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Editorial

Indentured to the past, we drag our inherited identities through a forest of networks bursting with mysterious intellectual fruit. We're not sure which concepts are poisonous and which are safe. History is like a mistranslated phrasebook full of old-fashioned illustrations which everyone makes fun of on the internet. Attempts at organization feel fanciful and absurd: eclectic inventories of apocalypse-kitsch. In "A Palace of Unsaids," Rob Goyanes considers the work of mourning under twenty-first century conditions. Does it matter if we show up to the wrong shift at the memorial-factory as long as we do our time?

Those that insist on mourning only their own ancestors are practicing what Boris Groys calls "vertical solidarity," which sees the world as fundamentally organized by competition not between classes, but between expanded territorial kin-structures. Nothing is more vertical than patriarchy, in this respect, insofar as it is patriarchal anxiety which stand guards over whatever inheritance which is 'passed down,' from generation to generation. As a result, Houria Bouteldja demonstrates, indigenous women frequently find themselves trapped between colonial and peripheral patriarchies. This competition makes any "horizontal solidarity" between women difficult, because it passes over the entrenched persistence of colonial patriarchy to celebrate isolated instances of its refusal at the periphery.

Perhaps a more promising basis for horizontal solidarity might be the de-territorialized, planetary relationship to petroleum that Oxana Timofeeva theorizes in "Ultra-Black: Towards a Materialist Theory of Oil." A layer of energy sedimented beneath our feet from the lives of creatures past gives a concrete reality to the idea that capital represents an accumulation of dead labor. The potential at work in this common relationship to oil is why the United States so aggressively mobilized the national-chauvinist brand of vertical solidarity before each of its military excursions in Iraq, as Rijin Sahakian shows in "What We Are Fighting For." Here, too, shifts in media technology—from broadcast to cable news, from cable news to the internet—have not changed the imperialist emphasis on gender roles in the process of reproduction. From nuclear family-themed Super Bowl halftime shows to lies about killing babies, our screens have only intensified the distribution of misinformation. Francesca Hughes reaches back to the legacy of the Arab-Islamic renaissance to provide a deep epistemology of the screen as stretched, quite literally, between two figures previously responsible for representing the process of knowledge, the tower and the corridor, or passageway. Jacob Stewart-Halevy looks at a more recent century to compare how moving-picture technology has approached questions of work and labor across distinct regimes of accumulation.

Is the image or the word more immediately horizontal? Which requires more translation? The verticality of

language frequently confronts the moment when translation gives way to what Emily Apter calls “Armed Response.” How do we judge what we hear or read? And how is this process different than what we bring to bear on what we see? Why is nationalism so image-heavy, when it is language that gets all the credit for separating nations? This question takes on unique weight in an international art world that moves between territories and languages on a regular basis. Claire Fontaine collects a chorus of anonymous responses to Documenta, as a way of avoiding re-inscribing the show’s vertical lines. “The chorus’s function is to comment and highlight the key moments of a Greek tragedy, in order to help the public position itself in relation to the events represented.” Hopelessly horizontal, anonymity resists accumulation, lighting a path to the exit.

X

Emily Apter

Armed Response: Translation as Judicial Hearing

I first noticed the ubiquitous signs when I moved to Los Angeles in the 1990s. They festooned the forecourts of houses, front and back gates, porches, fences, window ledges, and driveways. They peeped out of shrubbery, and dotted emerald lawns. Stranded between a marketing tool for security companies, a feature of militarized gardening, and a status symbol of affluence and domestic self-regard, the signs sported the ominous phrase "Armed Response." I pondered the range of associations in that charged phrase. The army, *la société de contrôle*, gun violence, home invasion. The signs telegraphed a host of warning interpellations: *Achtung*! Listen up! Man is his castle! Stand Your Ground! This building is armed![1] They telegraphed a logic of preemption: "If you're staking out this property or putting the security of its occupants in jeopardy, think again! Police and security details standing by! Cameras and motion detectors in place to record your every move, your kinetic bioprint goes straight to the criminal database! Suspicious noises will trigger the alarm!"

"Armed Response" conjures surveillant technologies of domestic fortressing, protections against incursions on "my privacy," citizens' militias, the prophylatic infrastructures of risk reduction, apopotraic shielding, and something more—let's call it the technical apparatus of judicial hearing defined by the right to "make the call" (even a lethal one) on what is being heard or what it means "to respond to." For what is translation if not first and foremost an adjudication of response to verbal and sonic cues? An act of translational justice? Armed response affords a literal translation of the French expression "*traduire en justice*" (normally rendered in English as "to prosecute," "to levy criminal charges"). It conveys the sense of "to translate in or into justice," as if "justice" were the name of a discrete language. It communicates laying down the law, lying down before the law, or being "down by law" (prison slang for having someone's back).

The concept of armed response, cast as exemplary of "translation in-justice," refers to operations of militarized policing, state patrols, privatized security sectors, local militias, and "Neighborhood Watch" groups endowed with far-reaching discretionary powers. Operating at the edges of the law, often in extrajudicial zones of the justice system (like spaces of extreme rendition and covert interrogation or citizens' militias that play host to vigilantism), the phrase "Armed Response" effectuates an unexceptional state of exception, whereby domestic privacy is routinely breached in the name of security, forcible entry authorized, and use of force justified in the name of prevention. Whether it is in the name of derailing drug deals or routing illegal immigrants, there is a kind of pretrial, or predetermination of guilt, associated with "making the call." It is this call (anchored materially in the history of the telegraph: ADT, the largest home security company in the US and Canada, stands for "American District Telegraph") that will justify the transgression of eminent domain as well as tactics of no-knock arrest and

property seizure. Armed response, in such contexts, mobilizes translation as a control-society mechanism of what Peter Szendy calls "panacousticism," or "overhearing" (in French, Szendy's neologism *surécoute* also translates as "overlistening").[2] To translate in these terms is to subjectivate by ear, to act on hearsay or tip-offs from informants, to have recourse to a metalanguage of security equipped with euphemistic monikers like "Critical Armed Response ," "Dynamic entry," "Forcible entry raid," "Task Force Raptor." Armed response encompasses acts of selective hearing, as well as *underlistening*—to wit, the case of Philando Castile, whose fatal shooting aftermath was livestreamed on Facebook by his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds. Castile was shot by Officer Jeronimo Yanez as Castile reached toward his glove compartment for his ID and gun permit. The officer claimed to hear only the word "gun," enough to justify the use of deadly force. (Yanez was recently acquitted of the killing.)

The play between "response," understood as an open ear to the other or as a form of aural excitation (*exciter* in Latin, as Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us, "means to call on someone to come out, to call outside"), and "Armed Response," understood as a *techne* of weaponized hearing, will shape my concerns.[3] But first, to better grasp what an "Armed Response" looks like, Hollywood-style, here's the opening scene of the film *Straight Outta Compton*, in which an escalating dispute between LA drug dealers is eclipsed by a full-on police raid.

"Real life" accounts of incidents like this, while less sensational, are even more frightening in capturing the randomness of collateral damage. Kevin Sack's *New York Times* article "Door-Busting Raids Leave a Trail of Blood" captures this effect, opening with a chilling narrative vignette:

> At 2:15 a.m. on a moonless night in May 2014, 10 officers rolled up a driveway in an armored Humvee, three of them poised to leap off the running boards. They carried Colt submachine guns, light-mounted AR-15 rifles and Glock .40-caliber sidearms. Many wore green body armor and Kevlar helmets. They had a door-breaching shotgun, a battering ram, sledgehammers, Halligan bars for smashing windows, a ballistic shield and a potent flash-bang grenade. The target was a single-story ranch-style house about 50 yards off Lakeview Heights Circle. Not even four hours earlier, three informants had bought $50 worth of methamphetamine in the front yard. That was enough to persuade the county's chief magistrate to approve a no-knock search warrant authorizing the SWAT operators to storm the house without warning. The point man on the entry team found the side door locked, and nodded to Deputy Jason Stribling, who took two swings with the metal battering ram. As the door splintered near the deadbolt, he yelled, "Sheriff's department, search warrant!" Another deputy, Charles Long, had already pulled the pin on the flash-bang. He placed his left hand on Deputy Stribling's back for stability, peered quickly into the dark and tossed the armed explosive about three feet inside the door.

It landed in a portable playpen.[4]

The more one watches clips such as the ones the *New York Times* published, the more it becomes almost impossible to distinguish who is responding to whom and how. The roving, jerky movements of the body cameras provide fleeting glimpses of SWAT-team pileups, and stunned residents pinned or frozen in their daily rituals. The soundtrack is even more telling. We discover a peculiar cipher, mixing intelligible words, inaudible speech, guttural sounds, and noise, punctuated by the pounding of doors, the crash of battering rams, shouts, shots, explosions of matériel, exclamations of surprise, stress, and fear. In one clip, "*Abre la puerta!*" or "Open the door!" becomes the caption in a grim playbook. Here, bilingual enunciations position the speakers on different sides of the law. As a police command, the phrase in Spanish performs a judgment call of guilt-by-association. A Hispanophone suspect is presumed to be an employee of a drug cartel, an illegal immigrant, a "bad hombre." Here, the concept of "*traduire en justice*" applies to the practice of language profiling (what the artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan identifies as treating "the voice as if it were a birth certificate or passport," whereby the form of speech itself is under investigation).

Abu Hamdan's work considers translation under coercive circumstances: accent tests administered on asylum seekers, language profiling at border checkpoints, the practice of *taqiyya*, i.e., the right to remain silent or withhold language from translation in the face of religious and political persecution. In his video work *Rubber Coated Steel* (2016), the politics of listening plunges us into the material forensics of judicial hearing in both senses of "hearing," as trial and as a way of deciphering acoustic signs. The subject matter is drawn from an actual court case held in May 2014 concerning two unarmed teenagers, Nadeem Nawara and Mohamed Abu Daher, who were shot and killed by Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank. Abu Hamdan's project takes the form of an imagined courtroom transcript in which an audio expert is brought in as a witness for the prosecution to provide forensic analysis of the lethal shot. The defense claims that because the soldier's rifle was fitted with a rubber-bullet adapter, it was impossible for him to fire live ammunition. The prosecution alleges that the army used a rubber-bullet adapter as a decoy or alibi. Using a spectrogram that enables visualization of a bullet's "sonic

signature," measured by the ratio of speed to sound (a real bullet breaks the sound barrier), the audio witness identifies the fatal shot as the one showing higher frequency on the spectrum. For the defense, this allegation about the rubber-bullet adapter is unproven, based on *hearsay.* But the prosecution argues that Palestinian children have developed such advanced powers of auditory discrimination that they can identify the nature of the ammunition being used. Meanwhile, the judge entreats the audio expert to explain what he is hearing, because he professedly has a "tin ear."

Even as Abu Hamdan's video attends to what armed response sounds like (by graphing what it looks like), it demonstrates how difficult it is to render justice by ear.

Determinations of acoustical "rightness" depend on the ear of the listener, as Mladen Dolar reveals with a joke about "failed interpellation." Taking off from a line of Plutarch's *Moralia: Sayings of Spartans*—"A man plucked a nightingale and finding but little to eat, said 'You are just a voice and nothing more'"—Dolar describes the plight of a commander in the Italian trenches unable to elicit a response to his order to attack.

> He cries out in a loud and clear voice to make himself heard in the midst of the tumult, but nothing happens, nobody moves. So the commander gets angry and shouts louder: "Soldiers, attack!" Still nobody moves. And since in jokes things have to happen three times for something to stir, he yells even louder: "Soldiers, attack!" At which point there is a response, a tiny voice rising from the trenches, saying appreciatively, "*Che bella voce*! [What a beautiful voice!]"[5]

The humor of the joke turns on an illocutionary performative of baffled messaging: we assume the teller has already translated the commanding command from the Italian. The punch line reveals this assumption, and the joke is on us. More significantly, it underscores the aesthetic factor in determinations of what is heard or misheard.

To hear "rightly" is to register acoustical rightness or trueness not only by means of forensic acoustics, or by moral criteria of right and wrong, but according to measures of rhythmic beauty (*euruthmoi)* and mellifluous accompaniment. "To accompany" (*akoloutheî* means to follow or to flow from) lies at the heart of what Plato, in the *Republic,* identified with the poetic. For Plato, just as matter must follow soul, so musical harmony and rhythm must follow poesis. Good rhythm in this sense accompanies, agrees with, or "goes along with" fine

speaking. For Plato, making a "right" republic necessitates allowing the superior register to lead, and ensuring that its accompaniment be a good match.[6] We could say that Plato gives us the "good match" theory of *just translation*.

But what exactly is "just translation?" A matter of timing, of knowing when and when not to translate? A question of translation's bounds or limits as a praxis grounded in the work of textual rewording and inter- or intralingual transmission? A protocol for medial transposition on certain conditions? A demonstration of fidelity to the absolute of one meaning or sense under oath? A matter of negotiating a *response* to Aristotle's "things in the voice" (what Daniel Heller-Roazen playfully calls "a thinking of grammar that leaks out of the cave") that defies the logic of nominalism, statement, and proof, and mobilizes all matter of nonapophantic utterances, from "ridiculous sentences" ("Spirit is Spirit"), perplexing speech phenomena, indefinite names, and inarticulate noises, to the cries of beasts?[7] In *No One's Ways: An Essay on Infinite Naming,* Heller-Roazen tracks such forms of indeterminate expression as they interfere with the metapragmatics of speech, derailing the path of reason towards truth. This obstruction of reason brings to mind Derrida's excursus in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* on Lewis Carroll's Alice—her exasperation over the fact that kitty's constant purr makes it "impossible to guess whether it meant 'yes' or 'no.'" "Isn't Alice's credulity rather incredible?" queries Derrida. "She seems, at this moment at least, to believe that one can in fact discern and decide between a human *yes* and *no*."[8] Elsewhere Derrida writes, describing encounters with indecipherability, "It is always difficult to read what does not let itself be translated"—as when the insect, cut in half, becomes a figure for sentences that have a "sectional" life in their capacity to "move forward and back," making meaning "swarm." Where indefiniteness meets infinitude, Derrida identifies the abyss of language's "infinite reserve" (*sa réserve infinie*) and "innumerable multiplicity" (*la multiplicité innombrable*).[9]

Ultimately, it would seem to be impossible to delimit what is "just translation" within the wide parameters of "being" in and across languages, or across sound and sense spectrums and orders of animacy. For this reason, rather than take the question of "what is just translation?" to mean what is "only" translation (as opposed to some other way of relating to language or non-speech), we would do better to shift the emphasis to the "just" in justice, orienting translation theory toward the politics of hearing rightness or rightly. *Justesse*, as a body of aesthetic principles, would, to this end, train attention on the politics of ethical relation as well as on the extent to which

translational norms of correspondence, equivalence, harmony, and hierarchy are imbued with the force of law, embedded historically in the criminal justice system, and normatively inscribed as regulatory mechanisms of legal reason and reason of state.

Derrida's essay "Justices" (published in *Critical Inquiry* in Peggy Kamuf's translation in 2005 and in French in a 2014 volume of essays titled *Appels*) gives us a way of theorizing "just translation." The text pays tribute to a friend and colleague, the literary critic J. Hillis Miller, and involves a reading of Miller's 1963 book *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (1963), in which the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins was foregrounded. Hopkins's notion of "justified" self-being calls to mind analogies with the justified margin in a page of text where the words all fit; where the aleatory semiosis of difference and deferral is formally rectified; where, as Wai Chee Dimock puts it, justice speaks "a language of structural *guarantee*" that "demands from the world a grammatical uniformity ... an adequating rationality [that] images forth the world as a commensurate order, so that problem and solution are not only reflexively generated but also instrumentally corresponding."[10] But where Dimock is concerned with the worldly scoring of correspondences between grammar and justice, Derrida sources in the poet Hopkins an aesthetics of rightness that is all process and praxis; it is contained in the untranslatable neologism "to justice" coined by Hopkins in his poem "As Kingfishers Catch Fire," which reads:

> As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
> As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
> Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
> Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
> Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
> Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
> Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
> Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*
> I say more: the just man justices;
> Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
> Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.

Referencing the first line of the second stanza, Derrida writes:

> Hopkins does not name only the just; he also uses the word *justice*, but otherwise than as a noun. He has the magnificent audacity of an unusual verbal form: *to justice*, *justicing*, the act of doing justice, of justi *fying* justice, of *putting* justice *to work*, operating a justice that, by rendering justice outside, in the world and for others, remains itself, remains the justice it is, carrying itself out in the world without going out of itself. *To justice* is intransitive even if justice, *by justicing*, does something, although it does nothing that is an object. Justice shines forth, it radiates and so does the just.[11]

"Justicing," the text implies, is an ethics of writing and teaching, but it is also, we could say, an intuition of right translating that at least in theory eventuates in confounding the misattribution of "poetic justice." When we say "poetic justice" in English, it suggests "just desserts," appropriate punishment, or still more colloquially, the folk wisdom that "what goes around comes around" in the grand distributive scheme of slights and injuries meted out and returned in kind. But for Derrida, when Hopkins (and Miller) "justice" something, there is a more singular meaning to be harvested. First, the right meter, close to natural speech, and which Hopkins called "sprung rhythm"; and second, something along the lines of Emile Benveniste's "middle voice" (*la voix moyenne*), an important *point de repère* in Derrida's seminal early essay on "la différ *a* nce." Benveniste's concept of middle voice has been taken as a way of describing intransitive modes of intersubjective address, whereby the exclusivity of the I-thou circuit is interrupted, and the subject, as Irving Goh would have it, is pre-positionally (as well as prepositionally) situated in the netherworld of *à* (in the sense of *à venir*— to come, to arrive, "to be" in aporia, to differ); in short, a state of being without fixed abode, temporal emplacement, or entelechy.[12] The middle voice provides access to what Jean-Luc Nancy designates "arch-sonority"—an *arké*-sonority of existence that points to the originary soundings of subjective resonance and the start-time of auricular dehiscence.[13] To become attuned to the middle voice is to master the art of oto-ontological responsiveness, a capability of "hearing" ontology, or hearing being (*das Seiende*) as it exists.[14]

"Justicing," from this perspective, implies an address to being achieved through a sublatory dispensation, one that destabilizes and deconstructs the economy of debt and legal calculation. This argument is laid out in Derrida's famous essay "Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction 'relevante?'" ("What is a 'Relevent' Translation?"), where he begins by associating "relevant" with aesthetic rightness. "Relevant" is

> whatever feels right, whatever seems pertinent, apropos, welcome, appropriate, opportune, justified, well-suited or adjusted, coming right at the moment when you expect it—or corresponding as is necessary to the object to which the so-called relevant action relates: the relevant discourse, the relevant

> proposition, the relevant decision, the relevant translation. A relevant translation would therefore be, quite simply, a "good" translation, a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honors its debt and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the most *relevant* equivalent for an original, the language that is *the most* right, appropriate, pertinent, adequate, opportune, pointed, univocal, idiomatic, and so on.[15]

Here we find ourselves back in the familiar territory of *justesse* defined as that which is exact, true, and proper, as in *disegno*: correct lines, true measures, right angles, well-drawn or pleasing resolutions in design, or the satisfactory construction of a load-bearing grammatological architecture. There are echoes of Flaubert's quest for *le mot juste* and calculation of the correct ratio of punctual rhythm to expressed thought. In a letter to Louise Colet, Flaubert projects this ideal style, which would be "rhythmic as verse, precise as the language of the sciences, undulant, deep-voiced as a cello, tipped with flame: a style that would pierce your idea like a dagger, and on which your thought would sail easily over a smooth surface like a skiff before a good tail wind."[16] Derrida would also seem to allude to the time of decision, the "right" moment of the revolution or messianic end, or of the precise, opportune time of the "equivalent's" arrival at the door of the original. In play, too, is the doublet *lex/jus*, which connects law to oath, public office, and Roman canon law, which decreed the foundations of towns, the so-called "natural" union of man and woman, and the legal status of animals. Rightness (from Kant to Mill) refers to a dictate or imperative of reason that prescribes certain actions—a sense of moral rectitude or duty fulfilled through obedience to the categorical imperative, an aspiration to freedom defined as individual autonomy. With this meaning, there is the allusion to doctrines of natural and legal right: the Lockean right to property in the person, the right to human rights, the right to speak your language (recognized in the 2007 Declaration of Indigenous Rights). And finally, there is the persistent line of intellectual pursuit, apparent in a lifetime of texts and seminars, of the Derridean right to literature, right to philosophy, right to translation, right to have rights.

Bringing Hegel to bear on Shakespeare, Derrida will proceed to deconstruct the formal and historical coordinates of "relevance," drawing on the supercessionary power of " *la relève*." In his reading of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, the play's metaphors of "economy, calculation, capital, and interest" come to a boil in the "unpayable debt to Shylock." This debt carries over to the French translators of Shakespeare, who are effectively inveigled into a "transferential and countertransferential contract" that dooms them to "treason and perjury," to offenses punishable by death. "Insolvent indebtedness," the ground zero of the translator's "task, his duty," introduces a crisis of credibility that threatens the entire system of ethics and belief in Abrahamic traditions. Left with only unreliable regulators of transmission, we face the prospect of "responding to" in the vacuum of relativism.

Disestablishing the laws of general equivalence, consigning subjects to the fate of ceaselessly "weighing in" amid a sea of relative and relational comparisons, Derrida loosens the strictures of the force of law on translated subjects. But in the same movement he enters us into a lawless territory of untranslatability fraught with microaggressions and fears of armed response. Here we would effect a small but crucial axial shift from Derrida's "différ *a* nce" to Jean-François Lyotard's "différend," remembering that the differend refers to particular states of adjudicative stalemate in Lyotard's ascription. First and foremost a "phrase in dispute," the differend describes an unlitigable condition in language, whereby "you have a conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments."[17] A zero-sum logic prevails, because "applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule)" (D, xi). One example Lyotard uses is known as the Paradox of the Court, from the Latin author Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, a logic problem based on Protagoras's standoff with Euathlus, the latter of whom is refusing to pay Protagoras's fees as a debate coach because he has not "won a victory yet'" (D, 6). The two opponents reach a contract that, rather than resolving their conflict, provides a kind of you-lose-you-win work-around akin to the liar's paradox ("Everything I say is false"), or a variant of it, the paradox of Buridan's bridge (where Plato's aggressive sophism "Socrates, if you first say something true, I will let you pass, but if you say something false, I will throw you in the water" is met by Socrates's wily rejoinder: "You will throw me in the water"). In the same vein, Protagoras makes the point that if the dispute over payment goes against Euathlus, the money will be due to Protagoras in accordance with the verdict, but if the decision goes in Euathlus's favor, the money will *still* be due to Protagoras according to the terms of the contract, since Euathlus will have won a case. For Lyotard, Protagoras relies on the logic of *antistrephon*, a dilemmatic argument in a lawsuit that allows each side to use it against the other with the hope of a successful outcome, or more colloquially, a disagreement in which there are presumed areas of agreement on how to disagree. Protagoras, he maintains, "transforms the alternative into a dilemma. If Euathlus has won at least once, he must pay. If he never won, he still won at least once, and must pay" (D, 6). ("Si Evalthle a gagné au moins une fois, il doit payer. S'il n'a jamais gagné, il a quand même gagné au moins une fois, et il doit payer."[18]) Reflecting further on how it can it be that Euathlus won when he always lost, Lyotard explains that

Protagoras's trick, anticipating the Russellian logical axiom of n + 1 as well as the Kantian solution of the antinomies of pure reason (in which the phrase that synthesizes the series, in being excluded from the series, opens the series to indefiniteness), is to "confuse the modum ... with the dictum," which is to say, "to use the faculty of the phrase to take itself as a referent. I did not win, and in saying it I win" (D, 6) ("Je n'ai pas gagné, je le dis, et je gagne en le disant" [LD, 20]). "A case of differend between the two parties takes place when the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom" (D, 9). Another way to describe this is as a bait and switch, in which two orders of language rub up against each other in mutual untranslatability. As Lyotard articulates this: "Phrases from heterogeneous regimes, cannot be translated from one into the other" (D xi–xii) ("Deux phrases de régime hétérogène ne sont pas traduisibles l'une dans l'autre" [LD, 10]).

Where the differend prevails, the social field of intersubjective communication is rife with triggers and traumatic affects.[19] Jordan Peele's phenomenal comedy-horror film *Get Out* brings this treacherous landscape into stark relief, starting with the title. The expression "Get out!" may be understood both as a self-serving or protective command—"Get out of the way! Get out of here!," flee, save yourself—and as a sarcastic comment: "Get out," "Go on," "Gimme a break," "Stop pulling my leg." This primal amphiboly programs undecidability into the narrative path. As in a video game, the protagonist must navigate prompts in order to survive, all the while knowing that in entering the linguistic realm of homonyms, where any single sentence contains "different plurals at one and the same time," the slightest move of under- or overhearing brooks catastrophe.[20]

Get Out is an exercise in ear training—in translating the violence of aural cues embedded in the double entendre and in discerning the element of personal *attack* in forms of sonic address that fire their sprockets in multiple directions (it is this extra target charge that, in raising the receptor level of intensity, distinguishes listening from hearing according to Jean-Luc Nancy).[21] To become "all ears" in this sense suggests prowess in the art of gaming, the possession of proprioceptive skills at averting close calls and scrapes, encounters with bad juju, traps that bring the subject within a hair's breath of mortal danger. Here we reach another dimension of the word *justesse,* specifically, its adverbial usage in the French expression *de justesse*, meaning "cutting it close," or "just making it." In an afterword to Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud's *Just Gaming*, Samuel Weber refers it to

> the manner in which an event, an act, a thing can almost not make it, or the way in which something has a hard time making it [*a de la peine à arriver*], perhaps because it was cut a little close [*calculé un peu juste*], or because there were obstacles to overcome, barriers to get by, resistances to surmount. As in a sporting contest, or in a fight, where one can win (or lose) just by a hair [*de justesse*] . Or like an accident, which may have been just avoided [*de justesse*]. Or finally, like a text that manages to be written, but just [*qui ne réussit à s'écrire que de justesse*].[22]

In *Get Out*, Chris's magic powers, which allow him to only just barely (*de justesse*) make it out alive from Rose's bucolic slave-camp, are matched against the forces of failure and impotence lodged in the epigenetics of trauma, the embedded memory of maternal loss, and beyond that, the transmitted memory of slavery-wounds: indenture, enchainment, torture. Here, then, we are also embarked on tracking the effects of what Jean Laplanche, in an interview with Cathy Caruth, called the '"enigmatic signifier," which draws out the obscured link, at the level of the signifier, between seduction and traumatic impact, between inscription of presence and the adult Other's forced intrusion on the child's psychic structure.[23] In the film, there is a fully resonating chamber of these enigmatic signifiers. A knock on the door by a white woman arriving at her black boyfriend's apartment, the thud of a deer hitting a car windshield, the chopping of wood on a stately property—all might subliminally register as the audio track of a forcible entry raid (pounded doors, battering rams, grenade detonations).[24] A banal phrase attesting to the white family's loyalty to their black retainers—"We simply couldn't let them go"—enunciates the family's evil reinvention of slave captivity.

An anodyne interview with a traffic cop dispatched to the scene of the car accident simultaneously reads as a performance of racial profiling:

> Officer (addressing Chris): Sir, can I see your license please?
> Rose: Wait why?
> Chris: I have a state ID
> Rose (interceding): Wait why? He wasn't driving.
> Officer: I didn't ask if he was driving, I asked to see his ID
> Rose: Yeah, why? That doesn't make any sense. (To Chris) You don't have to give him your ID because you haven't done anything *wrong*.
> Officer (with Rose chiming in): Any time there's an incident we have every *right* to ask for ...
> Voice of backup cop over radio: Everything all *right*, Ryan?
> Officer (to other officer): Yeah, I'm good.
> Officer to Rose: Get that headlight fixed, and that mirror.
> Rose (dripping with sarcasm): Thank you officer.

By exchanging the "who" (as in who was driving) for the what (his ID), the officer deploys a bait and switch, providing answers that deflect the object of the question. "I didn't ask who was driving, I asked to see his ID." The same device applies to the mode-flipping of "right" (as in the "right" to enforce the law) for "right" (in the sense of "being OK," "good," or "having the situation under control"). These effects of differential hearing surface too in the cat-and-mouse game of autocorrection being played: Rose corrects the officer on his mistaken identity of the driver, prompting the officer to correct her correction, at which point she understands that what is really not correct is the fact that she is traveling with a black passenger. What is withheld or unspoken is just as important as what is said or heard in this world of innuendo weaponized by force of law. By *not* asking to see Rose's ID, by *only* asking to see Chris's ID, the officer indirectly alludes to voter intimidation tactics that involve vetting minority voters who might not have the right papers. By the same token, asking to see his ID references the long history of harassment of African-Americans by traffic police, from routine incidents of stop and frisk to the murders of Sandra Bland, Samuel DuBose, and Philando Castile, all of whom were pulled over because they were driving while black.

Get Out trains a microphone on the most cringe-inducing specimens of raced speech, revealing the lowering violence within interracial dialogue. Throughout, the white people strive to prove how unracist they are, as when Rose's father queries the couple using his grotesque mimesis of African-American vernacular speech: "So how long has this been going on, this 'thang'?" Chris initially programs himself to under-hear such microaggressions, offering a nervous laugh or a smile in response to the white people's self-congratulatory professions of philo-negritude: "I would have voted for Obama a third time, if I could"; "It's such a privilege to be able to experience another person's culture. You know what I'm sayin'?"; "Is the African American experience an advantage or disadvantage?"

Such phrases prophesy a sinister end, and audience members, acting as danger translators, have been known to scream at the screen, "Get out! Whitey's coming for you!" But Chris is not the only character who is translationally challenged. Two black detectives, alerted by Chris's friend Rod, prove to be similarly unable to hear how paranoia can speak the truth. As Lyotard reminds us: "Doesn't paranoia confuse the *As if it were the case* with the *It is the case*?" ("Le paranoia ne confond-elle pas le: *Comme si c'était le cas* avec le: *C'est le cas*?" [LD, 23]). Well here, it really is the case! As one of the film's commentators has observed: "Rod spins what seems, to the officers, like an absurd yarn: Chris is the victim of a conspiracy involving the theft of black bodies, and their enslavement. The story turns out to be all too true, and clearly evocative of past antiblack atrocities that have similarly been disbelieved, distorted, and denied. Rod is laughed at by the very people from whom he expects racial solidarity."[25]

Get Out depicts how the differend, the phrase in dispute, shatters solidarities and disarms the powers of active resistance. It is only the shock of armed response—Rose's confiscation of the car keys, the implementation of weapons and brute force by members of the family—that induces Chris to be "woke," shaken out of the hypnotic stupor that keeps him granting white people permission to communicate their microaggressions—cuts, slights, and exclusions—under cover of civility, bonhomie, and the pretense of good intentions.

There may be some glimmer of hope by the film's end that the soundtrack of yells and shrieks of pain associated with the long history of enfleshed black subjects of torture—what Hortense Spillers calls "pornotroping"—will convert to a score of resilience and survival, such that, as Fred Moten put it, "shriek turns speech turns song."[26] But the promise of retribution, in the guise of a justicing song that shakes reparation free from an equivocalized interpretation, remains elusive.

