

KNOWLEDGE, SPIRIT, LAW

BOOK 2:
THE ANTI-CAPITALIST
SUBLIME

GAVIN KEENEY

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For John Berger

A black space is not a space, it is a nonspace, a fullness with maximum density. Black is the heaviest, most terrestrial, most perceptible color: it is a theoretical limit, a noncolor through the absolute proximity of the eye; the noncolor of the death of all gazes in the shock of contact.

Louis Marin

When the forms of things are dissolved in the night, the darkness of the night, which is neither an object nor the quality of an object, invades like a presence. In the night, where we are riveted to this darkness, we have nothing to do with anything. But this nothing is not that of a pure nothingness. There is no more this, nor that; there is not "something." But this universal absence is, in its turn, a presence, an absolutely unavoidable presence.

Emmanuel Levinas

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References



God did not die; he was transformed into money.¹
Giorgio Agamben

The Anti-capitalist Sublime, Book Two of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law*, as a critique of present-day forms of Cognitive Capitalism, privileges what Alain Badiou has identified as the twin gestural positions of modern and late-modern French Arts and Letters (that is, “existential vitalism” and/or “conceptual-formalism”), while suggesting ways forward—and backward—toward the literary-critical mode for philosophical inquiry he also considers the future for discursive and artistic forms of cultural criticism (from both within and beyond academia, and from both within and beyond the *commercium* of the contemporary art world). This suggestive synthesis and elaboration of a successor “state” to modernist and post-modernist theoretical praxis in the Arts and Letters arguably hinges upon the production of the author’s “voice” in the work of literary-critical merit, and the personal responsibility of the author and/or artist for a nominal return to useless speculative thought and its time-honored forms of dissemination—for example, the

¹ “In order to understand what is taking place, we have to interpret Walter Benjamin’s idea that capitalism is really a religion literally, the most fierce, implacable and irrational religion that has ever existed because it recognizes neither truces nor redemption. A permanent worship is celebrated in its name, a worship whose liturgy is labor and its object, money. God did not die; he was transformed into money”: Giorgio Agamben and Peppe Savà, “‘God Didn’t Die, He was Transformed into Money’: An Interview with Giorgio Agamben,” *Libcom*, February 10, 2014, <https://libcom.org/library/god-didnt-die-he-was-transformed-money-interview-giorgio-agamben-peppe-sav%C3%A0>. First published as Giorgio Agamben and Peppe Savà, “Il capitalismo è una religione la più implacabile mai esistita,” *Ragusa*, August 16, 2012, <http://www.ragusanews.com/articolo/28021/giorgio-agamben-intervista-a-peppe-sava-amo-scipli-e-guccione>.

long-form book, the singular art work, the library, the gallery, and the archive.

Against the current penchant for mediatic and performative splendor in contemporary discursive and artistic praxis, this “return” is only possible through the evocation of an a-historical and a-temporal, universalizing agency in such works that also makes any such return paradoxically “futural,” with rote temporality present only in terms of the necessary negation (via subjectivized meta-critique) to be visited upon the socio-cultural and socio-economic biases of politically and socially motivated critique in the Arts and Letters, biases that tend to quietly service capitalist ideology, all the while denying such a role, but as generally clumsy and often-forlorn or pessimistic interlocutor. Therefore, a deconstruction of the supposed privileges of mediatic performance is the first-order examination to be undertaken in order to enter into a critique of the complex system that Cognitive Capitalism represents (in second-order forms), with its inordinate prejudice or appetite for conditioning and capturing speculative inquiry in the Arts and Humanities as marketable products and/or its conversion and demotion to “information” and or entertainment—the payoff for authors and artists being celebrity as form of complicity. What becomes obvious is that intellectual inquiry has suffered the dual fate of becoming re-naturalized in socio-economic systems that automatically reduce any prospects for a decisive intervention in the neo-liberal capitalist capture of intellectual and artistic capital. The conversion of revolution to “@evolution” is of this order, and representative—in the extreme—of the reduction of first-order concerns to second-order commodities.

When discussed across representative works, through works that cross the life-works of notable authors and artists, the anti-capitalist sublime takes on a set of qualities that are inherent to such critical works, but also a “messianic” edginess that transcends them. The inquest often comes with apocalypse....² Tautologically,

² Such is the case with the late works of both Johnny Cash and Townes Van Zandt—quintessential American folk and/or folk-blues artists. In the case of Cash, the works in question are the American Recordings produced by Rick Rubin (foremost, *American VI: Ain't No Grave*, 2010, released seven years after the artist's death). In the case of Van Zandt, the works in question include his posthumous release, *A Far Cry from Dead* (Arista Records, 1999), released two years after the artist's death, and various minor live recordings to be found on YouTube. In both instances the late works include recordings that were made immediately prior to the artist's death and rendered other-worldly by inspired post-production, with country-mu-

the life-work only exists when the life-work is closed (archived), and a life-work may only be assessed (opened) once it is closed. The premise is that, as a type of sublime excess given to such works, the anti-capitalist sublime is the virtual abstraction within cultural production that also contextualizes singular works into near oblivion, an element of the analytical project that is—far from being a disservice to authors and works—a peculiar compliment under the right circumstances, or as seen in the proper light.

