the hijackers (four initial companions, and six who were released from Japanese prisons as part of a hostage exchange) remain an obstinately ghostly presence.

> Bangladeshi Journalist: How many hijackers were on board?
> Japanese Stewardess 1: Five … past … five men.
> BJ: Did you see their face?
> JS1: fes?
> Japanese Translator: Fays! Face! (mimes)
> JS1: Yes, but, (mimes) covered. Covered.
> BJ: Could you guess if they are young or old or middle aged?
> JS1: About …
> Japanese Stewardess 2: They said … about, (shows two fingers) about two … twenty years
> BJ: Very young then!
> JS2: No, the youngest and the oldest, twenty, about twenty years … difference
> JS1: About thirty years
> BJ: Between 30–35, 25–35, or 25–30?
> JS1: Yes
> BJ: Which one?[3]

The 1977 hijacking was fastidiously followed in the Japanese and Bangladeshi press, but after the hijackers arrived in Algeria, very few traces were left behind—only fragments from such moments of mistranslated or fetishized details remembered by a hostage: "cruel eyes, he had very cruel eyes, I can't remember *anything else*."[4] Only at the time of arrest did things come back into focus. Maruoka had been arrested in 1987 on a false passport; another member had been arrested while shoplifting dried cuttlefish in a Tokyo store. The computerized system in a Tokyo police station had matched his fingerprints with an Interpol database. An international hijacking career ended over a craving for salty snacks.

Maruoka could possibly be the lead hijacker of that Dhaka flight—codename "Dankesu"—on the negotiation tapes.

In the last moments of the hijack, he insisted on staying doggedly illegible:

> Mahmud: Danke … uh, tell me what is your name? Because I have told you my name.
> Dankesu: My name is … number twenty. When we establish people's republic of Japan, I'll tell you my original name.[5]

If number twenty was Maruoka, he died in prison in full view of the state. But he left little in the way of records that could help a researcher trace the origins of this group, or create any social mapping of its membership. The experience of the JRA in captivity stands in marked contrast with that of Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF), whose time in Stammheim prison was exhaustively documented on television and in print. Along with recent film adaptations and academic monographs, fragments of the RAF's own archives keep trickling out, from Meinhof's early articles to Astrid Proll's collection of photographs.[6] It has been noted more than once that RAF members, children of a particular conjuncture of media-is-message moment, always had one eye on the record for posterity, documenting themselves within their own process. The cursory brevity of Maruoka's obituary highlights the fact that no similar self-generated archive exists for the JRA—certainly not in English. Four very different works about the group provide incomplete snapshots, with Eric Baudelaire's film coming closest to holding the ethnographer's gaze on group survivors.

Think Tank Identikit and "Salaryman" Japan

William R. Farrell's *Blood and Rage* is almost a penny dreadful, but it is still quite useful as an example of the terror-industrial complex's publication flow. His interest in the Japanese Red Army is primarily to probe the mind of the "modern terrorist," by now a commodity fetish object. Written in 1990, it begins with breathless warnings ("We will hear more from the JRA. The noise will be loud and the effect deadly."[7]) that come, rather pointlessly, long after the group's demise. The book's acknowledgments lay out the think tank network that Farrell's text relies on: the Institute for Social Engineering in Tokyo, the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv, Business Risks International in Nashville, and the Naval War College in Rhode Island. The last organization seems an anomaly until we read in Farrell's first chapter that in 1988, JRA member Kikumura Yu ("more like a ne'er do well than an agent of death," says Farrell) was arrested on the New Jersey Turnpike. During the trial, it was alleged that Yu's target was the US Naval Recruiting Station in New York, which explains how the Naval War College library came to build up an extensive Japanese-language dossier on the
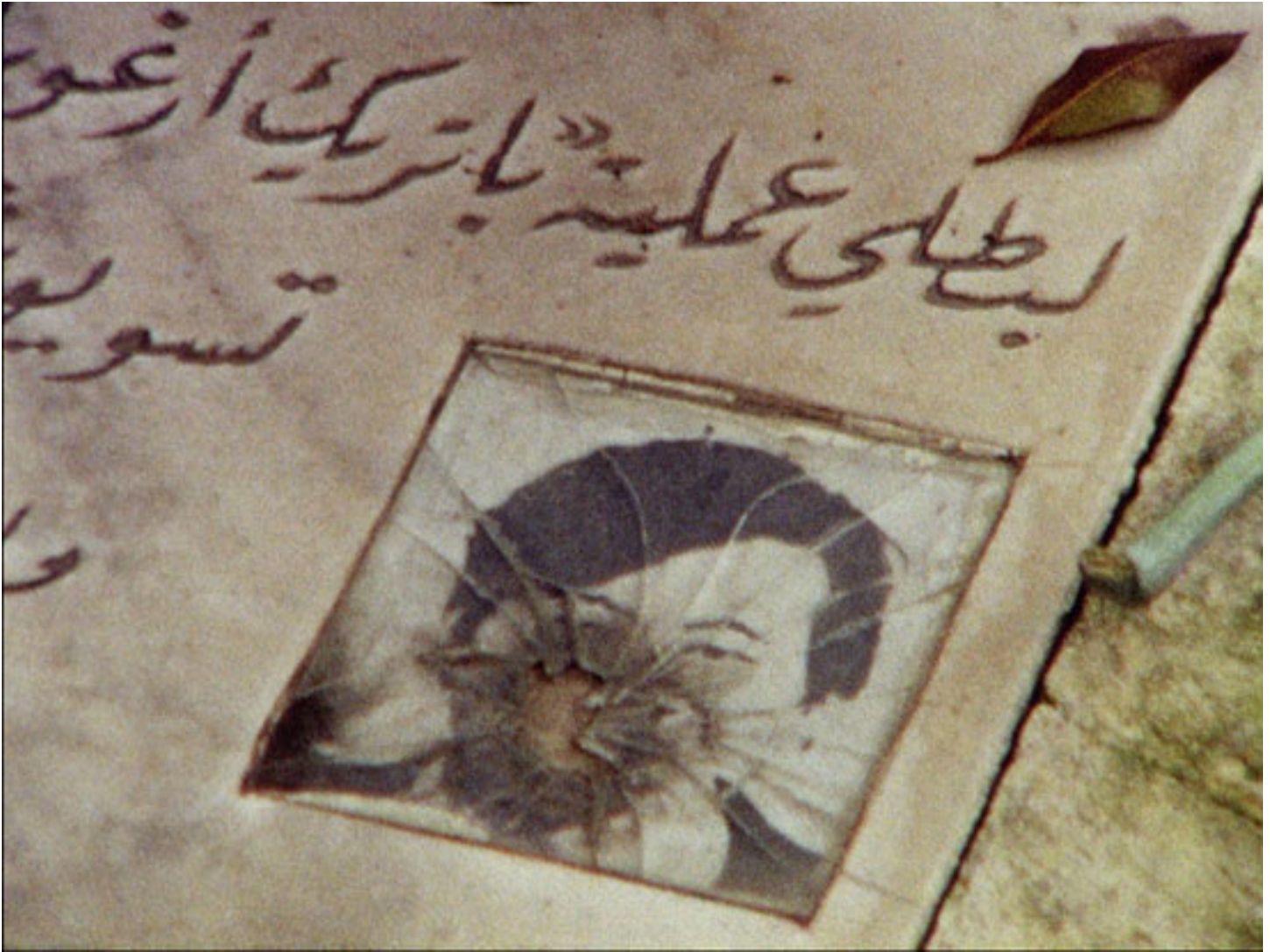
Eric Baudelaire, The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, 2011. Film still.

JRA. These sources guide Farrell towards a highly pathologized view of the members' motivations. Even Yu's diminutive presence ("5 feet 2 inches") is cause for Farrell's droll witticism that this man had "planned to stand tall" in the annals of terrorism.

Although two of the JRA's most notorious actions are the Lod airport killings of 1973 and the Dhaka hijack of 1977, most analysis of the group centers around the Asama mountain killings of 1971. A Grand Guignol moment of group hysteria, the incident began with JRA members hiding in the mountains for training and "self-purification." The group had been weakened by arrests that decimated top leadership, and the isolated mountain was the stage for a series of recriminatory self-critique sessions. The leaders turned on the weaker members, accusing them of being "insufficiently revolutionary." Sexual desires for other members, whether expressed or silent, were also seen as betraying the movement. Ritual beatings were inflicted on the accused weaker spirits, and if a comrade

died from this, it was considered *haibokushi*, or "death by defeatism." Eventually, the JRA killed a dozen of its own members at this isolated lodge. Newspapers dubbed it "revolutionary suicide." When the JRA members were later arrested in a police dragnet, the discovery of the dead bodies sent shock waves through Japan. Asama became the overdetermined basis for all understandings of the JRA group and its motivation, usually read as group-induced pathology and sexual competition.

Farrell's analysis of the "bastard child"[8] Japanese Red Army is closely aligned with the commonly held psychoanalytic view in Japan that Asama was primarily an expression of repressed sexuality. We see this projected outward to the group's post-Asama arc as well. Individual cell leaders are stand-ins for group dynamics, and Farrell spends a great deal of time looking into the autobiography of the more "disturbed" members, such as Nagata Hiroko.[9] For his descriptions, Farrell depends on *Japan Times* reports of March 1972, which were published as part of a
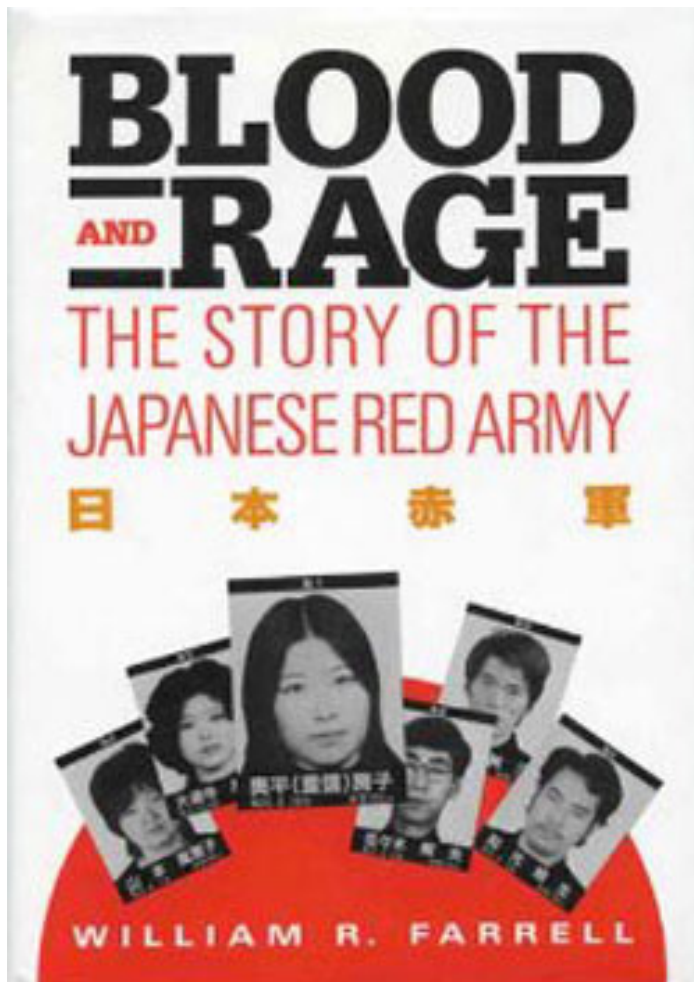
William R. Farrell, Blood and Rage, 1990.

media push to present caricatured images of all JRA leaders. The *Japan Times* in particular focused on the rage that Nagata directed at female JRA members at Asama, and concluded that she was a "mentally unstable, radical queen." Farrell discards the closeted queer theory and focuses on the ravages of hetero lust as a foundational moment in Nagata's psyche. He details the 1969 encounter between Nagata and her onetime mentor Kawashima Go. Visiting the arrested Kawashima in prison, she berates him for his lack of revolutionary zeal—an encounter later leaked to the press by the prison guards. Farrell quotes from post-Asama press reports to argue that Kawashima had raped Nagata on their first encounter, after which they eventually became lovers. He was, in Farrell's words, "a lover who took, not shared," planting a traumatic experience in Nagata.[10] It is this trauma that allegedly leads her to becoming an instigator of violence within the JRA, first through "sexual experimentation" and then, ultimately, "revolutionary zeal."

From Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman's *Empire of Trauma*, we know that Farrel's working definition of trauma is aligned with early-twentieth-century theories of the weak-willed receptor. Farrell's dependence on military

institutions as his interlocutors privileged this view of certain people's natural receptiveness to traumatic events (hence the emphasis on Nagata's puberty travails). Before the rise of micro-scale urban guerrilla warfare, as well as the memorialization of natural disasters, trauma was most frequently observed during industrial accidents and in the theater of war. Forensic psychiatry, which previously had been focused on the evaluation of criminals or "abnormal" inmates, looked to the detection of trauma neurosis as an expansion of their field of expertise. Pierre Janet argued that trauma arose from an external shock (perhaps an event in early childhood) that created a mechanical psychological reaction (versus the neurological anatomical reaction proposed by Jean-Martin Charcot). Freud developed his theory in two stages that were distinct from Janet (who focused on external shock). In the first variation, which Freud called seduction theory, he argued that hysteria was generated by a sexual trauma in infancy. Later, Freud abandoned seduction theory and moved to fantasy theory, which argued that the sexual is already traumatic in the unconscious.

In Farrell's book, we find a mixture of Janet's external shock theory (e.g., Nagata's reception by classmates, the rape by a comrade) as well as Freud's sexual as already existing trauma. He states that "sexual behavior was very much on the mind" of JRA leaders, delineating a rupture between two group factions after massive police actions (the JRA had formed from the wreckage of two other radical groups). One JRA faction argued that women were to be supporters, sexual and domestic, while men did the "soldiering." The more radical JRA faction, led by Nagata, argued that sexual relations had to be subservient to the movement, and engaging in such relations was counterrevolutionary. Finally, Farrell uses the beating death of Shindo Ryuzaburo, accused of flirting with female JRA members, as evidence of repressed sexuality as a prime mover of JRA energies.

Sociologist Patricia Steinhoff goes beyond Farrell's tabloid-like analysis of puberty crises. Instead of responses to an external trauma in childhood or puberty-onset sexual misadventures, Steinhoff focuses on the Japanese corporate ideal type ("Sararıman," or salaried man) as the model to understand the violence of the JRA, especially the confrontation at Asama lodge.[11] It is this socialization itself that she identifies as the root of their violent subjectivation. In the Althusserian interpellation story, the act of naming can only *attempt* to bring the addressee into being—there is always the possibility of mishearing, refusal, or defiance. So, why the turn and why the obedience? Steinhoff's rather simple answer is that young Japanese people are socialized into being model employees of corporations. She argues that rather than being misfits at the margins, the JRA recruits were socialized normally, and this is what made them ideal candidates for the breakdown—leading to fratricide in search of "purity," along with other acts of violence during a decade of hijackings.

In a fairly essentialist analysis, Steinhoff regards the internal structure of the JRA as a reinvention of the Japanese managerial style. She highlights two specific ideal salaryman attributes that the JRA espoused; at the same time, because of underground status, the JRA did not absorb these elements fully, leading to contradictions that would implode group dynamics. These attributes are the JRA's strong hierarchical structure, and its rituals that emphasized membership. In the case of the Rengo Sekigun (United Red Army)—the new group that was formed from the merger of two different organizations (Sekigunand Kakusa)—hierarchies were maintained, but not without dispute. Sekigun leader Mori Tsuneo became the head of the new group, while Kakusa's leader Nagata Hiroko reported to him. According to Steinhoff, such a hierarchy is generally acceptable in Japanese society, but because of the "revolutionary" nature of the JRA, Nagata felt compelled to reject gender roles and push against this hierarchy. For Steinhoff, the planning and decision-making process was "characteristically Japanese," especially the use of autonomous groups, the obsessive degree of detail in event planning, and the implementation of systematic procedures to maximize "learning from failure."[12]

Although replicating the Japanese corporation within the secret cell, the JRA, as Steinhoff reminds us, lacked a standardized output, a stable site, and social acceptance, and was therefore plagued by inter-member conflict. Steinhoff emphasizes that in conflict situations, it was precisely standard "politeness" that aggravated the dispute. The technique of breaking down unproductive defenses, by making the person acutely aware of them in a group consciousness exercise, was practiced in American group psychotherapy; Steinhoff argues that the same model was being implemented in the JRA.[13] However, the lack of any trained practitioners of psychotherapy made the JRA lose control of the process. Thus, when Nagata berated member Toyama Mieko for her "feminine demeanor," only to have Toyama remain silent in a display of "standard polite Japanese response," Nagata was compelled to continue with more fervor. Steinhoff argues that members may also have been trying to display *amae* (seeking favor by creating a relationship of dependency), even though the Japanese student movement of the 1960s (which gave rise to some parts of the JRA) had already rejected *amae* as antithetical to a "revolutionary spirit."

Steinhoff's analysis depends on a very particular essentialization of "Japanese politeness," as well as conflations of various analytic models. On the one hand, we are told that the JRA network was a faithful replication of the Japanese corporation. On the other hand, the network is supposed to have been infiltrated by American group therapy techniques—an "alien" practice that "Japanese politeness" could not digest. Steinhoff is on firmer ground when discussing conceptual innovations developed in response to member defiance. For instance, Mori was the innovator of the concept *kyosanshugika*, which translates as "communist transformation" or

"communization." This term had first been used in Sekigun's written material ("communization of revolutionary soldiers"), but no practical steps had been defined for reaching this. The JRA's time in Asama led to the design of *kyosanshugika* as relentless self-critique sessions. According to Steinhoff, fuzzy thinking was in evidence among both leaders and followers—the former innovated in new, illogical ways and the latter followed without questioning. Mori had, by this time, fused together two terms: *jikohihan* (self-criticism) and *sokatsu* (collective examination of organizational problems). The emotional appeal of transformation "from bourgeois Japanese college student to revolutionary soldier" made all aspects of past life or present thought suspect. Just how much self-criticism would be needed before *sokatsu* could transform the organization? Unfortunately, the organization, or in this case the individual bodies, could not survive the examination process. Steinhoff thinks the "traditional Japanese practice of decision making by consensus" doomed the process, as no individual follower could take control of the situation and call for a halt to *kyosanshugika*.

Masao Adachi, Female Student Guerrilla, 1969. Film still.

Pink Remediation and L'Anabase

Farrell and Steinhoff represent two highly schematic ways of looking at the Japanese Red Army. One gives credence to tabloid reports of childhood trauma, while the other maps the movement onto a corporate organogram gone awry. Both authors focus on the arc that begins at the Asama lodge and ends with the airport events. The Lod attack, described as the "first suicide mission in the history of the unfolding Mideast conflict," exerts a magnetic pull on historians.[14] The JRA also presented it as a central event in their redemption as a world revolutionary group. The violence of Lod erased the public shame of the mountain fratricide, and by carrying out the action in the

name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the JRA catapulted themselves into the center of a global network (which included Rote Armee Fraktion and patron governments at the various nodes).

Filmmaker Eric Baudelaire pushes against this narrative skein that begins and ends with the JRA's dramatic plane hijackings. Instead, he traces what happened to the JRA in the aftermath of the 1970s, long after the television cameras had left, and Arab governments had lost interest. In many cases, the host countries were aggressively exploiting the JRA as an example of the global reach of the Palestinian struggle—both to redirect domestic dissent, and to claim leadership of a post-Bandung amorphous idea of deterritorialized globalist movements. Young members of JRA were thrust into the role of being figures for a transnational movement; but once the euphoria of the event had faded, they were often adrift in their new host countries. One of the early hijackings that involved ransom money was the September 1974 takeover of the French Embassy in the Hague. After a crisis lasting several days, the hostages were released in exchange for a $300,000 ransom. The JRA then tried to fly to Yemen, but were refused permission to land and eventually had to settle for Damascus. The Syrian government received JRA members cordially, but immediately informed them that hostage taking for money was "un-revolutionary." The money was seized, but where it went no one seems to know. By the time of the 1977 hijack in Bangladesh, the ransom had risen to $6 million, which was dutifully impounded by the government at the final destination of Algeria. When you read about JRA members showing up on police radars, alone and penniless, in cities as varied as Bangkok and Lima, you can presume a more general abandonment (not only financial, but also political). This would be accelerated by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon which made it dangerous to offer them refuge. By the mid 1980s, they were revolutionary orphans, bereft of a mission.

It is this aftermath that Baudelaire is intrigued by, offering the possibility of looking at "revolutionary" commitments after the disappearance of the cause. To explore this, he tracked down JRA member Masao Adachi. Adachi was a filmmaker, and also part of the JRA organizing cell in Lebanon. Until 1971, Adachi was primarily a film director's assistant, working with renowned "pink" erotic film director Koji Wakamatsu. Both were JRA sympathizers, and the films that Wakamatsu made in this period can be read as erotica that doubled as propaganda. Jasper Sharp's book on the pink industry describes Wakamatsu's appreciation of the freedom of the erotica format: "They gave me a free rein as long as it included some shots of women's naked backs and some love scene."[15] That "free rein" appears to have extended to direct on-screen endorsements of JRA's tactics of violence.