By the conclusion of the film, the imploding differend lays bare a battleground of untranslatability, contoured by heterogeneous regimes of hearing and response. We don't know what is being heard up to the very last. Chris has eluded the clutches of his captors; Rose, who has tried to hunt him with a rifle, has been felled and strangled by Chris; and then there is the peal of a police siren. Armed response! Immediately we predict Chris's downfall at the hands of the white criminal justice system. But as it turns out, the police car belongs to Rod, Chris's guardian angel, who works in the security business as a TSA officer. Everyone in the theater laughs with relief at realizing that Chris will be spared and that the siren call was a joke on us.[27] But thinking about this further, the joke is probably on the joke, which depends for its effect on the fact that you can't, on the basis of hearing, distinguish (in a Schmittian framework) friend from enemy. Rod is, after all, an employee of the security state, part of the same apparatus of criminal justice that employed the white traffic cop who harassed Chris earlier in the film. The administration of audiometric justice is thus suspended, stranding the listener to the soundtrack of armed response in the netherworld of the judicial hearing, where one can no longer justify what one hears, nor "justice" how one responds. To translate, in these conditions, is to commence a work of judicial hearing, which attunes the ear to a violent soundtrack that defies even as it demands re-adjudication.

X

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1
The text on customized signs of this sort ranges from polite (on a lawn next to a driveway in Brentwood: "Do Not Enter this Driveway! *Merci.*") to grotesquely threatening (on a chain-link fence in front of a Southwest Baltimore rowhouse: "This Property Protected by Two Pitbulls with AIDS!"). Both examples provided by Neil Hertz, whom I duly acknowledge with thanks.

2
Peter Szendy, "(No) More Ears: A Preface to the English-Language Edition," in *All Ears: The Aesthetics of Espionage* , trans. Roland Végsö (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), x.

3
Jean-Luc Nancy with Adèle van Reeth, *Coming*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 33.

4
Kevin Sack, "Door-Busting Raids Leave a Trail of Blood," *New York Times,* March 18, 2017 The footage accompanying the article reveals the blurred line between policing and home invasion https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/18/us/forced-entry-warrant-drug-raid.html .

5
Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 3.

6
Plato, *La République*, ed. and trans. Georges Leroux (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 581.

7
Daniel Heller-Roazen, *No One's Ways: An Essay on Infinite Naming* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 15–18.

8
Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* , trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 8, 9.

9
Jacques Derrida, "Ants," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Oxford Literary Review* 24 (2002): 17, 20. French original: "Fourmis," in *Lectures de la différence sexuelle* , ed. Mara Negron (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1994), 69, 74.

10
Wai Chee Dimock, *Residues of Justice: Literature, Law, Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 110, 166.

11
Jacques Derrida, "Justices," trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 691.

12
Irving Goh, "From the Editor: Prepositional Thoughts," *Diacritics* 42, no. 2 (2014): 4–5.

13
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 29, 28.

14
This call to "being" comes through in Pink Floyd's song "Comfortably Numb," which kicks off with the sound of someone knocking on a door and repeating "Time to Go," followed by the lines: "Hello? (hello) (hello) / Is there anybody in there? Just nod if you can hear me / Is there anyone home?" The lyrics also register a dream/drug state or underwater sensation of experiencing an address that looks intelligible but whose message remains unheard: "Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying." See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FrOQC-zEog&list=RD5R8EpAv4miA&index=5 .

15
Jacques Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (Winter, 2001): 177.

16
Gustave Flaubert, Letter to Louise Colet, in *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert* , vol. 1: 1830–1889, ed. and trans. Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 159.

17
Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* , trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press). Further references to this work will appear in the text abbreviated as "D."

18
Jean-François Lyotard, *Le différend* , (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983), 20. Further references to the French original will appear in the text abbreviated as "LD."

19
The problem of trauma, its veridical perception, fiability, and litigatability, lies at the heart of Lyotard's endeavor. In the introductory pages of the first chapter, the differend is posed in relation to the Holocaust denials (Robert Faurisson et al.) that were raging at the time. Lyotard cites Pierre Vidal-Naquet's response to the Faurisson affair in his *Les juifs, la mémoire, et le present. Réflexions dur le genocide* (Paris: La Découverte, 1981). My thanks to Hent de Vries for drawing out the connection in Lyotard's work between the dilemmatics of differend—"Either you are a victim of a wrong or you are not. If you are not, you are deceived (or lying), in testifying that you are. If you are, since you can bear witness to this wrong, it is not a wrong, and you are deceived (or lying) in testifying that you are the victim of a wrong," (D, 5)—and the debate in France around the existence of the Final Solution.

20
Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantellle, *De l'Hospitalité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997).

21
Nancy writes: "If *listening* is distin guished from *hearing* both as its opening (its attack) and as its intensified extremity, that is, reopening beyond comprehension (of sense) and beyond agreement or harmony (*harmony* or *resolution* in the musical sense), that necessarily signifies that listening is listening to something other than sense in its signifying sense." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, 32.

22
Samuel Weber, "Afterword," in Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 114.

23
Cathy Caruth, "An Interview with Jean Laplanche," 2001 http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.101/11.2caruth.txt .

24
Drawing out the especial significance in Nancy's writing of the "knock," Irving Goh offers an astute analysis of "the political implications of risking accidental knocks in 'the risk of existing,'" as a "counterpoint to" or "'jamming' of" contemporary biopolitics." Irving Goh, "The Risk of Existing: Jean-Luc Nancy's Prepositional Existence, Knocks Included," *Diacritics* 43, no. 4 (2015): 10, 19.

25
Glenda R. Carpio, "Going in for Negroes," *Public Books*, May 23, 2017 http://www.publicbooks.org/virtual-roundtable-get/#carpio .

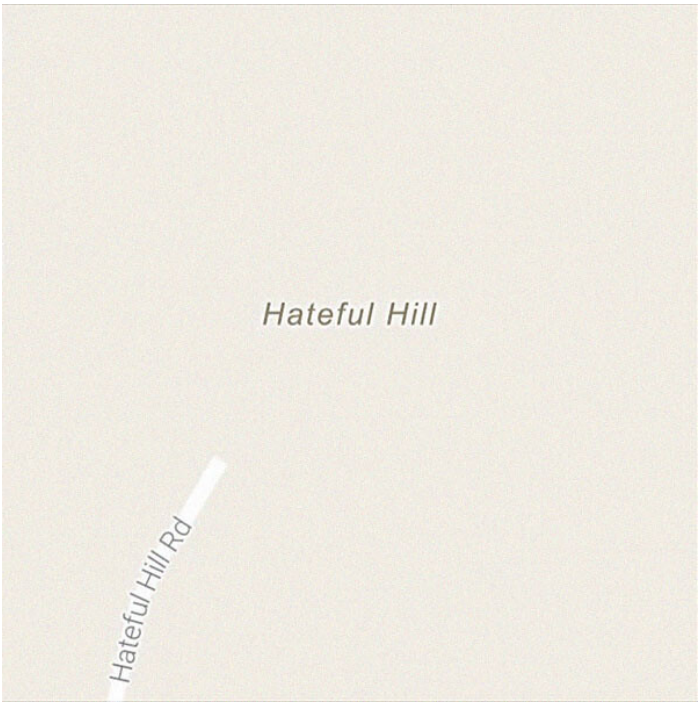
26
Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 22. Moten is building off of Hortense Spillers's landmark essay "'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe': An American Grammar Book" (1987), in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 203–29; and Saidya Hartman's seminal *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For an important analysis of "the auditory in the operations of the cinematic pornotrope," see Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 106.

27
On the sound of the siren and the joke, see Zadie Smith, "Getting in and Out," *Harper's*, July 21, 2017 https://harpers.org/archive/2017/07/getting-in-and-out/ .

Boris Groys

Trump’s America: Playing the Victim

Unavoidably (because I am a German citizen), I look at the Trump situation from the European perspective. And so I will try to situate the Trump phenomenon in the broader context of the contemporary nationalist movements that are on the rise in Western countries. The European tradition knows three main lines of political thought: liberal, nationalist (or fascist), and socialist. Thus, it is a bit different from the American tradition that differentiates between liberals and conservatives. Today, it is normal in Europe to speak about neoliberalism as the ideology of capitalist globalization. The conflict between neoliberalism, or globalism, and right-wing nationalism seems to define contemporary politics. In all recent and upcoming elections, including the American presidential election, the second round of the French presidential election, and the coming election in Germany, this conflict has dominated the public space.



Right-wing nationalist parties are becoming increasingly influential in what was once called Western Europe—in France, Holland, Belgium, and also in Germany—even more influential than they’ve been in what was once called Eastern Europe. These parties are time and again compared with fascist parties from the European 1930s and ’40s. And, indeed, they use similar racist, xenophobic rhetoric. Like their fascist predecessors they advocate a “conservative revolution” directed against the main ideologies of the twentieth century, namely liberalism and socialism, as well as against the political institutions that are historically related to these ideologies. Their propaganda is also directed against similar groups inside their own countries: globalized, cosmopolitan elites and immigrants.

However, the new right is different from the classical fascist movements that were aggressive and expansionist, striving for world domination and trying to establish a universal new order. The neofascist new right is, on the contrary, defensive and protectionist. The ideology of the new right, including the Trump movement, can be seen as a return of the territorial into world economy and politics. The post–Cold War era was a period of globalization—and, to use a Deleuzian term, of deterritorialization. The main symbol of this era was the rhizomatic and at the same time global structure of the internet. Today one is often reminded that the corporations and organizations that operate the internet have certain addresses in real, offline territories that are controlled by certain states. As such these internet corporations and agencies come under suspicion for representing the interests of these states. They come to be regarded as instruments of surveillance, propaganda tools, and sources of fake news. Instead of constituting a virtual space beyond state borders, the internet is seen today more and more as the privileged battlefield for interstate information wars.

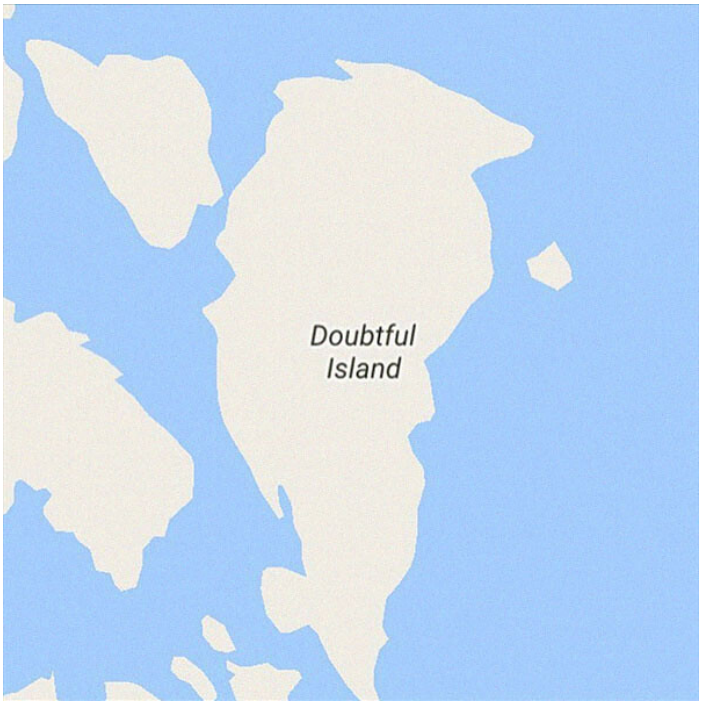
This is only one example of the reterritorialization of politics that we experience now. The second—and, actually, the most important—example is the fact that migration and, especially, immigration have became the central point of public concern. It is safe to say that it is primarily the attitude towards immigration that structures the contemporary political landscape—at least in Western countries. The anti-immigration politics of the contemporary new right parties is an effect of what can be characterized as the territorialization of identity politics. The main presupposition of the ideology of these parties is this: every cultural identity has to have its own territory on which it can and should flourish—undisturbed by cultural influences from other cultural identities. The world is diverse and should be diverse. But world diversity can be guaranteed only by territorial diversity. Mixing different cultural identities on the same territory destroys these identities. The world becomes uniform—boring, depressive. And even more importantly, in becomes unprofitable for the tourist industry, which promises to international tourists precisely the combination of traveling to a different territory and encountering a different culture.

Right-wing propaganda sees globalized, deterritorialized elites as the main enemy of this reterritorialized, diversified world order. Elites—the famous 1 percent—are accused by this propaganda of being interested in only the global financial markets and not in the fate of the populations of their countries. They're accused of being indifferent to the well-being of these populations, to the technological infrastructure installed in their territories—one of the big themes of Trump's campaign. Globalization is seen as creating a line of division inside every individual society. A small minority profits from globalization, but the majority is left behind. This majority becomes additionally endangered by immigration. Global trends—financial, technological, and informational—destroy traditional lifestyles and professions and make acquired skills and cultural habits useless—skills and habits that have been practiced for generations. This loss of traditional professions and work habits becomes further aggravated by the influx of immigrants with different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. The elites do nothing to stop this—thus confirming that they are not interested in the fate of ordinary people. So these ordinary people begin to feel and say that the elites have betrayed them and that it is time to do something about the problem. The only question is: What has to be done?

Historically, we know of only two answers to this question: socialism and nationalism. But also from a logical point of view, there are no other possible answers. Let us revisit the picture that I just tried to paint. Globalization presents itself in two forms: rich globalized elites and poor immigrants. If one sees one's own country as a victim of globalization, one has a choice: to unite with the poor immigrants against the rich elites (the socialist solution), or to unite with the rich elites against the poor immigrants (the nationalist solution).

It is obvious that—at least at the moment—the populations of Western countries have rejected the socialist choice and tend to accept the nationalist choice. The reason for this is also pretty obvious: it is an effect of the victory of neoliberal globalism over socialist internationalism at the end of the Cold War. Indeed, during the historical period after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Western left was systematically destroyed—first of all the Western communist parties, and then social democracy with its social states. All the socialist models—radical or moderate—were proclaimed to be economically inefficient, historically discredited, and obsolete. So during recent decades a certain consensus was formed: socialism is economically inefficient and, generally, bad. And this is the actual reason for the nationalist, neofascist choice: after neoliberal, anti-socialist propaganda managed to persuade the wider population that socialism is economically ruinous, the socialist choice became blocked—and only the neofascist choice remained possible. Of course, this is not the result that the theoreticians of neoliberalism anticipated. But they failed to anticipate it only because they overlooked a few key things. Let us now consider these things more carefully.

What is the actual difference between socialist internationalism and neoliberal globalism? Socialist internationalism is based on international solidarity, whereas neoliberal globalism is based on global competition. In the context of global markets, everybody competes against everybody—every individual competes against every other individual, every country against every other country, and so forth. Of course, socialism—being based on solidarity—is inefficient in the context of competition. So if one believes that competition is what



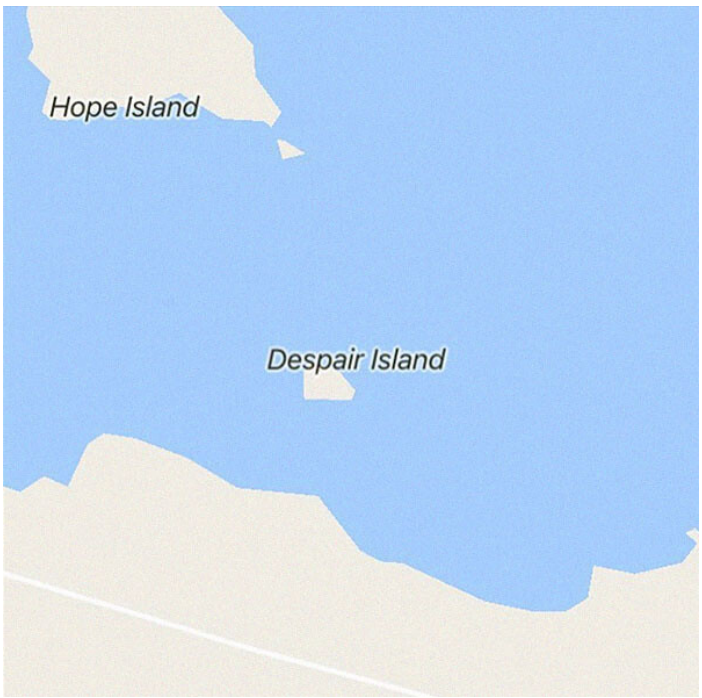
people should do, socialism is automatically discarded. And this is indeed what neoliberal ideology believes. Of course, this ideology also presupposes that the competition is fair. But who is responsible for the fairness of global competition? Such an institution does not exist. Of course, American politicians say time and again that they feel themselves responsible for global affairs. But then the suspicion emerges that they interpret this responsibility in a way that serves their own interests, to the detriment of the interests of the others.

And what is fairness actually? Is competition fair when it is reduced to market success? Maybe such competition is unfair because it favors a certain human type, a certain cultural identity, a certain way of life based on economic success. Maybe it would be a good idea to protect people who have cultural identities that do not fit so easily into the global competitive framework—help them and defend them, maybe even do so through institutional and military coercion. For example: What happens when American commodities are not so successful and the American workforce is inadequately trained? Then the state can say: buy American and hire American. (*Kaufe nicht bei den Juden*—do not buy from the Jews.)

Here, the way from neoliberalism to neofascism becomes clear enough. And this way is very short indeed. Both neoliberalism and neofascism believe in competition—this is what distinguishes them from international socialism. Neoliberals tend to think that they will always be the winners of this competition. The losers will be always the famous Other. Liberals are ready to preach recognition of the Other, respect for the Other, etc. But it seems that they can hardly imagine a situation in which they themselves become these Others. I remember listening to a talk by a liberal Berlin professor on German TV, around the time that a right-wing movement against the immigration policies of Angela Merkel started. He said that Germans should accept immigrants because they will always remain in the lowest sector of German society—and thus will not present any danger to the majority of Germans. However, the right-wing German protestors were not so sure about this—and it was precisely this uncertainty that moved them towards the radical right. So one can safely say that the desire to change the rules of competition comes from the uncertainty that these rules are fair—where “fair” is mostly understood as favorable. Thus, Trump says time and again that the trade deals between the US and other countries are unfair—and here “unfair” simply means unfavorable to the US.

In the US, the notion of cultural identity and, in general, identity politics is traditionally related to minority politics. The goal of minority politics is to defend minorities from cultural, political, and economic domination by the majority—the domination of the weak by the strong. So in America, identity politics is traditionally regarded as leftist politics. That is why it seems surprising that the white majority initiated an identity politics from the right. However, the reason for both kinds of identity politics is the same. Today, the US does not feel strong enough, being confronted by competition from countries all over the world, such as China and Mexico. This feeling of weakness is what Trump embraced and exploited. It was especially interesting to see his performance during the debates with his Republican competitors. All of them praised America and everything American at every opportunity: “the greatest people on earth,” “the greatest civilization in human history,” “a shining city on a hill.” Trump alone spoke about everything American as disastrous, catastrophic, and disgraceful—airports, highways, inner cities, wars, and peace treaties. He presented the US not as a historical winner but as a historical loser. And that is how he captured the hearts and minds of so many Americans—not by celebrating American supremacy, but by raising the specter of America’s ultimate defeat. Here, American identity was presented as a losing identity, the whole global system as a means of destroying the US, Americans as the primary victims of the post–Cold War order they themselves created, and American elites as traitors selling out the US on the globalized market. The results of the election show that a significant portion of the American population also sees the US as a power in decline—and sees itself as a victim of recent historical processes. The US thinks of itself as an unhappy country, even a masochistic country, having been exploited and ripped apart by everybody. Here, the question of saving and guarding American identity becomes urgent—and identity politics becomes truly neofascist because it begins to address not minorities but the whole country.

This shift of identity politics from the left to the right is less unexpected than it might seem. First of all, in the



European tradition the notion of cultural identity was always the basic notion of right-wing politics. Secondly—and more importantly—the possibility of this shift is opened by the logical structure of cultural identity insofar as this identity becomes connected to the ethnic origin, gender, or sexual orientation of the individual. Here, identity politics produces a phenomenon that can be called "vertical solidarity." The notion of solidarity is historically connected to the struggle of the exploited classes against the exploiting classes. Thus, in the context of class struggle, solidarity was always "horizontal solidarity." It was solidarity among the oppressed, directed against the oppressors. In the Marxist tradition, class was defined economically, through its role in the development of the productive forces. According to this tradition, a worker who makes a fortune ceases to be a worker and becomes a representative of the upper class. Horizontal solidarity with a particular person becomes annulled when this person leaves his or her class. The authentically leftist notion of identity is class identity.

But, of course, things are not so simple when cultural identity and the status of oppression comes to be inscribed into the bodies of the oppressed. Solidarity among women was dictated by their unfavorable economic and social position vis-à-vis men. Solidarity among blacks was dictated by their unfavorable position vis-à-vis whites. But what if a woman becomes an entrepreneur, or a black person becomes a politician? Should other women or blacks break their solidarity with them? On the one hand, this female entrepreneur and this black politician have changed their position in the class struggle, moving from the side of the oppressed to the side of the oppressors. And it can be argued that their class ascension does nothing to change the fate of other women or other black people. Indeed, it would be wrong to see in such class ascension signs of the social or economic improvement of women or blacks as a whole. But on the other hand, if somebody with a certain identity rises to the top, it means that they change what one can call their "identity rating." Theoretically, all identities are equal, but practically, different identities have different ratings—they are related to different expectations for social and economic success, different assumptions about their bearers' social status. This is the point where horizontal solidarity transforms into vertical solidarity.

Is it easy to show how this shift from horizontal solidarity to vertical solidarity produces fascist politics. Benito Mussolini is a good example of this shift. He started his career as an international socialist. However, at the beginning of World War II he changed his orientation—and gave an interesting explanation for this change. He wrote that in analyzing the situation in Italy, he realized that the absolute majority of Italians were poor. Only a small minority—1 or 2 percent—were rich. So the shift from being an Italian socialist to being an Italian nationalist did not change a lot: the difference between these two positions concerned only a small portion of the population. It was obviously better not to reject this small portion but instead co-opt it into a greater nationalist movement, so that rich Italians could also contribute to the well-being of the Italian population—and strengthen the position of Italy in international competition. Thus, Mussolini did not see the shift from socialism to nationalism as having much importance. Hitler, for his part, spoke about his ideology as "national-socialism." The idea of solidarity is kept intact, but this solidarity becomes the vertical solidarity of one ethnic-cultural community competing with other ethnic-cultural communities. In other words, the concept of solidarity is subjected to the concept of competition. That is why fascism remains compatible with capitalism, which is based on the concept of competition. Today, we also have two major political forces in the West: conservative liberals and the nationalist right. Both think in terms of competition—but liberals want only economic competition, while nationalists are ready to impose the conditions that they believe will allow them to, if not win, at least not lose.

Cultural identity is seen as a major asset in such a competition. Indeed, as Michel Foucault has shown, it is primarily so-called "human capital" that makes an individual truly competitive. According to Foucault, human capital can be defined as the sum of habits, skills, and norms that an individual inherits from their family and immediate milieu.[1] It is precisely this human capital that is meant when one speaks about cultural identity. That is why there is such a defensive attitude towards immigration. Immigration is seen as a force that destroys particular cultural identities and atomizes society, leading to generalized homogeneity: every country begins to look like every other country. Cultural diversity gets lost. In the right-wing European tradition, such a strategy of

homogenization through immigration was always associated with Americanization. Today one can also find in the right-wing press a conspiracy theory according to which the current immigration crisis was consciously created by the Americans. According to this theory, the US destroyed the Middle East with the goal of creating a flow of immigrants towards Europe. In this way, European national identity will be destroyed: all cities, including Paris and London, will eventually look like American inner cities. American fast food and mass culture will triumph over the more sophisticated but also more culturally rooted European cultures. That is also why people on the right were so surprised by Trump's victory. The majority of Europeans always saw the US as the hegemonic power behind the project of globalization—and were shocked to see that this power was becoming uncertain of itself.

Here it is important to realize that the definition of the identity of a person has nothing to do with the how this person identifies himself or herself. Identity, as it is currently understood, is not a subjective attitude but a genealogical or sociological fact. The identity of a person is defined by the identity of their parents and by their place and date of birth. Of course, somebody born, for example, as Jewish or German can reject their identity. But in the eyes of others, such a rejection would only confirm and reproduce a certain pattern of self-denial that is already historically well known—and perceived as being typical for these identities. One has no power of definition, no sovereignty over one's own identity. The production of identities is always the work of others. The current popularity of the notion of identity has to do with the proliferation of identity documents, like passports and birth certificates, and also of other bureaucratic forms that allow society to become informed about the genealogy of individuals—and, thus, also about their identity. The internet has made this genealogical information much more widely available than ever before. Today it is relatively easy to find out one's genealogical past. The contemporary notion of identity is dependent on global networks of information and applied to individuals insofar as their genealogies are documented in these networks. And under the conditions of the informational age, almost nobody can escape genealogical control.

Genealogy is closely related to ecology. The reproduction of certain kinds of human animals—human animals with the same identity—requires the sustainability of the biotopes in which this reproduction takes place. That is why the thinking of rightist parties is not so much cultural or economic, but ecological. These parties expand ecological concerns to include human animals, and try to organize particular ecosystems in ways that will favor the (re)production of human bodies with certain identity characteristics. And as with other animals, the main concern here is the stability of these ecosystems, their defense against intruder-animals that could destroy the already existing ecological balance. One might understand this defense of particular ecosystems as an interruption of the global flows of goods, capital, and people. But this is not quite the case.

The widespread interest in territorial diversity and difference is an effect of the expansion of global cultural markets and, especially, of tourism. The contemporary consumer of culture is interested in the diversity and authenticity of cultural markets. Here, the notion of cultural identity plays a central role. Individual cultural products are valued when they reflect the cultural identity of their producers. Otherwise, these products are perceived as inauthentic. When traveling to France, tourists want to experience something uniquely French—and they are disappointed when they see a Chinese restaurant or a McDonald's. The (re)production of bodies with a particular identity is related to the production of certain cultural goods that have a global rating. That is why rightist parties try to keep certain identities intact and their ratings high and competitive. In this sense the new rightist parties are perfectly compatible with a contemporary neoliberal globalization that lets human animals with different identity characteristics compete on the global scene.

Accordingly, immigrants are rejected not as "people with a different identity," but rather as agents of the "big world" in which all kinds of identities disappear. In Brussels, I often hear my Flemish friends say that their main problem with immigrants is that they prefer French to Flemish. I've heard something similar in Germany—among many other things, immigrants are made responsible for the Americanization of Germany, including the everyday use of English instead of German. Along with the fear of the disappearance of different kinds of animals and plants, one becomes concerned about the possible disappearance of the German or Flemish human animal. In European countries there is a lot of talk about the necessity of "integrating" immigrants into the respective national cultures. But it is obvious for everybody that the opposite process is taking place: the influx of immigrants speeds the integration of local European cultures into the Americanized, globalized, English-speaking world. Immigrants are perceived (and resented) as the agents of empire; again, their arrival in Europe is seen as a US conspiracy. Anti-immigrant affect is, actually, anti-imperial affect. And this affect is not new—in fact, it was the main motivation for the creation of the European Union.

In this sense, it is fitting that one of the creators of the European institutions that still form the foundation of the EU was Alexandre Kojève, who, from the end of WWII until his death in 1968, represented France in the early diplomatic efforts to create a unified Europe. Kojève wrote the first laws that regulated tariff policies in Europe and influenced the further development of the Brussels bureaucracy. However, Kojève's most important contribution to postwar politics was his project for a new Latin Empire.

As Kojève wrote, the Latin countries—especially France—could not easily find a place in a world dominated by a communist Soviet Union and a protestant United States. So they needed to create a Latin Empire on the basis of a union among France, Italy, and Spain—with cultural links to the Arab countries of the Maghreb and to Latin America. This empire was to have only one goal: to protect the way of life of the Catholic—or rather post-Catholic—Latin cultures. Here Kojève proposes a project of cultural biopolitics, or let's say, cultural ecology: human animals of the Latin variety should be allowed to live their traditional way of life because only then will they be truly happy. The role of the imperial European bureaucracy should be to protect this way of life from the aggressive and expanding empires of the Soviet Union and the US. This is a project that is not based on any specific future promise, on any specific ideology, on any historical mission. Instead, its goal is to secure the reproduction of a way of life that has its origin in the past.

Before becoming a politician, Kojève was a philosopher. As a philosopher he proclaimed, already in the 1930s, the end of history—by which he actually meant the end of ideologies. According to Kojève, the end of ideologies turns humans into animals. In the famous footnote 6 in the first edition of his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Kojève asserts that after the end of history, nature survives. Kojève goes on to refers to Marx in the footnote, who predicted that the historical realm of necessity that opposes man to nature and one class to another will be replaced by the realm of freedom, which will open to mankind the possibility of enjoying, in Kojève's words, "art, love, play, etc., etc." in harmony with nature. However, in a note in the second edition of the book, Kojève was more pessimistic, conceding that the disappearance of historical man would actually make traditional notions of art, love, and play obsolete:

> Hence it would have to be admitted that after the end of History, men would construct their edifices and works of art as birds build their nests and spiders spin their webs, would perform their musical concerts after the fashion of frogs and cicadas, would play like young animals, and would indulge in love like adult beasts.[2]

But more importantly, with the end of history, the human animal loses language, which is the only medium of wisdom; discourse, or Logos, disappears:

> Animals of the species *Homo sapiens* would react by conditioned reflexes to vocal signals ... What would disappear, then, is not only Philosophy or the search for discursive Wisdom, but also that Wisdom itself. For in these post-historical animals, there would no longer be any "[discursive] understanding of the World and of self."[3]

For Kojève, European mankind was already post-historical mankind: pacified, without true ambition, incapable of sacrifice—a society consisting not of humans but of human animals. One can say that what we have here is an early version of the postfascist project. It has certain traces of the fascist concern with keeping specific cultural identities intact. And it presupposes vertical solidarity among members of the same cultural identity. However, Kojève believed that the Latin Empire would be only a first step towards the worldwide, universal, and homogeneous state that Kojève associated with socialist, or rather communist, society.

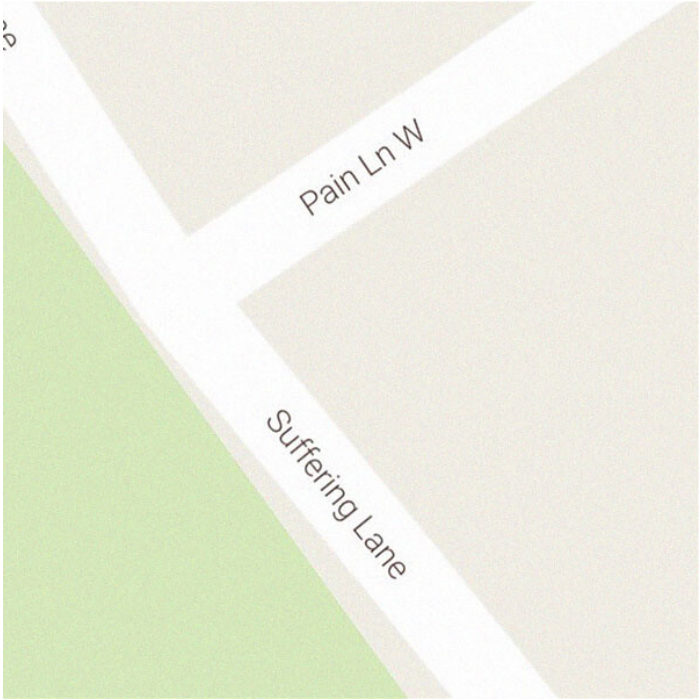
And this is precisely the point at which the new right-wing protest parties emerge. The ecological protection of the European way of life seems to collapse—the bureaucrats of the European Union lose the trust of the public because of their overly liberal orientation. Of course, liberals are against protectionist, isolationist cultural politics. When liberals speak about culture they mean cultural information—and its free flow across borders. The right-wing parties, on the contrary, understand culture not as a sum of cultural commodities or information about cultural events. Culture for them is rather a certain way of being in the world—the way of being into which a child is born and by which its attitudes, habits, and behavior patterns are formed. This process of cultural formation takes place way before this child becomes an internet user, content provider, and cultural consumer. When the right-wing parties insist on keeping intact a certain cultural identity, they mean this everyday, habitual, "non-formalized," ecological sense of culture—which has nothing to do with the production and distribution of cultural commodities or the circulation of cultural information. However, even if there is no common understanding of culture shared by liberals and nationalists, their points of view are easily compatible on the economic and political levels. Indeed, economic liberalization and globalization on the one side, and cultural nationalism on the other, are not mutually exclusive—precisely because cultural formations function de facto as preconditions for the effective participation of individuals in economic and political competition. That is why the combination of cultural globalization and extreme cultural conservatism defines the politics and art of our time.