Book Two of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law* takes up where Book One (*Radical Scholarship*) left off, foremost in terms of a critique of neo-liberal academia and its demotion of the book in favor of various mediatic projects that substitute for the one form of critical inquiry that might safeguard speculative intellectual inquiry as long-form project, especially in relationship to the archive (otherwise configured—here and there—as the “public domain”). This ongoing critique of neo-liberal academia is a necessary corrective to processes underway today toward the further marginalization of radical critique, with many of the traditional forms of sustained analysis being replaced by pseudo-empirical studies that abandon themes only presentable in the Arts and Humanities through the “arcanian closure” that the book as long-form inquisition represents (whether as novel, non-fictional critique, or something in-between). As a tomb for thought, this privileging of the shadowy recesses of the book or monograph preserves through the very apparatuses of long- and slow-form scholarship the premises presented here as indicative of an anti-capitalist project embedded in works that might otherwise shun such a characterization. The perverse capitalist capture of knowledge as data is—paradoxically—the negative corollary for the reduction by abstraction of everyday works to a philosophical and moral inquest against Capital. The latter actually constitutes a reduction to the antithesis of data—*Spirit*. Thus the anti-capitalist sublime also signals a type of antinomialism—a judgment of quotidian law as generally reducible to conformity via anti-humanist, machinic measures. For similar reasons, the anti-capitalist sublime is primarily a product of the imaginative,

sic session musicians effectively paying homage to Cash and Van Zandt by adding spare instrumentation to the bare-bones recordings. Cash's great swan song is “Hurt” (*American IV: The Man Comes Around*, 2002), an exceptional rendering of a song written by Trent Reznor and first recorded by Nine Inch Nails. Cash died in Nashville, Tennessee, on September 12, 2003. Notably, in Cash's version of “Hurt,” Reznor's term *crown of shit* becomes *crown of thorns*.

magical-realist regimes of thought in service to “no capital”—to no capitalization of thought. Thus the legendarily “useless” side of the Arts and Letters, and the liberties permissible there.³

It is the late works of Chris Marker that bring the majority of the issues regarding an extensive critique of Capital by Art to bear primarily through what has now become an accomplished *life-work*, inclusive of books and multimedia projects, but a life-work that is now caught, following the demise of the author, in the throes of a subtle capitalization through institutions associated with official French patrimony—the statist model for assimilation of the Arts and Letters that France has long perfected. Marker’s work across works, famously available in multiple iterations, with many singular works suppressed for reasons peculiar to their specific provenance, provides a set of discursive and non-discursive coordinates for the re-reading of the individual or singular work across the life-work in such a way that the archival record that includes numerous examples of intentional distortions and proleptic elisions (typical of the wayfaring artist) becomes a perfect embodiment of the very concept of life-work. In particular, Marker’s films and writings remain, as part of his posthumous archive, an exceptional situational case study for scholars to re-visit, with new-found distance from the performative and spectacular side—always a smokescreen anyway for what actually moves from

³ “The prevailing tone is ironic, a form of self-protection Shostakovich hopes ‘might enable you to preserve what you valued, even as the noise of time became loud enough to knock out window-panes.’” Review of Julian Barnes’s historical novel, *The Noise of Time* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), with an emphasis on the ability or freedom of fictional works to ventriloquize subjects, if not History. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Zanchevsky, Zakrevsky or Zakovsky?” *London Review of Books* 38, no. 4 (February 18, 2016): 23–24, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n04/sheila-fitzpatrick/zanchevsky-zakrevsky-or-zakovsky>. McKenzie Wark, in “The Sublime Language of My Century,” after more or less admitting that the present state of capitalism is distinguished by its conversion of everything to intellectual property, then asks: “What if we took a more daring, modernist, de-familiarizing approach to writing theory? What if we asked of theory as a genre that it be as interesting, as strange, as poetically or narratively as rich as we ask our poetry or fiction to be? What if we treated it not as high theory, with pretensions to legislate or interpret other genres; but as low theory, as having no greater or lesser claim to speak of the world than any other. It might be more fun to read. It might tell us something about the world. It might, just might, enable us to act in the world otherwise.” McKenzie Wark, “The Sublime Language of My Century,” *Public Seminar*, May 14, 2016, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/05/the-sublime-language-of-my-century/>.

within the works across the accomplished life-work. Such a re-visitation or return would invoke those aspects of his work that include production, dissemination, and assimilation—a complex field not totally reducible to how the author maneuvered within the cultural terrain at the time of each work’s emergence—or how subsequent works altered the perceptions and claims of earlier works and justified a re-reading or suppression of any singular work. In structuralist-inspired post-mortems, meta-context as signature of the paradigmatic always trumps mere horizontal or syntagmatic particulars, the latter easily faked or manufactured. All forms of regressive ideology famously require “cooking the books,” while all forms of progressive ideology involve imagining a book that supersedes all other books (model for the life-work proper). In Marker’s case, a close study of the diffusion of his works across various media (books to film, film to books, film to DVD, etc.), inclusive of the rather prosaic issues of copyright and reproduction, remains incomplete and at best circumstantial as of 2016—an incomplete and perhaps impossible study that will nonetheless be re-visited obliquely in the “Lived Law” project, in 2017–18, which will introduce themes associated with the origin of the Moral Rights of Authors and Intellectual Property Rights in the Early Modern period, but also trace the same, through cognitive mapping, examining nascent and then-rampant trends that edge ever closer toward the present moment and the attendant crisis for authors and artists whose rights are being obliterated through the mass digitalization of cultural production and the conversion of culture to malleable and scaleable intellectual property—whether the rites of extermination take place on the public side or on the private side hardly making much difference.