Yuriko Furahata's work on Japanese avant-garde film reads Wakamatsu's films as part of a cycle of intensified "mediatization."[16] This was a period when some of Wakamatsu's films included newsreel footage of JRA events that occurred the same year the films were made. (Adachi, who was in active communication with JRA members, often collaborated on these films). The speed of this repurposing can be seen in the 1970 film *Sex Jack* (selected for Cannes in 1971), which drew on the same year's Yodogō hijacking that had ended with the hijackers defecting to North Korea. The film appropriated the Yodogō hijackers' slogan "We are *Tomorrow's Joe*" (itself appropriating the manga *Ashita no Jō*), circulating a media reference through the actual event and into a film—the entire cycle taking less than a year before it reached cinema screens. Furahata reads Wakamatsu as working in extreme proximity to journalism around JRA events, and eagerly remediating these into his films. These media appropriation techniques also appear to include self-criticism of the movement—often in plain sight, and not to be explained away as simply an ironic gesture.
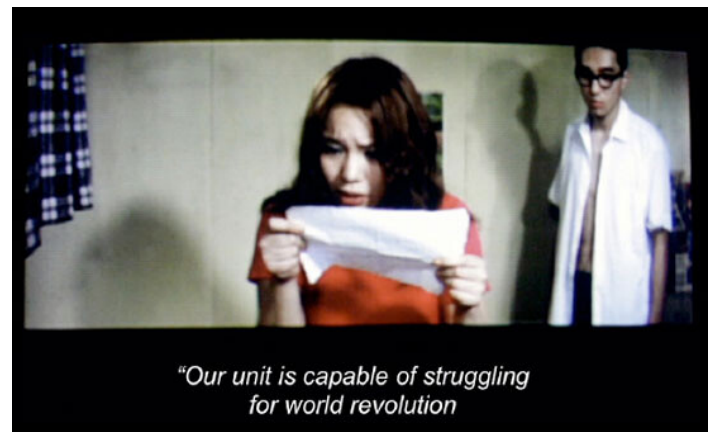
Koji Wakamatsu, Sex Jack, 1970. Film still. The film features a script by Masao Adachi.

If we venture beyond Wakamatsu's well-known JRA-inspired films *Sex Jack* (1970) and *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War* (1971), Adachi's 1969 film *Female Student Guerrilla* appears to make the self-criticism of the group explicit. Topless Japanese women fire guns at school officials and say they will never return to class because the revolution has started (recalling Lindsay Anderson's *If...*). Awash in assemblages of breasts, guns, and slogans, the film could be a spoof of radical chic—except for the fact that a JRA ideologue would surely not satirize the movement. Or, would he? Fast forward to *Sex Jack*, and in a climactic scene, an underground revolutionary group disintegrates as one member after another takes turns having sex with the two female members. As one woman lies on the floor, submitting to her "comrades," the other woman, with trembling hands, rapidly reads from a manifesto:
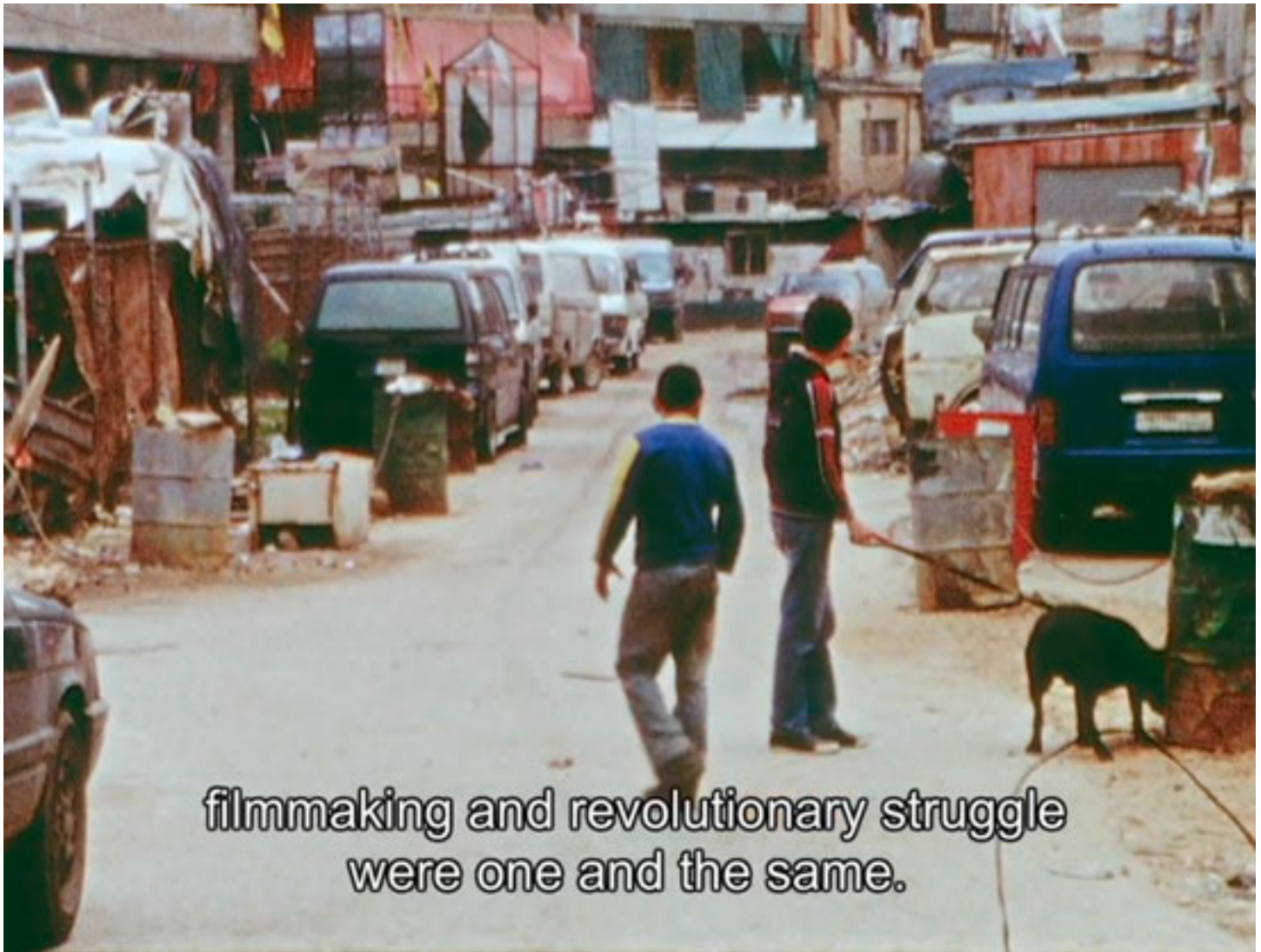
Eric Baudelaire, The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, 2011. Film still.

Woman 2: On our own initiative we consciously revoke our own nationality.
Woman 1: [*moan*] And force our way across the border. [*moan*] It's only the beginning. We reject any notion of phases. Our unit is capable of struggling for world revolution and building a world headquarters. Fight on a worldwide scale, spilling into North Korea. [*moan*] We will grow and progress towards Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Korea, the Near and Middle East. We call on all our Japanese comrades. We call on all revolutionaries. Long live communism. Long live world revolution.[17]

The scene lays bare the hypocrisy—gendered and otherwise—of the JRA's revolutionary ethos. But this film was made in 1970, and Wakamatsu and screenwriter Adachi (writing under the collective pseudonym Izuru Deguchi) were still enthusiastic supporters of the JRA at

that time. Why did they make a film that seemingly lampooned the group? Why did other JRA members not condemn the film? In fact, how could Adachi become the JRA's official spokesperson *after* making this film? Was everyone in on the joke, or is the irony only visible to us today? How do we understand this film when compared to Dziga Vertov Group's *Ici et alleurs* (1976), a project more legible as a critique of left violence, made in a moment when hope had not been yet discarded? For the Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Anne-Marie Miéville), events intervened to bring emotional distance and an ironic doubling to the script. The work on the original film, *Jusqu'à la victoire* (1970), was interrupted by evets in the region. By the time the Dziga Vertov Group returned to the footage, some of the Palestinian guerrillas they had been profiling had been killed in the Black September war. Facing the chasm between filmed images of inevitable triumph and the ruins of the movement, Godard turned the camera around—questioning the specter of guns that do not fire, and audiences that will a

Eric Baudelaire, The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, 2011. Film still.

reality into existence. *Ici et alleurs* is the result: a postmortem of a failed movement whose members have not yet fully absorbed the knowledge of that failure. Are Wakamatsu's films very different from this, or do they inhabit a similar sense of impending failure? Furahata argues that Wakamatsu's work carries an element of "belatedness," where events are recycled, thus allowing the viewer a line of sight into the gap between journalism and cinema.[18] I think Wakamatsu expected that the disjuncture would provoke in audiences a cynical eye toward the news cycle, which was usually so critical of the JRA. However, in the scene I described above, the emotional poverty of the group becomes stark, inviting a criticality of claims about revolutionary spirit. What is extraordinary in the film is that the JRA is being imploded from within during their high point—by one of the group's own ideologues and fellow travelers.

If such premonitions of contradiction appear in a film made when the JRA was at its zenith, how has Masao

Adachi navigated the space of revolutionary exile-—when failure is much more visible? To explore these questions, Eric Baudelaire tracked down an aging Adachi. Thinking through this space of the stranded protagonist's exile, Baudelaire introduced the idea of *l'anabase*, or "anabasis." The word comes from the Greek, meaning both "to embark" and "to return." Baudelaire uses it to indicate a "movement towards home of men who are lost, outlawed, and out of place."[19] In his book *Le Siècle*, Alain Badiou has a chapter on anabasis; he regards it as an allegory of the twentieth century drawing to a close, and of the drifting of a soul caught between two options: "disciplined invention and uncertain drifting."[20] According to Badiou, this idea first appeared in 401 BC, when Cyrus the Young led thousands of Greek mercenaries across the Tigris. During the ensuing battle, the Persian army killed Cyrus, rendering the Greek soldiers suddenly headless, stranded in enemy territory. Their unguided wandering through this unknown land became the plot for the play *Anabasis*, attributed to Xenophon, a student of Socrates

Eric Baudelaire, The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years without Images, 2011. Film still.

and a professional soldier. Xenophon becomes the protagonist of the play when he is elected rearguard commander after Cyrus's death. In *Anabasis*, Xenophon uses the term to also symbolize the collapse of a sense of order after the sudden shift in subjective position from heroic warriors to leaderless strangers in a hostile land. Reviewing the twentieth century use of the term by poets Alexis Leger (under the pen name Saint-John Perse, in 1924) and Paul Ancel (under the pen name Paul Celan, in 1963), Baudelaire suggests that there are two opposed literary motifs at play: a search for home, and the invention of a destiny in a new home.

When Baudelaire finally finds Adachi, the JRA member has gone through a second dislocation. After two decades of hiding in Lebanon, improvements in face-recognition technology led to Adachi's arrest. He was flown to Japan to stand trial, but the court failed to prove that Adachi had a direct role in JRA attacks. He was a spokesperson for the group in Lebanon, but was not involved in violence. The films he wrote for Wakamatsu, with their melding of guns

and sex, were not admissible as evidence (They were only fiction, after all.). In the end, Adachi was charged only with forging passports, and he was released from prison after three years. Later, when European interest in Wakamatsu's films picked up, Adachi was invited to come to a festival in France (this trip would have paralleled his 1971 trip to Cannes, when a stopover in Palestine resulted in the film *Red Army/PFLP: Declaration of World War* and led to his stay in Beirut). But, instead of traveling to France, Adachi discovered that the Japanese authorities would not issue him a passport—he was back "home," but trapped within its borders. Baudelaire's research leads him to Adachi, but not to an interview in Japan as he expects. Instead, Adachi, who wants to return to filmmaking, asks Baudelaire to help him recover fragments of the Lebanon he can no longer visit: "When you go to Beirut, please shoot some images for me to use in my next film."