So one can say that both neoliberal ideology and neofascist ideology celebrate diversity and difference but de facto produce cultural uniformity. Neoliberal ideology believes that global diversity should be present in every individual place on earth. But that means, of course, that all places become alike because they present the same set of diversities. (Like the supermarkets full of diverse

commodities that are similar all around the world.) This uniformity is criticized by the new right, which believes that true diversity means that different places have different cultural characteristics. This idea seems seductive to many people. However, there is one problem: it can be realized only through mechanisms of control and repression. And these mechanisms are similar all around the world—even if the cultural identities that these mechanisms protect are different. One tries to protect Polish, Hungarian, or Indian cultural identities. They are, of course, very different—however, when one begins to look into the practices of their conservation, one is impressed by the uniformity of these practices. And this uniformity is precisely what the populations of these different places are primarily confronted with in their everyday lives. Diversity, meanwhile, can be experienced only by global tourists.

Globalization inevitably leads to global uniformity—and the resistance to globalization also leads to global uniformity. If this is so, why is contemporary politics, be it neoliberal and neo-rightist, not ready to accept this fact? Why does it continue to insist on difference and diversity? The reason is again the fact that the will to uniformity is associated with socialism—and after the end of the Cold War, everything related to socialism is taboo. To illustrate this point, let me mention a text that was written at the beginning of the Cold War and that treats precisely this point. In his "Notes towards the Definition of Culture" (1948), T. S. Eliot speaks about the perspective of universal and homogeneous culture as an inevitable perspective.[4] Eliot is a conservative author and his notion of culture contradicts the understanding of culture as a sum of cultural goods. He understands culture more or less in the same way as contemporary rightist parties do—as an ecologically defined biotope for the reproduction of different kinds of human animals. At the same time, he does not believe that the protection of such biotopes can be effective. And he also does not believe that this protection is beneficial.

The reason for this skepticism is Eliot's analysis of a shift in patterns of migration. Earlier, individual tribes and small ethnic groups, he writes, migrated in their entirety—so that they brought their culture, their way of life with them. Later, however, migration no longer happened on the level of the whole *Volk*. Instead, migrants were individuals who left the centers and original areas of their culture—and thus did not transport their culture in its entirety but mixed it with the culture of the populations among which they lived.[5] Eliot speaks about this new type of migration in relation to the phenomenon of colonialism. He worries about the influence of Europeans on the sustainability of non-Western cultures. However, today migration is more associated with the movement of people from non-Western countries into Western countries. Thus, for contemporary Europeans, the worries that were formulated by Eliot become even more acute.



But Eliot does not believe in the possibility of stopping migration and protecting the European cultural biotope. He writes:

> For if we content ourselves with the ideal of "European culture" we shall be unable to fix any definite frontiers. European culture has an area, but no definite frontiers: and you cannot build Chinese walls. The notion of a purely self-contained European culture would be as fatal as the notion of a self-contained national culture: in the end as absurd as the notion of preserving a local uncontaminated culture in a single county or village in England. We are therefore pressed to maintain the ideal of a world culture, while admitting that it is something that we cannot *imagine*.[6]

Now one has to ask: Why is such a culture unimaginable? Eliot answers this question by rejecting all efforts by the "world planners" of the Hegelian-Marxist tradition to create a world state. In the spirit of the beginning of the Cold War, he accuses "our Russian friends," as he writes, of the desire to eradicate all cultural differences and create a "uniform" world culture that would dehumanize humanity.[7] These accusations glorify the historical past in which the humanity of mankind manifested itself in conflict, competition, and rivalry. Basically, it is a kind of Nietzschean aversion to the idea of a pacified, post-historical, socialist humanity that motivates Eliot to proclaim world culture to be an unimaginable project. It is the same aversion that today unites nationalists and liberals in a common celebration of human capital and

creativity. Today we are back in the nineteenth century—witnessing a combination of globalized markets and localized cultures, of the internet and Marine Le Pen. And as in the nineteenth century, the only alternative to this combination is the socialist one, which aspires to expand the ecological protection of culture to the whole world. But it seems that this alternative needs some time to become re-actualized in global political practice.

X

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1
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* , ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 215ff.

2
Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* , ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 159.

3
Ibid., 160. Brackets in original.

4
T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 62.

5
Ibid., 63.

6
Ibid., 62.

7
Ibid., 61–62.

Houria Bouteldja

We, Indigenous Women

> "How brave!"
> —A white woman admiring a *beurette* escaped from the familial gulag[1]

Sisters, do you remember the made-for-TV movie *Pierre et Djemila*? Him, handsome, in love, considerate. White. Her, beautiful, in love, terrorized by her family. Arab. That film was intended for us, the daughters of immigrants. It spoke to us. It told us how detestable our families were and how desirable French society was. A film that turned us away from our kind, from our fathers, those exploited *zoufris*[2] who painstakingly kept us alive, and our mothers, wives of immigrants, who painstakingly raised us. The film explained to us, their daughters, that they treated us badly and that we had only one way out: to tear ourselves away from them. In the beginning, I'll be honest with you, I believed in this old tune which accompanied us everywhere, insinuating itself into every pore, encrusting itself into your skin. You too, perhaps? And then I doubted, and in the end, I didn't go for it. But I could have, like so many of us did. There's no doubt that the teenager that I was had already benefitted from the experience of our older sisters who (often) broke their teeth on the mirage of the white prince charming. A spell which cost them almost everything: tearing their families apart, the stigmatization of their mother who was guilty of having "badly raised" them, the shame that reflected on everyone but also the guilt, and the bad reputation ... How many of our sisters committed suicide, caught in the cross fire of these two patriarchies? The white patriarchy, conquering and self-assured, and the other, the indigenous patriarchy, dominated and desperate. A spell that proposed to turn all of us into accomplices, auxiliaries to the racist system that would wield the deathblow to this much-hated family from North Africa. All this barely two or three decades after the African independence movements. That old recipe hasn't aged a day. In fact, didn't it reach its climax with the blazing success of Ni Putes Ni Soumises?[3] The French elite are unique. Consider their relationship to the sexism of those who are at the top, the sexism of those who are at the bottom, and the sexism of those who are beneath those who are at the bottom. The high-powered France that did not hesitate to publish a photo of Simone de Beauvoir, naked, in the headlines of a major magazine to celebrate the centennial of her birth. Can you image Sartre, naked, on the cover of a serious magazine? Undoubtedly, this must be read as the expression of an altogether French sensibility. Artistic. Aesthetic. Who better than the French elite to see and discern that which, behind feminism, defines "the woman"? A self-satisfied, know-it-all elite, walking five inches above the ground and obstinately indifferent to reality. A reality that is mistreated and despised in favor of a self-satisfaction that has no limits. From our standpoint, the spectacle is edifying. What do we see? First off, the near-total indifference of this elite to white patriarchy, which structures French society and

Photo: Hassane Mezine

determines the lives of millions of women. And yet, all evidence demonstrates that the condition of French women is deteriorating (rape, domestic violence, wage disparity, exploitation of female bodies for commercial ends ...). Next, these elites form tight ranks to irrevocably denounce violence done to women in the suburbs, when the perpetrator is black or Arab. The sexism of guys in these neighborhoods is a barbarism without cause or origin. See, all these white male chauvinists who become feminists when the guy from the suburb[4] appears? There is no word harsh enough to crucify him, no compassion strong enough to sympathize with him. All of the white world has time and time again united with quavering voices against the bad guy from the projects. *Last but not least*, they demonstrate a near-unanimous class solidarity to support DSK and co.[5] and come up with the most outrageous extenuating circumstances for them. An elite that becomes one with its male chauvinism: it euphemizes white rape, voluntarily confuses rape and licentiousness, and ignores any kind of compassion vis-à-vis victims when the perpetrator is white and high-ranking. On the other hand, against our brothers, it's a real corrida: the matadors are let loose.

Under pressure, certain of our men slip on a white mask. They don't wear it well. It disfigures them for life. Do they question themselves about their violence against us? Yeah, sure. They are ugly because they abdicate their power only to please white people. Because we are subjected to their violence. They abdicate in the face of power. When they court a white woman, they are chivalrous, considerate, romantic. Qualities that are unimaginable within the privacy of our housing projects. I've come to prefer big fat machos who own up to it. I'm telling you sisters, we must take drastic action. It's not good for us when our men reform themselves at the behest of white people. Because in fact, they do not reform themselves. They pretend to. They are actors, playing their roles with more or less talent. If you chase away what is natural, it comes running right back. And we're the ones to suffer the consequences. As I am swimming in my own contradictions, I'll admit, I prefer the original to the copy. Because it's less the reality of masculine domination that poses a problem than its dehumanization. What's worse is that none of this is new. These black people bearing white masks have illustrious predecessors. It's funny but feminist pioneers in the Islamic world were ... men: Qasim Amine, Mohammed

Abduh, Tahar Haddad, Taha Hussein, Mohammed Rachid Rida ...[6] Most female Muslim commentators are pleased with this phenomenon and see in it an exceptional humanism, a God-given philanthropy. This naïveté leaves me speechless. Why would men voluntarily abdicate their privileges? Why on earth would they encourage a struggle that threatens their power over women? In Europe, the first feminists were, quite naturally, women. Why has the Islamic world given birth to such incongruity? It's no big mystery to me. The elite in these societies were already crushed by the thought of their civilizational "backwardness." Women's liberation, when it is extolled by men, can in no way be explained by a pro-women tropism, but more conclusively by the complex of indigeneity, shamed by colonial power and seeking to hoist itself up to the level of the so-called norms of the colonized. These guys exhaust me. Speaking of virility, have you noticed, sisters, the emotion that overtakes a white democrat when a guy from the suburbs declares his homosexuality in front of a camera and mic? To hear a shyster make his coming out: what a joy for the white civilizer, an endpoint for the backward, indigenous people. Because for a *khoroto*,[7] to make of one's sexuality a social and political identity is to enter modernity through the front door. The white man is on the edge of ecstasy. All of these words jostling each other at the threshold of the indigenous person's still archaic consciousness—which, though it is still archaic, is destined to a Man's fate—besiege him: "to take responsibility for oneself," "to be accomplished," "to realize oneself," "to tear off one's chains," and "to shatter all taboos." The indigenous person is surrounded but hypnotized. Sometimes, because his people are suffocating, he gives in. Immediately, he is carried to the pinnacle. I'm sick and tired of these worthless heroes. But the white democrat goes into a trance. When he meets that unlikely character, his body shakes all over, he has an irrepressible desire to kiss him, to hold him in his arms and commune with him. Thanks to this unexpected conversion, he has accomplished his civilizing mission. He has just won a miraculous victory against an enemy, who petrifies and taunts him: the great and insolent Islamic virility. The one that is maddening. The one that has male chauvinists drooling. "They veil their wives. They can have four of them. The bastards!" We must stop lying to ourselves. When white people rejoice at an indigenous man's coming out, it's both out of homophobia and out of racism. As we all know, "the faggot" is not quite a "man," thus, the Arab who loses his virile power is not quite a man. *And that's good*. It's *really good.* And it's so reassuring. It goes without saying that the message is understood loud and clear on the other side of the highway as well. The virile and homophobic competition that takes place in the opposite camp will come as no surprise, and it will take great pleasure in overplaying sexuality, which is fabricated by the colonial gaze in the devious war between antagonistic and irreducible forces. But aside from this, apparently, within philanthropic circles, they are worried about our lot, us chicks. No kidding!

My sisters, we are entitled to ask ourselves questions, are we not? Why have white women and especially feminists, who have refined knowledge of the patriarchy, let themselves be recruited in this sacred union against guys from the suburbs? Were they bewitched? I will not have the weakness to believe that. The truth is that, caught in a conflict of interest, they privileged racial solidarity. Like Le Pen, they prefer their family to their neighbor ... As indigenous people, we have known, since *Pierre et Djemila*, that there are very few people who want our well-being. We are nothing but foils, instruments of white vanity. This hypocrites' dance nevertheless has a virtue. It forces us to return to the real, to resituate ourselves. It compels us to remain lucid. We chase away the myths; we dissipate the fog. Let's look at our parents, let's look at our brothers, let's look at the women from our neighborhoods. And let's observe the white elite. And then, let's rediscover our mothers, our fathers, and our brothers. Them, enemies? There is no simple answer to this question. I would be lying if I answered with a candid and irrevocable no. But I make the conscious choice to say no because my liberation will not be attained without theirs. Like Assata Shakur, I say: "We can never be free while our men are oppressed."[8] No, my body does not belong to me. I know today that my place is among my own people. More than an instinct, it is a political approach. But before becoming conscious knowledge, this return was accomplished through a collective will for survival and resistance. My consciousness comes from this. Our collective self reacted by creating its own immune system. What becomes of Djemila—what becomes of us—when the time of romance has passed and Pierre dumps her for other horizons? What becomes of her financial autonomy? What becomes of the indigenous woman, isolated and vulnerable in a hostile society that discriminates against her, exoticizes her, and instrumentalizes her? Will she find a refuge among her own people after her "treason"? Sometimes, yes, and sometimes, it will be difficult. Whatever happens, she will have been disgraced. Why then take this risk? This is the question we must answer, especially those of us coming from the lower classes. In other words, most of us. A friend was telling me: "I have never been a feminist. I never even thought about it. For me, feminism is like chocolate." Isn't that right! Reproaching us for not being feminists is like reproaching a poor person for not eating caviar. For, what leeway do we have between the white patriarchy and "our own," indigenous and dominated patriarchy? How should we act when the latter's survival strategy consists in exposing his pecs, making a display of his virility? This is the equation that the collective self has had to resolve. An I that has easily achieved the difficult compromise between integrity, the safety of the group, and the liberation of the individual. A compromise between indigenous men and women, which some African sisters have called "nego-feminism." In this struggle, we have not been passive. We have played our part, making do as best we could. Some of us distanced themselves from white men, some drew closer to them, not without imposing their own

conditions, others demanded a conversion to Islam, others wore the hijab. All this for a number of reasons, which range from the search for spirituality to political resistance, by way of a strong self-awareness and awareness of one's dignity. After all, we are not merely bodies available for white male consumption. And we refuse to allow our bodies to be exploited by the society of the spectacle. At the same time, we are rebuilding ties to ourselves. We belong to the "community" and we ensure it of our loyalty. Is it a paradox to undergo a collective benediction? A knife in the back of women's struggle? No. This is the precondition for a concrete emancipation, because it's either that or the perpetual divide, the "no-man's land" of the *beurette* or the disembodied black girl. From now on, this margin of freedom we negotiated will allow us to have a bit more control over our lives. It's significant and better than nothing. Within this framework, the "chocolate" dimension of feminism finds its fullest expression: the indigenous man is not our main enemy. The radical critique of indigenous patriarchy is a luxury. If a responsible form of feminism were ever to see the light of day, it would have to take the sinuous and craggy routes of a paradoxical movement, which will necessarily have to pass through a communitarian allegiance. At least, so long as racism exists.

Sisters, let's begin with an act of liberation. A simple thought. That of allowing ourselves to ask this question: Must we necessarily subscribe to feminism? And why is this question, in and of itself, already an intolerable transgression? If so, does a new feminism need to be invented? For my part, I prefer to remain prudent and examine the matter more closely. We live in a complicated time, and this complexity makes our self-definition more difficult. Be that as it may, there is a need to clarify and to analyze in order to lead struggles that are adapted to our condition as nonwhite women of the East. For the purposes of our cause, I'm willing to use the concept of "decolonial feminism." Though it does not entirely satisfy me, it's a compromise between a certain resistance to feminism at home and throughout the Third World, and the massive, disturbing reality of the multidimensional violence that is inflicted on us, a violence that is produced by states and by neoliberalism.[9] Let's consider this compromise as an agreement between the resistance to feminism, to its Western-centric forms,[10] and its successful penetration into nonwhite worlds, its adoption and subsequent reappropriation by some of us. It's a real mess. Let's start by clearing a path.

Is feminism universal and a-temporal, a necessary passage to aspire to liberation, dignity, and well-being? I don't think so. As is the case with all social phenomena, feminism is situated in space and time. One has only to determine its conditions of emergence. First, I must confess, I have a reproach to make against us: too often, feminists from the South see the feminist movement through Chimène's eyes. From the outset then, it's accepted as a superior phenomenon. This subjugation is such that Muslim feminists, for instance, do not hesitate to inscribe feminism within the genesis of Islamic history. All of Islam's dignity is thereby contained in the capacity of these militant women to prove that Islam's writings are feminist but its interpretations by the local patriarchy have been sexist. Muslim feminists are condemned to demonstrate this, and remain prisoners to the terms of a debate imposed by others. They sin through their blind adherence to the paradigm of modernity, through the idea that gender conflicts today are first and foremost determined by the nature of Islamic societies, rather than by global economic and political structures and North/South relationships. In this way, societies in which the feminist movement is nonexistent or marginal are seen as bearing a civilizational backwardness. One would have to make up this delay and operate grafts in different space/times, by ignoring the sociohistorical or even geopolitical realities of the countries in question, the impact of modernity in gender relations and their transformation, as well as the historical condition of the emergence of feminism, which have made feminism into a specifically European phenomenon, a phenomenon that emerges out of the geopolitical space called the West.

Sisters, let's be methodical and ask ourselves the right questions. Do white women really have an instinctive, feminist consciousness? What are the historical conditions that have *enabled* feminism? It's impossible not to relocate the basis of the *possibility* of feminism within a specific geopolitical moment: that of capitalist and colonial expansion, made possible by the "discovery of America" and by another foundational moment: the French Revolution, itself a condition of the emergence of the rule of law and of the individual citizen. The French Revolution became a promise—the promise of the recognition of complete and total universal citizenship—which was obviously not kept, since this citizenship was at first reserved to men. It later became a possible horizon for women because, from then on, thanks to the principles of the revolution, they would be able to solve the equation: if the individual is a citizen, and woman is an individual, then woman is a citizen in full right ... Feminism would take a long time to develop (it reached its apogee in the 1970s) but would always be contained within the framework of liberal democracies, founded on the idea of the equality of citizens, and in which white women obtained rights, because of their own struggle, of course, but *also* thanks to imperial domination.

"The History of the West," writes Domenico Losurdo, "faces a paradox ... The neat line distinguishing white people on the one hand, from black people and Native Americans, on the other, favors the development of relationships of equality within the white community."[11]

Interesting, no? Let's not forget that at the time of the revolution, the black slave trade already existed and France was a stakeholder in this commerce. The "racial" conflicts of interest between the North and the South

weren't fixed then. The peoples of the North who were not yet completely "white" could conceive of dangerous convergences with the colonized. The French Revolution coincides with the Haitian Revolution and interacts with it. The *sans-culottes* protested to demand the abolition of slavery against the "aristocracy of the epidermis." But the colonial states, in the process of being established, have always skillfully known how to integrate certain layers of the proletariat and of women throughout their social or political wings. This is also how the white race was invented. What I mean, sisters, is that European societies were horribly unjust toward women (several thousand "witches" were immolated there), but also that women, thanks to capitalist and colonial expansion, largely improved their condition on the backs of the colonized. So, let's stop dumbly admiring a world that birthed political phenomena only to resolve its own contradictions, be they justified or not, but which had nothing to do with an avant-garde enlightening of the world. Isn't this what James Baldwin and Audre Lorde invite us to do?

To Baldwin, who reproaches Lorde for overloading black men, the African-American feminist replies:

> I do not blame Black men; what I'm saying is, we have to take a new look at the ways in which we fight our joint oppression because if we don't, we're gonna be blowing each other up. We have to begin to redefine the terms of what woman is, what man is, how we relate to each other.
>
> Baldwin replies: "But that demands redefining the terms of the western world."[12]

"But that demands redefining the terms of the *western world*." Sisters, may I propose that we extend Baldwin's remark? The expansion of capitalism across the world exported political systems and conflicts that structure the white world into left and right, progressives and conservatives, nation-states, languages, modes of life, dress codes, epistemologies, structures of thought ... There is no reason to believe that feminism escaped this. For me, feminism is indeed one of those exported European phenomena. The power of imperialism is such that all the phenomena that structure the Western political, economic, and cultural field impose themselves across the world more or less contentedly: sometimes they come up against the resistance of the people, sometimes they penetrate, slide in like butter. They become reality. They inform and shape the everyday. However, all these countries have specific histories, and they especially have specific economic and political systems that determine and shape, among other things, the relations between men and women. You might already know this, but before the "great encounter" with the West, there were places where relations of gender domination did not exist; there were even regions of the world in which the female gender did not exist.[13] There are regions where, on the contrary, there was a specifically local patriarchy, which is to say, not Christian-centric and not necessarily heterosexist. In fact, before the great colonial night, there was an extreme diversity of human relations that I do not want to romanticize, but that we cannot ignore. As Paola Bacchetta reminds us: "The colonizers did not only impose their own notions of gender and sexuality onto colonized subjects: the effect of this imposition has been to worsen the situation of women ... and sexual minorities."[14]

With fifty years of hindsight, and thanks to Latin American decolonizing intellectuals in particular, we know that while formal independence movements have indeed taken place, the "colonialism of power" has not disappeared. Indeed, the young liberated nations have walked in the footsteps of their old masters, copied their political systems without any critical distance, adopted the forms of European nation-states, the French in particular, whose limits were painfully felt during the two so-called "world" wars, the forms of jurisdiction, of democracy, of relation to citizenship, to freedom, to emancipation ... The diversity of social forms thus gave way to a progressive homogenization. Diversity either disappeared or transformed itself. Often it resisted and reconstructed itself. This is what has happened in most cases. Feminism, as an idea, but also as a form of struggle, therefore sometimes becomes a reality that we must accept when women take hold of it and redefine it, whether it is secular, Islamic, or articulated through the local cultures, but that we should refuse, if women reject it.

This is what Baldwin suggests when he bases the redefinition of femininity and masculinity on a reconsideration of the West. He's completely right. We cannot rethink social relations, the family, gender relations, or sexuality without rethinking the nature of the state, North/South relations, neoliberalism, and its metamorphoses. Moreover, we must question the notions of equality, emancipation, freedom, and progress, and even refuse to conform to the liberal model of the individual.

Sisters, we need a global thinking that conceives of an alternative to Western civilization, which is in decline and has reached its limits. In other words, thinking about gender and the types of relations between men and women cannot be done without a radical calling-into-question of modernity and a reflection on its civilizational alternative. It is not by targeting symptoms of masculine violence against us that we will transform our reality, but by attacking structures. In this struggle, our mobilization as nonwhite women will be decisive. But you will say, this is all well and good, and yet in the meantime, we are suffocating.

Yes.

To the question "why didn't you press charges?," the black rape victim answers the interviewer, who is himself black: "I never pressed charges because I wanted to protect you. I couldn't bear to see another black man in jail."[15]

This is what provokes Audre Lorde's rage:

> It's vital that we deal constantly with racism, and with white racism among black people—that we recognize this as a legitimate area of inquiry. We must also examine the ways that we have absorbed sexism and heterosexism. These are the norms in this dragon we have been born into—and we need to examine these distortions with the same kind of openness and dedication that we examine racism.

Our communities cannot do without this introspection. Men must learn to respect us and understand our sacrifice, just as we understand the necessity of protecting them.[16] This debate amongst ourselves is a priority. Will we see to it?

James Baldwin continues: "A woman does know much more than a man." Audre Lorde: "And why? For the same reason Black people know what white people are thinking: because we had to do it for our survival."

Yes, we know much more, and it is for this reason that we are more strategic ... or sly, as others would say. We especially know that our men are just as oppressed as us in different ways.

"Do you know what happens to a man when he's ashamed of himself when he can't find a job? When his socks stink? When he can't protect anybody? When he can't do anything? Do you know what happens to a man when he can't face his children because he's ashamed of himself? It's not like being a woman ...," says James Baldwin. And he continues: "A Black man has a prick, they hack it off. A Black man is a ****** when he tries to be a model for his children and he tries to protect his women. That is a principle crime in this republic. And every Black man knows it. And every Black woman pays for it. And every Black child."

In Europe, prisons are brimming with black people and Arabs. Racial profiling almost only concerns men, who are the police's main target. It is in our eyes that they are diminished. And yet they try desperately to reconquer us, often through violence. In a society that is castrating, patriarchal, and racist (or subjected to imperialism), *to live is to live with virility*. "The cops are killing the men and the men are killing the women. I'm talking about rape. I'm talking about murder," says Audre Lorde. A decolonial feminism must take into account this masculine, indigenous "gender trouble" because the oppression of men reflects directly on us. Yes, we are subjected with full force to the humiliation that is done to them. Male castration, a consequence of racism, is a humiliation for which men make us pay a steep price. In other words, the more hegemonic thought tells us that our men are barbaric, the more frustrated they become, and the more they will oppress us. The effects of white, racist patriarchy exacerbate gender relations in the indigenous milieu. This is why a decolonial feminism must have as its imperative to radically refuse the discourses and practices that stigmatize our brothers and that, in the same move, exonerate white patriarchy. I think I can see that Lorde is conscious of this when she tells Baldwin: "It's vital for me to be able to listen to you, to hear what it is that defined you and for you to listen to me, to hear what it is that defines me—because so long as we are operating in that old pattern, it doesn't serve anybody, and it certainly hasn't served us."

This has political and strategic implications. It means that we must engage with men in a conversation on masculinity, as the very lucid Baldwin invites us to do when he tells Lorde: "There's certainly not [a] standard of masculinity in this country which anybody can respect. Part of the horror of being a Black American is being trapped into being an imitation of an imitation."

The trap of imitation. Isn't this one of the many dimensions of the jihadist, Daesh phenomenon, that acts like a counterrevolutionary force? Isn't it into this trap that its promoters and fighters fall pray? The trap of grotesque imitation? The colonial West thought it had decimated the virile power of our men. Instead, the West proliferated it in its own image. Today, this power explodes in our faces, not without the active complicity of certain of our younger sisters, who were programmed to become *beurettes* but responded to the call of "jihad" with a resounding: yes! When their brothers go off to save their lost honor, they follow them, go with them, reinvent a mythological family model wherein the roles are naturalized but reassuring: men make war, women make children. The men are heroes and the women, loyal Penelopes who accept the downfall of a progressivism that was never shared, a falsely universal but truly white progressivism, which continues to try to domesticate them and hide their future from them: "No, our men aren't fags!" they tell us. We've come full circle.

In the face of this need for security, it will not suffice to implore or oppose great principles. If we had to have a mission, it would be to destroy imitation. This is a goldsmith's job. We will have to guess which part, in the testosterone-laden virility of the indigenous male, resists white domination. Then we will channel it, neutralize its violence against us, and orient it toward a project of common liberation. This fundamentally white masculinity will require something to offset it that is at least as gratifying. That is called respect. It's not complicated, but it's costly.

"I think the Black sense of male and female is much more sophisticated that the western idea."

Dear sisters, what do you think of this quote from brother Baldwin? I find it enigmatic because it seems misleading, given that our lived experiences contradict this affirmation. But I feel that it contains a knowledge that is hidden in our depths. It is full of a powerful potential, and even of a promise. I want to believe in it, but they will be quick to accuse me of giving in to an indigenous patriarchy. But after all, I don't care, because I'm decided on optimism and the triumph of revolutionary love.

X

This piece is an excerpt from Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love *by Houria Bouteldja, translated by Rachel Valinsky, and with a foreward by Cornel West, forthcoming from Semiotext(e) in November 2017.*

Houria Bouteldja is a French-Algerian political activist and writer focusing on anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and Islamophobia. She serves as spokesperson for the Parti des Indigènes de la République (Party of the Indigenous of the Republic).

1
Translator's note: *beurette* is French slang for a French woman whose family is originally North African (female version of the term "beur," which is verlan—i.e., an inversion of syllables—for Arab).

2
Translator's note: Arabic term derived from the French word for workers, "les ouvriers" (which became "zouvriers"). Often used to refer to bachelors who came to work in Europe.

3
Translator's note: Ni Putes Ni Soumises is a French feminist movement and organization founded in 2003. See http://www.npns.fr/ .

4
Translator's note: *banlieusard*—used to refer to someone living in the suburbs of a major city, especially Paris.

5
Translator's note: Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

6
Translator's note: figures of reformism in Islam.

7
Translator's note: from North African dialect, a word used to refer to an Arab in a self-deprecating and humorous register.

8
Assata Shakur and Joanne Chesimard, "Women in Prison: How We Are," *The Black Scholar*, April 1978: 14.

9
See Tithi Bhattacharya, "Explaining gender violence in the neoliberal era," trans. Félix Boggio Ewanjé-Epée and Stella Magliani-Belkacem, *International Socialist Review* 91 (Winter 2013–14) http://isreview.org/issue/91/explaining-gender-violence-neoliberal-era . Originally published as "Comprendre la violence sexiste à l'ère du néolibéralisme," *Revue Période* http://revueperiode.net/comprendre-la-violence-sexiste-a-lere-du-neoliberalisme .

10
European feminism is of course plural. There are statist, liberal, neoliberal, imperialist, or, on the contrary, radically anti-liberal, anti-imperialist, and antiracist feminisms. Here, its dominant version is discussed.

11
Domenico Losurdo, *Le Péché originel du XXe siècle* (Brussels: Aden, 2007), 19, 21. Translation mine.

12
James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, "Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation Between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde," *Essence Magazine* , 1984 http://sonofbaldwin.tumblr.com/post/72976016835/triggerwarning-ableist-speech-sexismrevolutionary . All subsequent citations from Baldwin and Lorde are from this conversation.

13
See Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

14
Paola Bacchetta, "Réflexions sur les alliances feministes transnationales," in *Le Sexe de la mondialisation. Genre, class, race et nouvelle division du travail* , eds. Jules Falquet et al., trans. Layla Ghovini (from English) (Paris: Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2010), 264–65.

15
Gordon Braxton, "This Sexual Assault Victim Didn't Report Her Rape Because She Wanted to Protect Me," *Huffington Post,* June 10, 2014 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gordon-braxton/this-sexual-assault-victi_b_5125310.html?comm_ref=false&src=sp&utm_hp_ref=fb .

16
On the notion of sacrifice, see Houria Bouteldja, "Universalisme gay, homoracialisme, et 'mariage pour tous'" ("Gay Universalism, Homoracialism, and 'Marriage for All'"), Parti des indigènes de la Républiques, February 12, 2013 http://indigenes-republique.fr/universalisme-gay-homoracialisme-et-mariage-pour-tous-2/ .