It goes without saying that studies of an artist’s role in such a slippery terrain as the imaginative, not imaginary trans-historical regimes of a specular sublimity that is only visible in the abstract registers of critical inquiry, will effectively erase the author as primary voice commenting upon or speaking on behalf of such works (that is, justifying his/her own works) and install another voice that is often considered manufactured, or worse, by detractors of abstract, meta-critical praxis. Yet the mostly hidden hand that writes the anti-capitalist sublime over what merely seems aeons is also present in contemporary works; and it is that other voice of the sublimity of works of such an order that is to be heard, however provisionally, in art-critical or art-historical treatises that leave the formalistic or sociological biases of Art History and History (forms of Big History) behind, favoring the literary-critical and trans-his-

torical reading as a type of “trans-montane” inquiry into universalizing themes that qualify the reduction of the author’s voice to a form of valedictory ventriloquism for trans-humanistic, other voices. Indeed, most authors operating at this nexus between two worlds would admit such, if and only if they were permitted the long view that is cut short by quotidian mortality. The immortality of the works is *for* works, versus *for* authors. The immortalizing of authors (as in the official production of saints) is, therefore, the concern of socio-cultural regimes of patrimony, which prefer the subjection of such works to ideology (capitalist or otherwise)—the embalming of the author in an authorized form permitting patrimonial authority to resort to the age-old criticism of any unauthorized appropriation of the author’s works with the explicit denunciation, “The dead would not like it.”

Who should speak on behalf of the dead then becomes the primary question in the defense *of* and *for* past, present, and future ultra-speculative works. For *who* is dead? And *what* is dead? Is it the work that has become fossilized or the author who has been embalmed? A ready-made answer is, “Both.” An additional answer, presenting the gothic image of the living dead, is, “Those who have embalmed speculative inquiry are the living dead.” The neo-liberal capitalist assault—unrelenting in its disregard for speculative thought—also prompts the penultimate conclusion for evading all systems of patrimonial enslavement of works, “Let the dead bury the dead....” Beyond that penultimate conclusion is the starting point for all new works of such an intensely calibrated speculative order.

Whether querulous or incredulous, yet always at the far end of all meta-critical and meta-historical analysis of socio-cultural production, the ventriloquized voice *for* or *against* the anti-capitalist sublime in the Arts and Humanities has very little to do with Capital *per se*—a strange admission for the preface of a book on the anti-capitalist sublime. It is not unlike the ventriloquized voice of the so-called Radical Enlightenment, which quavers in respect of Reason—favoring rationality or surrationality, the latter edging toward irrationality (to counter the abject historical failures of rationality). It is simply a matter of tonality; or, that over the path of modernity this speculative, yet haunting and alluring voice has increasingly come to register a marked disdain for the instrumentalized orders of prosaic existence as Darwinian struggle, with the late-modernist reduction of life to commodity, inclusive of the destruction of the natural world, the gravest error or crime against human and non-human existence imaginable since the birth of the

literary-imaginative work.

The anti-capitalist voice would therefore seem, upon closer examination (and through the experiencing of that voice), to be more archaic and futural, at once, speaking of an order of being that is—without a doubt—the immemorial site or address for what has come to be known through modernist reduction as ethics and mere morality. The highest registers of this voice are, therefore, demonstrably other-worldly. The this-worldly expression of this voice becomes, as a result, the purpose of the Arts and Letters under the sign of the anti-capitalist sublime. The present only ever exists in relation to the past and the future. Arguably, the multiple second-order purposes of this hypothetical voice are trans-historical and exceed even such a timely agenda as commenting upon anything merely historical and—*hopefully*—merely passing away. The chances are that the same voice will speak once again of other, perhaps more pressing issues—yet only once the present issues are resolved. For the argument presented here is that the present-day issues associated with the capitalist capture of life itself actually block more pressing issues—transformational issues that are the express purpose of the Arts and Letters. Such is one reading of the crime of Capital in the neo-liberal capitalist era. Such also invokes the Alpha and Omega of the world as embodied Word, something Capital has utterly no clue about—a cluelessness that is most likely the source for the coming collapse of the capitalist project.⁴

June 20, 2016

⁴ The continued veneration of the digital revolution as the first step toward post-capitalism is both naïve and dangerous in this regard. For the digital revolution is, arguably, the actual source for the neo-liberal assault on immaterial capital through strategies of mass financialization. For conflicting views, see Paul Mason, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Allen Lane, 2015) and Raphael Sassower, *Digital Exposure: Postmodern Postcapitalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For a review of *Postcapitalism*, see Owen Hatherley, "One Click at a Time," *London Review of Books* 38, no. 13 (June 30, 2016): 3–6. "Postcapitalism, like pre-capitalism, could be feudalism or slavery or some Threads-like nightmare of devastated cities and radioactive nomads. Or it could merely be the non-free-market statism that so horrifies Mason. Socialism, however much its meaning may have been clouded by overuse, still means something social, communism something communal, anarchism something anarchic. Each is something you might want to fight for because you believe in it. Postcapitalism tells you that the forces of production make something possible, then suggests either that you demand it, or that you're already doing it" (Hatherley, 6).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



While the research for these essays, reports, and reviews dates as far back as 2012, with the Marker Archive study originating in PhD work in Australia under the auspices of an International Postgraduate Research Scholarship, and the Kandinsky and Nolde study a result of preliminary research in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2013, plus a failed research grant proposal to visit two key archives in Munich and Neukirchen, all preliminary material has been supplemented by parallel extra-topical studies that represent further development of themes present in *Knowledge, Spirit, Law: Book 1, Radical Scholarship*. In particular, "Tractatus logico-academicus," as presented here in Appendix A, owes much to the "Agence 'X' Publishing Advisory," as published in Book One of the project.