Fulfilling this part of the agreement, Baudelaire makes a trip to Beirut and then returns to Tokyo with 16 mm

footage of a changed city, its post-Hariri construction boom rendering the place unrecognizable to Adachi. At this point in the film, the audience may expect to finally be rewarded with Adachi's recollection of the early days of the JRA: a what-why-how sequence that will give us an understanding of the group's ideology (a better understanding than Farrell and Steinhoff provide). Instead, Baudelaire presents an elliptical series of encounters in which Adachi mourns his filmmaking life and the loss of Beirut:

> Adachi: If I had continued working, I might have been able to make many more interesting films. If I had stayed in Japan without going to the Middle East, I would have shot many more films. But on the other hand, I am a heavy drinker. I might have died from alcohol abuse 20 or 25 years ago if I had stayed in Japan … So perhaps it's all the same. The question of "here" or "there"—being in Japan or the Middle East, it may be different in a geographical sense, but I think actually there is only one "here." If you are in the Middle East the Middle East is "here." Wherever you go, there is only "here." The point is to pursue a "here" "elsewhere."[21]

The film ends here, fading to black. Adachi has brought us back to the unfamiliar familiar—"elsewhere" as a metaphor for the universal. The Japanese Red Army failed to start a world war, a universal insurrection. Many years later, this surviving member seems to want to create a language for a different universal project.

In Don DeLillo's *Mao I*, Lebanon's pious political landscape feels strangely familiar even before we encounter *l'anabase*: "It is the lunar part of us that dreams of wasted terrain. She hears their voices calling across the leveled city. Our only language is Beirut."[22] Anabasis, or wandering in the hopes of creating, is a theme we glean from the wreckage of movement energies. In the context of Baudelaire's film, Pierre Zaoui recounts the original story of Xenophon's Greek soldiers, in chapters that match the path of the Japanese Red Army in the turbulent 1970s: first the initial conflict between thirst for the outside and mercenary interest; then the death of Cyrus and the subsequent wandering in the desert. That wandering was not aimless, but rather a journey that required crime to sustain itself—that is, the routed army needed to plunder to survive. As for the Greeks, so for the JRA, who entered into ever more fragile alliances by the end of the 1970s: Algeria, Syria, Libya, and so on. "Nostalgia for the kingdom of water" drove the sojourners, but when they finally reached home, nothing was as it was promised to be. Adachi realizes that, by the end, the largest collateral damage of the JRA project is its own members. The cities that were the stage for their actions—Dhaka, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Hague—survived, but

men did not. Zaoui reminds us that " *Anabasis* is not the tale of a ruin of the ruined, but of a ruin of ruiners, or people who are the chief architects of their own ruin."[23]

Baudelaire's film on Adachi encapsulates a bittersweet look at youthful possibilities. This is a reversal of the heroic narrative we expect in these moments—uprisings that do not result in victory for the vanguard. Binary notions of failure/success do not necessarily illuminate, and sometimes even obscure, the optimism that was embedded in these moments. There was an almost impossible belief that a transformation was "just around the corner," and all that was needed was a "little push." Though Adachi says little about why he joined the JRA, his thoughts on "elsewhere" hint at why movements choose certain modes of confrontation "in the heat of the moment." His collaborations with Wakamatsu exploited the anarchic sexual energy of pink film, but were also tinged with the pathos of (possible) failure. That possibility of failure may have even encouraged Adachi and the JRA to push a little faster, a little harder, just to get past the moment of doubt. Adachi's own earlier film *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (1969) gives us another lens through which to consider his time in exile. In that film, bleak landscapes draw our attention to the constant vagrancy that shapes the protagonists (and the filmmaker). In Baudelaire, we find echoes of that same landscape, with Lebanon playing itself, but also standing in for Japan, and finally for Adachi– alone without a nation. While we hear Adachi's voice or read his emails, lingering shots of a highway fade into the horizon. Somewhere on screen, or in the timbre of Adachi's voice (now hesitant, now certain), is the moment when a foretold failure became the actual.

X

Naeem Mohaiemen researches borders, wars, and belonging within Bangladesh's two postcolonial markers (1947, 1971). Project chapters include United Red Army (2011), a film about the Japanese Red Army, which premiered at Sharjah Biennial 10. The next chapter, *Afsan's Long Day* (2014), explored a Maoist insurgency and premiered at MOMA, New York. The latest chapter, *Last Man in Dhaka Central* (2015), will premiere at Venice Biennial 2015. A survey show and publication, Prisoners of Shothik Itihash (Correct History), was at Kunsthalle Basel in 2014. Mohaiemen is a Ph.D. student in Anthropology at Columbia University, and a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow (film-video). He is a member of Gulf Labor, which advocates for the rights of migrant labor building museums in Abu Dhabi.

1
Patricia Steinhoff, "Portrait of a Terrorist: An Interview with Közö Okamoto," *Asian Survey* XVI (Sept. 1976), 842

2
Kyodo News Service, "Ex-Red Army member Maruoka dies in prison hospital," May 29, 2011.

3
Naeem Mohaiemen, *United Red Army (The Young Man Was, Part 1)* , 70 min. (2012), 00:56:14.

4
Naeem Mohaiemen, Interview with Carole Wells, Los Angeles, March 2013.

5
Mohaiemen, *United Red Army*, 01:04:10.

6
Charity Scribner, *After the Red Army Faction: Gender, Culture, and Militancy* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2014; Ulrike Meinhof, *Everybody Talks About the Weather ... We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008); Astrid Proll, *Baader Meinhof: Pictures on the Run, 1967–77* (Zurich: Scalo, 1998).

7
William R. Farrell, *Blood and Rage: The Story of the Japanese Red Army* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990, xi.

8
Ibid., 3.

9
Nagata Hiroko described herself to Japanese police as a "very sensitive person" with parents who "gave her all that she could want." Farrell argues that the arrival of puberty set off a spiral of self-loathing in Nagata, as her "husky voice" and "slightly bulging eyes" reduced her "femininity." Nagata compounded this by wearing "wrinkled clothes" and "rarely applying makeup." Ibid., 4.

10
Ibid., 5.

11
According to Steinhoff, the young men and women drawn to become members of the underground group were "quite normal individuals" who were "well-socialized members of Japanese society." Patricia Steinhoff, "Death by Defeatism and Other Fables: The Social

Dynamics of the Renko Sekigun Purge," in *Japanese Social Organization* , ed. Rakie Sugiyama Lebra (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 195.

12
Patricia Steinhoff, "Hijackers, Bombers, and Bank Robbers: Managerial Style in the Japanese Red Army," *The Journal of Asian Studies* , vol. 48, no. 4 (Nov. 1989): 730, 731.

13
Although Steinhoff does not mention Werner H. Erhard's EST program by name, it may be what she is thinking of when she compares these JRA confrontations to "consciousness-raising techniques familiar to American women's groups" (Steinhoff, "Death by Defeatism and Other Fables," 198).

14
Eric Baudelaire, *L'Anabase de May et Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, et 27 années sans images* [booklet] (Centre D'Art Contemporain la Synagogue de Delme, 2011), 12.

15
Jasper Sharp, *Behind the Pink Curtain: The Complete History of Japanese Sex Cinema* (Guildford: FAB Press, 2008).

16
Yuriko Furahata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 100.

17
Koji Wakamatsu, dir., and Masao Adachi, screenplay, *Seizoku / Sex Jack , 70* min. (1970). For an extended discussion of Wakamatsu and Adachi's films: Go Hirasawa, *Koji Wakamatsu: Cinéaste de la Révolte* , Imho, 2010; Go Hirasawa, *Masao Adachi: Le bus de la révolution passera bientot près de chez toi* , Rouge profond, 2012.

18
Yuriko Furahata, *Cinema of Actuality* , 114.

19
Baudelaire, *L'Anabase de May...* [booklet], 28.

20
Alain Badiou, *Le Siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005), 121. (Excerpts translated by Eric Baudelaire.)

21
Eric Baudelaire, *L'Anabase de May et Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, et 27 années sans images* [film] 85 min. (Centre D'Art Contemporain la Synagogue de Delme, 2011), 01:21:00.

22
Don DeLillo, *Mao I* (New York: Penguin Group, 1991), 239.

23
Pierre Zaoui, *L'Anabase de la Terreur: vouloir (ne pas) comprende* , trans. Matthew Cunningham (Centre D'Art Contemporain la Synagogue de Delme, 2011), 45.

Nothing is less passive than the act of fleeing, of exiting. Defection modifies the conditions within which the struggle takes place, rather than presupposing those conditions to be an unalterable horizon; it modifies the context within which a problem has arisen, rather than facing this problem by opting for one or the other of the provided alternatives. In short, exit consists of unrestrained invention which alters the rules of the game and throws the adversary completely off balance.[1]

—Paolo Virno

Simon Sheikh

Circulation and Withdrawal, Part II: Withdrawal

There may not be a notion in recent aesthetic and political discourse that has been more romanticized and problematized than the notion of an exit or a withdrawal, or as it is often described, *exodus*. It is, however, often exaggerated and misunderstood in the usage of it as the possibility to escape hegemonic social structures, or even the effects of capital itself. This originates, famously and notoriously, from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's use of exodus as equivalent to desertion and nomadism in resistance strategies, or what they call "Being-Against" in *Empire*: "Whereas in the disciplinary era sabotage was the fundamental notion of resistance, in the era of imperial control it may be desertion," and, moreover, "this desertion does not have a place; it is the evacuation of the places of power."[2] Withdrawal here is directly political, and supplants previous models of resistance such as sabotage, and it is implied that rather than fighting power head-on, or if you will, the centers of power, symbolically and physically, one must instead withdraw from power, walk away from the structures and subjectivities of contemporary capital. Furthermore, if in the networked society it is not easy to define the exact locations of power, one can, presumably, always find exit ways and loopholes in the network itself, in the seemingly totalizing system that is Empire. Tactically and politically, Hardt and Negri thus conflate three different forms of mobility under the rubric of withdrawal: *nomadism, desertion,* and *exodus*. If these types of withdrawal belong to different subjects in different spatiotemporal configurations, they are here united in order to create a contemporary form of class struggle, even if it is a double movement that both, positively, "pushes from behind," and, negatively, "pulls forward."[3]