Rob Goyanes

A Palace of Unsaids

1.

I found myself collecting all the little fascisms I could. Isidore Heath Hitler is some guy from New Jersey who recently changed his name to Hitler—the initials stand for "I hail Hitler."

He had also named his son Adolf Hitler. In 2008, Hitler tried to get a birthday cake with his young son's name on it, but the cake writer at ShopRite refused. A Walmart in Pennsylvania obliged. A year later, the state took his kids away, citing abuse and neglect by Hitler and his wife Deborah Campbell. During an appeal hearing to get back the children, who are all named after Third Reich characters and white nationalist groups, Hitler was told he needed to seek psychological counseling, but he said he wouldn't because his psychologist was Jewish.

Denying custody, the court citied unspecified "physical and psychological disabilities," including the fact that the parents themselves were victims of childhood abuse.

I read about the story on major news outlets and local New Jersey websites. My eyes hungrily scanned the paragraphs, which were interspersed with ads oddly related to my email correspondence. The macabre humor of it was titillating at first, but when I think about it now, a guilty sorrow washes over me, a pity for Hitler, but mostly for those who must suffer their relations. Then comes vermilion anger.

Today politics seems fully pathologized: Adhere to the status quo? Desire radical change? Reignite an old order? Healthy politics don't exist. Everyone is sick, but especially "me."

2.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a labyrinthine, sloping field of stelae. Arranged in an elegant, softly undulating grid, they don't seem very tall from outside the memorial, but as you descend within, an unsettling quiet fills the air. The rectangular stones are clean and simple, and start to grow taller and taller. Everyone who enters is quickly set along their own path. Visitors cut corners in mischievous delight or solemn repose. Everywhere you look—despite all the possible turns one could take—it's a straight line. Peter Eisenman said his design is all about the "enormity of the banal," and from the outside, the memorial seems logical, systematic, punctilious. But as you move through it, your confusion deepens, and we become strangers. Is this what we call history?

People walk through toppled headstones at Chesed Shel Emeth Cemetery, a Jewish cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, February 21, 2017. Photo: Robert Cohen/St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP.

3.

There's a Yiddish saying that goes *Abi gezunt—dos leben ken men zikh alain nemen.* It translates to "Stay healthy, because you can kill yourself later."

Imagine what Holocaust memorials might look like in a thousand years: comprehensive VR re-creations of the camps, massive museum complexes of excruciating scale and detail, algorithmic factories for sorrow. Or will they exist at all? "Nothing insures a poem against its death," Derrida remarks on Celan, "because its archive can always be burned in crematory ovens or in house fires, or because, without being burned, it is simply forgotten, or not interpreted or permitted to slip into lethargy. Forgetting is always a possibility."[1]

Nothing guarantees remembrance: not the archive, not the internet, not the much-touted "moral arc of history," nothing. Falsities can be memorialized into fact and violence can be valorized as beauty. As the affective economy booms and busts, the tempo of memory slows its loop. Then it accelerates. Museums and memorials are factories for memory, articulating the act of remembering as a discrete division of labor. Walk these halls, see these artifacts and documents, stare at these statues in public squares, expend your energy in thinking and feeling, and you will have *done the work of remembering*. Is this the future of labor? Collecting up our affective capacity, purely for the purpose of fixing and circulating social-historical capital? Or will it be enough, one day, to just walk the earth remembering? The entire planet a memorial, a museum, a place to think and feel?

4.

My Great-Uncle Morty, a short and portly man with an angular, hooked nose, died a couple years ago. He was found at his desk, slightly slumped over. He was in the middle of a game of solitaire. Morty, my mom's uncle, was the one who told the stories about the family dying in Poland. My whole life I was told that Uncle Morty's dad was captured by the Russians during World War II and sent to a labor camp in Siberia. When he returned home to Poland, all seven family members were gone. I grew up with this knowledge but never knew the specifics, only that the family was Polish—no specific names, cities, or camps were ever provided. As I've attempted to sketch the intergenerational trauma, I've found that family, like history, includes an accumulation of silences. It is a palace of unsaids, lingering with hushes, everyone hurtling through it and uncertain how they got there, moving from

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, 2010. Photo: Hindrik Sijens/CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

pain to ecstasy, from boredom to purpose.

5.

It was a beautiful day in 2013 when I went to Sachsenhausen, the concentration camp in Orianenburg. I'd never visited a camp before. I walked the perimeter toward the entrance, the sky was clear and blue and the air was cool and brisk. The trees were lush, and there it was: the architecture passed through me, shifting its weight in my brain and body. I felt doubly a tourist. The place had known me forever, yet I had never been. All my life the familial fact of the Holocaust had swirled around my mind, impinged upon me, and now I came upon it, the near-terminus of an entire people, "my" people, the spring of my identity, the modern font of contemporary subjectivity, ground zero for both the dominant moral paradigm and my othered self. Everyone at some point feels like an other—detached and disassociated and delirious—but not everyone knows *this* level of estrangement, the type that connects you to yourself while also demanding your total extermination.

As I walked around Sachsenhausen, I saw exactly what I thought I would see, and yet I saw something precisely different. I felt the perfectly uncanny, a "class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar," as Freud defined it.[2] Seeing the exhibits that accompanied the *Appellplatz* where roll call took place, the bunkers that housed the imprisoned, and "Station Z" toward the back of the triangular camp, where the bodies were incinerated—I still longed for the other camp, the camp where my own family perished. I felt I had ended up at the wrong exhibit, then felt deeply ashamed for feeling that way.

Exhausted, I went to the café on the grounds of the concentration camp and ordered a mozzarella and basil sandwich. For Agamben, the camp, as a model, is not "a historical fact and anomaly belonging to the past," but rather "the hidden matrix and nomos of the political space in which we are still living."[3] The famous inscription *Arbeit macht frei* at the entrance—work sets you free—is the kind of total cliché that seems entirely unvanquished since Luther, its five-hundred-year reign of terror continuing through totalitarianism and into neoliberalism. And this sandwich was the condition of possibility for completing this labor—the labor of memory, the labor of trauma—a biological necessity for witnessing the darkness of a forsaken world. The pale, humorless café attendant handed me the sandwich, and I handed him my euros. I scarfed it down as I walked away from the camp back toward the train, and I'm not exaggerating or joking when I say that it was the most delicious sandwich I have ever eaten. And I had earned it: it was a political and spiritual sacrament, a bizarre relief, my body's automated recognition to never take anything for granted.

6.

What is a Jew? As Primo Levi once said, "Everybody is somebody's Jew." For even more perplexing insight, we can look to Isaac Deutscher, the Polish writer who rejected his orthodox upbringing to become a Marxist historian, a biographer of Trotsky and Stalin:

> I remember that when as a child I read the *Midrash* I came across a story and a description of a scene which gripped my imagination. It was the story of Rabbi Meir, the great saint, sage, and the pillar of Mosaic orthodoxy and co-author of the *Mishna*, who took lessons in theology from a heretic Elisha ben Abiyuh, nicknamed Akher (The Stranger). Once on a Sabbath, Rabbi Meir went out on a trip with his teacher, and as usual they became engaged in deep argument. The heretic was riding a donkey, and Rabbi Meir, as he could not ride on a Sabbath, walked by his side and listened so intently to the words of wisdom falling from heretical lips, that he failed to notice that he and his teacher had reached the ritual boundary which Jews were not allowed to cross on a Sabbath. At that moment the great heretic turned to his pupil and said: "Look, we have reached the boundary—we must part now: you must not accompany me any further—go back!" Rabbi Meir went back to the Jewish community while the heretic rode on—beyond the boundaries of Jewry.[4]

Deutscher fits the non-Jew—the one who rejects his Judaic structure and stricture—into a long line of Jews, paradoxically reinforcing his Jewishness. The wise Jew is heretical, nomadic, one who *chooses* exile, one who willingly crosses the boundaries of territory and thought.

The notion of constant travel is essential to the question of what makes a Jew.

The legend of the wandering Jew, which has its roots in several independently existing racist myths, goes like this: the Jew, after mocking Christ as he hung from the cross, was cursed to meander the earth for all eternity, hiding and foraging in various farmlands, always on the move.

But is this much worse than terrestrial stuckness? Mobility is a means of escape, a cloak for tunneling, a way of doing the eternal work of moving beyond trauma. In the twentieth century, nationalism begat nationalism, creating an ever expanding territorializing circuit that hardened identities, pitted people against people.

In the face of the Holocaust, Zionists found hope and relief in the state apparatus and its administration of land. They, and nationalists of every stripe, believe they've found the ideological antidote to the curse of upheaval and uncertainty: an occupational therapy of power as treatment for trauma. A counter-nationalism, a wage of apartheid.

In 2005, the Israeli government forcibly removed eight thousand colonists who were illegally settling in the Gaza Strip. As Ilan Pappé noted,

> In a desperate attempt to thwart the government's action, the settlers' crusade adopted an insignia meant to link the pullout with the Holocaust: yellow stars of David and tattooed numbers on the arm. During the actual removal, many of the settlers reenacted scenes they had seen in Holocaust films or museums: parents and children raising their hands, crying and shouting on the way to the luxury buses that whisked them off to Israel. Soldiers and police were cursed as Nazis, and senior army officers were likened to Hitler.[5]

The settlers have mistaken the disease for the cure. They've bought into the bullshit, the idea that Jews' displacement and travel was only a curse that would bring pain and suffering, that wandering was sad or bad or somehow lesser-than. The truth is that wandering is a strategy, a necessary fixture of peace: it teaches humility, the sharing of space, the circulation of concepts and experiences. Not for nothing does the Greek word for theory, *Theôria*, mean a journey out of one's home or town in order to partake in ritual or witness an event.

The self is constituted by others; everybody is somebody's Jew. Look to the Muslims murdered en masse in the Middle East, harassed and killed in the United States; the war against black lives carried out by cops and klans and right-wing terrorists; the classist eugenics performed on the poor by the extractive networks of capitalism; the Native victims of cultural and natural destruction via unregulated development of indigenous lands; the many displaced by the gentrification of urban space. And no matter who you are, at one point or another in your life, *you are your own Jew*.

An illustration by A. Ferdinandus in Eugène Sue's 1844 book The Wandering Jew.

7.

Though I've known depression and anxiety my entire life, I didn't start having full-blown panic attacks until after Trump's inauguration. For the uninitiated, panic attacks are defined by reverberating, surging loops of dread that consume you. The heart beats uncontrollably; the mind races faster and faster and repeatedly concludes that you simply must be dying. The first full-blown panic attack I had, in early 2017, involved allergy medication. I take two meds, Montelukast in the evening and Fexofenadine in the morning. One day, I ran out of the Fexofenadine and double-dosed on the Montelukast. After taking the pill, I

made the critical error of smoking weed. The fear and psychosis quickly started to build within me; the newfound architecture of political anxiety had opened a local chapter. It felt like I was dying, and I became convinced that I was going into shock from the second allergy pill. My body trembled, I couldn't catch my breath. It took me calling Poison Control and being told that I couldn't die from two Montelukasts in order for me to eventually calm down. No one is perfectly heretical, and there are some things about my Abrahamic makeup that I just can't profane.

Allergies, like paranoia, are assigned as a stereotypical quality of Jewishness.

Ashkenazi Jews are in fact more prone to disease because of their pure-bred genetic makeup. After a little research though, it seemed my Jewishness was probably not the reason for my severely runny nose and congestion—this is just a stereotype. Allergies, it's been found, have been rising in general over the past couple years due to global climate change: warming climates from the industrial pumping of carbon dioxide into the air—the wholesale gassing of the planet—mean longer pollen seasons and more mold.[6] This, of course, is one of our lesser worries in the Anthropocene, but it hints at a deeper set of questions. How will the sediments of knowledge continue to shift our paranoias? Will they stoke or dampen the flames of delusion? How does anxiety, one of the most common mental-health issues in the world, relate to our emerging political subjectivity? And, if the pessimist in me is right, and we're actually living in early capitalism, what will this mean for the global future?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is what my therapist told me, and I didn't need any convincing.

8.

A couple months ago it was reported that dozens of headstones were knocked down in Washington Cemetery, a Jewish graveyard in Brooklyn. The same thing happened at the Chesed Shel Emeth cemetery in St. Louis, where one hundred headstones were toppled, and many broken, in February. That act of vandalism in St. Louis was during a wave of over one hundred bomb threats made to Jewish community centers across the US, which caused evacuations and intensified fears about a new tide of anti-Semitism in the United States following the inauguration. It turned out that an eighteen-year-old Jewish teenager in Israel—who has a brain tumor that affects his behavior, according to his lawyer—was the primary (but not sole) source of these bomb threats.

In Washington Cemetery, I look around and see some tombstones that are sort of slouching, a couple that are fully knocked over. The NYPD had recently finished their investigation and ruled that it was not the work of vandals, and was rather the result of neglect and soil erosion instead, though the cemetery disputes this. I wonder if this was anti-Semitic vandalism, or just the result of environmental slippage and a ploy by the cemetery. The landscaping of the graveyard is unmanicured, allowed to run wild with tall grasses and dandelions. I sit with the dead; they're a calming force sometimes.

Flowers bloom in Washington Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY.

9.

In April 2017, Gean Moreno gave a lecture called "A Fascinating Prospect," on the work of imagining human extinction, which "reminds us that we are the outcome of processes that were set in motion long before we were around and that will continue long after we are gone, processes that will fold us back into their unbroken line of incessant mutation, swallowing any trace we leave behind."

Moreno acknowledges the dazzling phenomenon of our evolved processes, things like metabolism and other little labors that sustain life, only to remind us that we're "a swarm of chemical and informational transactions." In our

current global project of imagining human extinction (not totally new, but it has come with something especially obsessive and rational about it as of late), the possibilities are not remote: they are literally written in the earth's geology, communicated in the eyes and stories of the anguished.

After the talk was over, I went to the bar to grab another Chardonnay, and saw the printed text of the lecture in the trash. I retrieved it and walked outside. I glanced at a line: "an incapacity to affect our immediate and material conditions and political landscapes, of a swelling sense of impotence before incessant crisis and social disintegration." Downstairs, I gazed up to see the sign that hung next to the entrance. It read "Ritualarium," with Hebrew letters beneath it. This, I found, is the last Mikveh in the Lower East Side, the ritual bath used by Orthodox Jews where individuals are immersed for purification. This was the meeting place for the Federation of Jewish Organizations of New York State, who protested the Russian pogroms happening at the turn of the twentieth century, and the stricter immigration laws that were being put in place by the United States.[7]

As the night drew on, I wondered stupidly if the total extinction of humanity is our only chance at true peace. It isn't, of course, though it certainly seems like the most visible strategy at the moment. Beyond a transaction with this bleak horizon, and the task of giving recognition to suffering in all its forms—the labors of empathy, memory, reparation, and defense—there's another labor that must be integrated: the work of forgetting.

The last time I saw my Uncle Morty, he asked me if I had a girlfriend, and told me that it was important to have a body that could keep you warm at night. This is something I like to forget; it was creepy and made me uncomfortable, despite its kernel of truth. Forgetting, you see, is different from amnesia; it has a political function. Born in the Ukraine in 1772, Rebbe Nachman was the founder of Breslov, a Hasidic group that encouraged joy and dancing as a means of getting closer to God. He wrote, "Most people think of forgetfulness as a defect. I consider it a great benefit. Being able to forget frees you from the burdens of the past." Remembrance and the archive are integral, but the mind and culture cannot always be crowded with the objects of our opposition, the source of our demise. What we strive for must exist—for now—within, underneath, and through the structures of extinction.

10.

Inmate Bedrich Fritta, who was imprisoned at the Theresienstadt camp in Czechoslovakia, placed numbered suitcases and bundles of belongings near a fence and some dead trees in order to signify that the owners had been exterminated. This was a form of art, created within the camps as a disavowal of power, disobedience in the face of dehumanization. It was instrumental and communicative.

Three years ago I encountered a contrary image: a favela sat in the bright Basel sun. It was just outside the Messeplatz, the two massive convention halls made of basket-weaved brushed aluminum, which are conjoined at the center by an enormous oculus—a silver wormhole to the sky. Architects Herzog & de Meuron designed it with the weaving pattern in order to reduce the sense of scale, but still, it remains huge and imposing. *Favela Café* was an art installation on the occasion of Art Basel 2013, a mini-shantytown of stained wood pallets and corrugated metal roofs. The structures, meant to invoke Brazilian slums, were clean and simply constructed, not very slum-like. They served as concession stands for coffees and Aperol Spritzes and various pastries. A few days into the fair, I heard the booms of teargas guns being fired by Swiss police. They were breaking up a group of about one hundred artist-activists who partied, vainly, in protest. After the demonstrators were maced, arrested, and driven out, everything got cleaned up, and the point-of-sale art installation continued providing lattes and dappled shade.

11.

Just down the street from the Miami Beach Convention Center where Art Basel is held, the Holocaust Memorial's outstretched arm explodes out of the earth, bodies flailing on its forearm, all in a bronze-green patina. The marketplace for memorializing is a tiny blip in the larger nexus of the speculative fine-art market. As Claire Fontaine remarked on a not-too-distant past, "The market was only one background noise among many, and not yet the endless, deafening throbbing we have now grown accustomed to."[8] What is the function of art and the memorial in the age of contemporary fascism?

There's a reason we find hope in the black-clad antifa punching a white nationalist, and the memes set to a thousand songs. There's a reason we're pulling down those statues of white men.

12.

In his review of the Jewish Museum's "Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art" (2002), Peter Schjeldahl wrote, "We were afraid that Adolf Hitler would keep making us feel bad forever, but you know what? He's dead, and we're not."[9]

This quote from Schjeldahl is meant to provide some dark comic relief and, within that, some modicum of hope. Still, the mind remains a concentration camp for thought, a site of both desire and repulsion, hopelessly attracted to

A scientist studies the ERT data that first revealed evidence of a tunnel beneath Ponar forest in Lithuania, at the site of a mass grave where Nazis buried murdered Jews.

history's mass extinctions and the political vocabularies that animate them. History is like food for the mind, and we feast on the dead. Sontag: "The appetite for pictures showing bodies in pain is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked."[10] I return to this subject of genocide repeatedly—sick of it the way Celan was sick of his much-anthologized poem "Death Fugue." It feels played-out, and yet, the desire and necessity for it gets periodically inflamed. Yes, Hitler might be dead, what about all the others? Is there no way out?

Recently, in Lithuania, a hundred-foot tunnel was discovered at Ponar, the site of multiple mass graves where Nazis buried murdered Jews during the Holocaust. The tunnel was dug with spoons.[11]

13.

My family's deaths in the Holocaust have haunted me ever since I was a child. This was despite the void of information, the lack of specific horror stories. The haunting was given shape by the traumas that affected me directly, the various dismemberings: some universal, others singular. So the Holocaust took on greater meaning, perhaps, as a way of coping with my everyday struggles, the traumas of family, the polluted self.

When I reached out to one of Uncle Morty's daughters about what happened to the family during the Holocaust, after her grandfather returned to Poland from the Siberian labor camp, she corrected me and said that she heard that he had fought in World War I. She said that Uncle Morty told many lies. I was unprepared. My sense of identity flashed before my eyes. Okay, but did any family die in the camps? "I think some of the family that did not leave died in the camps," she said. At the moment, the question remains unanswered, a knot only made tighter by inquiry, a lacuna that has left me wondering, wandering.

In college I took a class called "Comparative Genocide," and Dr. Olson, the professor, gave us a sheet containing his twin-spiral model of the progression of genocide. It had two neat spirals next to each other. They illustrated the social processes of othering and dehumanization that lead to the systematic murder of a targeted group of people, and one day, after watching a portion of the documentary *Shoah*, I walked in the heat of Miami to my car. "The Fair," the county fair on the grounds close to the university, was alive and rowdy with the yells of roller-coaster riders. It was fall, but it felt like the dead of summer. As I stood there, perspiring and listening to those yelling in absolute ecstasy, my eyes welled up, the tears mixed with my sweat. The screams of joy were transmogrified, forever engraved in my mind.

This is the labor of memory. As we walk through history, the lushest of forests, we find the engravings and trash of those who have come before. Obsessed with finding our way out, or with securing our patch of ground, we do the work that's bestowed upon us, the work we take on, deal with (and dole out) trauma, reckon with ourselves and with others, confuse stimuli and signals and try to interpret them as best we can. This labor includes far too many moments of flesh-crawling horror. What if my family wasn't a part of the Holocaust? Does that invalidate my work? Does it negate all the times I was a victim of anti-Semitism in all its forms, pernicious and casual? Am I still in intimate relation with one of the darkest moments in human history? Ultimately, it doesn't matter. The labor of memory is traumatic, but what makes trauma *trauma* is how easily we find ourselves returning to it again and again, like a beautiful poem. Lucky are those who travel through the cycles of shame and doubt and trembling, for theirs is a familiar—and familial—world. As Celan wrote:

> Iris, swimmer, dreamless and dreary:
> the sky, heart-grey, must be near.[12]

Like all of us, I am still seeking answers and some sort of relief, learning to remember, remembering to forget.

X

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Oxana Timofeeva

Ultra-Black: Towards a Materialist Theory of Oil

> People think that they sell oil, but in fact they are becoming oil.
> —Victor Pelevin

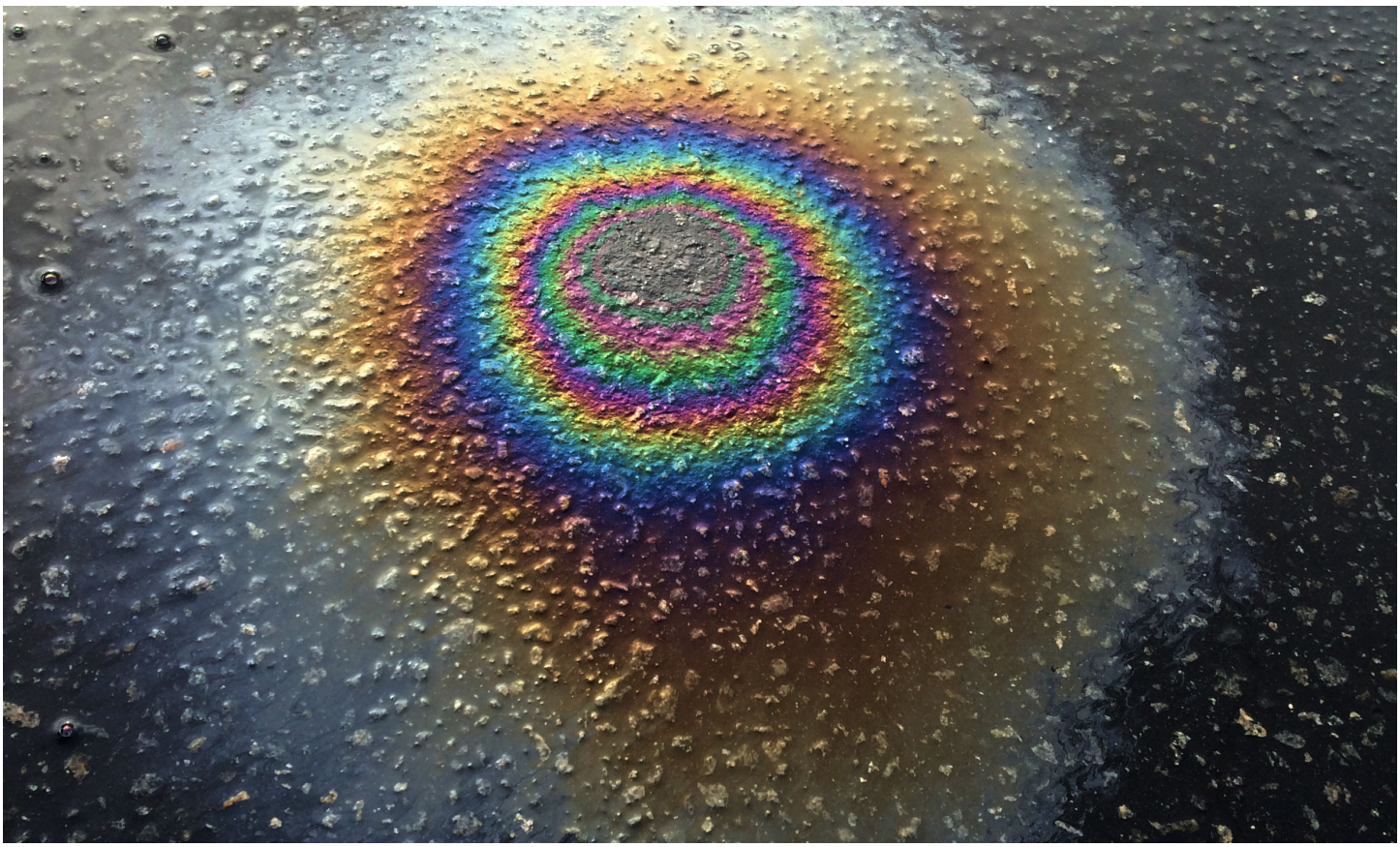
How is it possible to be a materialist today, when many proclaim themselves the only true materialists and build their arguments against the wrongness of the materialism of others? It is tempting to call this epic battle for the flag of materialism a return to the "philosophy of nature." Such terminology sounds anachronistic, to say the least. Any synthesis of knowledge about the living and the nonliving world under the heading of the philosophy of nature summons the specter of classical Western metaphysics; the philosophy of nature is understood to be pure idealism of the very highest grade. And yet the question of nature, or material reality, continues to be a stumbling block for ontology, the philosophy of science, political economy, and psychoanalysis. All of these discourses continue to do "nature philosophy" by other means. The main difference between today's philosophers of nature and those of the past is that our contemporaries do not present their subject matter as a mirror of spirit, a universe of God's creation, or even, as Hegel had it, "the falling-away-from-itself of the Idea," but seek to discover nature as such, to think about the very nature of nature that is naturally independent of thought, if not opposite to it.

About one hundred years ago, Alfred North Whitehead, a famous English philosopher and mathematician, formulated the problem as follows:

> Thus in a sense nature is independent of thought. By this statement no metaphysical pronouncement is intended. What I mean is that we can think about nature without thinking about thought. I shall say that then we are thinking "homogeneously" about nature. Of course it is possible to think nature in conjunction with thought about the fact that nature is thought about. In such a case I shall say that we are thinking "heterogeneously" about nature.[1]

Nature is not thought, says Whitehead, and it is difficult to disagree with this statement. Thinking homogeneously about nature is, according to Whitehead, inherent to the natural sciences. It seems that when philosophy follows this attitude and tries to think about nature without thinking about thought, it qualifies itself as materialism, new materialism, or realism. These are new philosophies of nature.

The nature of nature as such can be thought as agential (Karen Barad's agential realism); as ancestral or as a real



An iridescent oil slick on top of asphalt, Nevada, 2014. Photo: Rocor/CC by NC 2.0.

that was already there before us (Quentin Meillassoux); or as objectal, when everything, subjects included, turns into objects (Graham Harman), or even into hyperobjects (Timothy Morton) that now, at the end of the world, rise beyond all our measurements (global warming, etc.). It can be described in older oppositions of subject and substance, or subject and object, or subject and thing (materialist dialectics and transcendental materialism, critical Marxism, psychoanalysis). It can be approached as forms of life (vitalism), as bodies (corporeal, transcorporeal, and incorporeal materialisms, or what Alain Badiou ironically calls "democratic materialism"), or as media and technology. It can be dialectically or nondialectically opposed to technology, or identified with it. It can be represented and symbolized as a constant lack—a lack of resources (extractive economy), a lack of desire (libidinal economy), etc.—but at the same time as an irreducible excess; as a realm of need and necessity, or of hyperchaos and contingency; as something to be defended and preserved (ecophilosophy, deep ecology), or as a threat—a complex of unknown, blind, and potentially destructive forces (dark materialism).

In his book *In the Dust of This Planet*, Eugene Thacker presents a dark materialist philosophy of nature through the lens of horror. The word "world" has, according to Thacker, three different meanings. The first is the *world-for-us*, or simply the *World*; the second is the *world-in-itself*, or the *Earth*, and the third is the *world-without-us*, or the *Planet*. The World is anthropocentric, the Earth is natural, and the horrifying Planet is supra-natural, of fantastic. Regarding the Earth, or nature, that in a significant part is "grounded by scientific enquiry," Thacker says that it is "a paradoxical concept; the moment we think it and attempt to act on it, it ceases to be the world-it-itself and becomes the world-for-us."[2] The author is more interested in the last, supra-natural world, from the (non)understanding of which he is trying to remove all the anthropomorphic projections. He claims that thought is not human, that nature is not natural, that life does not belong to living beings but is rather alien to them, and that perhaps the future of philosophy lies in the mysticism of an inhuman, uncanny dark matter. Such a modern mysticism is not theological, but climatological, and devolves "upon the radical disjunction and indifference of the self and the world."[3]

Without sharing the mystical spirit of Thacker's philosophy of nature, I generally find this division useful and productive.[4] However, I would like to suggest that the world-for-us, the world-in-itself, and the world-without-us are not three separate entities. I rather imagine them as three concentric circles: the smallest is the World, the next

biggest is the Earth, and the biggest is the Planet—although these three circles might actually be the same size and even occupy the same place: their difference is not geometrical, but topological.

The first circle is like the home where we live. In this home, everything is familiar; we are surrounded by things that belong to us. We open the doors of this circle and go out: there is a second circle there, where animals and plants dwell without thinking and being thought. This is nature as such, or the world-in-itself, or—to borrow the name that Quentin Meillassoux gives to things-in-themselves outside any subjective relation—the Great Outdoors.[5] We grab something there (some food, some wood to make a fire, some water, etc.) and go back inside. But we know that there are yet other doors, the doors of nature, that lead towards a Greater Outdoors where even the wildest of beasts do not dare to go, let alone humans. It is populated by gods, demons, dark forces, hyperobjects, and other entities that, for some unspecified reason, we cannot or do not want to explain rationally, even if we created them ourselves.

The cosmic utopia wants to conquer not only nature, but that Greater Outdoors, too. It wants to make it ours—contrary to mysticism, which keeps it secret: in this sense, Russian cosmism presents an interesting alternative to dark materialism. Revolution is not possible in one separate country, but the worldwide revolution is not enough either, as it only involves humanity. The Bolsheviks dreamed of revolutionizing not just society, but nature itself, for nature was considered a realm of unfreedom, inequality, injustice, need, exploitation, and death.[6] Diverting rivers, blasting mountains, making animals speak: the idea was to transform the Earth by means of technology in order to make it, as Andrei Platonov says, more "kind to us."[7] But even this does not seem satisfactory, as revolution tends to expand further and to become planetary, or cosmic.

Doesn't this desire to conquer the Greater Outdoors tell us that the triple circle of the World, the Earth, and the Planet is still structured like a human habitat, with its composite inner and outer spaces connected by doors that lead in and out? In ancient Greece, the outer part of this structure was called *cosmos*, and the inner one *oikos*. The latter has several meanings—a house, a household, a family, but also a family's property, up to and including slaves. Today these meanings are maintained in the paronymous words "economy" and "ecology." Both economy and ecology are concerned with nature—either as a living world, environment, *Umwelt*, or as a source and resource. They are conjugate—beyond ecology there is always economy, and vice versa: this is our earthy home, here we keep slaves and exchange oil for money. But this is not the whole story, as beyond the doors of nature, the Greater Outdoors stands and creates anxiety. How is it possible, the world-without-us?