The "miracle" of the 2015 Fulbright Specialist Project at the University of Ljubljana, the origin for "Tractatus logico-academicus," requires special mention. There is no doubt that the application in 2013, to be included on the FSP Roster, met with a howl or two from the review committee, insofar as it was written from the depths of the PhD project and privileged the research methodology of "wandering aimlessly," wryly attributed in the submission to the influence of Chris Marker. Yet admission to the roster was approved and then parked for two years, until in early 2015 the opportunity for utilizing research and publication methodologies associated with the PhD study led to a rapidly developed and rapidly approved submission to the US Embassy in Ljubljana and the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, all via the Council for International Exchange of Scholars. It is the CIES, in fact, that was instrumental. And it was one or two anonymous guides in that process that made it happen. It has wisely been said that one can never know where the old liberals are hiding, though it is worth seeking them out through both real and parodic applications "into the blue," from time to time.

For informal peer-to-peer (P2P) review versus the abominations

of formal and blind, academic-style peer review, credit goes to the various interlocutors who have read and commented upon draft versions of the essays presented here, and who have provided insights, often under the veil of confidentiality, into the various topics under discussion. Foremost, “Marker’s Archive” has benefited from conversations and correspondence over the years on the disposition of Marker’s works and the subsequent assimilation of his posthumous archive, facilitated by State fiat, to the Cinémathèque Française in 2013.

Suffice to say that innumerable souls have contributed to this second volume of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law*. As it is all but impossible to name them all, it would be best not to try. You know who you are. All works are produced confraternally, whether acknowledged as so or not. In this regard, see the comments on “no-ledger” in the essay, “No-media.”

Of prime significance, then, is the *freedom of inquiry* permitted by supporting institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, and Australia, and the *moral support* of numerous individuals both from *within* academia and from *without*. The type of free-ranging inquiry presented here in essayistic form is notably unfashionable today inside the university and academy, as scientific research takes precedence over humanistic research, and as the essay form is generally abandoned for closely wrought works of apparent high erudition erring on the side of comprehensive socio-political surveys and/or epistemologically profound broadsides. As Brian Dillon recently wrote in *The Times Literary Supplement*: “The essay thinks, and while it thinks it seethes, it bristles, it adventures. Essays fly to extremes or stick close to home, attending the everyday.”¹ He adds:

The essay is provisional, perhaps unfinished, a textual ‘sally’ of sorts, as Samuel Johnson put it. All of which is true, but also something of a cliché. I prefer to think of the Swiss critic Jean Starobinski’s deeper archaeology of the word. *Essai*, he notes, comes from the Latin base *exagium*, meaning a scale. *Exagium* is related to *examen*, a needle—and in turn a swarm of bees or a flock of birds. The essay is teeming and multiple, it corrals all the above diversity and at the same time maintains a form, a logic, a sense of being bound and possessing a point. It is a

¹ Brian Dillon, “What Does the Essay Do?” *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/essay-to-day-brian-dillon/>.

venerable form orientated to the present, to the moment and the manner of its making as much as to the world around it.²

There is a certain beauty in the waxing and waning of fortunes that has produced both books in this series. When studying the list of texts included here in Book Two, it is not without a certain wistfulness that the times and places of inception come to mind—the travels and the battles. In many cases the origin of the text is a chance encounter with a single book or a struggle to assimilate a form of media that also resembles a contagion. Jameson's *The Hegel Variations* is of this order in the case of the essay "Neo-Hegelian Spirit," first encountered in a bookstore in Ljubljana, while forays into the Venice Biennale and other real and virtual venues dedicated to artistic spectacle are more or less responsible for the sustained critique of mediatic performance in "No-media."

Lastly, compliments are due to punctum for surviving thus far the onslaught of the new and clearly not-improved version of Open Access; that is, the neo-liberalized version now taking root inside of academia under the auspices of "safeguarding" publicly funded research and offering it up as sacrificial victim to the Knowledge Commons. The Romantic quest for a type of scholarship that evades capture by Capital, as represented by this book, and as respectful of the right of the author to determine the manner in which works are assimilated, is not dissimilar to the Romantic quest of *authentic* open-access (open-source) publishing. Both are effectively lost causes in search of a future; or, both are cases of a future memory in search of a present. Thus Beckett's "Fail, fail again, fail better," plus its untimely update, "Become a ghostly memory, if needs be" (a generative catasterism)—or, appear, disappear, re-appear.

November 2, 2017

² Dillon, "What Does the Essay Do?"



Book Two of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law* utilizes a type of dream language that is at odds with the conventions of so-called scientific scholarship and often shades toward a magical-realist prose that is, arguably, required to reach the speculative plateau of the sought-after subject—the anti-capitalist sublime. Its more conventional resources of survey and citation therefore suffer a kind of distortion in service to that dream image which comes to expression here as the figure of the life-work—and the Shakespearean “disappearance” of the singular work, if not the author of that work, in the abstract registers of the life-work. The distended contentions and conventions are in some ways representative of a view of scholarship as hopelessly mired in circularity otherwise defined by post-structuralist convention as contextualized discursive praxis. Not so much the quest for a new language of criticism, these subversions of conventions intend to meet, exceed, and subvert such conventions by favoring reverie over the merely discursive.