Hardt and Negri have, quite rightly, been criticized for this somewhat romantic construction, for suggesting that one
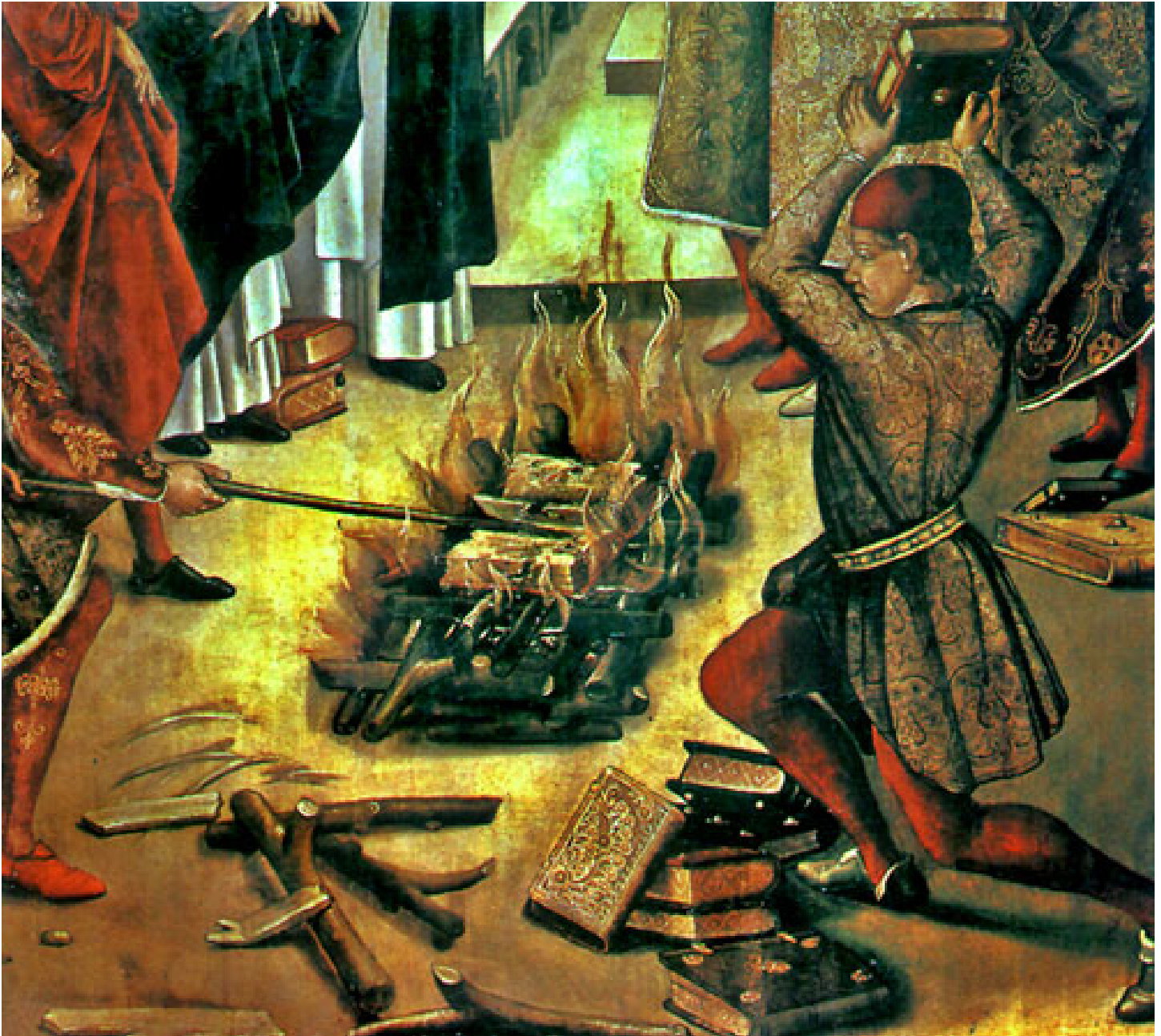
A detail of a Pedro Berruguete painting represents Saint Dominic of Guzman. The Saint's books are said to have miraculously survived a fire.

can combat power by abandoning it (do the relations and rules of power ever really leave you?), and for seeing nomadism and exodus as the same movement, making refugees similar to conscientious objectors. For this reason alone, one would hesitate to invoke withdrawal. But exodus has religious overtones which are highly objectionable, and more neutral terms like "exit" or "withdrawal" are useful, at least in the present discussion. Now, as an historical argument, the case for exit or withdrawal draws on Deleuze's reading of Foucault, and the suggestion that disciplinary regimes have turned into a society of control, what they call the "imperial." But, crucially, contrary to Deleuze, control and discipline do not compliment each other; instead, one succeeds the other. This is, presumably, also the reason why they see sabotage and withdrawal as two different strategies, whereas in the guerrilla tactics they have likely taken the terms from, these would always, and inevitably, go hand in hand, as surge and retreat, attack *and* exit. Indeed exit, as proposed by Paolo Virno rather than exodus, may be the preferable term, since it indicates a shift from a religious imagery to both a military deployment and everyday language, and, as quoted in the epigraph, exit as fleeing does not have to do with passivity, but with tactics, and with maneuvers that change the rules of the game, or at the very least break them.

Cover of Metropoli, an Italian publication of the 1970s for which Paolo Virno was a contributor.

For Virno, the notion of exit is connected to the term "civil disobedience," as acts of not only protest, but also of active refusal to participate in the surplus production and exploitation of labor under the conditions of capital. It is not, however, unproductive; rather, "exit hinges on a latent kind of wealth" and "an exuberance of possibilities" for producing value that is not accountable, not transformable into cultural entrepreneurship.[4] This is, of course, the question that faces all critical magazines, not only in the way they often employ an extended use of unpaid labor, not in a sense of exploitation, but as rather a removal of both work time and free time from surplus production. In order to create criticality, withdrawal is necessary, not as an inactivity, but as an alternative production of value and meaning:

Defection allows for a dramatic, autonomous, and affirmative expression of this surplus; and in this way it impedes the "transfer" of this surplus into the power of state administration, it impedes its configuration as productive resource of the capitalistic enterprise.[5]

This withdrawal is, as we shall see, simultaneously contradicted by circulation, partly in terms of which reach

and which constituency the magazine has and wants, as well as in how it deals with the inevitable production of surplus that occurs with increased circulation. The question here is one of sustainability, both economically and intellectually. On the one hand, it is impossible in the long run to sustain production based only on free labor, or very low costs; on the other, there is the question of how the income, however minimal, is distributed among the producers of the magazine. Moreover, evading the state's regulation of your personal economic situation (i.e., taxes, benefits, and so forth), while producing public things, such as a publication, is also difficult to sustain over longer periods, due to the confluence of economy and governmentality in modern state power, notwithstanding the issue of alternative economies and their possibilities for cultural and critical production. Exit is thus never absolute, but part of tactical movements of circulation and withdrawal. Furthermore, criticism must always have an object, whether in the narrow sense of an artwork or exhibition, or in the broadest sense of the art world, societal structures of power, or capitalism as a world system of governance and exploitation. In other words, your intellectual stance, as critique, must define its position not just in terms of ideology, but also, more methodologically, in terms of angle and vicinity.

With this in mind, we can revisit the complications and controversies surrounding the Documenta 12 magazine project in terms of how critical magazines, or critical positions, place themselves in relation to power and discourse, that is, the perceived hegemonic powers of Documenta and the competing discourses and critical positions of the other magazines. The invitation to partake in the magazine project, a formalization of cooperation, exchange, and circulation, can be understood as interpellation, as the center of art world power bringing the various magazines into a relation not only with each other, but also with the place of power. And it may be precisely for this reason that some chose to withdraw—in order to evacuate the place of power, as it were. At the same time, this resistance made possible exchange, solidarity, and commonality among a whole circuit of magazines, and made discourse-production less possible, to the extent of excluding the potential for these hundreds of magazines to form a bloc of power within the world of art, and in relation to Documenta as their centralizing point. Circulation and withdrawal became a matter for each individual publication to perform, circumnavigate, or embrace in various ways, which, ironically, only highlighted their placement *in* the market place, as competitors in the sense of discourse and critique, as well as in terms of readers and market shares, making withdrawal not a denial of the market and the magazine's participation in it, but a way of securing your share and position through the assertion of a critical stance. Even in withdrawal, a magazine cannot be a powerless structure.

Withdrawal is the *affirmation*, in Virno's terms, of surplus, in the form of an *excess* of meaning, and a *generosity* of

Members of the XV Congress of the Bolshevik Party wave pamphlets, Moscow, 1927.

time investments, in spite of economic demands and promises. As critique, it is not ordered, and it is often unwanted. It answers the claims inherent in artistic production and products themselves, rather than directly confronting the structures of power, in the realization that those in power, both in art and in politics, do not feel compelled to answer in any case. As Michel Foucault has shown in his seminar on *parrhésia*, the ability to speak truth to power requires a specific relation, an actual closeness to power, that places you in a position such that the sovereign will listen to you—as a senator, advisor, or the like. What Foucault was questioning was the figure of the truth-sayer. Who can speak the truth, and does it require certain types of speaking as well as taking up

certain hazardous positions? In antiquity, the occupation of this position was at the peril of one's own life, and thus required courage and self-sacrifice. This has led many a contemporary commentator to focus on the heroic aspects of *parrhésia*, pointing out injustices and speaking on behalf of the people against the powers that be, regardless of the consequences for oneself. However, for Foucault the situation is more complex, indeed doubly so: in order to have the ability to speak the truth to power in antiquity, one could not be just anyone, one had to have a position that was somehow connected to the despot, and speak from a position of authority. Secondly, *parrhésia* does not only mean to speak the truth to someone, i.e., those in power; it also implies the ability and insight *to*

speak the truth about oneself. This would indicate that speaking the truth also means self-reflection, and the willingness to disclose the position from which one is speaking, and through which means and methods one is constructing the speaking (of the truth). To speak the truth is also to speak the truth about oneself and one's actsof speaking, thus exposing the subject and object of the speech equally.[6]

Critical magazines today realize that they, for better or for worse, are not in such a position within the art world, that a specific type of criticism is purely historical, and its close relation to the places of power has forever shifted to other agents, such as art patrons, collectors, art advisors, and curators—roughly in that order. To the extent that the object of critical theory is the mode of governance, or the distribution of power, critical theory addresses this object through cultural forms or products, as manifestations and critiques of power relations. That is, on the one hand cultural productions are symptomatic of these relations, while on the other analytic of them—having the potential of intervention and critique, again with a specific placement and angle, or, if you will, method of intervention and mode of address. Critical writing is thus a sort of double or shadow, whose task is not only to trace the work, but also to respond to it and to separate the symptom and the analysis, as well as to unpack the overlaps, contrasts, mergers, and mutations of these two moments and movements. And this is a radically different task than that of art advising—or that of the aesthetic judgment of yore, for that matter!

A form of publishing that has always been constituted, at best, by a kind of shadow world that is both withdrawn from and fully dedicated to its object of study is the so-called *fanzine*. As opposed to a magazine proper, it is irregular and has less visibility and circulation, and the fanzine is usually not published by a company and thus not professionalized. It retains an affirmative amateurism. The places from which fanzines speak are far removed from the places of power, and are usually from below, namely from the point of view of the recipient, but refusing to be a consumer, instead positioning him or herself as a coproducer of meaning. Fandom should here be read not as blindly idolizing, but rather as highly committed and critical of the object of affection, studied in minute, often obsessive, detail. As a labor of love, a fanzine is totally dedicated and committed to its objects of study, but crucially recognizes this object of desire as an ideal rather than reality, and thus to be held accountable for its ideality, ideals, and ideology, all.

It may be instructive to look at how fanzines outside the world of art, but in the related realm of music, have operated. One of the first rock music fanzine editors, Paul Williams, wrote in his very first editorial about his publication: "This is not a service magazine," going on to state how he was not interested in predicting sales or pleasing the producers, but rather in writing intelligent

Crawdaddy! Magazine, no.8 (1976)

criticism about the music, as opposed to the traditional trade rags.[7] Williams instead makes the following apparently simple statement of purpose: "The aim of this magazine is readability."[8] Readability was meant here to indicate that rather than servicing the music industry, the magazine was for and by its readers (as a fanzine, this would most likely have literally been the case)—but surely it also implies transparency? Surely it implies that the position of the publication was easy to identify, to read? Withdrawal was, in this case, from the demands of industry, and in the hope that another type of circulation was possible (i.e., an alternative culture), Williams himself was to withdraw from his magazine at the very moment it became normative for a particular kind of critical writing about music, when the underground went overground with mainstream magazines such as the dreaded *Rolling Stone*. However, readability could also be read (pun well intended) in terms of an attitude to the objects of study, as an insistence on them as discursive statements that can, and must, be read, and thus interpreted and discussed. It is a commitment to circulation as much as to withdrawal.