My argument is that this uncanny space or cosmos does not stand out or around the canny space of the *oikos* that we share with other natural creatures, but paradoxically emerges at the very heart of it. Without is within. What appears to us as absolutely alien and monstrous is to be found there, where we would never think of searching for it. Alenka Zupančič puts it very precisely: "The great Outside is the fantasy that covers up the Real that is already right here."[8] The fact that it is a fantasy does not mean that it can be neglected. As psychoanalysis teaches us, fantasy is at least as important as what we call reality, and perhaps even more so. The phantasmatic world-without-us is not only attached to the world-for-us, but presents its internal truth. It is *un* canny and *un* human and *un* natural, where the prefix *un-* does not merely negate, but produces a kind of displacement or resistance that dialectically turns canny, natural, human, etc., into their opposites, while maintaining the ostensible clarity and significance of the original. This is why these new concepts of nature continue to revolve around an old concept of the human, in various directions, including the transhuman, the nonhuman, the antihuman, the posthuman, or the inhuman. Such concepts seem to start from the dismissal of the human, but often end up with what I would call negative anthropocentrism, i.e., anthropocentrism of a centrifugal, rather than a centripetal, type.[9] While turning away from the hearth of the inner circle, and towards a fantastic/phantasmatic outside that *feels* uncanny, negative anthropocentrism does not depart from a philosophy of nature that rests on the significance of these same distinctions. It is humanism with a monstrous face, we might say.

The etymologies of the words *heimlich* (canny) and *unheimlich* (uncanny), both deriving from *das Heim*—the home, the domestic hearth—were analyzed by Freud, who underlined the ambivalence of *heimlich*, which, on the one hand, "means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight."[10] Freud referred to Schelling's definition of *unheimlich* as "everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light."[11] According to Freud, the feeling of uncanniness—this special kind of fear—relates to "something repressed which recurs" and thus it is "nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression."[12] The *un* conscious is not a mysterious substantial reality beyond our psychic life, but a structural formation of the process of repression which, as Lacan explains, coincides with the return of the repressed.[13] Similarly, the inhuman and unnatural planetary outside of the world can be regarded as the very image of its interior, which returns from the depths of oblivion in a scary shape that we do not recognize. The world constantly turns inside out, and we are the hole through which it does so (by "we" I do not mean exclusively humans, but a much bigger collective of beings that precedes concrete species).[14]

As Georges Bataille writes in his very short essay "Materialism" (1929):

> Materialism will be seen as a senile idealism to the extent that it is not immediately based on psychological or social facts, instead of on artificially isolated physical phenomena. Thus it is from Freud, among others—rather than from long-dead physicists, whose ideas today have no meaning—that a representation of matter must be taken.[15]

In this sense, Alberto Toscano is right when he says that Meillassoux's concept of the Great Outdoors, or ancestral real—indifferent to humans and animals—is "ultimately idealist in form."[16] Interestingly enough, Simon Critchley evokes Bataille's spirit in his critique of Meillassoux. He recalls a conversation between Bataille and A. J. Ayer, a British proponent of logical positivism, which took place in a Parisian bar in 1951, and

> lasted until three in the morning. The thesis under discussion was very simple: did the sun exist before the appearance of humans? Ayer saw no reason to doubt that it did, whereas Bataille thought the whole proposition meaningless. For a philosopher committed to scientific realism, like Ayer, it makes evident sense to utter ancestral statements such as "The sun existed prior to the appearance of humans," whereas, for a correlationist like Bataille, more versed in Hegel and phenomenology, physical objects must be perceived by an observer in order to be said to exist.[17]

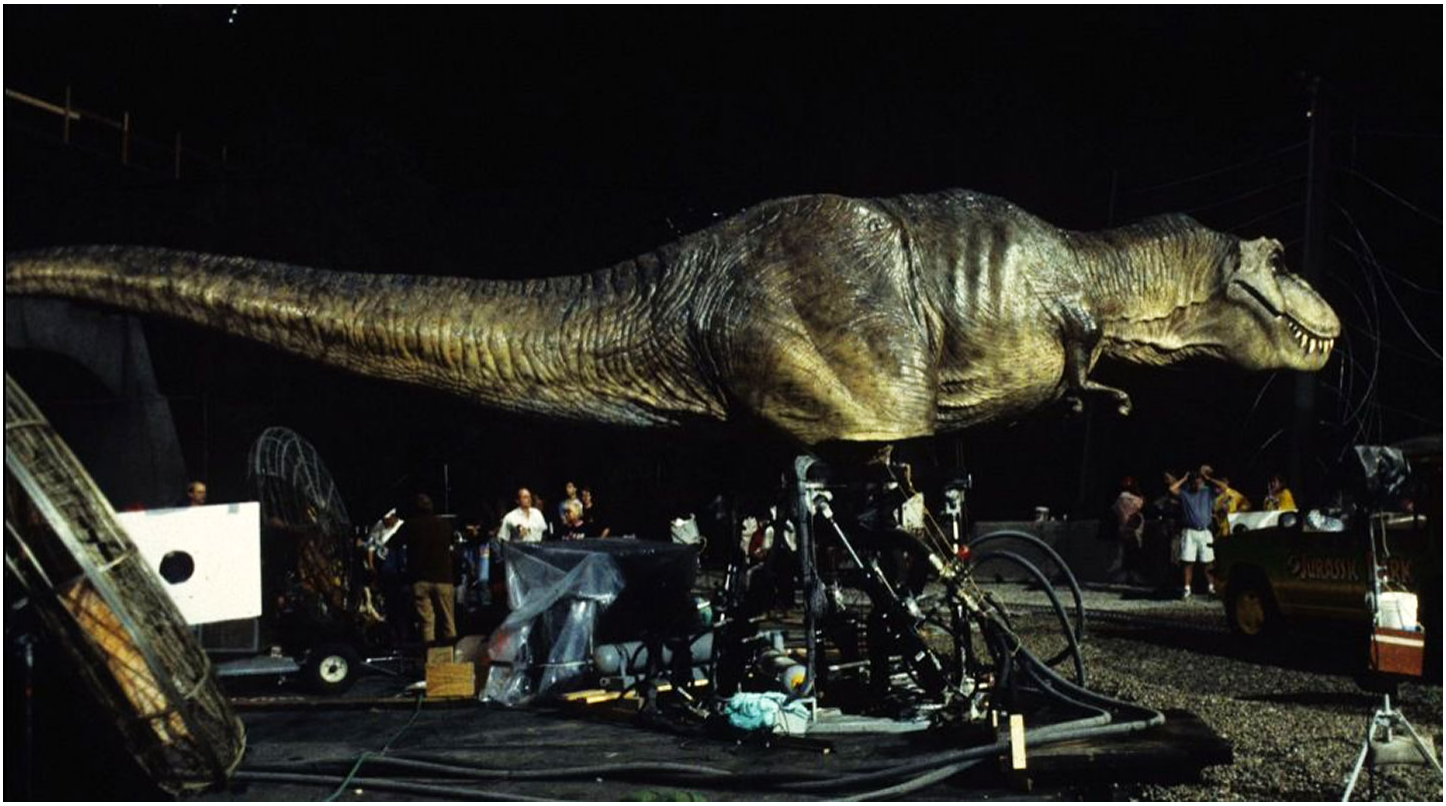
To be precise, Bataille's sun does not really need an observer. "Observer" is maybe not the right word here: one cannot, as Bataille constantly repeats, "observe" the sun, at least directly—because it burns the eyes. The sun is that cosmic object that makes me blind, insane, dizzy. The psychological aspect of matter, which Bataille tries to take into account in his own conception of base materialism, should not be underestimated. Matter is principally ambivalent and heterogeneous—as is the unconscious—and cannot be reduced to anything within an epistemic framework. Later, in his book *The Accursed Share*, Bataille expands his critique of political economy to the planetary scale and articulates the need "to recognize in the economy—in the production and use of wealth—a particular aspect of terrestrial activity regarded as a cosmic phenomenon."[18] This planetary activity is called "general economy" and is opposed to a "restricted" one that only registers the activity of human beings on Earth. The restricted economy is the movement of labor and accumulation (of goods, of capital), whereas the general, planetary economy consists in expenditure and nonproductive consumption. The more we try to accumulate inside, the more destruction comes from the outside. Eventually, the energy from the sun collects and a volcano explodes. Literally or figuratively, this explosion is definitively beyond our control. An ultimately destructive cosmic activity is totally indifferent to humans, but we are involved in it, much in the same way as one is involved in a crime. If we regard this theory as an economic refraction of Bataille's earlier base-materialist insights, then we have to admit that the general cosmic activity is material, and corresponds to the unconscious that itself, in Bataille, is perhaps best described as "posthuman." To put it in more psychoanalytic terms, there is a libidinal dimension of planetary ecology and economy, where a universal death drive underlies all other drives.

In the world-for-us, where things operate according to the domestic laws of restricted economy, the unconscious becomes a capitalist unconscious.[19] Existence under a capitalist regime is bound to a general equivalent, or a value form that can be attached to any piece of living and nonliving matter. The world as we know it consists of commodities, and among commodities there is one for which all other commodities can be exchanged: money. Money is both abstract and real; it is a real abstraction that, even if it does not really exist, produces effects in reality. However, this does not give us an entire picture of the structure of the world-for-us. The fact is that money is not an ultimate commodity. It is not an autonomous being. Behind money, there are three main commodities upon which it grows: the first is matter, the second is labor, and the third is time. All three of these are of principal interest, but here I will only address the first one.

In contrast to money, matter is not an abstraction; otherwise, it would not be matter, but an idea—this is the meaning of what Bataille calls "senile idealism." Matter as an ultimate commodity is a concrete piece of substance, to which money clings in order to prove that it is real. Such a piece of substance historically stands for the whole material world exchanged for money. It is a material side of the general equivalent, or the Thing of the economy. In old times, the general equivalent was represented by gold. Now such a commodity is—not "officially," but conventionally—oil.

"Oil is the life-blood throbbing through the arteries of war," says a fictional Hitler in Julian Semyonov's famous novel *Seventeen Moments of Spring*.[20] No one can seriously dispute this today. Thus, in Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia*, it is oil that allows us to understand war as a machine, or rather two machines: on the one side there is an Abrahamic monotheism, or jihadist war; and on the other, "Technocapitalist" war, or the War on Terror:

> To grasp war as a machine, or in other words, to inquire into the Abrahamic war machine in its relation

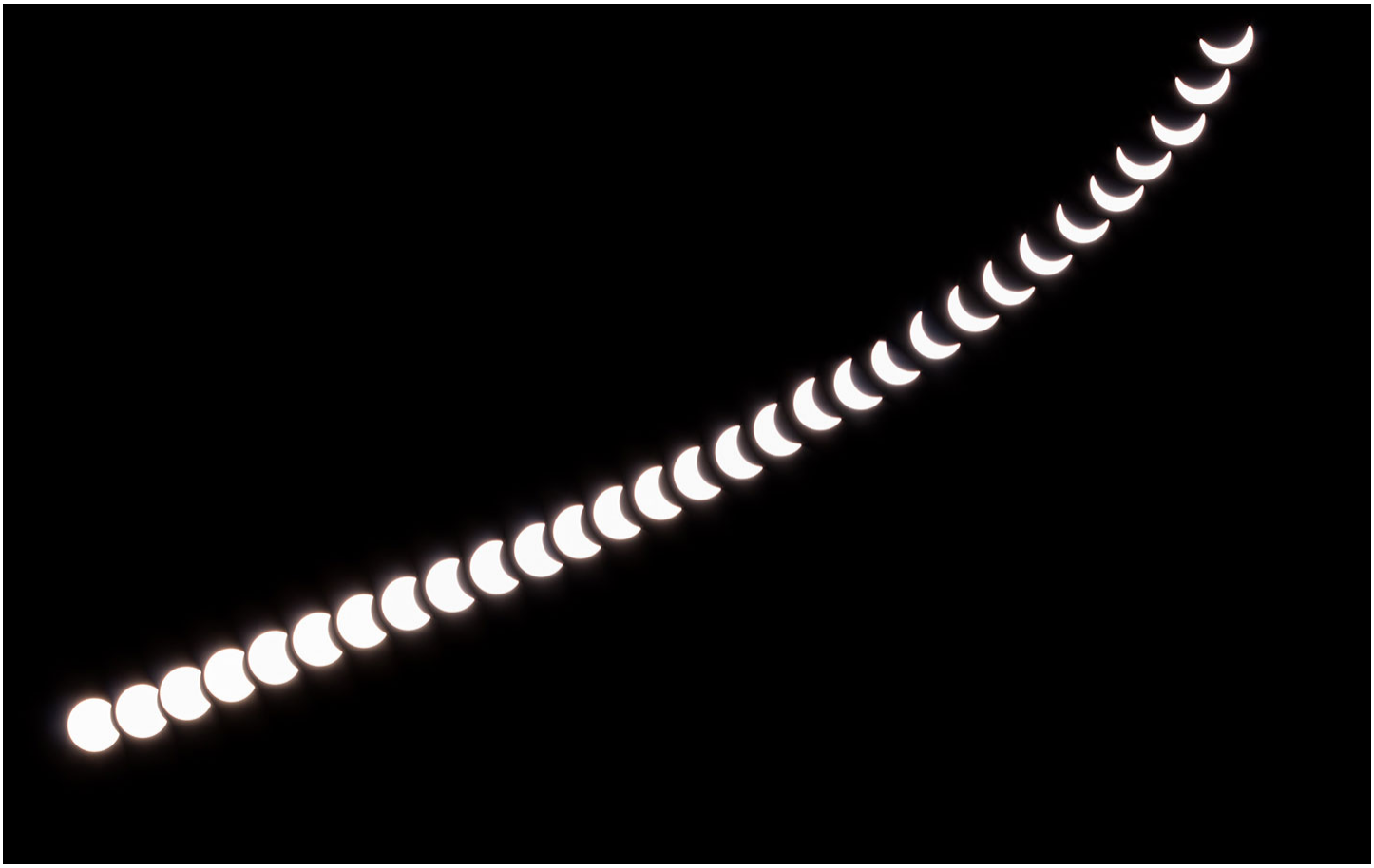


An animatronic dinosaur on the set of Steven Speilberg's 1993 film Jurassic Park.

> to the Technocapitalist war machine, we must first realize which components allow Technocapitalism and Abrahamic monotheism to reciprocate at all, even on a synergistically hostile level. The answer is oil: War on Terror cannot be radically and technically grasped as a machine without consideration of the oil that greases its parts and recomposes its flows; such consideration must begin with the twilight of hydrocarbon and the very dawn of the Earth.[21]

Negarestani presents a set of ideas about the nature and origin of oil and its representations. He touches upon a popular comparison between oil and blood and relates it to a theory "according to which hydrocarbons constitute the origin of petroleum."[22] Both oil and blood contain porphyrin, an organic compound that serves as "evidence of a common lineage, the hydrocarbon," and, in the eyes of the "advocates of the myth of fossil fuels," porphyrin proves that oil as the blood of the Earth is not just a metaphor. A politico-economic explication of the theory of fossil fuels states that the sources of oil are finite, and in the petroleum wars, blood is the price of oil. To put it very simply, the fossil-fuel theory suggests that oil was produced from organic matter—from the decomposition of various living or dead organisms, from bacteria to dinosaurs. Negarestani notes very briefly that, "according to the classic theory of fossil fuels ... petroleum was formed as a Tellurian entity under unimaginable pressure and heat in the absence of oxygen and between the strata, in absolute isolation," which, from his perspective, comprises "a typical Freudian Oedipal case."[23] In contrast, Negarestani outlines, in a post-Deleuzian vein, a theory of the non-oedipal, inorganic unconscious, or inorganic demons that, in a parasitic way, "infiltrate an anthropomorphic agency" and "embed their inorganic sentience within the human host."[24] Negarestani's oil is part of a sort of diabolic cosmic conspiracy that underlies the planetary economy and world military politics and brings together all existing narrations. But the very link between oil and the unconscious is what I find important.

Speaking personally, my first associations with oil are definitely "oedipal" and "organic." When I was little, my family lived in Surgut, one of the centers of the oil industry in northwestern Siberia. As a schoolgirl, I was very familiar with the "dinosaurs" origin story. It was my mother who told me that the oil was made of their bodies, which were decomposing beneath the ground and the layers of permafrost. On my way to school there was a shallow swamp. Each time I crossed it I had the feeling that the ground was in fact never really solid, not only there but everywhere. What we think is solid ground in fact just covers this tenacious black liquid, a subterranean cemetery of enormous animals that inhabited the Earth long before us. I even believed that the scary dinosaurs could reemerge from the pools created by oil spills, like



A partial eclipse of the sun, 2015. Photo: kulatraxas.

the Loch Ness monster protruding from the water. Dialectically, oil retained something from that organic life, the death of which was its origin. The oil of my childhood was neither living nor dead, but a living dead, an undead, or an uncanny and utterly inhuman afterlife of ancestral animals. Was the oil there before we humans came along, as would be suggested by a proponent of philosophical realism like Ayer (or a schoolgirl like me in 1986, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union)? Or should we admit, in a Bataillean manner, that this proposition is meaningless, not because this substance must be observed, but because, like the sun, it burns?

"The Black Corpse of the Sun" is one of the names Negarestani gives to oil in his book. It makes me think about the color of oil. I saw it get spilled. Nothing can be compared to the blackness of it. The oil is ultra-black. More black than death.

More black than the blackness constructed to justify slavery in the era of colonialism, when people were taken from Mother Africa and sold to the Americas. More black than the black market today, where human beings, together with drugs and arms, continue to be traded as illegal commodities, whose general investment in the production of value is enormous but whose slave, unpaid, or low-paid "dirty work" (we Russians call it "black work") is not visible because it is not socially represented. Numerous sweatshops, where migrants and people from poor countries are exploited, are hidden somewhere underground, in basements, bunkers, and tunnels.

The fact is that blackness here designates that which is gratuitous (in the sense of gratuity), as that which goes uncompensated. As David Marriot writes:

> For the white bourgeois and worker, from the nineteenth century to the present, blackness is a degraded form of being that cannot as such conserve itself; or, it is seen as an impoverished way of being that can only be put to work as a supplementary labor (for of course work is niggerdom), which means that it cannot profit from itself as capital. In all these readings, blackness is seen as both exorbitant and impoverished, both decadent and deliriously perverse. Its lack of restraint suggests both the collapse of capitalist values and a threat that puts an end to civic duty: the substitution of private consumption for collective duty is here linked to a more general anxiety about an entity driven to negate the very idea of accumulation—hence the extravagant excess of a

> being that is seen to come from a nihilistic, menacing, undeserving need to consume everything.[25]

The blackness of the slave is like the blackness of oil in that both are conditions of possibility for surplus, but also incapable of accumulating that surplus themselves, on account of their own, hopeless profligacy.

Remember Marx, who, in his *Economic Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, does not really make an essential distinction between a worker and a slave: the point is that exploitation transforms living labor into dead capital. What do a slave, a worker, and oil have in common? The very fact that they are not only the repressed, but the oppressed, not only the unconscious layer of a society in which we exchange matter, labor, and time for money, but that which is exploited, consumed, and burned up in the production of surplus. The worker is exploited as a labor force, the slave is exploited as a "black" labor force, and oil is exploited as a natural resource. If we want to grasp oil, as Hegel would say, "not only as substance, but equally as subject," not only as the thing from the Greater Outdoors but as "the Real that is already right here," we must admit that oil—which, like money, now stands for the whole material universe—is not a master, but a kind of ultimately inhuman black slave, one that literally occupies the lowest—and the biggest—strata of the pyramid of exploitation, and creates the very core of our capitalist unconscious.

X

Oxana Timofeeva is a philosopher from St. Petersburg, and is the author of *Solar Politics* (Polity 2022), *How to Love a Homeland* (Kayfa ta, 2020), *History of Animals* (Bloomsbury 2018), *Introduction to the Erotic Philosophy of Georges Bataille* (New Literary Observer, 2009), and other writings.

1
Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 3.

2
Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of this Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1* (London: Zero Books, 2011), 4–7.

3
Ibid., 158.

4
I prefer comedy to horror. The former demystifies not only everything that exists but also everything that does not, without reducing it all to mere data of positivist inventory.

5
Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* , trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2009).

6
See on this, for example, Oxana Timofeeva and Lorenzo Chiesa, "(Post)socialist Animals and Plants: Lysenko with Platonov," in "Technology," special issue, *UMBR(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* , 2012: 115–28.

7
Andrei Platonov, "On the First Socialist Tragedy," trans. Tony Wood, *New Left Review* 69 (May–June 2011): 31-2.

8
Alenka Zupančič, "Realism in Psychoanalysis," *JEP: European Journal of Psychoanalysis* 32 (2011): 33.

9
See Oxana Timofeeva, "The Non-Human as Such: On Men, Animals, and Barbers," *On_Culture* 2 (Fall 2016) https://www.on-culture.org/journal/issue-2/timofeeva-non-human/ .

10
Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," *New Literary History* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1976): 623–24.

11
Ibid.

12
Ibid., 634.

13
Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 1: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953–54* , trans. John Forrester (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 191.

14
See Oxana Timofeeva, "Unconscious Desire for Communism," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender, and Culture* 11 (2015): 32–48.

15
Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939* , ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 15.

16
Alberto Toscano, "Against Speculation, or, A Critique of the Critique of Critique: A Remark on Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude* (After Colletti)," in *The Speculative Turn* : *Continental Materialism and Realism* , eds. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 87.

17
Simon Critchley, "Back to the Great Outdoors," *Times Literary Supplement* , February 28, 2009, 28.

18
Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share* , vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 21.

19
The capitalist unconscious is analyzed by Samo Tomšič in his book *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2015).

20
Julian Semyonov, *Seventeen Moments of Spring* , trans. Katherine Judelson (New York: Riverrun Press, 1988).

21
Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity With Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008), 16–17.

22
Ibid., 28.

23
Ibid.

24
Ibid.

25
David Marriot, "On Decadence: *Bling Bling* ," *e-flux journal* 79 (February 2017) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94430/on-decadence-bling-bling/ .

Clear opinions are not expressed in the art world because they earn people enemies, and having enemies is a luxury these days: in a liberal world, nobody can afford them.

Networks may seem illegible and labyrinthine, because friendships aren't based on elective affinities, shared aesthetic tastes, political complicity, or love; they are inflected by interests, power, and money-related motivations, and these drives can bridge any gap—racial, sexual, ideological—and that's why the art world looks like such a diverse and tolerant place from the outside.

The insider, on the other hand, doesn't experience the friendly and slightly neutered community that one would expect, but rather a very aggressive environment ready to turn against anyone who breaks this unwritten law by actually saying something identifiable and clear enough not to be misunderstood.

In short, nobody can protect freedom of expression because nobody can bear the consequences of it.

Being asked to review an exhibition from an artist's position is problematic: artists can't (and perhaps shouldn't) be impartial; they are often resentful, capriciously driven to some things and inexplicably disgusted by others.

Such a review will say more about their position than about the show itself and will end up being an involuntary confession.

We decided to create and protect freedom of expression within this text in the only possible way: through anonymity.

This review is a *chorus* of anonymous voices that we don't identify or agree with.

The chorus's function is to comment and highlight the key moments of a Greek tragedy, in order to help the public position itself in relation to the events represented.

A. A viewer who has only experienced the venue at Kassel (for the second time in my case, as I didn't visit Kabul during the previous Documenta either) could be under the strong impression of being deprived of half of the exhibition. Personally, I've also felt that Athens had been the most significant and eventful part of Documenta 14, and that I was constantly reminded of this throughout the different venues. In that respect, the omnipresence of the Parthenon was also a bit disturbing and oppressive (the sculpture by Marta Minujín in the main square made with censored books under cellophane; the obscure oil painting from 1939 of Alexander Kalderach, and Eva Stefani's *Acropolis*, both in Palais Bellevue; the Parthenon with a Nazi flag in *The Disasters of War* by Daniel García Andújar at Neue Galerie; and many more occurrences). There was a desire to make a statement about the

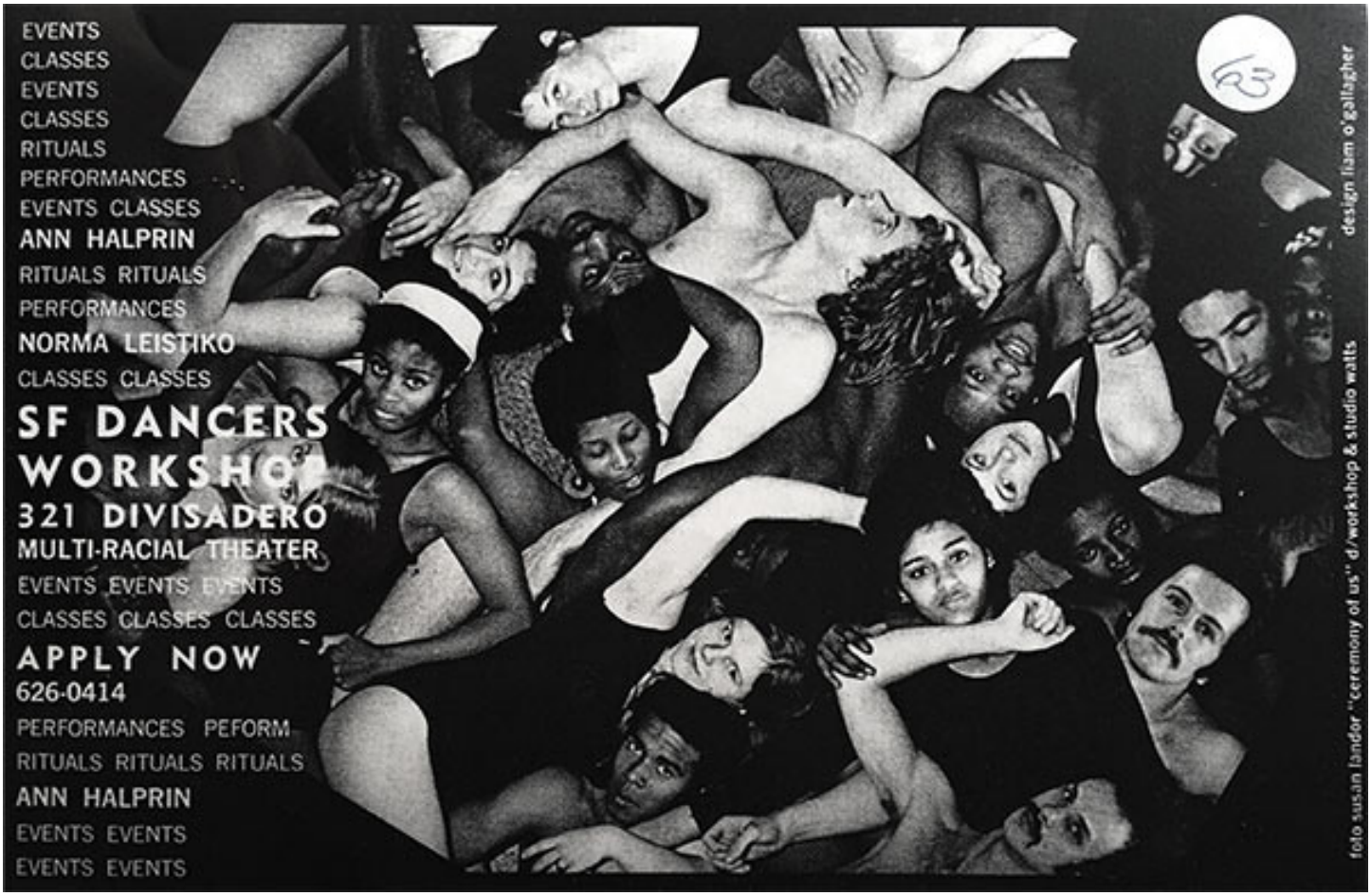
Claire Fontaine

Chorus Anonymous: Voices from Documenta 14

Installation view of Alexander Kalderach's Der Parthenon(1939) at Documenta14, Neue Galerie, Kassel. Oil on canvas. The Belvedere Collection, Vienna.

Western world and its crisis, where Athens represented the capital of recession, the place that we must unlearn from, and Germany played the part of the unfair landlord collecting Europe's rent from its poor tenants. But in the end, this intellectual/political position is also Manichean. Even going to the Fridericianum, whose content was simply Athens's EMST collection shipped over as a counter-gift to/from Documenta 14, seemed problematic: diplomacy was definitely taking over the quest for excellence, because the EMST provided the beautiful space in Athens and it gave the unremarkable art to Kassel. The collection is heavily characterized by the presence of Greek artists; there are also some great artworks: Hans Haacke's *Fotonotizen documenta 2*, a series of photographs that he took in 1959, when he worked as an assistant for the second edition of Documenta: we see the public of the time and can compare it to the people that surround us in the room; Janine Antoni's *Slumber* from 1994, revisiting Penelope's myth as an oneiric hallucination, making Ulysses the delirious love object of a lonely woman; Sekula's amazing photographic series and texts from *Fish Story*. Giving up the curation of the main venue feels contemptuous towards the public more than irreverent towards the tradition. Szymczyk talks about an "exercise in fragility" to describe Documenta 14—can we afford that? Can we reinforce what is already too strong and not fight our own weaknesses? Be complacent about them? Generally speaking, I felt that the art presented wasn't valued as a source of meaningful encounters with the public, as something that could escape curatorial control: the works were treated more as documents than actual artworks sometimes, and in fact, what worked best was documentation (of performance or music, mostly shown in the Documenta Halle). There was little magic and maybe still too much to learn in order to be able to unlearn anything. For example, the project "aneducation," organized in partnership with the Kassel "Faculty," with the "Choruses" of Athens and Kassel, and with other actors, seemed somehow the conceptual backbone of the exhibition, but there was no way that the viewer, coming for three days and spending a lot of money as it is, could make the time to follow the program or even to enjoy a part of it. There are over thirty venues in Kassel alone, and this year they were quite scattered, which also showed a certain lack of consideration for the viewer. It's upsetting to be given too much and to be unable to take it in. It is also seemingly contrary to the curators' approach: Why make things bigger if doing so makes them harder for the audience to assimilate?

B. I partly agree with that, although I have found that there were some truly nice venues that worked as blocks of sensations and meaning, as islands. My favorite was the



Anna Halprin, detail of installation, documenta Halle, Kassel, documenta 14. Photo: Mathias Völzke

Stadtmuseum. There, I think one could see the perfect meeting between a discourse, a theoretical position, and a historically loaded preexisting context. I had never visited the museum before and I had the chance to experience the wonderful video by Hiwa K, *View from Above,* before seeing the actual model of the destroyed city of Kassel that he had filmed in his work. I loved this Kafkaesque narrative of the journey of a refugee that becomes a fiction for himself and others, to the point that the character can be described as someone who never really existed, just like the "safe zone" that is only safe in the distorted views of European bureaucrats but deadly for all those who must flee from it without being entitled to asylum. It's a metaphor that takes some weight off our present and gives us a new entry point to the existential situation of refugees. In that same venue, Peter Friedl's video work *Report* was also very touching. It featured professional and nonprofessional actors reciting in their own mother tongues Kafka's 1917 text *A Report to an Academy*. In the Documenta exhibition as a whole, the subtitling of video works was somewhat erratic. So when one enters the room where *A Report to an Academy* is being played and is faced with an un-subtitled video of people speaking languages one doesn't understand, one thinks, "Something isn't working here," and exits the room. I have been timing how long people spend watching video works in exhibitions all over the world: it rarely exceeds thirty seconds. So if one doesn't know that the subtitles were purposely not inserted in *A Report to an Academy*, what kind of chance is the artist giving himself to be listened to and cared for? Maybe not much, but then this is interesting in itself.