Many of the passages included here resemble, but in literary-critical mode, Francisco Goya’s “Los Caprichos” (published 1799), or at the least his “Los Desastres de la Guerra” (“Disasters of War”) series of etchings and aquatints (executed 1810–1820). Perhaps it is Carlos Saura’s *Goya en Burdeos* (*Goya in Bordeaux*, 1999) that is the best analogue via parallel disciplines insofar as that film takes liberties with Goya’s record to make other points toward *revolutionary liberality*, which in Saura’s film is embodied in the linguistic turns he gives to the famous statement, “The sleep of reason produces monsters,” from “Los Caprichos” (number 43 of 80), at one point Goya stating in conversation with himself that “imagination without reason produces monsters,” while stating at another point (to paraphrase, from the malleability of memory), “Without imagination we are inhuman.” The great moment then comes when Goya is standing in front of Velázquez’s *Las*

Meninas (1656) and he finally sees in this painting what he has been seeking his entire life through his own painting—a work of art that departs this world but opens onto another world. Goya's three masters (as stated by Saura)—Velázquez, Rembrandt, and Nature—are thus invoked in a quest that is not named explicitly, the perfect evocation of what in a literary-critical mode might be called, simply, the Absolute of Art, yet configured as the inspired exit from Hell (the hellishness of Spanish tyranny or the hellishness of Napoleonic Spain).

Thus the risks taken in a form of scholarship that also distends or reads transversally the historical record for other, a-historical purposes might easily lead to accusations of subjectivism in scholarship, the great bias against interpretation that rules conventional "objective" discourse analysis; for example, to cite a film versus the historical archive of citations atop citations, and moments (lived experience) converted to hard and fast facts. Yet it is axiomatic that every form of objective analysis is underwritten by subjective states that operate as a threshold for the insights of so-called objective scholarship that distinguish scholarly inquiry from mere fantasy, and which distinguish objective or rational discourse from "poiesis." In such cases, Saturn becomes the inner mentor. What Book Two of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law* seeks is the a-historical something else that might nonetheless be called upon or named historically—a something else herein intuited and interpreted as a trans-historical anti-capitalist sublime operating across works and, critically, in works that cross life-works.

As with the exquisite and specular closure or epilogue of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, wherein all books are finally thrown away (at least in Peter Greenaway's 1991 fantasia, *Prospero's Books*), if offense is given by the liberties taken, it was never the intent.

Knowledge, Spirit, Law, as project (begun in 2014), has developed in tandem with the emergence of the so-called Red Left in Europe and then—marginally—elsewhere. What is inferred in the political is also present in the cultural. They map each other, forward and backward, and across discrete disciplines. The political clearly inhabits the cultural, while it may be said today that the cultural is only of interest to the political if it might be monetized. Therefore, the two books of *Knowledge, Spirit, Law* are a de facto cultural history of the anti-capitalist moment of the first quarter of the twenty-first century.

Lastly (logically or *illogically*, and depending upon the reader's point of view), if open-access academic scholarship today is conditioned and crippled by the twin pillars of corrupted forms of peer review and circular bibliographic citation, then both the overt and subtle imposed conventions of each bankrupt methodology for justifying works perform a process of authorization that leads to diminishing returns for speculative inquiry itself. Open Access, as allied with platform cultures, tends to serve two masters: one being academia, and its agenda of securing reputations for careerists, and the other being the original purpose of Open Access, as it dovetails with Open Source and the well-intentioned circumvention of most conventional definitions of ownership and privilege. If Open Access is, instead, the "open book" (herein privileged as an actually existing physical book to be found in an actually existing physical library, a now-archaic situation), and the old-school scholar consults that open book in concert with his/her conscience and/or dreams, the prospects for speculative and conceptual praxis in the Arts and Humanities broaden significantly, perhaps with the unexpected outcome of critical and radical scholarship returning—finally—to its origins in immemorial conventions that, arguably, upturn all normative conventions. This would be a return that is premised upon the elective contortions noted above. Such is one reading of Michelet, Burckhardt, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Bachelard, Foucault, Derrida, Agamben et al., as meta-historians—and such is one reading of the non-aligned *free* scholar of meta-criticism to come, the addressee for *Knowledge, Spirit, Law*.

February 22, 2016

LIFE-WORKS



The “gigantomachy” around being is also, first and foremost, a conflict between being and acting, ontology and economy, between a being that is in itself unable to act and an action without being: what is at stake between these two is the idea of freedom.¹

Giorgio Agamben

I. GIGANTOMACHIES AND WORLD-SOUL

There are two semi- or *now*-archaic examples of life-works that introduce the immeasurable themes of the life-work in terms of author and reception, or in terms of the over-arching themes of such works and the eclipse of the singular work or voice in the non-regressive gigantomachy of a campaign that overwrites mere historical and mere biographical agency. Such is the life-work of Plato, which actually presents the life-work of Socrates (who famously never wrote anything down), and such is the life-work of the New Testament, which constitutes—in its very nature as synoptic work, with the actual author of each book more or less erased (effectively rendered unknowable)—the a-historical, eschatological dimensions of the Christian Dispensation. Both introduce what might only be termed a world-historical something else, grounded in teleology, which is ultimately assimilated to cultural patrimony belatedly—albeit, through the collective life-force of the life-work as archival record.

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, with Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 58–59. First published as Giorgio Agamben, *Il Regno e la Gloria: Per una genealogia teologica dell'economia e del governo (Homo Sacer II, 2)* (Vincenza: Neri Pozza, 2007).