Other fanzines soon sprang up, consciously withdrawing from the orthodoxy and hegemony of magazines like *Rolling Stone*—for example, magazines such as *Who Put*

the Bomp and many other punk magazines to come throughout the 1970s. *BOMP!*, as it soon became known, was a defiant act of withdrawal from the mainstream, while it simultaneously existed through the form of publication and thus circulation, and with a writing style that allowed for wild experimentation, and with reappraisals of the overlooked alongside furious attacks on the conventionally promoted. *BOMP!* was willfully marginal and oppositional, insisting on a specific aesthetic and attitude that was later to be identified as punk. It was, if you will, committed to a specific and almost partisan point of view, with no pretentions of neutrality and reasonability. And whereas the critical stance of Williams's pioneering *Crawdaddy!* is instructive, it is, in our post-internet actuality, perhaps best coupled with the fanatic immersion into specific aesthetics as propagated by *BOMP!* editor Greg Shaw, who called his editorials "R.I.A.W.O.L." Behind this obscure acronym lay the seemingly simple words "Rock and Roll is a way of life."[9] But what exactly does such a life entail, if we think of it as a response, as listening, as reading? And can we now make a similar claim for the writing and function of theory, that of criticality as a way of life?

X

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1
Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Semiotexte, 2004), 70.

2
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 212.

3
Ibid., 213.

4
Virno, 70.

5
Ibid., 71.

6
Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others, Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

7
The Crawdaddy! Book , ed. Paul Williams (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2002), 10.

8
Ibid, 11.

9
For more on the history and legacy of this magazine, see Suzy Shaw and Mick Farren *, BOMP!: Saving the World One Record at a Time* (Pasadena, CA: AMMO Books, 2007); and Suzy Shaw and Mike Stax, *BOMP! 2: Born in the Garage* (San Diego, CA: UT Publishing, 2009).

Beti Zerovc

Joséphin Péladan: A Proto-Curator?

A quintessential aspect of aesthetic modernism in the nineteenth century is that it produced not only a body of artworks and a profusion of – *isms*, but also a body of institutions and a template of practices that, unlike the art itself, were accepted almost without protest by the European and American art public.[1] As early as the late nineteenth century, the field of exhibition-making also had isolated examples of figures similar to the independent curator of contemporary art—although, of course, without the institutional support that is usual today.[2] One such "proto-curatorial" figure was Joséphin Péladan, who among other things was the founder and director of the Catholic Rosicrucian Order of the Temple and the Grail (L'Ordre de la Rose-Croix Catholique du Temple et du Graal) in Paris. In the 1890s, Péladan organized large group exhibitions as the order's main public events, in which he presented artists who had been selected in accordance with his very particular conceptions of art. Viewed from today's perspective, he was a typical independent curator who, at every level and wherever present, defended his "particular position" in art, communicating it through his public image and lifestyle as well.[3]

Today, Péladan is not well known for his curatorial work, not because he was so far ahead of his time that, say, his contemporaries did not understand him, but rather because, when it came to positioning himself successfully in art with an enduring place in history, he made several "mistakes." Among other things, despite Péladan's hard work and the genuinely large influence he enjoyed in his day, he did not do enough, and above all was not sufficiently convincing, to ensure that he would be "right" in art history. He did not persevere long enough in his practice, he was not successful enough in assembling a coherent group of artists, and he was not well connected to the market. Furthermore, he was so extremely pompous and so obviously contradictory that it made it difficult for anyone to take up his cause openly and in earnest. Mario Praz described him as heroic in intention and comic in results.[4] Péladan experienced a small revival in the late 1960s, when symbolism as a movement again acquired a certain general importance.[5] Hippies, too, found him interesting because of his strange attire, his fascination with magic and the Near East, his rejection of weapons, and the like.

Péladan

A brief look at the life of this bizarre, complex individual is needed if we want to understand his proto-curatorship and compare it with contemporary curatorial practices. Joseph Péladan (1858–1918), as he was originally called (he later changed his first name to Joséphin), was born in Lyons in the family of the fervent Catholic journalist and mystic Louis-Adrien Péladan. He thus acquired his zeal for mysticism and Catholicism from his family, while his

Alexandre Séon, Portrait of Joséphin Péladan, c. 1892. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Lyon.

delight in costumes, mysteries, unusual rituals, and pseudonyms (Sâr Mérodack, among many others) was common among occultists and artistic circles of the time. We need only recall, for example, the group Les Nabis.[6] Péladan carefully crafted his external appearance: he wore long tunics, silk and lace, had long hair and a long beard, and sported eye-catching, provocative accessories.

He travelled in Italy as a young man, after which he arrived in Paris filled with fervor and loudly announced his mission in the press. Among other things, in a review of the 1883 Salon, he wrote: "I believe in the Ideal, in Tradition, in Hierarchy."[7] In short, he declared war on every kind of realism. In 1884, he published his first major literary work,

the novel *Le Vice suprême*, which was followed not only by other novels but also many plays, articles, reviews, and scholarly works on art. He even published two travelogue-type books— *La terre du sphinx* (on Egypt) and *La terre du christ* (on the Holy Land)—and some esoteric "self-improvement" books, including books on becoming a magus and becoming a fairy. Among his many other extraordinary accomplishments, he claimed to have discovered a new location of the tomb of Christ. He called his vast cycle of novels *La décadence latine*: his belief that the corrupt and irreligious Latin race must fall appears as a common thread and motto in most of the works. The novels reflect his fear of democracy and the coming of the barbarians. They deal with mysticism and strange events, and they are usually plotted around Péladan himself in the guise of a literary character. Péladan's hero is always in pursuit of the Ideal, for which he makes the greatest sacrifices and renounces everything worldly, as deeply infatuated noblewomen try to seduce and distract him. Only rarely is this formula abandoned. Art is normally involved as well—its redeeming potential, the struggle for true art, and so forth. For example, in the novel *L'androgyne*, Péladan promises to crusade against all that is ugly, all that is vulgar, both in his writing and in real life.[8] To this end, he advocates an indivisible art that can take us back to the Catholicism of the Renaissance, which, he argues, produced the greatest number of masterpieces—the highest proof of the existence of God.

Despite his enduring fascination with the occult, Péladan was an idiosyncratic and fanatical Roman Catholic who zealously promoted the Catholic faith. He believed that while the church opposed sorcery, it was not against magic and even supported it. The bombastic fanfare around the publication of his novel *Le Vice suprême* brought the occultist Stanislas de Guaıta to him, and together in 1888 they revived the Rosicrucian Order (L'Ordre de la Rose-Croix) in Paris. Philosophical differences soon led to internal disputes, and at the start of the 1890s Péladan founded his own Catholic Rosicrucian order, the Order of the Temple and the Grail.

The members of the Order performed works of mercy to prepare for the coming age of the Holy Spirit and, most importantly, sought an inner perfection that would allow them to live a contented life on a perverted earth. The main focal points of the Order's work were aesthetic, and its most visible public events were, in fact, exhibitions—art salons held regularly from 1892 to 1897. These were typical oppositional exhibitions, which proclaimed that, unlike the once-official Salon and similar contemporary art shows, they were presenting "true" art. This, of course, meant art as it was understood by the enthusiastic curator Péladan, who with great fervor and pomposity invited his chosen artists to exhibit.[9]

Félicien Rops, Frontispiece for the Joséphin Péladan book Le Vice suprême, 1884. Etching and aquatint.

Péladan, the Proto-Curator

What aspects, then, of Péladan's manner of exhibiting the art of his day make him seem so close to the modern-day curator?

The first is, certainly, the simple fact that, quite unusually for his time, he decided to convey his philosophical and critical views and ideas about art not only in writing but also through large group exhibitions. He evidently decided on the exhibition form because it allowed him to use other people's works to illustrate and communicate his worldview, and the beliefs he was advocating. This understanding of the exhibition makes his approach identical to that of today's curators: an exhibition is not only a medium for showing art but also a vehicle that can work toward a variety of goals, for instance, encouraging social renewal. Apart from his love for art, what justified

and confirmed Péladan in his commitment to such work was his dedication to a higher goal, the Catholic renewal of society. This, to be sure, makes him ideologically distant from contemporary curators' commitment to fight global capitalism or support politically correct views, but the principle is basically the same.

Because of this "utilitarian" attitude toward exhibition-making, Péladan is, in fact, already a typical curator with a particular position, one that defines all his projects in a characteristic way and stamps them with a distinctive mark. Turning things around a bit, we can say that by enforcing his own ideas, dictating the messages, using a characteristic "form" for his exhibitions, and choosing very specific artists, Péladan developed a distinct authorial style of curating in which his name alone informed viewers of what they could expect.

Like modern-day curators, Péladan also established his own circle of artists, for whom he was a fervent supporter and advocate. As is true today, the curator's proximity meant, for the artist, considerable help in becoming established, but also that the curator's worldview, narrative, and speech would considerably define his art, shaping an interpretation and staking out an understanding of him and his work that he himself might not necessarily embrace.

Furthermore, with Péladan's work, we can already witness the merging into a single job of the two positions that are usually kept separate in the art world, namely, those of producer and artistic director; indeed, it is this specific combination that gives curators today such extraordinary power. The ability to organize and coordinate numerous large productions thus brings the producer as well a direct means for establishing his ideas, views, and artistic aspirations, since in the process the producer is not divorced from the creative function but rather defines even the exhibiting artists and their work, and conceptualizes the event as a whole. It is understandable, then, that such a curator-as-producer also takes the lion's share of the prestige and fame, as the greatest part of such bonuses attaches specifically to his name.[10]

Péladan, the Producer

If, of the two positions just mentioned, we first look a little closer at the producer's side, we find that Péladan performed this role very well and used work methods that are completely modern. He knew how to acquire devoted collaborators, the necessary funding, and a prestigious venue, and how to promote the event in a way that would attract media attention and the widest possible public. Let us take his first salon as an example.

Labelled as a *geste esthétique* and *acta Rosae crucis* (acts of the Rose Cross), the exhibition was held at the Galerie Durand-Ruel from March 10 to April 10, 1892.