C. I have something to say about two videos in the show that were made by artists and that refer to older artists—I am not a fan of this operation in general, as it seems like a way to dismiss the autonomy and specificity of the medium, transforming it into a narrative tool whose content becomes somehow the "art" part of it, the added value. Rosalind Nashashibi's *Vivian's Garden* is fascinating but frustrating. We find ourselves in this exotic setup with incredible light, tropical vegetation, birds screaming, dogs, a very strange mother and daughter. We barely understand anything, we are left on the threshold of a stillborn narrative. The film revolves around the artist Vivian Suter, who is also featured in Documenta—in the Glass Pavilions in Kassel people can see her amazing paintings made with organic matter and pigment that smells like animals. But what is the relationship between the insignificant fragment of this very interesting painter's

life presented in the film and her actual work? I haven't seen any other paintings at Documenta that I have liked as much as Suter's. It seemed to me that that the curators didn't even like painting or trust it as a medium. In Suter's case there is a tactile, sculptural dimension to the installation, incredibly sensual. It's the only synesthetic experience I have had: this exhibition has sometimes stimulated my mind, but it has always left my senses and my whole body stone cold. The other work that poses a more serious problem for me is Douglas Gordon's video installation on Jonas Mekas, *I Had Nowhere To Go: A Portrait of a Displaced Person.* It was presented in the Kino Star, a large movie theater with excellent sound. But it is an incredibly failed experiment: Gordon didn't seem to be able to direct Mekas, who sounds fake when he reads his diaries about being a refugee in America during World War II. Mostly we are faced with a visual void—not even a black screen; the projector is often off and this causes the back door of the room to remain open so that people can find their way out but also see the rare heads of the audience in a sea of empty seats. The installation is all this—all the elements that the artist hasn't mastered and, by the looks of it, has neglected with disdain. We hear the sound of Mekas's old theatrical voice, involuntarily turning his tragic experience into derision, showing the structural problems of any unresolved documentary *by* an artist *on* an artist. Gordon doesn't seem to have directed Mekas at all. He has trapped him in a useless device, and when we see images of a monkey with Mekas's voice-over, we wonder what was going through Gordon's head. At times there are even horrible sounds of bombs. Why is it acceptable to present a work like this? If Documenta is about *not* showing the obvious big names, why Mekas, and with such an unremarkable work? I have found it unforgivable. It has tainted my whole experience of the exhibition, because the work is supposed to tackle the issue of displacement and the experience of being a refugee and it totally misses the point.

A. Yes, but then in this respect Angela Melitopoulos's installation *Crossings* totally makes up for it. It is a masterpiece! It seemed to me that it was the only truly contemporary work in the whole exhibition, because of its wonderful use of the space (a very strange and fascinating venue) and because it dives into the disturbing connection between the phenomenon of displaced people, migratory fluxes, debt, and the politics of our present. Visually and aesthetically it was very accomplished, and the position of the work seemed to me absolutely in tune with the curatorial project. It was a gift to the viewer. I also loved Wang Bing's retrospective—I wish I could have spent more time there. The display was fabulous, giving people visual and historical insights into his movies, traces of a material memory. The photographs showing the unburied bones of the victims of a 1957 repression against "rightists," the covers of the notebooks used to write stories that escaped censorship—these were amazing artworks.

D. I think that besides the political sensibility, there was a strong musical component in this Documenta. You could feel it from venue to venue. It was organized as a symphony, maybe a dodecaphonic, a disharmonic one, but there was an attempt to balance things. There was also a palpable antipathy for the internet, its language, and social media. In some parts it really felt like something from the Seventies and I liked that. In Documenta Halle there is a lot of breathing space, and even if you don't like everything, you understand how some decisions are part of an agenda that wants to highlight indigenous questions, ecology, feminism, and the body. I really enjoyed the documentation on Anna Halprin's dance company: the architectural device that she projected with her husband, the traces of physical, emotional, and political community with people from many backgrounds and racial origins are just so precious today.

B. Well, in retrospect there are projects that may seem very tied to the past but actually challenge the present very strongly. In that respect I loved Maria Eichhorn's *Rose Valland Institute* and the *Album Bundesarchiv Koblenz*—this last work is such an incredibly graceful exercise of aesthetic and political sensibility applied to political memory. Nazi looting is a delicate subject because the material part of the damage caused by the exterminations is insignificant compared to the loss of lives. But she shows how the appropriation of material goods, including art, books, and luxury items, was also one of the motivations for killing their owners.

It's curious how artworks echo each other in this Documenta, and how, for example, one can see very similar images of Nazi looting in Spain in Andújar's work (*The Disasters of War*). There are threads crossing the exhibition, like Asja Lācis's documents and Walter Benjamin's floating spiritual presence. But then there are themes that are less legible, more like a subterraneous stream, themes like ecology, LGBTQ sensibility, but also mutilation: for example, why present in the same exhibition the transgender armless painter-performer Lorenza Böttner and Zmijewski's *Realism*? What they say about amputation and life is diametrically opposite: Böttner is an artist who fought disability through resilience, while the subject of Zmijewski's video is mutilated soldiers exercising and humiliating themselves in front of the camera, as people often must do in his works.

I thought that, in terms of challenging the context and talking about the present, Regina José Galindo's performance setup *El Objective* was disturbing and interesting. In both of the works I have seen of hers at Documenta, she emphasizes the source of Kassel's wealth: a city destroyed by the war that makes money from building weapons—it is something incredible in terms of historical anamnesis. Finding yourself at gunpoint in a room, even if one knows that the weapon isn't loaded, can be very challenging. I didn't go inside the room were

people could “shoot” you, but I looked at others through the lens and felt scared and empowered at the same time.

C. Okay, let’s just say that at least in this edition of Documenta, the obsession with the monumental isn’t so present; it’s a modest exhibition, but on such a scale that doesn’t honor modesty and laboriousness. I think that maybe when the approach doesn’t want to be Western-centered (although some historical traumas such as fascism, Nazism, and colonialism are omnipresent), all of a sudden the concretion that we call contemporary art, its very field, looks problematic. Maybe this Documenta is an attempt to expand contemporary art, to surpass it and wave goodbye to it on the way to something else that doesn’t look as economically promising or glamorous but maybe will redeem us. I don’t think the market is what they have tried to avoid (doing so would have been idiotic, as it’s everywhere). I think that they have tried to create new visual narratives, but the aura isn’t there, so it’s a little disappointing and maybe obscurely hopeful. I don’t know: I’m an art historian, I wish I had seen more amazing art.

X

Claire Fontaine is a collective artist based in Paris and founded in 2004. After lifting her name from a popular brand of notebooks, Claire Fontaine has self-declared herself a ready-made artist. She works with neon, video, sculpture, painting, and text. Her practice can be described as an ongoing interrogation of political impotency and the crisis of singularity that seem to define contemporary society at the present time. A monograph about her has been published by Koenigs Books entitled *Foreigners Everywhere* featuring texts by Bernard Blistène, Nicolas Liucci-Goutnikov, John Kelsey, Hal Foster (2011). She has published an anthology of her texts entitled *Human strike has already begun and other essays*(Mute, 2012), *Some instructions for the sharing of private property*(One Star Press, 2011) and *Vivre, vaincre* (Dilecta, 2009). Recent solo exhibitions include *The Crack-Up,* 2017, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; *Fortezzuola*, Museo Canonica, 2016, Rome; *Tears,* 2013, The Jewish Museum, New York; *Redemptions* , 2013, Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; *M-A-C-C-H-I-N-A-Z-I-O-N-I*, 2012, Museion, Bolzano.

Rijin Sahakian

What We Are Fighting For

On the campaign trail in 2015, Trump stood triumphantly at the podium in Fort Dodge, Iowa, describing how he would deal with ISIS in Iraq:

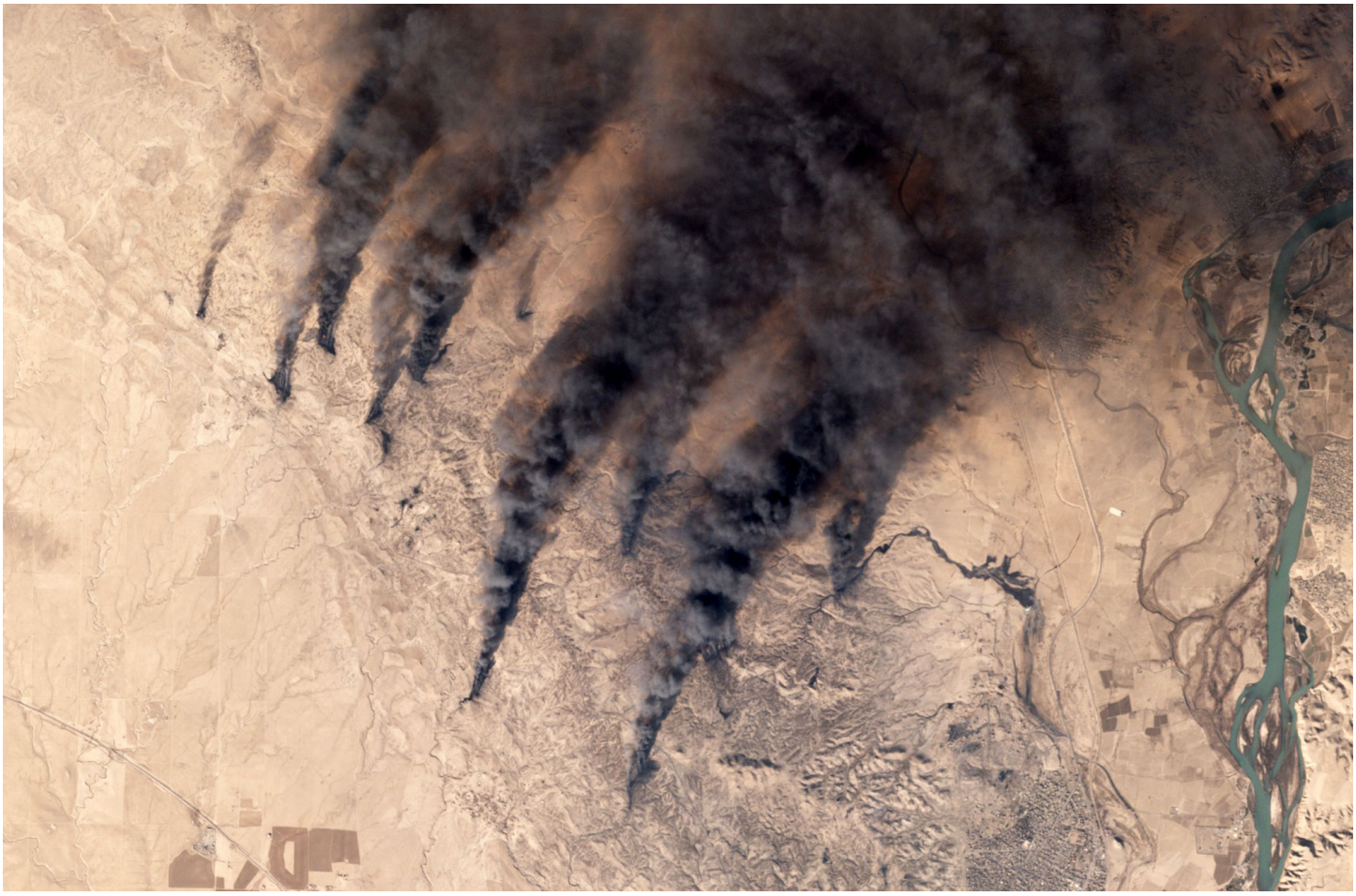
> I would bomb the *shit* out of 'em! I would just bomb those suckers. And that's right, I'd blow up the pipes, I'd blow up the refineries, I'd blow up every single inch, there'd be nothing left. And you know what? You get Exxon to come in there and in two months—you ever see these guys, how good they are, the great oil companies? They'll rebuild that sucker brand new, it'll be beautiful. And I'd ring it, and I'd get the oil.[1]

The crowd erupts into applause, shocked and delighted by such an unapologetic and direct plan of action.

Trump speaks excitedly, as though he is the first person to think of bombing the shit out of Iraq. He speaks about the beauty of the burning oil fields remade in Exxon's image. A year later, Trump's words proved prescient. In the summer of 2016, oil fields across northern Iraq burned, with credit due not to Trump, but ISIS. Civilians in northern Iraq lived under a thick layer of toxic soot for eight months until the fires were finally put out in February 2017. Time will tell what damage, generational and in this lifetime, was caused to humans and the environment alike. Meanwhile, Trump also proposed a 10 percent increase—fifty-four billion dollars—in the US military budget, because we are going to *win*. What you can't take by being a nice guy, you take by force. Beautiful women, oil fields, whatever.

The relationship between Iraq and the United States is intimate, toxic, and enduring. It is a relationship whose violence is generally dismissed as inevitable. It is made possible by many other partners, and kept exciting by still-unfolding entanglements. We grabbed Iraq by the pussy, and some people are very upset that it did not make America great again. Despite all the time and money we put in, we apparently did not get what we wanted. We did not win. *Well she is crazy, that Iraq, full of toxic, bloodthirsty baggage*. *We tried to give her a chance at something good, but that's what you get for being a nice guy, for trying to do the right thing.* For all our shock at Trump and this administration's language, it is not so far from the way violence has been dressed up and excused since the end of the Cold War. While the rhetoric from the first public announcement of the 1991 Gulf War to today has been more sophisticated than Trump's, the president has, in effect, simply dissolved the veneer.

The shock at Trump's words and actions, rather than an admission that this is a natural outcome of longstanding policy and general indifference, is a surprising gap. I'm not the first to speak about this; there are a number of authors who have connected exploitative foreign policy and the



Oil-well fires burn near the town of Qayyarah, Iraq, 2016. Photo: Planet Labs.

systems of control used to implement these policies to black and indigenous experiences in the US. We have to look at these experiences as bound up with one another. Humvees and war scenes at Ferguson and the Dakota Access Pipeline represent precisely this internal colonialism. Like Iraq, the Dakotas require a military presence to ensure policy acceptance and unencumbered resource extraction. However, mainstream discourse regarding these similarities generally stops with the idea that "it is a scene out of Iraq." But what does that mean? What do we actually understand about Iraq's impact and connection to American life, beyond its resemblance to the worst episodes shown on the news?

It seems that we have now entered an information war, an unprecedented era of "alternative facts." But the first Gulf War was launched through a major information offensive. One day after Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Wexler Group, headed by Craig Fuller, was acquired by Hill & Knowlton, the most powerful public relations lobbying firm in Washington, DC. Fuller had been the chief of staff to George H. W. Bush when he was vice president under Ronald Reagan. Now, as president, Bush would soon announce the start of the Persian Gulf War. But before that happened, Hill & Knowlton was hired by a newly formed outfit, "Citizens for a Free Kuwait," for more than ten million dollars. Nearly all the money came from the government of Kuwait, which hired the firm to galvanize American support for the war. The funds were well spent. With support from a focus group that counted Pepsi Cola as a client, Hill & Knowlton was able to find the perfect messenger to sway minds: a girl named Nayirah.[2]

Nayirah was a fifteen-year-old girl from Kuwait. Modest, with bangs and a long braid down her back, she gave highly emotional testimony to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990 regarding atrocities she claimed to have witnessed inside the infant care unit at a Kuwaiti hospital. Her voice cracking, tears streaming down her face, she described babies being ripped out of their incubators by Iraqi soldiers, thrown to the ground, and left to die:

> Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Nayirah, and I just came out of Kuwait. While I was there I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns. They took the babies out of incubators. They took the incubators and left the children to die on the cold floor. It was horrifying.

Iraqi antiaircraft fire lights up the skies over Baghdad as US warplanes bomb the Iraqi capital in the early hours of January 18, 1991. The US campaign drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait in a little over a month. Photo: Dominique Mollard/AP.

Seared into the American imagination, this episode was told and retold by members of Congress in the months leading up to Operation Desert Storm. At one point, standing in front of a group of US soldiers, Bush referenced the babies "pulled from incubators, and scattered like firewood across the floor."

The story was fabricated. The girl in question turned out to be the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US. Tom Lanton, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Human Rights, knew her real identity, but said nothing. Citizens for a Free Kuwait also provided a fifty-thousand-dollar donation to the Caucus. The invasion of Kuwait did cause terrible violence and looting, though not the kind described in Nayirah's testimony. It is also important to note that crimes by the Iraqi government were inflicted not only on the people of Kuwait, but also on the Iraqi populace as a whole in the decades prior to, during, and after Operation Desert Storm. Iraq's regime led by Saddam Hussein had in fact long been supported by the US, despite being a dictatorship characterized by widespread, well-documented abuses and the violent suppression of independent, left-leaning movements.

It was against this backdrop that any lingering concerns over Desert Storm were soon overwhelmed by the first televised war—which did not disappoint. Journalists were in awe and given front-row seats in hotel rooms that provided a once-in-a-lifetime view of a Baghdad sky famously described as "lit up by fireworks." The green lights of antiaircraft missiles sparkled with trails that zigzagged across a foreign landscape, as the post–Cold War military-industrial complex mounted a global display of its undiminished potency. Before the promise of big data was the promise of smart wars. The bombs over Baghdad made for a most impressive unveiling of the technologies soon to guide aspects of our lives as intimately as they guided missiles to their targets. The American public was introduced to real-time, living-room war games.[3] This was what winning looked like.

That year—1991—the Super Bowl took place in Florida, at the height of military operations. Security was tight and the atmosphere was tense, though there were no credible threats. Even so, the *New York Times* noted that Tampa's public safety administrator's office "has asked the Federal Aviation Administration to prohibit flights close to the stadium except for regularly scheduled takeoffs and landings by commercial airlines," adding that, "inevitably, the movie *Black Sunday* has been recalled here. In it, a Palestinian terrorist takes over a Goodyear blimp at the Super Bowl, planning to strafe the crowd."[4] Despite reporting no basis for concern—and despite the fact that at that very moment the US was deploying violence

affecting Iraqi civilians—the *New York Times* inserted a scenario from a fictional Hollywood film to serve as a specter of Arab terrorism in the US.

This game was, as ESPN put it, the start of the branding relationship between the NFL and the US Army. Small American flags were put on every seat in the stadium for attendees to wave. Whitney Houston was brought in to sing the national anthem; subsequently released as a single, Houston's rendition would make the song a Top 20 hit for the first time.

The performance by Houston was huge, replayed again and again.[5] My junior high school in California played it at an assembly the following week, and teachers instructed us to send letters and notes to US troops. It was the time of yellow ribbons, when to criticize the war was to betray the troops, the innocent men and women—the only innocent men and women, it was to be understood—of this conflict. This was also the first year that the Super Bowl enlisted contemporary pop stars for the halftime show. The year before, the halftime show had featured an Elvis impersonator. Though most outlets broadcast a news update, the 1991 Super Bowl was the first iteration of halftime as popular spectacle.

At the halftime show, hundreds of little girls dressed as cheerleaders swarmed the stage, dancing and singing about rich men, football stars, and beautiful girls.[6] Lyrics sung by the mini-cheerleaders, looking no older than eight or nine, repeated, "You've gotta be a football hero to get along with the beautiful girls. If you are rich or handsome it'll get you anything!" A few minutes later, their counterparts, hundreds of young boys dressed as football players, ran onto the stage. One, with a blonde bowl of hair, took the microphone and solemnly sang the Bette Midler hit "Wind Beneath My Wings," as images of troops in the Persian Gulf played across the screen. Children of the troops were paraded onto the field, and a live message from George and Barbara Bush was broadcast from their living room, blessing America, the Super Bowl, and our troops.

Then a replica of the Disneyland spectacular It's a Small World After All took center field, as Mickey Mouse, dressed to look like Uncle Sam, burst out with a parade of children in various international costumes. The children and Disney characters all linked hands, singing "We Are the World" and "It's a Small World After All" as the camera panned across a sea of multinational faces and flags, mirroring the coalition of countries in the Gulf. A small world united by war, and our children. This is why we fight. This is why we win.

And win we did. Norman Schwarzkopf—commander-in-chief of the coalition forces—was gruff and respected, a tough-love coach who showed us the way to victory. There were whiteboards with the various teams laid out (remember, this was a thirty-four-member coalition, with more than half the war costs covered by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia), patiently describing how we did it. He also had a great sense of humor. At one of his press conferences, he had a small television set brought out to replay various bombings and attacks from the air. He concluded by introducing us to "The Luckiest Guy in Iraq." In the video, we see the movement of a vehicle across a bridge. Seconds after the vehicle passes, the bridge explodes—to laughter from the press.[7] This is meant as a lighthearted moment. The man is alive, and all he has to show for it is witnessing a bridge bombed just behind him and a war waging, literally, all around him.

Schwarzkopf later explained why some Iraqis were not so lucky. At the end of the war, George Bush made several statements, broadcast inside of Iraq by Voice of America radio, encouraging Iraqis to "rise up." Logically enough, Iraqis took this to mean that if they revolted against the Hussein regime, the US would support them. And rise up they did. In the north and south of Iraq, major rebellions, often celebratory, broke out. The optimism was short lived, as the US had agreed, in the ceasefire agreement, to allow Iraq to resume flying military planes over the country. Soon, the north and south were attacked from the sky, driving hundreds of thousands of Iraqis into the mountains of the north and the deserts of the south.

Schwarzkopf, the celebrated strategic military mastermind of the war, led us to believe that he had no idea that allowing the regime to fly armed aircraft over the country would result in a swift crushing of the rebellions. He claimed that he was left alone with no guidance as to how to work out the ceasefire agreement. In countless interviews and commentary, US military and political figures spoke of the complicated makeup of Iraq and the possibility of a "quagmire" if further involvement in the country was pursued.

We see here the precursor to the militarizing of sect and ethnicity. Kurds and Shia become "factions" rather than citizens with commitments and concerns. "I don't think that we should ever say that because of what's happening to the Kurds now means that our mission failed," said General Schwarzkopf in the aftermath of the ceasefire agreement. He continued:

> It's exactly the same thing that happened to the Kurds a few years ago at the end of the Iran-Iraq War. It's exactly the same thing that's happened to the Kurds for many years. Yes, we are disappointed that that has happened. But it does not affect the accomplishment of our mission one way or another.[8]

All of this resulted in one of the largest and most deadly mass migrations in history, a precursor of what was to

come. At its height, nearly a thousand people died each day, with thirty-five to sixty thousand dying in total. More than a million fled, with Iran taking in many of the refugees. Nearly twenty-five thousand people remained in Camp Rafha, a desolate camp in the Saudi Arabian desert, for more than a decade.

As this tragedy unfolded, a contract was signed between the US government and the Rendon Group in 1991. The Rendon Group was headed by John Rendon, a former Democratic National Committee director turned self-described "information warrior." He had also been hired by Citizens for a Free Kuwait to manage public perception. During a speech he delivered at the National Security Agency, he told a story about this work: "Remember those little flags the Kuwaitis were waving around as the tanks rolled in? How do you think they got those? Let alone flags of the coalition nations? That was me."

This Rendon Group contract, however, was for a much bigger job, with a much higher, multimillion-dollar price tag: to push for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. During the next decade, Iraqi human rights abuses, so heartbreakingly real, were consistently manipulated in the service of paid CIA operatives and exiled collaborators. This information war, along with real legislation to make the overthrow official US policy (notably, the Iraq Liberation Act, signed by Bill Clinton in 1998), would eventually lead to the fabricated "weapons of mass destruction" claim, infamously printed on the front page of the *New York Times* above an article by Rendon Group ally Judith Miller. These false claims were chillingly referenced by key leaders like Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice: "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

But as the second Gulf War loomed in early 2003, it was hugely unpopular, provoking massive protests worldwide. Something more was needed. "Shock and Awe" was a campaign that used military and visual force to knock Iraqis, and the memory of the record-breaking protests, off their feet. No longer in green-and-black night vision, this war was rolled out in full color. Huge bombs rocked the buildings across Baghdad's riverfront, with screens flashing white from the intensity of the explosions. As the strikes hit, news tickers went from reporting the size of the antiwar rallies to providing updates on military advancements.

The antiwar movement had lost. The US Department of Defense ensured that journalists from major news outlets were embedded with US forces, breathlessly reporting from tanks and Humvees. Things were going well—until, of course, they weren't. Nighttime raids went horribly awry, images from Abu Ghraib were leaked, militias and gangs waged an internal war that killed three thousand people a day at its height in 2006. Journalists were being killed at an unprecedented rate, along with everyone else. And as many books written about the conflict would later attest, it was also one of the most corrupt wars in history, with rampant cronyism and graft. It was all so chilling, confusing, morbid, and impossible to keep up with; you didn't want to look, and so, many did not.

In 1992, *60 Minutes* did an interview with a vice president of Hill & Knowlton, Lauri Fitz-Pegado, who had met with Nayirah and worked on her Kuwait testimony.[9] The interviewer was seeking some kind of accountability for Nayirah's misleading story. After reading a statement from Hill & Knowlton denying any culpability for working deceptively towards the war effort, Fitz-Pegado expressed no regret: "I'm sure there'll always be two sides to a story. I believe Nayirah, I have no reason not to believe her. The veracity of her story was indelibly marked on my mind, when I saw her and when I talked to her."

Again, it was clear back in 1992 that privatizing the war effort would not only be effective but also that, acting through a corporation like Hill & Knowlton, the government itself would never be held accountable. This has, over and over again, proven to be the case. Even the initial shock of Abu Ghraib is a distant memory. A handful of low-level soldiers were prosecuted, but no one at the top of the government chain of command was charged. CACI International, the prison firm that ran a section of the prison where abusive interrogation took place, has never experienced any blowback. On the contrary, it retained its contract and its profits. In addition, eight months after the Abu Ghraib abuses—rape, torture, and death, which the press referred to as merely a "scandal"—General Keith Kellogg, who was previously director of operations for the Coalition Provisional Authority, in charge of assuring compliance with the billions of dollars in corrupt contracts, took a position as executive vice president at CACI International. Today, he serves as chief of staff of the United States National Security Council in the Trump Administration.

In a special investigation conducted by *The Nation* in 2007, fifty combat veterans were interviewed. The report noted that

> two dozen soldiers interviewed said that callousness toward Iraqi civilians was particularly evident in the operation of supply convoys—operations in which they participated. These convoys are the arteries that sustain the occupation, ferrying items such as water, mail, maintenance parts, sewage, food and fuel across Iraq. And these strings of tractor-trailers, operated by KBR and other private contractors, required daily protection by the US military.

As a former sergeant put it,

> We're using these vulnerable, vulnerable convoys, which probably piss off more Iraqis than it actually helps in our relationship with them, just so that we can have comfort and air-conditioning and sodas—great—and PlayStations and camping chairs and greeting cards and stupid T-shirts that say, Who's Your Baghdaddy?[10]

The author's snapshot of the infamous US army occupation slogan.

The above image of the shirt does not come from the *Nation* article. A few months ago, I was sitting outside a coffee shop on a beautiful California morning with my mother and one of her best friends, also Iraqi and in her early sixties. I bring out their coffee and see this guy, tall, late-forties maybe. He's standing, chatting with a friend a few feet away, wearing the shirt. I freeze for a moment and look at my mom and her friend, and they look at me quizzically, *what does the shirt mean?* They both speak perfect, heavily accented English, and are both scientists, not dense. At first I was angry at him for the shirt, then I felt something I'm not sure I can describe. It was this terrible thing. On the one hand, it's funny—haha, *who's your daddy?* On the other, it means *I own you baby and you like it. You get me off daddy and I like it*. And this is said by an occupier, an invader. *We grabbed your pussy. Tell me you like it.* How do you explain that to two moms? *Who's your daddy? Who's your Baghdaddy*? This beautiful city, with all of its beautiful people and its histories, their histories, already ravaged and now reduced to this T-shirt. How could I tell them that? My mother and her friend, so proper and good natured, always wanting to remain optimistic, sitting in the sun, troubled by their confusion. I couldn't. I told them it was just something silly, a stupid saying. I changed the subject.

We might—and I often want to—think that this is history, it's old stuff. But this is the dissonance: we still haven't come to terms with this shirt, this narrative, this violence. It's still okay, sometimes even funny, to parade about in public wearing this shirt, in our coffee shops, our newspapers, our galleries. (Indeed, many well-meaning people thought the shirt was funny when I first showed it to them.)

Why haven't we reckoned with this? Instead, we have articles like "What We're Fighting For," published on February 10, 2017 in the opinion section of the *New York Times*.[11]

The piece recounts the honorable way the author and his fellow soldiers fought in Iraq. Even his references to a colleague at Abu Ghraib mention only the lightest use of harsh tactics: slapping young men for information. The author does not approve of these tactics, but paints a holistic picture of the effort in Iraq as one solely of honor and courage. I do not doubt that this was the case for some, but it has proven to be far from the truth for all. At the end of the article, the author references an Iraqi soldier who was killed, and notes that had he been saved,

> the enemy soldier would have ended up with a unit like mine, surrounded by doctors and nurses and Navy corpsmen who would have cared for him in accordance with the rules of law. They would have treated him well, because they're American soldiers, because they swore an oath, because they have principles, because they have honor. And because without that, there's nothing worth fighting for.

It is a bizarre conclusion to an article accompanied by an image of bound, blindfolded Iraq men kneeling at the feet of American soldiers in a barren desert.The article is presented as though there is no shameful history of Iraqis being rounded up, hooded, and detained by the US military, often only to be let go with no charges after they and their families endured terrifying, humiliating ordeals at best, fatal or torturous outcomes at worst. It is presented as though thousands of Iraqi men have not been held and routinely killed, by various actors since the invasion, in mass graves littered throughout the country. Instead, this

image is turned into a national call. Bowed and handcuffed Iraqi men, embodying, illustrating *What We're Fighting For*.

A day earlier, artist Francis Alÿs had written in *Artforum* about his experience being embedded with Peshmerga soldiers in Mosul, Iraq during the battle against ISIS. He posed a number of questions:

> What could the ISIS fighters possibly make of the rain? Strangely it brought us closer, we shared that moment. Did I film the rain? Is art just a means of survival through the catastrophe of war? Do we live because we narrate? ... This particular war? Because it is local, tribal, and religious conflicts that have had extraordinary repercussions on more than half the planet. It's medieval barbarism perpetrated and spread with the most modern of technologies. An existential war.[12]

This use of "clash of civilizations" rhetoric, of the gap between the barbaric and the civilized, and the always violent echoing of sectarian language, exemplifies how the arts mimic the tropes of information warfare. It also mimics the use of authority: a well-known French male artist can give us a glimpse into this odd, terrible world. Medieval barbarism? The City of Sammara, one of the biggest archeological sites in the world, celebrated for its spectacular Abbasid-era minarets, became a notorious torture site when US operatives used the public library to train Iraqi police and Special Forces, transforming it into a brutal interrogation unit that eventually engulfed the city in violence. Hardly a medieval phenomenon.

During the course of the work I undertook for several years with art students in Baghdad, I received incredible support from various members of the arts community. But I would be remiss if I did not also discuss a very disturbing acceptance of sophisticated, supposedly good intentions over the work of building new processes to bring people in. When I would tell people what I do, more often than not they'd express curiosity: *What's happening there? What medium are people using? Any interesting events? What's the scene like?* I would answer these questions, themselves violent in their ready willingness to ignore every facet of what was and is taking place: the wholesale degradation of infrastructure, and with it, the conditions under which young artists work.