All of the attendant issues of the archive are present in the synoptic category of literary-critical expression, with both the life-work of Plato (Socrates) and the New Testament characteristic of the introduction of an at-first elective gigantomachy in service to overturning a previous regime of thought considered emasculated by then-present historical and a-historical conditions—the outmoded effectively superseded (law overwritten by another law). In both forms of the life-work, teleology and eschatology collide. If Plato (Socrates) overturned the Homeric, truly archaic world of myth and heroic elegy (annals of a semi-divine gigantomachy subservient to ideology), and the New Testament overturned the entire apparatus of the pagan world of ritual obeisance to irrationality, the conflation of Platonism and Christianity through neo-platonist Christianity becomes explicable as a compromise between two emergent worlds—Western rationality and Christian exceptionalism. This conflation might also explain the subsequent conflation of Christianity and State—from Roman times forward. The subsequent gigantomachy of Reason and Faith will subsequently steer Western civilization for nearly two thousand years, with the specter of Big History piloting all, as “Heracleitean thunderbolt.” Yet with the cyclical irruption of what is actually buried with each conflated state, Reason and Faith horribly compromised in the company of one another, and the suppressed intellectual or conceptual fire power of each driven further inward versus outward (privileging a highly reflective subjective state versus an externally composed ideological state nominally embodied in law), these historically determined “rolling gigantomachies” may then be said to represent battles for the supremacy of world-historical reflection.²

It is the imaginative reach of faith that will nonetheless condition Reason, across these rolling gigantomachies, one following another, while it is the speculative inquisition of logic and rationality (reaching its zenith with the Enlightenment) that will limit faith—as represented in satiric terms by Voltaire (first philosopher as father figure, after Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for the French Revolution).³ This discordant concord subsequently may be found in the

² Dreams within; nightmares without. Goya’s evocation of gigantomachy, as expressed across the serial works “Los Caprichos” and “Los Desastres de la Guerra,” describes the dual perspectives of ontology and economy—one perspective world-negating and productive of the work of art, the other world-affirming and productive of monstrosities. See Carlos Saura’s 1999 film, *Goya en Burdeos* (*Goya in Bordeaux*).

³ Does Voltaire’s *Candide, ou l’optimisme* (1759) mock Rousseau’s *Émile*,

trans-historical life-work that G.W.F. Hegel will attempt to describe through his expansive, though doomed life-work, foremost in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807)—arguably, the last major Western philosophical and onto-theological work that tackles the problems of the concept of a Graeco-Roman World-Soul through converting History to the biography of God. With the subsequent, comprehensive psycho-discursive projects of, for example, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Martin Heidegger, the game notably shifts. The subjective conditions of Being are—in concert with the supposed anti-historical and utopian bias of the modernist project—further constrained, while they are also further elaborated in their topological relations with externality proper and the spatial bias of Modernism. This proceeds through the conversion of subjectivity to post-Darwinian, deterministic processes of subjectivization—a progressive de-centering of the subject, and diametrically opposed to Renaissance humanist and Cartesian privileging of the self-conscious subject (the cogito or the ego). The prior relation of such works to world-historical agency, while embedded in the modernist event as new positivist inquest, is notably eclipsed. It might be said, then, that the radical non-utilitarian agency of the life-work goes underground—operating henceforth through the Arts and Letters, a peculiar return to archaic agency insofar as the Imaginary of the Arts and Letters contains the suppressed fuse where rationality and imagination intersect and condition one another (where a semi-divine “irrationality”—or surrationality—still holds sway, captive within the temporally disposed elements of the work of art).

This grand schema, however reductivist, illustrates aspects of the life-work that are present in homeopathic dilution in all such works, a problematic of the discursive work of art (literary or otherwise) that justifies the archaeological expeditions practiced in meta-critical and meta-historical projects. Notably, it is an archaic voice that is often embedded in radical life-works, as it comes to expression in the subjective agency of the life-work—or, in both the subjective voice of the work and in the historical disposition of the work. No longer reducible to historical agency alone, the archaic concept of World-Soul as archaic voice returns in the in-

ou de l'éducation (1762), *avant la lettre*? For the dance between Voltaire and Rousseau, at this precise time, see Victor Gourevitch, “Rousseau on Providence,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers, Vol. 2: Human Nature and History*, ed. John T. Scott (London: Routledge, 2006), 377n3 [354–96].

tensely internalizing dynamic field of the discursive work of art or in the speculative work of meta-criticism that takes rational inquiry to the boundaries of both language and figural or mnemonic representation.

The massive diffusion of the Christian Dispensation across the late Graeco-Roman world, while privileging the imaginative resources of the individual subject per se, nonetheless came to its fullest expression in law and canon law—forms of collective, socio-political agency that, in turn, suppress the free agency of subjects as expressed in socio-cultural practice. While privileging the articles of Christian faith as transmitted through patristics, law became the gigantomachy of record and the singular fate of subjects was subsequently re-submerged or re-repressed through law. This, at the very least, is the reading rendered by Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek in their combined works on Saint Paul.⁴ Yet it is entirely possible to make one further reduction