Describing the show in today's terms, we would say it took an interdisciplinary and intermedia approach, was conceived as an integrated spatial installation—a kind of "environment"—and included many accompanying activities. On the opening night, the exhibition rooms were festooned with flowers and fragrant with heavy oriental perfumes, and the guests were greeted with the prelude from Wagner's *Parsifal* as they entered. Among other things, the opening also featured specially composed music by Erik Satie. This whole "circus" (excessive even for those days), which Péladan took in dead earnest, was just what the viewers wanted; they flocked to the show in droves, perhaps looking not so much for aesthetic delights as to satisfy their curiosity and lust for sensation. Those present on the day of the opening included Paul Verlaine, Gustave Moreau, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and even Emile Zola, who was hated by the symbolists—names, in other words, that guaranteed the event's reputation as a prestigious occasion.[11] We can conclude that the salon was very successful, despite receiving a mixed response from the critics.[12]

Péladan solved the problem of funding, and made the social connections needed for success, by involving powerful and influential sponsors in his shows. For his first salon he found such a backer in Count Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, who initially was one of his most important collaborators and also took part in the salon as a painter. De la Rochefoucauld generously supported the first salon financially and put his reputation behind it; he was thus crucially important in creating the initial momentum for Péladan's salons. Nevertheless, already in the first salon he and Péladan quarrelled a great deal over all sorts of things, and in the end de la Rochefoucauld had no choice but to leave the group. De la Rochefoucauld, the salon's main financial backer, who held with Péladan the highest position in the Rosicrucian Order, apparently fell into Péladan's disfavor because, among other things, he tried to win acceptance for some of his ideas about the selection and installation of the artworks at the salon.[13]

Péladan designed his art project to be explicitly international; he exhibited many Dutch artists, including Toorop, as well as such Swiss artists as Schwabe and Hodler, the latter shone at the first salon with his work *Disappointed Souls*. Another well-represented group were the Belgians, who also seem to have been the most enthusiastic about Péladan, especially Jean Delville, who for a time served as a kind of ambassador for him and his order in Brussels, and Fernand Knopff, who provided illustrations for his novels.[14] Although successful in attracting foreign painters to his salon, Péladan was not particularly successful in his attempts to expand the Order's network beyond Paris, and its foreign affiliates never really developed.[15] Among other reasons, the Order's involvement with visual art was probably too short-lived for such an expansion; Péladan announced that the Paris Rosicrucian salon of 1897 would be the last, and when it closed, he apparently stopped curating contemporary art.

Péladan, the Artistic Director

Presumably, it was Péladan's ability and success as a producer and organizer that secured him the interest and participation of a wide range of artists. Left to fend for themselves on the free market, artists in the nineteenth century increasingly saw regular exhibiting and press coverage as matters of survival and became increasingly dependent on—and in an unequal relation to—potential exhibitors.[16] Given the comparison with today's curatorial practice, it is particularly important to underscore that Péladan considered exhibition-making as a subjective creative challenge where he could have his ideas and views recognized and where he could realize his ambitions, while the artist was left to adapt to all this—or otherwise only invited to participate if the curator deemed him suitable. With the exhibition so devised, Péladan then saw it and defended it as, essentially, his own intellectual property, explaining and justifying it from his own personal perspective.

In this respect, Péladan created precise directives for the artists and works he would consider presenting at the Salon de la Rose-Croix. Although the expression "curatorial concept" was not in use at the time, his writings and public statements define in precise terms the kind of art he supported and considered worthy of being shown in the salon. Péladan did, however, conceptualize his exhibition practice in the form of the Order's art program, which was published as a set of rules. Although the ideas and subject matter of his desired art do not in themselves interest us here (at least not primarily), these rules can be summarized to get a sense of the considerable clarity of Péladan's concept, as well as the freedom (or lack thereof) he allowed art and the artist.[17] He writes in Section II of his rules that the Rosicrucian salons strive "to ruin realism, reform Latin taste and create a school of idealistic art." In Section III, he says that the order accepts works by invitation only and "imposes no other programme than that of beauty, nobility, lyricism." Nevertheless, in Section IV he lists "for greater clarity" the kind of subjects that will be rejected "no matter how well executed, even if perfectly": history painting, patriotic and military painting, "all representations of contemporary, private or public life," portraits (with rare exceptions), "all rustic scenes," landscapes, any still life, seascapes, humorous scenes, flowers, and so on.

"The Order favours first the Catholic ideal and Mysticism," he wrote, followed in importance by legend, myth, allegory, dream, and it wished to see content related to these topics "even if the execution is imperfect." These rules also extended to sculpture, and busts were not accepted except by special permission. Due to the fact that the art of architecture "was killed in 1789," the only acceptable
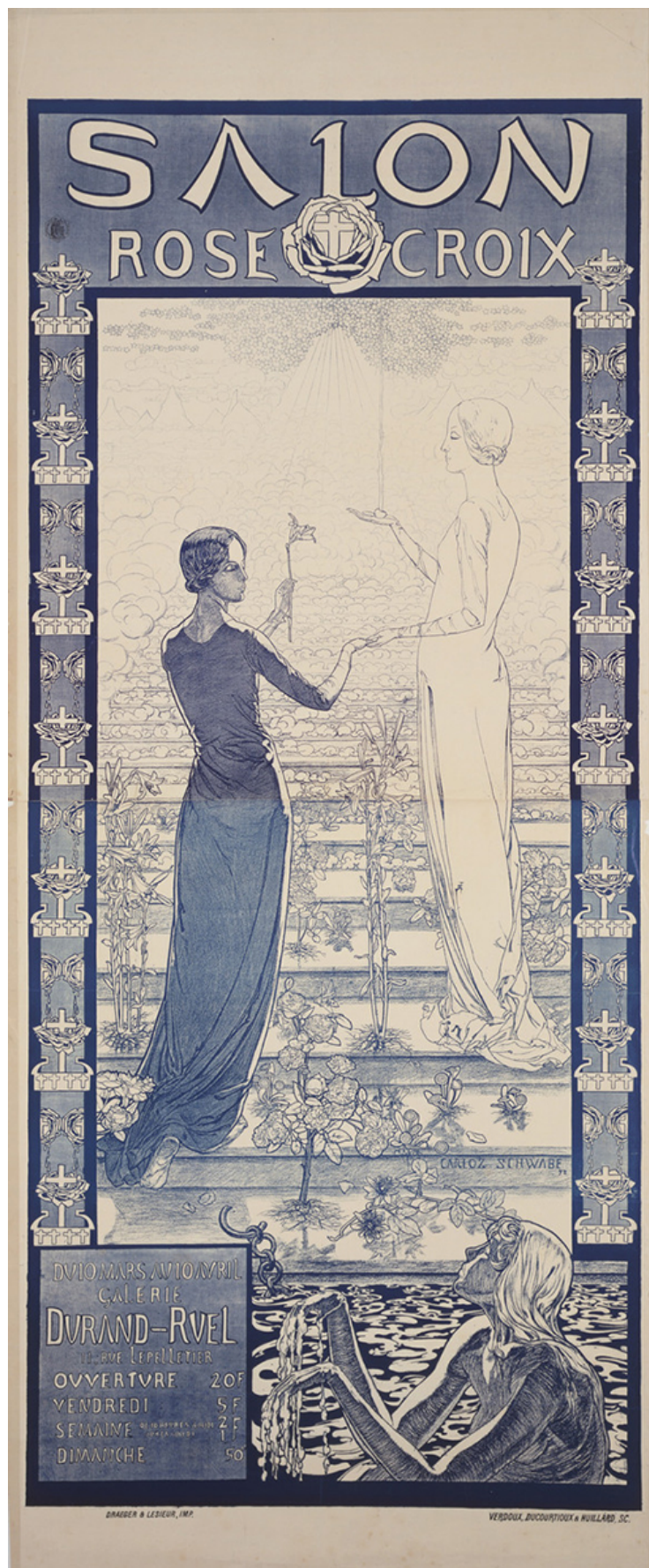
Carlos Schwabe, Poster for Salon de la Rose-Croix, 1892. Color lithograph.

works in this field were "restorations or projects for fairy-tale palaces."[18] The preferred technique above all others was the fresco. Drawing, less as a physical than a psychological technique, was also highly favored because the medium crossed the boundary between the earthly and the spiritual. Women were entirely excluded as exhibiting artists.[19]

To such truly "conceptualized" exhibitions, where the selection of artists was combined with rules about the content, Péladan then added a third level, where through focused writings and statements before, during, and after the event he further imprinted his story on the whole entity thus designed. As eloquently and as loudly as possible, he tried to justify his exhibitions and selections as universal, the most sensible, and the best selections of art at the present moment, and to achieve this, he skilfully employed all sorts of operations that are still being used by curators today. For instance, he was very adept at justifying and legitimizing new artistic positions by juxtaposing them with established antecedents and emphasizing the similarities. Because exhibitions also by this time had an intensive presence in the media realm, his message, in relation to the artist's, was already clearly in the foreground, especially because Péladan, like the successful curator today, was extremely careful about the media coverage of his events and knew how to make himself a very attractive personality for the press.

Not unlike modern-day curators, Péladan was already criticized for trespassing too far into the artist's domain—but criticism did no real damage. In response, and in a way quite characteristic of today's debates on the topic, Péladan would entangle himself in contradictory and contrived-sounding explanations about how he was truly exalting the artist and the artist's freedom. When it came to displaying his positive, devoted attitude toward the artist, Péladan could be extremely vocal. In the catalogue of the first salon, he wrote:

Marcellin Desboutin, Sâr Mérodack Joséphin Péladan, 1891. Museum of Fine Arts D'Angers.

> Artist, you are the priest: art is the great mystery and when your efforts result in a work of art, a holy beam descends on the altar ... Artist, you are the king: art is the true empire; when your hand writes a perfect line, the cherubims themselves descend to take pleasure in it as if in a mirror ... Artist, you are the magician: art is the great miracle and proves our immortality.[20]

Conclusion

In short, Joséphin Péladan tried to define the art of his day in a manner that was quite rare for the time but is today exceedingly common. But because the curatorship of contemporary art did not come to be until much later, we should assume there to be certain differences between today's curator and such isolated "proto-examples." So as not to get lost listing every possible specific difference, let us look at a difference that does seem to be at the very heart of the phenomenon. Until at least the first decades of the twentieth century, roughly speaking, the situation in the art field as a whole was fundamentally different that it is today; that does not mean that certain segments weren't already to a certain extent compatible with today's curatorial practice, but others weren't yet in tune with such practices. For example, at the time it was already possible to organize a large group exhibition of contemporary art in accord with one's own concept; to acquire the agreement and participation of artists, and a circle of supporters and backers; and attract the clear interest of the public and media; yet in contrast with today's art world, the institutionalization of such curatorial practices, which might allow them to happen regularly and widely, was completely absent. In the nineteenth century, the contemporary art exhibition was still very much in the domain of the market, and many years would pass before

it became the preferred form for supporting contemporary art on the part of the big backers and commissioners, politics and capital, and the today ubiquitous but then nonexistent art institutions. Among other things, the (large group) exhibition of contemporary art was not yet understood as something that, in the ritualized setting of a museum or gallery, could create narratives, generate meanings, shape worldviews, beliefs, and values, and so potentially even influence society in line with the desires of those who commissioned it. For such large structural shifts to occur, it had to become clear that such an exhibition does not only show and sell contemporary art but can also do much more, especially in terms of constructing specific integral messages and communicating them such that the potential ideological implications go unnoticed.

Still, despite the institutional sector not being immediately ready to adopt ambitious proto-curators, it is hard to say that Péladan had no influence at all on the field of contemporary art curatorship. His practices and strategies came into curatorship mainly by indirect routes, mostly through the mediation of artists who in the early twentieth century increasingly cultivated a practice similar to Péladan's. Unfortunately, we are only vaguely aware of this current, probably because serious thought about Péladan's influence—even on such central, iconic twentieth-century artists as Kandinsky, Malevich, Hugo Ball, and Duchamp, and on such groups as the Vienna Secession, Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists—is establishing itself in the art-historical discourse slowly, timidly, and in bits and pieces. It seems that we do not wish to see the characteristic practices of the pioneers of contemporary art as linked to similar practices Péladan had employed quite strikingly not long before, to the great attention of both press and public.