How much do most know of the arts in the Middle East beyond the Gulf States, which have poured billions into PR-friendly arts while maintaining their role as the US's main economic partner and builder of military bases (where construction workers are paid a miserably low wage)? So many of us still want to believe the Muslim ban is just a Muslim ban, solely about Islamophobia and not about unending warfare in strategic areas. Do we even look at why these states are exempt? It is not just because Trump has hotels there. These hotels pale in comparison to the billion-dollar US military installations and accelerating military activities.

The names of the seven countries included in the ban first surfaced years earlier in comments made by Wesley Clark, a highly decorated former US military general, former NATO commander, and one-time US presidential candidate. He publicly stated that just before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, he was told of a high-level memo outlining a strategy to take out seven countries in five years. Those countries? Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Lebanon. He said this long before Trump was even on the radar. By 2017, Lebanon had long been replaced by Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country, currently in the midst of a historically devastating war waged by the region's richest country, Saudi Arabia (supported in the conflict by the US). Why are we still reducing these policies to religious identities and Islamophobia? It is a distraction tactic, and many on the left happily eat it up rather than looking at the clear, ongoing politics involved. Islamophobia is real, yes, but a far more effective counter would be to disengage it from American political ambitions rather than amplify its use.

I bring up the situation of artists in Baghdad not because I think only Iraqi art students deserve a shot, but because it shows how willing we are to be contained by clean places, language, and events, and how much *we* are missing out in doing so. The things that these young people know about are things we couldn't even begin to understand in our lifetime. They have lived through a multinational takeover, militarized violence by the world's strongest armies, and dizzying messaging campaigns, all within a bustling, major metropolitan city with unrivaled history. It is our loss not to know, not to understand, not to learn, as much as it is their position to feel unheard and unseen in the most infamous, embattled city on earth—a position some of us may find ourselves in soon enough.

X

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1
See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySdhGyqGCZk .

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As reported by *60 Minutes* in 1992.

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See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUMAyiI0TPA .

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Gerald Ezkenazi, "SUPER BOWL XXV; Further Security For Game Unveiled," *New York Times*, January 23, 1991 http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/23/sports/super-bowl-xxv-further-security-for-game-unveiled.html?mcubz=3 .

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Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian, "The Other War: Iraq Vets Bear Witness," *The Nation*, July 10, 2007 https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/other-war-iraq-vets-bear-witness-0/ .

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Phil Klay, "What We're Fighting For," *New York Times*, February 10, 2017 https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/opinion/sunday/what-were-fighting-for.html?mcubz=3 .

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Francis Alÿs, untitled article, *Artforum* , February 9, 2017 https://www.artforum.com/words/id=66451 .

Francesca Hughes

Truth Is in the Tower

Part I: The Spatial Architectures of Computational Truth

The Arab-Islamic Renaissance, which unfolded from 800 to 1200, remains a lacuna for Western historiography. The family of technological innovations dating from the period includes the camera obscura, the first automata, and the work of al-Khwarizmi, namesake of the "algorithm"—a diaspora of premature anachronisms which effectively disrupt our narratives of technology's advance in the West's own Renaissance.[1] The work of logician Ramon Llull, born at the edge of this diaspora, in Mallorca in 1232, is a kind of aftershock occurring at the temporal and spatial periphery of these seismic technological transformations that this "first" Renaissance produced. Serially forgotten and retrieved throughout history by figures as disparate as Alberti, Leibniz, Descartes, Eco, and Calvino, Llull's work is both a distant echo of an event already deleted, and the enduring pathological legacy of our historiographic blind spots.[2]

In 1321, six years after Llull's death, his student, Thomas Le Myésier, in a bid to secure his master's legacy and his own no doubt augmented role in the production of this legacy, gathered Llull's masterwork *Ars Genralis Ultima,* and its abbreviated version, the *Ars Brevis*, in a volume named the *Breviculum*. In order to illuminate this work, he commissioned twelve miniatures depicting "The Life of Ramon Llull." Miniatures VI and VII depict truth abducted and being held prisoner in the tower of falsehood, from whose battlements and windows hang the monstrous demons of untruth. To the left we see wickedness, inactivity, ignorance, weakness, confusion, disaster or falling, futility, and nothingness; and, to the right, depravity (or distortion—the medieval sense of this one is not totally clear), impossibility, hatred, falsity, punishment, contrariness, emptiness, inflexibility, abundance in the sense of excess, and diminution.[3] This sinister tower is a play on the towers of truth, which ascend to the heavens, and those various other memory devices, the mnemonic towers of facts whose performance, along with that of mnemonic trees, hands, ladders, and arks, was central to medieval synthetic thought.[4]

Looking at this miniature, we can't see truth, but we can hear her calling out to be freed: a lamentation appears at the lower left of the page:

> "Have mercy, have mercy on me, at least you, my friends! The hand of ignorance touched me, and in my place faithless opinion was crowned in public. I, in contrast, who dreads every dark corner, am buried entirely against my will in darkness and without light in the depths of the dungeon. Sad, deserted, and almost desperate I die! There is no one to help me or give me comfort. On the contrary: many are more inclined to

Thomas Le Myésier, Breviculum ex artibus Raimundi Lulli electum, Miniatures VI–VII, c. 1321. Badische Landesbibliothek, code: St. Peter perg. 92. Kalrlsruhe.

> support false opinion than to free me from the dungeon. All you philosophers, in whom—apart from God—I place my entire trust, since you are the true lovers of wisdom and truth, please come to my aid, I beg you; otherwise I must perish by inaction!"[5]

The philosophers have heard. Riding to her rescue are three parties in chariots which it turns out are also towers—mobile siege towers. Within Le Myésier's staging, the fate of truth is suspended between the fixed tower that holds her captive and the three mobile towers that would liberate her.

At the front rides Aristotle on his horse Ratiocinatio, "rational reasoning,"[6] armed with the syllogistic apparatus of Greek logic. In his chariot are the five general propositions of logic, but also the peculiar and the accidental, yet to be excluded from his formal system. Although it is the beginning of the end for them: they won't be tolerated for too much longer.

Behind Aristotle rides Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd—known to the Latin West as his commentator, Averroes—on his horse Imaginatio, and armed with imagination. Averroes maintained the existence of a twofold truth in which a proposition may be philosophically true but theologically false. Despite the inclusion of Averroes here, Le Myésier's disapproval of this position is clear from the text below the image, which states that Averroes "did not know the truth, or had not concerned himself with it, because he disapproved of it just as much as he could." Worse still:

> He denied eternal life, and argues that the greatest joy lay in observation, which is perfected in the speculative sciences. He did not turn to the inner activity of God, just as he did not attend to his creative outward activity, unconcerned that every activity is directed to the goal and to perfection. Neither did he care to recognize the nature of the divine dignities or their activities: nor their unity in the individual differentiation of activity, without which God would forever remain inactive in himself and without any majesty. Consequently, he would in his entire nature be imperfect and ultimately unworthy to be God.

Heretic Averroes, ostensibly unmotivated by perfection-seeking abstract thought, argued that we are only capable of thought in union with our body. Given that Llull, as we shall soon see, would eventually dispense with the body altogether, we can only assume Le Myésier tolerates the presence of Averroes in this miniature tripartite philosophical alliance for strictly strategic and temporary reasons.

And at the rear is Ramon Llull on his horse Recta Intentio ("right intention"), and armed with his *Ars*. If first-degree knowledge was understood as sensible knowledge from sensible things, then Aristotle, with his tolerance of the accidental, and Averroes, with his pursuit of happiness from observation, are in the business of producing *second*-degree knowledge, intellectual knowledge of sensible things, in which perception provides input data before abstract reasoning takes over. But the axiomatic system of Llull's *Logica Nova* takes this decorporealization a step further by excluding perception entirely, thus producing third-degree knowledge: intellectual knowledge of intellectual things—precisely the kind of inward-turning thought Averroes is apparently incapable of.

The script on Llull's lance makes the abstracted nature of his newly hermetic system of logic for a *vita contemplativa* abundantly clear: "He who wants to know the spiritual must transcend senses and imagination, and often himself." This is the beginning of the production of truth cut off from the senses and thus insulated from the corruptions of our bodies and their creaturely limitations. This decorporealization of truth is truth getting ready to be housed in another kind of body, the machine of thought that is still as yet to be imagined. But already there is a sense that mechanized thought, being uncontaminated by the error that plagues human cogitation, will necessarily think no falsehoods.

Riding alongside Llull in his chariot are the nine absolute principles or concepts of his *Ars Magna*: goodness, greatness, duration, power, wisdom, will, virtue, truth, and glory—all pseudonyms for God, we should note—though only greatness looks like he is having a good time. Behind them are the nine relative principles or predicates: concordance, difference, contrariety, beginning, middle, end, majority, equality, and minority.

Note that unlike those of Averroes and Aristotle, Llull's chariot has a souped-up engine, the fire column, fueling his triadic reasoning systems—be it his *Ars Demonstrativa, Generalis Ultima,* or *Brevis* (each the software update of the previous). This fire is telling us that reason's machinic home, when it finally arrives, will be prodigiously powered.

Within his *Ars Magna,* we meet Llull's absolute passengers again, as the nine letters, B–K (no J), in his Figure A.[7] The connecting lines in Llull's diagram assert from the outset the potential of mutual transposition within this system: God is great, great is good, etc. They also assert the essentially active or performative nature of the terms, all of which are lent activity: it is not sufficient for something to simply be good, it must also *do* good or produce good in order to satisfy Llull's conditions. His system is relational from the start, by virtue of its triangulation between terms, thus anticipating Leibniz's belief that relations, not substances, come first—not the other way around, as Isaac Newton would have it.

This triangulation, with its cybernetic ambitions, is also the footprint of the trinity. The raison d'être of this system is the conversion of Muslims and Jews to Christianity, via logic *only*. There is no mention of any Christian-specific term in the whole system, but it is hardwired in with a triadic system—father, son, and holy ghost. Christianity's only signature here is spatial. This machine of thought "was planned as a kind of deductive apostle of the faith," as Ernst Bloch described it. Llull's goal was to convince all unbelievers of the truth of the Christian religion by means of the irrefutable and, crucially, transparent demonstrations of his machine which, being mechanized, was already, automatically, "free of every error in reasoning."[8]

Llull's Figure T is divided into nine chambers, or cameras, which house the nine relative principles. A substructure of lines sets up loyalties between three predicates, creating the three trinities: concordance-difference-contrariety, beginning-middle-end, and majority-equality-minority.[9]

Within Llull's Table, our passengers and their letters take on different meanings depending on which figure they find themselves in, e.g.: B in Figure A means "goodness," while in T it means difference, while in Questions and Rules it means "whether," and in Vices it means "avarice."

Figures A and T are combined in Llull's Third Figure, in which each pairing—given that each letter represents a different meaning in A or T—can generate twelve clauses. These pairings are commutable, so only half of Llull's adjacency matrix is ever present.[10]

Llull's final iteration of his ternary combinatorial system culminates in the Fourth Figure, which introduces three concentric wheels able to generate tertiary combinations between the principles and relative principles, thus establishing what Donald Knuth calls Llull's "three-valued logic": true, unknown, false.[11] Thus the presence of the trinity not only unwittingly installed a dynamic relational architecture, it also installed a possibility of indecision that later binary architectures would deny.

By combining all of the above (along with Llull's Definitions and Rules, which we will come to), we have a system of which we may ask any question and calculate an answer—such as, is the world eternal? This question is

posed in terms of BCD, whereby B is "whether" from Questions and Rules, and C and D from Figure A are "greatness" and "eternity," respectively, on the basis that for anything to be eternal it must also be great. The algorithm generates the answer: no.[12]

Like all the formal logic and universal language systems that followed, Llull's *Ars* is highly reductive and compressive in its makeup, comprising a set of basic truths designed so that any process can be broken down into a series of fundamental operational steps. This mandated processing of *only-one-thing-at-a-time* has constrained every computer since, no matter how powerful. The spatial reduction it delivers is not simply a response to archival exigencies but also key to reactivating knowledge.[13] Such systems are always hermetic: the system must be closed so that it can be exhaustive in its iterative testing of combinatorial possibilities in the production of different meanings. Thus, by redefining truth as a limited set of undeniable elemental truths pertaining to all fields of knowledge, hermetic systems claim to be able to calculate all possible truths. This is recursivity in service of universal truth production, in which the initial reductive action is always taken with a view to ultimate expansion. Don't be fooled by the spatial modesty of compression! Its ambitions are always colonial. Kircher neatly formulated this double strategy of compression-plus-expansion some three hundred years later, in his 1663 proposal for a universal language, the *Polygraphia Nova et Universalis*, which promised: *The Reduction of All Languages to One—The Expansion of One Language to All*. It is curious to note that beyond these first and second promises, the third promise this system made was that of encryption via "A Techno-logia; or, a universal Steganographic Secret operating by combinations of things; whereby, through a technique impenetrable to the human mind, one may transmit one's secrets to another in nearly a thousand ways." This took the form of a box (a physical three-dimensional matrix labeled "A Glottotactic Ark good for writing letters throughout the whole world") and a user's manual. All promises, though undelivered by their maker, have now come to pass in the form of the ultimate compressive/expansive language of zeros and ones. Returning to Llull, his Rules further equip us with nine epistemological tools in the form of nine interrogatory modes:

Utrum—whether. (This is the freest of the rules, problematizing mere possibility. It has three subspecies—affirmative, dubitative, and negatory—"so that," as Llull writes, "the intellect is not obstinately bound to an opinion.")

Quid—quiddity. What is it from?

Quare—formal cause. Why?

Quantum—quantity. How much?

Quale—quality. Which, of what kind?

Quando. When?

Ubi. Where?

Quo modo—modality. How?

Cum quo—instrumentality. With what or whom?

All of which are still busy on the frontlines of the current information wars.

Llull serially refined throughout his life the relations between the principles, predicates, and the Questions and Rules in search of their clearest, most efficient, but also most seductive presentation—their best user interface. Early formulations (the *Ars Compendiosa Inveniendi Vertitatem* and *Ars Demonstrativa*, both of 1238) were modified during what is known as the Ternary Period in Llull's production, by the introduction of the trinity with the *Ars Generalis Ultima* in 1305 to better appeal to Christian readers, and then abbreviated for easier consumption and thus better uptake in the form of the *Ars Brevis* in 1308. This *Ars* of conversions was, like all such universal systems, first and foremost an *Ars* of conversion to itself. Via Llull's wheels, the derivation of proofs could be demonstrated *ad oculus*, within this newly transparent logical artifice. Once converted to the apparent transparency of such an interface, the system behind it might lead the user anywhere its designer so desired.

If this sounds more familiar than medieval, it is curious to note that Bloch places Llull, with his aspiring machine that might satisfy what he describes as "bourgeois calculation needs," in the four-hundred-year-old project of European modernity.[14] Although quite how is unclear—Llull was fashionably early by some three hundred years. Bloch, in exile in 1930s America, described Llull's *Ars Demonstrativa* as a "logical logarithmic clock," a kind of "deduction machine of knowledge [that] should encompass and exhaust every variation of cognition that was at all meaningfully possible."[15] He simply might have said, as others have since, that it was for all intents and purposes the first computer. While Llull's paper machine used (fuzzy) words, it did so in a combinatorial and thus "discrete" or absolute way, as if they had sharp edges and could be treated as discontinuous terms, numbers on the clock face at the back of Bloch's mind, even though they clearly still exerted a symbolic pull, a tugging web of metaphoric linkages to their natural-language counterparts. If Friedrich Kittler called Turing's machine the universal discrete machine, or "the manic-cutter," we might call Llull's *Ars* the universal, *very nearly* discrete machine, whose cuts were never quite clean.[16] Despite their messy cuts, the loyalty of the words and letters in Llull's *Ars* to algorithms rather than to natural languages marks a turning point in Kittler's "2,000-year-old war between algorithms and alphabets and between numbers

and letters"[17] and their delivery of the truth: truth that is better because it is mechanized and thus makes no errors. Should the user be in any doubt, the *Ars*'s multiplicitous structure allows twenty routes, and thus twenty proofs, to the answer of any question.

How are we to read to these paper circles and the nascent machine their hybridity augurs? As drawings or as wheels? As representation or as mechanism? Aristotle describes thinking, the production of knowledge, and thus, hopefully, of truth, as activity. Llull's third-degree knowledge—intellectual knowledge of intellectual things—completed the decorporealization that Aristotle started, disembodying thought. But, being active, thought must still somehow *move* between its three constituent nodes, which Llull describes as the knower, the known, and the act of knowing (or more beguilingly, the lover, the beloved, and love itself). Such decorporealized thought must be lent some other body that moves, but a body-without-senses this time, a senseless body: the machine. The rehousing of thought in the machine results from Llull's decoupling of thought from Aristotle's senses—and not vice versa—in which thought that is hermetically sealed within the intellect (of the intellect, by the intellect, with the intellect) must, like a lion in its cage, turn in circles in order to satisfy its need to move.

But these paper wheels also facilitate other movement, other cycles. At the end of *Ars Demonstrativa*, Llull solves each of the 1080 questions by means of chains of compartments containing letters or terms drawn from the figures—a flowchart that incorporates the conjunction "and" and the disjunction "or." In their deductive action, the axiomatic cycles and subcycles describe an algorithmic structure of recursive logical operations that are, in turn, able to generate algorithmic artifacts. In this turning machine then, truth is secured as an algorithmic product. The autopoietic constitution of the *Ars* also means that truth, an algorithmic artifact, is able to produce other algorithms—is able to ask itself and answer new questions.[18] Peter Weibel argues that Llull's algorithm of concepts remained unchanged until 1879, with the publication of Gottlob Frege's *Begriffsschrift: eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens* (Concept-Script: A formal language modeled on that of arithmetic for pure thought), whose strange logical syntax influenced Ludwig Wittgenstein in his own project to eliminate falsehoods.[19] The verb "to err"—to drift from a true course—reminds us that the architecture of any algorithm (always an essentially corrective system, even when it is not in delivery of religious conversion) is primarily circulatory, a set of corridors and decision-gates through which data is irrigated without fear of deviation. Just as the immaterial architecture of archery and projectiles produced the geometry of the counter-architecture of the Renaissance fort, this tower of falsehood, with its distortion, inactivity, and confusion (to name but a few inhabitants), produced the counter-architecture of the algorithm, whose irrigating corridors might defend us from those same multicolored beasts.

Returning to our rescue party: If we imagine the line of philosophers continuing behind Llull, who else is there? Giordano Bruno, who loads the wheel with so much memory storage that it stops revolving but is lent other dynamics, with its esoteric data compression and decompression functions and tortuous storage and retrieval pathways. Kircher, whose *Arca Steganographica*, with its enmeshing of cryptography and computation, became the formal/causal precedent for the Enigma and the Colossus.

Hot on their heels are certainly Francis Bacon and John Wilkins, whose distrust of natural languages and the slippery promiscuity of words, which always lead thought astray, motivated their proposal for a universal language of real characters (still letters) that would eradicate all errors. Flanking them is Cave Beck, who, going the full mile, dumped letters and expressed all terms in numerical values, using 0–9.[20] Then there is Leibniz, in whose *De Arte Combinatoria* the ratiocinator and the binary never quite combined.

Nor did they in the work of the still unsung Ada Lovelace, nor in the brass baggage of Charles Babbage, with his industrialized arithmetic, until Turing, with George Boole and Kurt Gödel in the wings, merges Leibniz's binary with conceptual operations, writing all concepts, logical operations, and their interrelations in zeros and ones. Thus, as logical operations become mathematical operations, thought, or the production of truth, finally becomes calculation—all of this predicated on the if-then of Aristotle's first syllogism.

In 1986, in a strange inverse archaeology, Werner Künzel and Heiko Cornelius converted Llull's *Ars Magna* into COBOL (a contemporary programming language) and then into an Assembler application, which was inputted into a computer. Llull's triadic thinking entered the operational space of the then contemporary digital algorithm, whose recursive footprint it would have recognized. It would even have recognized the potential promiscuity of the system's application, as the *Ars* was intended to recombine not only Averroes's segregation logic and theology, but also rhetoric, literature, and metaphysics in a medieval multidisciplinary space where new syllogisms, and fallacies, might be added to classical ones—though it may well have wondered why these fields were now nowhere to be seen within its interrogations. Kurt Gödel, in 1931, in famously showing that mathematics produces propositions that are not decidable, not provable, and therefore indecipherable by a machine, effectively revealed an invisible architecture of ever shrinking horizons. The domain of truth is redrawn as the smaller subdomain of provability, and that of provability as the even smaller subdomain of that which is provable by binary computation. The *opera aperta*, as

Umberto Eco was to describe Llull's *Ars*, had somehow become much less *aperta*, though it still, to quote René Descartes on the *Ars* again, "allows one to speak on many subjects without knowing any of them."[21]

But it is not just the uncomputable or undecidable that must be excluded, that must remain imprisoned outside the algorithm's infinite corridors. To the left of the tower is written the task for the philosophers: "By destruction or distinction, destroy the tower." This distinction of difference was to become so distinct in the (difference) engines to come, that all analogue continuum was ruled out, in pursuit of discrete truth, despite the fact that it abbreviated complex relations by rewriting transitioning curves as dumb, discrete steps. Illicit curves did survive in the minor history of analogue computers: as late as 1979, Soviet analogue water computers—descendants of Vladimir Lukyanov's 1936 Gidrointegrator, a kind of calculation by plumbing—were still outstripping their digital counterparts in exactitude, unhampered as they were by the requirement to approximate relations between values. If we let our eyes wander down our imaginary, extruded line of rescuing-philosophers listed above, we see with each, as their falsehood-eradication systems became more discrete in what they included and excluded, more universal in their application and their suppression of alternatives, more heavily fortified against dissent, more effective in their colonization and monopoly of the production of truth, the more extraordinary the errors they produced. Accuracy per se was no longer the goal, as exactitude gave way to truth defined by speed and, above all, its ability to dominate.

Llull's machine approximated (and corrected) thought. Universal languages approximated (and corrected) their natural counterparts. Discrete values approximated any continuum as numerical values approximated (and corrected) Enlightenment real characters. And the binary approximated the indeterminacy implicitly tolerated by Llull's ternary. Returning to this miniature, we are reminded that Llull's chariot, unlike the others, is preceded by heralds bearing trumpets, three to be exact—the three reasoning angels that still comprise any machine of thought: reason, will, and memory. In his writings, Llull grants us humans a sixth sense: that of communication—cybernetics' twin to control. Even outside of his cross-referencing Figures, Llull rarely if ever presents any foundational aspect in an isolated manner but instead in a complicated web of relations between different components. Amadore Vega argues that Llull was "foretelling an order of connections that was much richer and more complex than the merely vertical (Platonic) or horizontal (Aristotelian)."[22]

From the angels' trumpets pour lines of words that converge and bifurcate as they exhaust their mutual permutational set of the trinity: God, the Creator, and the Savior. The weapon of truth Llull carries, powered by that burning engine in the back, having relational ambitions, reads the world in terms of threes. (Not at base three—Llull would count like us to base ten, but in terms of a triadic structure.) Thus, in Figure T, the relational figure, we saw: beginning, end, *and middle*; concordance, contrariety, *and difference*; majority, minority, *and equality.* This paradigm is constitutionally different from the binary paradigm of Kittler's "manic-cutter," which he describes as the inevitable product of the always binary zero-sum game of war—you win or you loose. No halfway house. But Llull's triadic system crucially did allow this possibility, this halfway house. Moreover, this triangulation of relatedness, which necessarily arose from his use of the trinity, allows feedback, and thus cybernetic action (remember the known, the knower, and the act of knowing). In so doing, Llull's trinity-induced performativity anticipated everything that in the twentieth century finally undid causal linearity and gave way to the looping recursivity of cybernetics and the new machines of life.

But there is yet more which leads us from the algorithm's corridors to our third and last architectural figure, the screen. Aristotle's syllogism, if A and B then C, uses two variables, is quadratic—i.e., two dimensional—and can be spatialized with an x-y matrix. Today's computers, being binary and thus "genetically" constrained by Turning's machine, are still quadratic. Although they may admit a long list of variables—if A and B and C and D or E and F then Z—in reality their processing can only deal with one pair at a time, the final pairs being paired up. Llull's triadic system, however, in adding a third variable, created a cubic system—if A and B *and C* then D—that is crucially processed in triplets.

But how was Llull to represent this? The adjacency matrices and graphs that had displayed his earlier quadratic systems were unable to accommodate such cubic ambitions. At first Llull produced a kind of bastardized x-y matrix, the *Tabular Generalis*, in which what were effectively values for the z axis were distinguished by inserting a syntactical separator denoted by the letter T. This acted as a wall, establishing a separate chamber or camera for z values to the right or left of it—a letter on the left of this wall was to be read as a y variable while the same letter on the right of this wall was to be read as a z variable. But this was clearly unsatisfactory. And so, unable to draw a three-dimensional matrix to house his cubic system, Llull drew a wheel.[23] His *vouvelles*, as they were called, brought with them many attributes that a three-dimensional adjacency matrix, could he have drawn it, would not have: they allowed multiple interpretations to be simultaneously tolerated, with the dominant truth at twelve o'clock and additional truths around the clock face. Further, by virtue of geometry, they allowed the possibility of additional wheels, potentially an infinite set—this system could grow and grow in its complexity.[24] But in solving Llull's representational dilemma, the wheel did something else that a three-dimensional matrix might have prevented: it let form in, and in particular, surface. And then surface did

its thing as it squashed the cubic space of the ternary into the flat space of the wheel. The heirs of Llull's wheels forgot the invisible cubic space of their operation that the trinity had procured, and remembered only what they saw: the flattening of all operations at the surface—the interface. The problem of knowledge has always been the problem of its representation. This was truly a triumph of representation.[25]

Thus the presence of the wheel in this first machine of thought is not simply about the need for thought to move, and for this moving line to also somehow stay put and not run over the horizon. It is also about a crucial flattening of space. Digital space was born flat. And, tellingly, this happened at the interface: where we can see it—all at once, all the time. The flattened space of Llull's representational vehicle took hold and somehow endured in its prefiguration of the flat space of the screens to come. As if our demon-infested tower has been unwrapped, unfurled, and is now presenting its flattened internal façade to the world, concealing behind the siege of truth calculating algorithms whose multiplying action delivers us an infinitely multiplicitous surface.

In 1671 Leibniz takes Llull's wheel (with its still fuzzy figures), and in his ratiocinator lends it cogs—the *almost* discrete was now indisputably discrete, and digital, base ten.[26] At the same time he resurrects the ancient Indian binary.[27] Words are gone, as is any triadic structure—and lost with it are the relational web and the middle undecided option. This is because, as Leibniz famously wrote to Mersenne, "once we have realized this language, calculating and reasoning will be the same thing."[28] Thus, discreteness (an inherently gross approximation of any continuum) secured the way for the engineered neutrality that the *Ars* had already paved; in order to bring about the conversion of Jews or Muslims through reason only, the *Ars* had needed to appear theologically neutral and nondoctrinal. Llull declares this strategic indifference as the property that distinguishes his *Ars* from both metaphysics and logic: "Metaphysics considers things exterior to the mind insofar as they concern their reason for being; logic, however, considers things according to their existence in the mind; but this Art, as the highest of all human sciences, considers being *indifferently* according to one mode or another."[29] Thus the construction of neutrality that is now the aboriginal hallmark of the machine of thought, like the decoupling of thought from the senses, was also formulated *ex machina*, before being installed in the machine, its newly adopted site of origination and, ever since, the site of mechanical objectivity: Thomas Nagel's view from nowhere. The engineered neutrality of the machine of thought has played the role of arbitrator in every domain of "truth" production. We saw the strange abdication of authorship that this produced in the discourses surrounding parametric design in architecture, and now this same engineered neutrality, with the advent of machine learning, authors not simply the parking of our cars but also the selection of our lovers, the bail decision in our law courts, and the tailoring of our very own personalized newsfeeds.

Today, the panoply of screens that make up our immersive and, often, tailored tele-scape is our tower—the latest architecture in which facts are still serially constructed and reconstructed in an eternal present, as their "truthiness" profiles rise and fall and rise again. This multiplicitous *mise en abyme* of zero depth (think of Recep Erdoğan's phone talking to a screen during a coup) is again truth without the z axis: flat truth.

All of its old tenants are still there, busy mincing and stirring the footage and tweets, tailoring the newsfeeds: wickedness, inactivity, ignorance, weakness, confusion, disaster, futility, nothingness, distortion, impossibility, hatred, falsity, punishment, contrariness, emptiness, inflexibility, excess, diminution.

And truth? Perhaps she is free and it is now we who are imprisoned in the flattened machinations of Llull's truth-rescuing machine.

X

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1
See *Allah's Automata*, eds. Seigfried Zielinski and Peter Weibel (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2015); and "On Deep Time Relations of Arts, Science and Technologies in the Arab-Islamic World and Beyond," eds. Siegfried Zielinski et al., special issue, *Variantology* 4 (2010).

2
A kind of missionary artificial intelligence, Llull's logical system sought to convert Muslims and Jews to Christianity.

3
I am grateful to Mary Beard for her nuanced translation of the following demon names from their medieval context: *malitia, cessation, ignorantia, debilitas, confusio, casus, frustra, nihil, pravitas, impossibilitas, odiositas, falsitas, poena, contrarietas, vacuum, difformitas, superfluum, diminutum.*

4
See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

5
I am grateful to Iain Boyd Whyte for his patient translation of the indecipherable text beneath this image, from its German transcription https://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/fileadmin/ub/referate/04/breviculum.htm .

6
This is also the name of Leibniz's machine, the calculus ratiocinator.

7
For our very brief purposes here, this is a much simplified account of the workings of Llull' s *Ars*. For a comprehensive user's manual, see Anthony Bonner's unsurpassed *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User's Guide* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2007).

8
Ernst Bloch, *The Principles of Hope* , vol. 2, trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, and P. Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 653.

9
Note the subtlety and implicit tolerance at work in this nonbinary system: contrariety is the opposite of concordance, whereas difference simply denotes a difference that is not antithetical.

10
Like the universal languages to follow of Francis Bacon, Leibniz, John Wilkins, et al., this system is ruthlessly stripped of any redundancy.

11
Donald E. Knuth, *The Art of Computer Programming* , vol. 4, *Generating All Trees: History of Combinatorial Generation* (New Jersey: Addison Wesley, 2006), 58.

12
I am grateful to Zsuzsa Peters for her redrafting of Llull's various diagrams.

13
As the combinatorial systems Llull inspired in the work of Giordano Bruno, Athanasius Kircher, and Leibniz were to confirm.

14
Bloch, *The Principles of Hope*, vol. 2, 652.

15
Ibid.

16
"The manic cutter known as the computer." Friedrich Kittler *, Optical Media* , trans. Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 228.

17
Ibid, 230.

18
This aspect is further enhanced by interactivity: "For the Ars 39 he gives explanations of how to interpret these compartments, but then for the remaining 1041 the reader is left to his own devices. As Llull puts it, 'the second group is dealt with in a more subtle fashion,' which is a delicate way of asking the reader to make the effort to do it on his own. As if this weren't enough, Llull adds yet a third group, in which the 'artist,' with the *Ars*'s two groups as models, is asked to make up *his own* questions and solutions. This new group is not only, he explains, 'subtler' than the other two, but it is 'the general goal of the entire Art.'" Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull* , 294.