⁴ These forays occurred at the tail end, or at *tale's end*, of the so-called theological turn in Continental Phenomenology (albeit, Post-Phenomenology), and as corrective to the nihilist remainder present in forms of late-modern post-Marxism. See Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, and Jean-Luc Marion, *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000). See also, Gavin Keeney, "Thought Itself," in Keeney, *"Else-where": Essays in Art, Architecture, and Cultural Production 2002–2011* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 55–63, for a discussion of Badiou and Žižek's "late-1990s synchronized swim" into theologically inflected political economy: "Žižek and Badiou, heirs to Marxist and Maoist strains of cultural criticism, and ardent naysayers of anything resembling a search for essences, or at best proponents of the Lacanian mischief that represents all representations as phantasmatic forms of either delusion or neurosis, nonetheless swam straight into the phenomenological soup by way of twin excursions in pursuit of, in the case of Žižek, the 'perverse core of Christianity' and, in Badiou's case, the incorporeal corpse of Saint Paul. What they were after, in the same manner as Žižek's attempt to resuscitate the embalmed corpse of Vladimir Lenin, was intellectual (architectonic) firepower. This took the form of expropriating (ripping from one context so as to insert into another context) certain philosophical and nominally theological concepts, most especially the concept of the universal. Both were looking for the most radical gestures within perhaps spent systems, or revolutionary moments par excellence, to extract and re-deploy against present-day abject nihilism (and abject relativism). Both were also responding to the challenge from the late phenomenologists, arrayed in Paris, hot in pursuit of what is clearly a new, non-abstract and non-metaphysical 'theology without God,' or a new approach to the Sublime (a resurrected sublime pulled from ob-

in this schema that suggests the gigantomachy of Western rationality in combination with the Christian Dispensation became the rule, across twenty centuries, while quietly supporting the radical premises of the origins of that rule.

From Aristotle forward, the situational bias of intellection itself increasingly favors speculative inquiry as re-naturalized in worlds (or vitally embedded in worlds)—the perfect meta-critical analogue for the life-work, and the perfect justification for radical scholarship as work of art, or art work as form of radical scholarship.⁵ Indeed, the heresies that accompanied and opposed the fusion of Roman law and Christian faith across centuries, post-Nicene Creed, are to be found today in the Arts and Letters. Such is the theory of homeopathic dilution for concepts that might de-stabilize the work of art or scholarship in relation to the formal operations either authorized or merely tolerated. Radical speculative inquiry, when under attack by Law and/or Faith, goes underground—“underground” being the indeterminate resources

scurity in the 1980s through a high-stakes quest for apparent metaphysical debris leftover from Husserl’s and Martin Heidegger’s demolition projects), but also (in effect) a new set of alchemical experiments performed on the bones of Blaise Pascal (in the form of a third phenomenological reduction aimed at, *in theory*, the ghostly figure of the two infinities). If this summary is, in itself, dizzying (breathless), it is due to the spectrality of signifying agency given to the post-structuralist and post-Marxist assault on ‘Everest,’ with the attendant swerve into psychoanalytical theory sparing certain ‘sacred’ gestural aspects of subjectivization from the quest for ‘impersonal’ agency” (Keeney, “Thought Itself,” 59). The three books in question, in chronological order, are: Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), first published as *Saint Paul: La fondation de l’universalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), first published as *Il tempo che resta* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000); and Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003). Agamben’s *The Time that Remains* is technically not part of his Homo Sacer project, even if, in many ways, it is an “outtake” of that project. This book was perhaps positioned outside of the Homo Sacer project, which generally operates in the negative sense of critique as demolition project, due to its chief merit being the delineation of positive, theologically inflected prospects hidden within “poiesis” proper—albeit, *messianic* prospects.

⁵ This statement, *contra* vitalism, nonetheless invokes the *impression of vitalism* as a trace for a form of sublimity that cannot be re-naturalized, as it is effectively “super-natural.”

of the Arts and Letters, plus the literary-critical practices that support reception, diffusion, and assimilation. The radical life-work, in this scenario, becomes the archive of the *impress* of the archaic World-Soul re-naturalized toward the production of new instances for its expression. Intellection proper, then, becomes the address for the life-work as evocation of the suppressed states that are topologically described—here and there—as “inner states” for works. The conveyance or conferral of subjective states to singular works, while not an abstraction as such, nevertheless brings back into play abstract forces that are present in systems of representation indicative of an irrepressible *spirit* that opposes mere law. To describe this spirit as “World-Soul” is to re-establish its specular credentials against the gigantomachy of secular law (law as the conflation of rationality and faith). To apply these credentials to the production of life-works that are also timely exemplifications of an anti-capitalist sublime—which is to be situated on the a-temporal side of the socio-cultural and socio-economic schism created by neo-liberal capitalist regimes of illiberality combined with law—is to safeguard the radical premises of the “onto-theo-logical” (or “onto-theo-political”) formulations that are falsely deployed to permit or justify recurrent gigantomachies of repression and statism.

II. THE VOICE

The great, universal blow against rationalism and dialectics, against the cult of knowledge and abstractions, is: the incarnation.⁶

Hugo Ball

Ironically, or not, it is the banishing of the literary-critical voice in conventional academic scholarship today, in the name of “new objectivity,” that also destroys the concept of the singular work as part of a possible life-work. What else might hold together a string of works—across academic journals, across conference pro-

⁶ Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimis (New York: Viking, 1974), 191–92; entry dated July 31, 1920. First published as *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1927). Or: “To disclose a site where the freedom of our will is rooted in a listening to a ‘word’ of which one is neither source nor master”: Richard Kearney, *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 75.

ceedings, and across the odd monograph or edited book? (Outside of academia, what is it that holds together a string of works across multiple films or multiple novels?) This is not to say that the pseudo-empirical biases given to present-day scholarship in the Arts and Humanities automatically preclude life-works from being developed from within the regimes of academic research; yet, it is to say that the inadmissibility of subjective agency in scholarship closes down an order of intellectual inquiry that might serve to restore only apparently outmoded forms of expression that might also help to counter the worst ravages of the neo-liberalization of academia and the suppression of dissent. Neither subjective agency in scholarship nor sustained dissent, however, are sufficient to counter what appears to be the main event in the neo-liberalization of academia—the calculated and nearly unstoppable assimilation of works to the *commercium* of authorized academic discourse, a process that proceeds by the capture of copyright and the denudation of moral rights.