Because these iconic artists' influence on the development of the exhibiting of contemporary art—and the development of contemporary curatorship and curatorial practices—is sufficiently well known, I will not discuss it here. Instead, I would like to propose a more active scrutiny of Péladan's influences on these artists in areas where I see a possible connection with contemporary curating. Here I propose three categories of influence, which may have operated separately or, even more often, as a whole, as an effective integrated work model.

First, we should note the importance of Péladan's use of the exhibition medium as a distinctly independent means of expression that is able to tell its own story and so requires a specific kind of "dramaturgy and directing." In this regard, the exhibition is not merely a passive juxtaposition of artworks; rather, it is simultaneously an interdisciplinary and intermedia platform, a "synaesthetic environment," and an intensive media event. We can assume that these aspects were reflected in the pioneering exhibition projects of the key figures of early-twentieth-century art—although, given the scant research into the connections between them and Péladan, it is difficult to determine the exact nature and extent of this reflection.

Second, Péladan's specific logic in constructing his own career in the art field seems to have been very influential: what is important here is the way he established and designed himself as a public persona with a clearly readable identity. Péladan—and we must not forget that he was himself an artist—actively tried to shape his own mythology, to turn anything connected with himself into an event, to develop his profile on different levels and through very different activities, and in a way to transform himself into an institution. While Péladan was certainly not the only one to do this, we need to consider more thoroughly his role in the evolution of the type of artist that came into its own in a real way in the decade before the First World War—the artist who forges his profile not only by creating artworks but through a variety of activities, including writing (among other things, manifestos), public performances, all sorts of organizing (of groups, events, and so forth), developing networks, a specific way of acting and dressing, unusual gestures, rituals, and the like.

And last of all, however unexpected as it may sound, the influence of Péladan's worldview is also probably greater than it seems at first. I am thinking mainly of his specific view of art in general, its aims and potential. Here the key element is his distinct contribution in raising the status of art, which was based on his understanding of art as a medium for presenting spheres that are suprarational, and as an effective tool for improving the world. Accordingly, Péladan also raised the status of the artist, who with this sort of responsible, priestly mission was now suddenly in a different position than before, also vis-à-vis society. With this understanding of art, a great deal was now expected of the artist, and much more, too, was permitted him. In the twentieth century such views became increasingly established, also in the art field. Péladan's contribution, however, was overlooked, mainly, I suspect, because his mystical explanations for these views, with their strange combination of Catholicism, elitism, conservatism, pomposity, and incoherence, were difficult for a wider audience to accept. But it is worth pointing out that in the early twentieth century, the leading figures of contemporary art themselves very often connected their work to mysticism, even to a mysticism that is sometimes surprisingly close to Péladan's.[21]

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1
Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

2
This, of course, is a provisional term for these individuals, although of all the possible professions in the art field, that of the modern-day curator most closely fits their work. Certainly, they had little in common with either the traditional museum custodian or the private gallerist. In France we find a few interesting examples of "protocurators" even before Péladan. A very early one is Mammès-Claude Pahin de La Blancherie, who in the second half of the eighteenth century was especially appalled by the cruelty of the American slave trade and devoted himself to liberating art and science from the bonds of tradition. Among other activities connected with his ideological views, he also organized a few exhibitions. These were temporary art shows, produced and conceived by Pahin himself and presented in the rooms of his own salon, which operated with the help of important sponsors. One appealing characteristic of his exhibition practice was that his catalogues also listed works he wanted to exhibit but was unable to borrow for the show. These were marked by an asterisk. See Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 14-22.

3
Today the best-known curators normally have certain well-developed philosophical positions, on which their work is based and which they feel committed to—or at least very passionately defend. They present these views as part of both their personal and professional identities, use them to set themselves apart from other curators, actually "compete" with them against each other, and so forth. See, for instance, Beti Zerovc, "Charles Esche," *Život umjetnosti*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2003): 60–65.

4
Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 316.

5
Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists* (London: Phaidon, 1973), 26.

6
Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 98–102.

7
Ibid., 109.

8
Joséphin Péladan, *Der Androgyn* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1924; originally published in French in 1891). The foreword to the German edition of Péladan's novel series was written by August Strindberg.

9
Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976), 90. Despite the fact that the exhibitions were official events of the Rosicrucian Order, I propose viewing them as primarily Péladan's affair in both their organization and content, which is how they have been treated by previous writers who have discussed them. I do not compare them with similar exhibitions put on by different artists' associations at the time, since in the latter the groups' dynamics, work, interests, and goals were, as a rule, explicitly in the foreground. Much original material connected with Péladan's Rosicrucian Order and its exhibitions is available on the internet (e.g., through the electronic library Gallica), while in the work cited above, Pincus-Witten provides a precise description of the Order and the exhibitions in English.

10
Péladan's obvious knack for promotion, including of course self-promotion, has been noted by earlier art historians, who compare him to the more famous Marinetti. Like the celebrated futurist after him, Péladan worked tirelessly to proclaim his positions and organize events, while at the same time drawing attention to himself. "Like Marinetti, Péladan seems to have been a compulsive exhibitionist, whose greatest artistic creation was his own personality" (Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* , 109). In the history of contemporary art, Péladan may well be more important than we now imagine, among other reasons because of his potential influence on art-world figures such as Diaghilev, Marinetti, and others, who started appearing not long after him. Péladan, who was also very active in the areas of conceiving and organizing musical and theatrical events, is further connected with such figures by his desire to produce the most auratic events possible, where what was essential was not so much the chosen medium or art form but rather the ultimate effect of the whole, which had to be as magnificent as possible. Thus, a musical event or art exhibition would be "directed" very much like a theater production. Compare Beti Zerovc, "The Exhibition as Artwork, the Curator as Artist: A Comparison with Theatre," *Maska*, vol. 25, no. 133/134 (Autumn 2010): 78–93. On the synaesthetic effects of the different artistic media at the Rosicrucian salons, and on Péladan's extraordinary enthusiasm for Wagner, see Laurinda S. Dixon, "Art and Music at the Salons de la Rose-Croix," in *The Documented Image; Visions in Art History* , eds. Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon (New York: Syracuse, 1987), 165–186.

11
Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "The Belgian artists and the Rose-Croix," in *Simbolismo en Europa: Nestor en las Hesperides* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderna, 1990), 371.

12
Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France* , 104–106, 131. The strong connection between contemporary art exhibitions and the media, even in the nineteenth century, is evident in the fact that for this first salon, as many as two thousand invitations were sent to the press! In fact, of all the Rosicrucian salons, the first received the best response from the media; this was, I expect, due in part not only to the initial shock at such an extraordinary project, but also to the show itself, which in fact impressed many as a special kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The salons that followed did not elicit such a response, and the last editions saw a decline in both the size of the shows and the quality of the artwork, as well as in the enthusiasm of sympathizers and financial backers and even in Péladan's own determination and drive. All of this led to an increase in negative responses from the press. See Christophe Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918): Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1993), 272–273, 300–301, 313–314, and elsewhere.

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Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan*, 225–235; Pincus-Witten, *Occult S ymbolism in France* , 140–144.

14
The French symbolists who are best known today had no desire to participate in Péladan's salons, although he did all he could to assemble as star-studded a group as possible (partly, I assume, because he was well aware of its promotional and social potential). Thus, he invited both Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes to show their work, but he did not receive their permission. He simply idolized Moreau, who, however, evidently had serious doubts about the Rosicrucian hocus-pocus. Even so, the painter sent his students to Péladan to be exhibited. Of the numerous French artists who showed work in his salons, not many are particularly famous today. The ones who do stand out somewhat are Charles Filiger, Alphonse Osbert, Alexandre Séon, Edmond Aman-Jean, Antoine Bourdelle, Georges Rouault, and Armand Point. Nor can we say that the group of artists that formed around Péladan's salons was fully coherent in style. Especially in the first salon, several artists had distinctly post-impressionist tendencies; here we could put Count de la Rochefoucauld. As the years passed, the salons became more unified stylistically, though unfortunately with a drop-off in the better-quality artists, while the work of those such as Point, Osbert, and Séon came to be seen, in a way, as the most typically Rosicrucian style of art.

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But even here he was not always successful, as we learn from an amusing anecdote. One of Péladan's favorite painters was the Englishman Edward Burne-Jones, who was more than a little astonished by Péladan's invitation to participate. He wrote about it to his colleague, the painter George Frederic Watts: "I don't know about the Salon of the Rose-Cross—a funny high falutin sort of pamphlet has reached me—a letter asking me to exhibit there, but I feel suspicious of it … the pamphlet was disgracefully silly." (Quentin Bell, *A New and Noble School: The Pre-Raphaelites* [London: Macdonald, 1982], 175).

16
Oskar Bätschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict between Market and Self-Expression* , (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1998), 9–10 et passim.

17
Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France* , 211–216. Longer summaries of the rules can be found in Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* , 111–112; and Jullian, *The Sy mbolists* , 227.

18
Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art*, 111–112.

19
Péladan's similarity to certain modern-day curators can be seen as well in the incoherence of his ideas—he was incredibly enthusiastic about all sorts of things, including, unsurprisingly, things that were completely incompatible. For example, although he banned the portrait genre (with only rare exceptions), he exhibited grandiose portraits of himself, and although he was a devout Catholic and a defender of virtue and purity, he was also a devoted admirer of the Belgian painter and illustrator Félicien Rops, whose drawings and illustrations are often a very perverse kind of pornography. This was an artist and an art that sprang from completely different views, the very opposite of his own, but still Péladan desperately wanted him for his salons and so always found a way to explain his enthusiasm for the Belgian. For example: "I have seen some of his masterful etchings, of such an intense perversity that I, who am preparing the Treatise on Perversity, was enchanted by his extraordinary talent" (Ollinger-Zinque, "The Belgian artists and the Rose-Croix," 370). The two men also engaged in a vast correspondence; Péladan wrote to Rops: "May the devil, your supposed master, keep for you the admiration of Catholic artists, to the greater confusion of Protestant pigs and bourgeois swine, Amen!" (ibid.). Rops, in fact, never did exhibit in Péladan's salons, although he provided illustrations for a number of his novels.

20
Ollinger-Zinque, "The Belgian artists and the Rose-Croix," 370.

21
On connections between Péladan and, for example, Duchamp (the two had many interests in common), see John F. Moffitt, *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), 27, 252; and James Housefield, "The Nineteenth-Century Renaissance and the Modern Facsimile: Leonardo da Vinci's Notebooks, From Ravaisson-Mollien to Péladan and Duchamp," in *The Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century / Le 19e Siècle Renaissant* , eds. Yannick Portebois and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies Publications, Victoria University in the University of Toronto, 2003), 73–88, among others. When we consider what traces Péladan left on curatorship, it is essential to stress his potential structural influences. In the present article, therefore, I have largely disregarded his specific ideas, which can be so bombastic that they very quickly drown out everything else and take us in their own direction. Looking at these ideas, we soon find ourselves dealing with instantly obvious comparisons based mainly on content (for example, with Harald Szeemann's body of work).