19
Peter Weibel, "Ramon Llull and the Digital Revolution," in *The Thi nking Machine of Ramon Llull and the Ars Combinatoria* (Barcelona: CCCB, 2016), 9.

20
See Paolo Rossi, *Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language* , trans. Stephen Clucas (London: Athlone, 2000).

21
Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull* , xiii.

22
Amador Vega, in *The Thinking Machine of Ramon Llull and the Ars Combinatoria,* 45.

23
That is, unable to use three-dimensional space as, for example, Kircher's drawing of his secret box had. I say "unable," well aware that this is a wholly insufficient attempt to pin down the difficult questions of exactly what representational obstacles were faced by Llull's pre-perspectival representational context. If nothing else, "unable" simply indicates that the wheels of Arab water clocks, combinatorial locks, and navigation devices, such as the astrologer's zairja, would already have been at the fore of Llull's visual imagination of possible interface designs.

24
I am indebted here to friend and colleague Gergely Kovàcs for the illuminating discussions we have shared on these points and more generally during our ongoing research into the prehistory of computation.

25
Here I am stealing Parveen Adam's compelling formulation in her work on the image. See *The E mptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences* (London: Routledge, 1996).

26
To be fair, Blaise Pascal's 1642 calculators, or *Pascalines*, had already introduced cogs, and, like Leibniz's ratiocinator, they were startlingly similar in arrangement to a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci for a proto-calculator, itself inspired no doubt by the cypher-wheels of Leon Battista Alberti, who was also a keen Llullist.

27
Bacon had already figured that with enough combinatorial positions, two symbols would suffice, and Leibniz even describes a binary machine that would operate with marbles and holes, though he never developed it.

28
Louis Couturat, *Opuscules et Fragments Inédits de Leibniz* (Paris: Alcan, 1903), 27–28.

29
Llull, from *Introductoria Artis demonstrativae* , in Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull* , 18–19.

> That big, big beautiful plant behind us, which will be even more beautiful in about seven months from now ... about 1,100 jobs and by the way, that number is going to go up very substantially as they expand this area.
> — President-elect Donald Trump speaking at the Carrier plant in Indianapolis, December 1, 2016

Jacob Stewart-Halevy

We Have Never Been Post-Industrial

When American President Donald Trump pays lip service to Western reindustrialization at a giant heating and cooling factory in Indianapolis, Indiana, we might ask whether we are living in a "postindustrial" era to begin with. Twenty-first century postindustry seems to bear little resemblance to the way the anarchist and historian of Indian art Ananda Coomaraswamy first imagined it a century ago.[1] In 1914, drawing together Arts and Crafts, theosophist, and Swadeshi visions, he foresaw a postindustrial epoch blooming upon the demise of colonization across Asia and the derailment of industrialization in the West. In their stead, semi-literate artisans would resume medieval Sinhalese craft traditions, weaving together a precolonial social order unraveled by the incursions of the British Empire.[2]

Postindustrialism meant "permanent revolution";[3] communities of skilled artisans, drawing on their "intellectual and imaginative forces," would supersede industrial capitalism from within.[4] As Coomaraswamy imagined, this kind of community "would appoint as its servants, for life or good conduct, its craftsmen and its artists, just as it now appoints its judges, its preachers, its professors, and medical officers."[5] Rather than take up these appointments, however, craftsmen would exercise what he called "a spontaneous anarchy of renunciation," a "repudiation of the will to govern."[6] Craft, fully integrated into spiritual practices, would constitute the fabric of a "social-corporatist" cosmopolitanism the world over, based on "mutual aid" and the recognition of common interests. The only limit to artisans freely exercising their species-being would be their ability to modify and manipulate their machinery.

By mid-century—in the wake of sociologist Daniel Bell's 1962 rereading of the term—Coomaraswamy's postindustrialism was all but forgotten. Dismissing his predecessor in a footnote, Bell prophesized that a fast-arriving post-ideological information society, not the craft guilds, would render industrialization obsolete.[7] Never mind seizing the means of production, Bell's smoothly functioning technocratic knowledge economy promised to erase class conflict altogether beneath the whirr of data processors coordinated by a centralized bureaucracy. Although the fantasy he envisioned likewise never came to pass, over the past three decades, defenders and detractors of neoliberalism have cemented his way of understanding globalization as a core

Asha Schechter, Coffee Scene, 2015, digital video. 13'57'' minutes.

composed of service-sector dominated "communicative capitalism," "the new economy," and "immaterial labor," while agricultural and industrial labor are outsourced to the world periphery.[8]

Today, the two seemingly incompatible postindustrial paradigms of the twentieth century—Coomaraswamy's social corporatism and Bell's proto-neoliberalism—have improbably intertwined. Contemporary labor theorists echo Bell, noting how customization deindustrializes production and consumption, creating interdependencies among the once distinct domains where goods circulate. On the production side, computer-aided manufacturing and distribution monitoring facilitate just-in-time, bespoke goods and services, where self-correcting feedback loops help avoid oversupplying or undersupplying market demand. Meanwhile, Coomaraswamy's unity of worker and machine has resurfaced, as user-generated, crowd-sourced, and personalized content displaces onto the consumer the duty of developing and reproducing commodities. This displacement allows corporations that facilitate these interchanges to vertically integrate cycles of research and development, production, marketing, and distribution, all while outsourcing each of these tasks to the lowest bidding subcontractor.

With the aid of Bell's technocracy, an arch version of Coomaraswamy's social-corporatism has come to pass. Karl Marx's dictum that "necessary labor time" will be measured by "the needs of the social individual,"[9] that "the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that ... disposable time will grow for all," may today be read with irony: rather than pointing to new forms of collective life, the growth of phatic or social infrastructures heralds less the coming of "socialism" than the commoditization of attention bartered across online media.[10]

This exchange transpires, above all, within a marketplace where corporate consultants, producers of digital content, and members of the creative industries compete and collaborate to define emerging lifestyle registers. By "lifestyle" I refer to the context where the routines of domestic life are transposed and presented back to persons who engage in them; similarly, "lifestyle register" is the performed combination of gestural, graphic, and spoken language appropriate to and entailing the "lifestyle" context. In retail, for instance, marketers brand commodities so they may confer value onto consumers, who in turn emblematize their distinction by purchasing, displaying, using, and interacting with these goods and services. Graphic designers advertising for Subaru create "bokeh effects" (the use of minimal depths of field to yield blurred backgrounds) so that the company's self-conception as a zero-emissions manufacturer conforms to a prestige lifestyle register we might call "environmentalese." In turn, people from their target markets drive hatchbacks and chat with each other about

MPG rates and their trips to the outdoors. As marketers and consumers perform the lifestyle register appropriately, they collectively fix and stratify the value of the Subaru brand.

as a refusal to confront a totalizing neoliberal agenda. Rather, they speak to a peculiar fetishistic quality of contemporary life where we hypostasize concrete material contradictions within geopolitical systems through felt experiences with tangible goods and activities.

Asha Schechter, Coffee Scene, 2015. 13'57'', digital video. In this scene Babinski presents before the SGA Barista Championship judges.

The Artisanal Lifestyle Register

One of the most prominent lifestyle registers turns out to be the very one that preoccupied Coomaraswamy to begin with: the "artisanal," witnessed today in trends towards eco-urbanism and design, small-batch fermentation and slow food preparation, industrial chic, upcycling, and other craft processes. Within the hermeneutic of ideology critique, these trends might index a return of the repressed, attempts to nostalgically recall residual labor processes sent to the Global South. The ubiquitous jargon of "sustainability," for instance, seems to de-implicate individuals in systems of unequal exchange, resolving these systemic problems through a sympathetic magic within "self-governance" and "responsibilization" routines.[11] Rituals around "ethical consumption" help individuals cope on a somatic level with their involvement in what Andre Gunder Frank once called "the development of underdevelopment," where involvement can be masked and metonymized under a bioethic of self-care.[12]

These compensatory impulses should not be merely dismissed or psychologized as bad faith, nor condemned

Recognizing how these goods and activities are pictured by "creative industry" professionals, who materialize and make them available for publics at different scales, may help us understand how we go on to use them to displace risks, contradictions, and responsibilities onto ourselves. By looking at the agents and institutions behind these operations, we may move away from too-ready self-entrapment tropes around the "culture industry," "consumer capitalism," and "distinction," and towards a more fine-grained account of how lifestyle registers hypostasize experience.

As Joanna Cook has persuasively argued in her work on the role that "mindfulness" plays under British austerity, ideology critique only considers "top-down intervention and does not account for diversity in the motivations ... and efforts of people practicing self-governance and the collaborative nature of the political processes by which it is promoted."[13] Cook suggests that it is "the maintenance of diverse and multiple meanings around self-governance" that ultimately drives the "motor of the political process." Register maintenance is key here. In

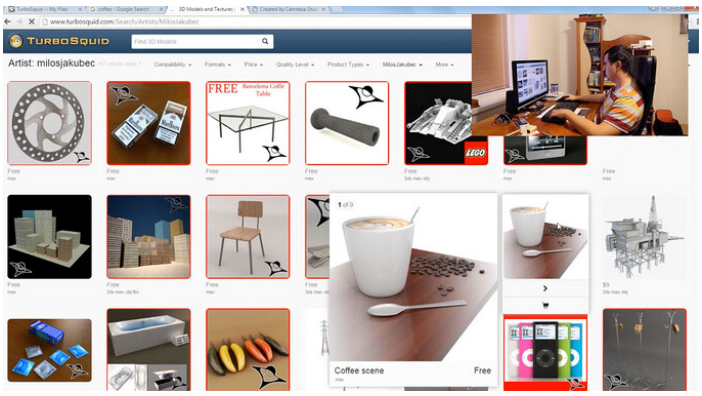
order to understand the trend toward the artisanal—which seems to go hand in hand with the mindfulness and meditation Cook discusses—we must look at the compromises, alliances, and border maintenance that agents and institutions arrange with one another as they contribute to the stylization and diffusion of the artisanal register.

Over the past decade, the art of Asha Schechter has examined our collective management of the artisanal lifestyle register, often in online, short-form narrative documentaries. This increasingly popular medium—approximately three to seven minutes in length, and available for uploading, embedding, and streaming—puts on display the competition over the voicing and visualization of the artisanal register. As opposed to high-cost music videos and extended commercial film trailers—where production quality for the most part still lies in the hands of ladder guilds—short-form lifestyle videos involve minimal in-camera or postproduction editing and require only a do-it-yourself knowledge of audio and design software. This deskilled format contrasts with the belabored care and maintenance procedures depicted on screen—curing butter, pickling radishes, and related craft behaviors.[14]

Even as they diagram the consolidation of the artisanal lifestyle, Schechter's videos toe the line between describing these processes and nominating themselves as token instances of the type. Schechter brings in other "creatives" to act as characters on screen; the works circulate on the same blogs and video-hosting services, such as YouTube and Vimeo; and they employ many of the same tropes, edits, and effects found in how-to videos about the mental-health benefits of drinking La Croix sparkling water or in Photoshop tutorials where novices learn to create bokeh effects. Meanwhile, commercial magazines occasionally hire Schechter as a "picture researcher" to discover these effects within a stock of images, which they go on to pair with their own publication content. Even as his videos contribute to the very formation of variables that make up the artisanal register, their existence as art objects flirts with a counterhegemonic position by revealing the parallel labor processes that naturalize the lifestyle.

Asha Schechter's Coffee Scene

Schechter's *Coffee Scene* (2015) considers the way artisanal lifestyle variables are produced, discussed, and replicated to instantiate registers of conduct, which is part of the artist's larger project around renovating avant-garde strategies associated with productivism. The video opens on the sidelines of the 2015 US Barista Championship, an event sponsored by the Barista Guild of America (BGA) and the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA), institutions offering aspirational baristas skill-building



Asha Schechter, Coffee Scene, 2015. 13'57'', digital video. In this shot Jakubec uploads the digital rendering onto Turbo Squid.

workshops, certificate programs, tasting sessions, and seminars on "coffee technology and innovation," without the dues and bargaining power involved in traditional trade unionism. As nonantagonistic post-Taylorist alliances, the BGA and the SCAA standardize professional practices around the provisioning of coffee services, teaching individual baristas to develop a specialty lingo of refinement and connoisseurship while learning the ins and outs of latte art. Workers are trained so that their own gestures, talk, and beverages conform to an increasingly regimented performance of service.

Schechter's service-Olympics protagonist in *Coffee Scene* is Charles Babinski. A bearded millennial with an apron and a printed cotton sports shirt rolled up to his elbows, he resembles just the kind of early-twentieth-century postindustrial artisan Coomaraswamy once imagined. In the initial shot, Babinski carefully sets up a tableau of stainless steel frothing pitchers, butcher-block tasting platforms, and ceramic espresso cups for yet-to-be-seated "sensory" and "technical" judges. But just as the video begins to settle comfortably into offering a behind-the-scenes account of Babinski's calculated conduct, Schechter cuts to 3-D digital modeler Milos Jakubec sitting alone at a home-office workstation in an unnamed Slovakian village. Jakubec plays Babinski's antiheroic double, narrating as he renders a three-dimensional model of a cappuccino, the very drink Babinski will soon produce for the competition judges.

The video allows the two protagonists' contradictory forms of coffee expertise to intersect. Jakubec's clicks of the mouse and scroll of the cursor are regulated by the preestablished protocols of imaging software and take place within the frame of the computer screen, contrasting with Babinski's machine-age pouring of the milk, control of steam, and turn of the nobs. Through a portable PA microphone, Babinski's hyper-articulate, scripted voice tells the judges that he is "really excited to be here today." Meanwhile, Jakubec narrates his navigation through layers of superimposed images in a

thick Slovakian accent devoid of grammatical articles: "now I must create plane," "now I make layer." Babinski's speech is accompanied by moderately paced house music, Jakubec's by melodic hardcore playing through his tinny computer speakers.

Babinski uses juniper spice to create precious complexity, while Jakubec remarks that he is glad he doesn't have to deal with the "simulation of liquids." Babinski sprays pressurized water and milk through a phallic nozzle to create microbubbles of aphroditic foam; Jakubec creates a similar effect by inserting digital noise around a flat surface rendering. Babinski describes the "personal" connections he makes with his customers as a small-business owner; Jakubec claims, "I don't need fake reality, but I have reality in this software." Babinski gives an impassioned speech about the sustainable business practices he maintains with "my farmer in Honduras," which is greeted with audience applause; Jakubec describes how he can publish his CGI cappuccino anonymously on TurboSquid, an online marketplace for 3-D models, where it will be purchased by art directors and animators and inserted into projects and advertisements on which he has no input. We witness a back-and-forth dance between two diametrically opposed projects, Babinski's revolving around his expert management of his own gestures and utterances, Jakubec's around the speed and verisimilitude with which he makes the digital cappuccino.

Placing the two side by side, *Coffee Scene* asks: How separate are the different nodes of freelance economy occupied by Babinski and Jakubec? How proprietary are their skills to their social roles? How strict is the division between service and graphic design, between the management of the gestural and the visual, and where do the two coincide?

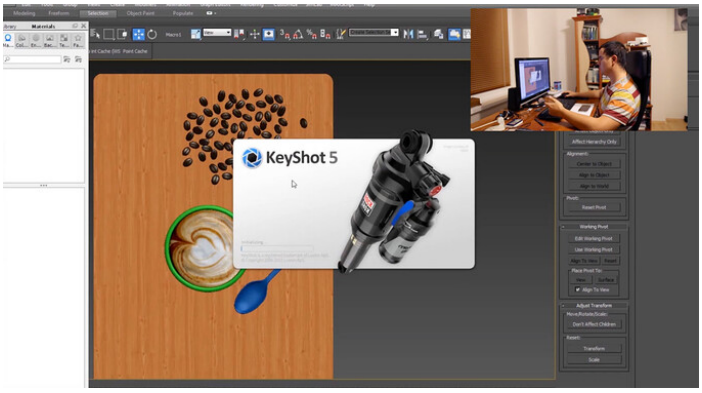
When Babinski, with bated breath, utters "my farmer in Honduras" or "hint of juniper," he is branding aspects of his speech, turning his terminology itself into a lifestyle variable, not unlike the physical cappuccino he makes with the turn of his hand and the pour of his wrist. Both the commodity and its associated rituals index distinction around Babinski's person, defining him iconically as an upwardly mobile authority, a well-trained maven—like his coffee, a person of considerable "complexity." He is socializing his gestures and speech into "oinoglossia," the register through which we linguistically produce prestige comestibles: "ice cream, olive oil, vodka, etc. ... all those things that through artisanal labor represent nature turned into culture," as Michael Silverstein writes.[15] Coffee is no exception. As coffee becomes aggressively marketed to wider social domains, speaking about its powers and effects in an appropriate manner produces new images of normativity. Coffee talk "seize[s] the imagination of a wide sector of people anxious about social mobility" so that "educated connoisseurship can be manifested while doing away with the artifact of perceptual encounter"—that is, with the coffee itself. Schechter emphasizes the construction of these images of refinement by showing how the judges swill their drinks in the manner of a sommelier, as a commentator analyzes the intricacies of Babinski's performance. This is not merely a taste test: the wider focus is on the way baristas *manage face*, that is, the impression they make on the judges and general audience.

Schechter's barista-as-sommelier plays into a process that Silverstein has described as register "emanation." Emanation is the "radiation of cultural signification" whereby "centers of value production" "anchor [the] trajectories of circulation" of a given lifestyle.[16] When marketers, connoisseurs, and ordinary consumers talk about coffee, they are really doing two things simultaneously. They are talking about the quality of the bean at the same time that they index the social identity of the speaker as the type of person who engages in coffee talk. This second indexical function produces a "register effect" that allows the register to spread, or "emanate," across separate events. By employing these register effects, the speaker constructs and classifies prestige and attributes it metonymically to what surrounds them, whether it is the granite countertop that supports the espresso cup or the high-tech dishwasher that cleans up afterwards.

The way in which those who provision, discuss, and consume coffee accrue and emanate Bourdieuian distinction is fairly intuitive to anyone who has lived through the diffusion of the Starbucks brand from Seattle-based upscale cafe in the 1990s to the interstate rest-stop parody fodder of today. But the way in which the linguistic production of lifestyle variables emerges dialectically with co-occurring visual and material cues is less easy to discern. It is not altogether clear how our expectations around speaking about comestibles align qualitatively with our tastes for them, or the images we create around them. *Coffee Scene* asks how oinoglossic fashions of speaking work co-constitutively with the management and manipulation of visual images that seem to do the same thing. How, in other words, do the commoditization of textual and visual emblems go hand in hand?

By placing the dual processes of linguistic and visual production side by side—Babinski at the counter, Jakubec at the computer—Schechter invites us to look more closely at the material dimensions of semiosis, that is, at how the winning cup of cappuccino emerges simultaneously within the constraints of both digital editing protocols and physical comportment. The elements taken for granted in one context become the site of scrutiny and virtuosic performance in another. The glint of porcelain, the sheen of the stainless-steel pitcher, the brushed-metal espresso machine merely serve as the shiny backdrop for Babinski's foreground theatrics. But for Jakubec, the management of these reflections from cup to

saucer, or the satin opacity of the coffee bean, is the bread and butter of visual editing. Inversely, the way Babinski creates "complexity" around his drink through his baroque explanations of provenance and his secret insertions of flavors becomes literally flattened out in Jakubec's concern over surface effects—creating accurately modeled planes and layers across compatible software such as 3ds Max and KeyShot 5.

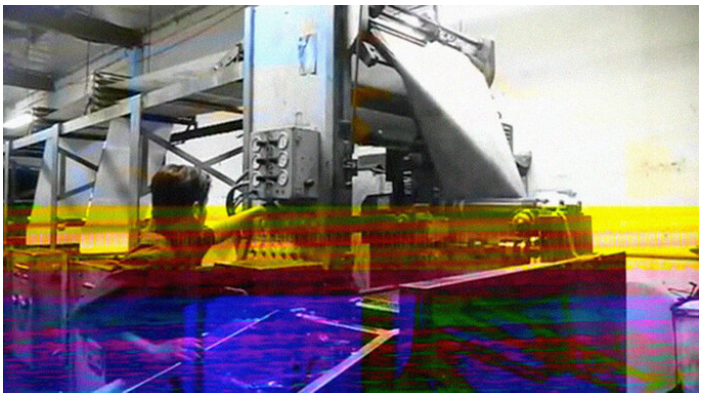


Asha Schechter, Coffee Scene, 2015. 13'57'', digital video. In this scene Jakubec moves the image into KeyShot 5 in order to manage the reflections and textures of the cup and spoon.

Freelance Productivism

The complementarity of Jakubec and Babinski's projects presents us with a kind of post-productivist, Vertovian simultaneity. It reveals isomorphic similarities in the rhythms of seemingly diverse workflows, a bridge between working with pictures and picturing work. Like many members of the Russian avant-garde in the decades following the 1917 revolution, Dziga Vertov wanted to articulate how cultural forms—film in his case—incarnated the motions of factory work. His filmic isomorphisms emplotted the exposure, production, editing, and projection of film into other spheres of labor. The paradigmatic Elizaveta Svilova editing scene from *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), for instance, begins with a solitary woman sewing fabric by hand. Then this activity becomes mechanized and several more seamstresses appear. It turns into a social activity—the seamstresses seem to be in a lively state of camaraderie as the wheels of the machine spin next to their smiling faces. But what initially seems like a representation of work becomes an analogue to it. As the fabric moves through a sewing machine, the sewing needle penetrates and binds the fabric at the moment where the light hits it, which turns out to be a structural analogue for the way the film projector takes up celluloid through its sprockets as the light that hits the back of the film binds the image to the screen. The technology of sewing develops out of the gesture of the hand, and in turn, the apparatus of the film projector finds its vestigial skeleton in the work of the sewing machine.

This analogy is meant to function pedagogically.[17] Through the equivalency it sets up between tangible fabric and celluloid, Vertov assigns utility to the filmstrip, inserting it into relations of material production. In turn, the audience is provoked to discover structural similarities between the movement of one object and its filmic equivalent. The sequence makes the case, as Jonathan Beller writes, that " *the image is constituted like an object* —it is assembled piece by piece like a commodity moving through the intervals of production—and it is a technological and economic development of relations of production."[18] Insofar as the sequence discovers the technological origins and development of the projector in the sewing machine, Vertov reconciles or familiarizes the collective audience's encounter with new equipment. What might be an otherwise alienating relationship for the public is made visible both historically and materially in the surrogate sphere of the cinema.[19] In this manner, the work on screen and the work on the image prefigure the shared activity that might burgeon in Soviet collective life.[20] His montaged intervals bind a particular movement or gesture to a constellation of productive labor forces, offering up a total view for the collective audience of themselves and their shared project of communization.



Asha Schechter, Newspaper Factory, 2010. 1'02'', digital video.

Where Schechter's earliest videos showed newspapers he had designed roll off the presses—in the manner of *Pravda* issues in *Man with a Movie Camera*—his more recent productivist montages present isomorphisms within segmented pockets of freelance labor, where providing digital editing services in Slovakia never quite links up with serving cappuccinos in Silverlake. Unlike the Kinoks—the alliance of factographic filmmakers around Vertov—the BGA and SCAA hardly provide any material or collective benefit for baristas, but just a kind of associational style or branded uniformity. Thus, the commonalities that do exist between Babinski and Jakubec are hardly affirmative. Their parallel masturbatory fidgeting with mechanical knobs and keystrokes hardly belies a factographic utopia, but rather their contemporary

proletarianization: the extent to which they make their working behavior conform to the demands of flexibility in the new service economy.

Nevertheless, *Coffee Scene* does make labor processes visible at disparate moments around the chain of semiosis through which commodities like coffee circulate. We are reminded again of Coomaraswamy's anarchist cosmopolitanism based on the "recognition of common interests" in the absence of a regulating governing body. Even if *Coffee Scene* does not present a rhythmic simultaneity of undivided collective experience back to the collective—as Vertov had intended—the video does prompt dispersed freelance workers to mutually recognize their divergent forms of expertise. In doing so, Schechter begins to picture the range of service-economy requirements for freelancers who become socialized into the artisanal register by disparate ways and means.

Schechter's montages, camera angles, and explicit commentary on the construction of images seem likewise distantly connected to the "industrial reflexivity" and "industrial allegory" that film theorists have outlined in recent years.[21] John Caldwell observes that "any screenplay or project developed ... today generates considerable attention and involvement ... by personnel from the firm's financing, marketing, coproduction, and distribution, merchandizing, and new media departments."[22] This "attention and involvement" finds its way on-screen through a set of reflexive genres that "out" the "embedded production knowledge" of the industry. Through regular "public disclosures to the viewing audience," Hollywood manifests the contradictions among its unions, corporations, and workers through its products.[23]

If Vertov's isomorphisms and Hollywood-studio reflexivity have facilitated the emanation of the industrial register to different ends, how do Schechter's work within the current economy? Schechter's videos—and the innumerable lifestyles on which they operate—are neither directed at mass audiences nor produced by professionals from the film and television industry, even in Hollywood's recent, flexibly specialized post-studio phase, where many workers occupy a precarious position with regard to the projects they help make. Rather. *Coffee Scene* is emblematic of a new periphery of prosumer para-professionals: namely, producers of digital content, marginal members of the "creative industries" who circulate content exclusively online. Their videos—even when tied to a corporate branding initiative—are often explicitly didactic, circulating as visual manuals for audiences who may be motivated to realize their own DIY artisanal projects, in turn filming them and uploading their own videos.

Coffee Scene, alongside Schechter's numerous other videos and photographic projects, provides a compendium of generic devices and effects drawn on by the heterogeneous group of amateurs, artists, and others who upload content. They show how "creatives" employ these devices and effects in nonuniform ways, accessing the artisanal register with different competencies and motivations. How, for instance, does the job of a buyer who needs to assemble the materials for an exposed brick display for the Home Depot website differ from a commercial photographer who is looking to shoot a loft for the background of a J. Crew catalogue, or an art director location-scouting for a reboot of *Wall Street*? Rather than reify these like-minded processes in the thing, in the exposed brick itself—which has been the pitfall of so much "speculative materialist" commodity fetishist art of the past half decade—Schechter assembles the conflicting and congruent orientations of freelancers in these processes.[24]

In consequence, his approach reveals how a philosophical program like object-oriented ontology—which imagines objects as void of human apprehension and social semiosis—actually ends up assimilating lifestyle registers into contemporary art. Observe the pervasive use of consumables, self-care products, fitness equipment, and bodies as raw material in recent years. By "extracting" these objects from the multiple social paths they travel, rather than addressing the processes of their circulation, artists are able to picture only their own participation in and knowledge of these lifestyle tokens. By melting rubber gym mats and bricolaging otaku-style prostheses, they demonstrate their facility with the conventions of "transhumanism"; by holding yoga-happenings and culinary workshops in gallery spaces, they present themselves as competently artisanal. Each token of a register type is meant to orient towards and outflank others within a field of artistic lifestyle production.[25]

If Schechter's work takes part in the legacy of productivism and polemics around the "postindustrial," it is because it evidences the struggle among freelancers over the artisanal register itself—the war of position taking place over its standards of appropriateness as they become increasingly codified. As his video reveals, the register rigidifies at points of intersecting commoditization across language, services, and goods, where the process of exposing live yogurt cultures to the right amount of light and air aligns with the exposure rates and lighting conditions of the amateur food photography used to document this very process. In this way, Schechter presents the dialectic through which people working in diverse fields and levels of professionalization encounter lifestyle. Through their combined and repeated use of lifestyle's material and linguistic forms, they make possible its macrosocial dissemination to ever broader demographics and contexts, so that even the most debased products in our society—our cleaning supplies, toilet paper, and contraceptives—are now accompanied by hypertrophic tasting notes and thoughtful packaging.

X

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1
Essays in Post-Industrialism: A Symposium of Prophecy concerning the Future of Society , eds. Ananda Coomaraswamy and Arthur Penty (London: T. N. Foulis, 1914).

2
Allan Antliff highlights the place individual that artisans held for Coomaraswamy and his cowriter—the guild socialist Arthur Penty—as they fleshed out the concept of Post-Industrialism: "Neither Penty nor Coomaraswamy sought a wholesale resuscitation of medieval institutions in Europe or India; their program idealized medieval societies in those countries as alternative 'models' for the social organization of the future in which spiritual values would shape every aspect of daily life ... The most important feature of medieval society was the integration of spiritual idealism with the day-to-day activities of the population, primarily through art." Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art Politics and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

3
Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Purposes of Art," *Modern Review* 13 (June 1913): 606.

4
Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* (London: T. N. Foulis, 1913), 34.

5
Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (Broad Campden: Essex House Press, 1908), viii.

6
Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Siva* (New York: Sunwise Turn, 1924), 138–39.

7
Bell notes his surprise in discovering the prior usage: "Ironically I have recently discovered that the phrase occurs in a book by Arthur J. Penty, a well-known Guild Socialist of the time ... and called for a return to decentralized, small workshop artisan society, ennobling work, which he called 'the post-industrial state'!" Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 37.

8
William Davies, "Neoliberalism: A Bibliographic Review," *Theory, Culture & Society* 31, no. 7 (August 2014): 316.

9
Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1972), 382.

10
Julia Elyachar, "Phatic labor, infrastructure, and the question of empowerment in Cairo," *American Ethnologist* 37 (2010): 452–64.

11
Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

12
Andre Gunder Frank, *The Develo pment of Underdevelopment* (New York: SAGE, 1966).

13
Joanna Cook, "Mindful in Westminster: The Politics of Meditation and the Limits of Neoliberal Critique," *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 1 (2016): 141–61.

14
Michael Storper and Susan Christopherson, "Flexible Specialization and Regional Industrial Agglomerations: The Case of the U.S. Motion Picture Industry," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77 (1987): 104–17.

15
Michael Silverstein, "Discourse and the No-thing-ness of Culture," *Signs and Society* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 327–366, 349. For a broader discussion of "Oinoglossia," see Michael Silverstein, "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," *Language & Communication* 23 (2003): 193–229.

16
Silverstein, *No-Thingness of Culture* , 329

17
In his history of early cinema, Georges Sadoul writes that Auguste Lumière's need for film to run through a mechanism at a normal rate of speed made him think that a foot pedal from a sewing machine might function equally well in a film projector. Georges Sadoul, *Histoire Général du Cinéma* , vol.1 (Paris: Denoël, 1946), 184–96.

18
Jonathan Beller, "Dziga Vertov and the Film of Money," *Boundary 2* 26, no. 9 (1999): 162. Italics in original.

19
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," trans. Jephcott and Zohn, in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings* , vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004): 101–33.

20
Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov* , ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); John MacKay, "Vertov and the Line: Art, Socialization, Collaboration," in *Museum Without Walls: Film, Art, New Media* , ed. Angela Dalle Vacche (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

21
John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Jerome Christensen, *America's Corporate Art: The Studio Authorship of Hollywood Motion Pictures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); J. D. Connor, *The Studios after the Studios: Neoclassical Hollywood (1970–2010)* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

22
Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 232

23
Ibid., 3.

24
Although often regarded as merely a "receptor surface," this question of "orientation" is key to the art historian Leo Steinberg's discussion of the "flatbed picture plane": "The characteristic 'flatbed' picture plane of the 1960s" insists on a "radically new orientation" towards it. Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). 84–85.

25
The denouement of "Speculative Materialist" art, in the wake of the most recent Berlin Biennial, seems to have resulted from the movement's inability to renovate a codified set of materials and talking points that had become vulnerable to ready-typification and parodic trolling from competing registers.