Since Pico della Mirandola's railing against the suppression of the Medieval voice in Renaissance letters, the mere deployment of names and the mere description, analysis, or depiction of this-worldly states has come to justify humanist inquiry as *pro*-scientific inquiry.⁷ The long eclipse of the author's voice in philology is perhaps one reason why Friedrich Nietzsche restored subjective expression to works of high-speculative inquiry, even if his life-work was subsequently denounced as "non-philosophical" in his own time by his numerous detractors. The life-work is qualified by "the voice" that crosses the innumerable works that comprise the compendium that is, so to speak, left behind. It is possible, given such a scenario for such works, that this voice is also—quite often—not the author's voice *per se*. Pico's defense

⁷ "We shall live for ever, not in the schools of word-catchers, but in the circle of the wise, where they talk not of the mother of Andromache or of the sons of Niobe, but of the deeper causes of things human and divine": Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, cited in Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (London: Phaidon, 1944), 120. First published as *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel: Johann Schweighauser, 1860). See Gavin Keeney, "The Origin of the Arts," in Keeney, "Else-where," 227–48. "Pico is speaking for scholastic writers of the Middle Ages against one-sided worship of antiquity, the hallmark of the Renaissance poet-scholars Burckhardt will later in his survey 'measure' against their very dissolution—the collapse of Renaissance humanism through its own inherent success and excess" (Keeney, "The Origin of the Arts," 227).

of the Medieval voice buried in Renaissance letters is such a case. This nominally disembodied voice is indicative of the disembodied hand of the Renaissance emblem that connotes works that write themselves—a gnomic gesture that also signals the presence of the annals of hermeticism in Renaissance Arts and Letters, a de-stabilizing remnant (however misappropriated) that undermined humanism from within—arguably, fomenting the emergence of Mannerism. For the voice of the emblem and the associated emblematic gestures of neo-platonic and Hebraic hermeticism provided the Renaissance humanists with a speculative range of figures of speech and thought that also (per Aby Warburg’s judgment) offered recourse to magico-religious forces within socio-cultural praxis that were at once disquieting and provocatively “inhuman.”⁸

The schematics of the life-work, therefore, include several patterns not necessarily conducive to elaboration via conventional case study, another bias of present-day academic scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences. These include the presence of a voice across works, the assimilation (accidental or calculated) across media, and the convergence of singular works in the archive of the life-work (whether formalized as physical archive or otherwise). The contribution of criticism and meta-criticism to the production of the archival record as de facto life-work is only of primary effectiveness retrospectively—for, in concurrence with the development of the work, criticism is most often merely complicit in conditioning the work’s reception. The erasure of the biography of the author and of authorized readings, curiously, takes time; while the singular works that assemble themselves as incipient life-work also suffer a similar fate. The conceptual fold of life-work precludes the singular, other than as life-work. Life-works are anti-deterministic in the extreme and transcend sociological reduction. The voice that is the foremost emblematic presence in the work across works is neither a biographically determined voice nor a super-imposed, disembodied voice (the figure of the Muse often misunderstood to represent an external voice speaking through the author or artist). The voice of the life-work in all cases—discounting what is simply unique in that voice or in the life-work as subject matter—is speculative inquiry re-grounded in the subjectivity of

⁸ Regarding Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*, see Gavin Keeney, “The Semi-divine Economy of Art,” in Gavin Keeney, *Not-I/Thou: The Other Subject of Art and Architecture* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 95–92.

the work that is facilitated through the subjectivity of the author. Subjective agency is, therefore, notably *doubled*. This doubling is the very foundation for structuralist-inspired inquiries into works, after the fact, and it is the very basis for the intellectual biography of authors, insofar as the latter reveals the multiple exigencies that produce the voice that speaks across works.

Through these schematics of the life-work, then, it is possible to suggest an order of works that “rise” to a level in socio-cultural discourse that eclipses the socio-cultural, leaving the socio-economic “in the dust.” Such works are those denoted “immortal” in the annals of authorized socio-cultural patrimony (or, in what has been called the canon). Setting aside all arguments for or against immortality for works, what might be said about the voice that speaks from these works, such that it justifies the inordinate prestige for such works?

* * *

The following five essays, plus the appendices, attempt to answer this last question, as above, regarding the voice that speaks through life-works that re-suggest the archaic figure of World-Soul—yet this is an always-provisional answer, offered primarily through a sustained critique of Cognitive Capitalism and the effects it has on speculative inquiry in the Arts and Humanities. The main answer is to be discerned obliquely in the operations against speculative inquiry in the intentional conquest of the Arts and Humanities by Capital. This campaign of serial conquest extending over half a century and facilitated by technocratic regimes of mass digitalization reveals the true intentions of the gigantomachy of Capital as world religion. The anti-capitalist sublime as identified here is, therefore, offered as the antithesis to the elevation of Mammon to world hegemon; but, as antithesis, it is also indicative of the endangered and telltale semaphore that might best render such sublimity visible to the internal eye of speculative reason—the book. Yet Reason writ large long ago abandoned the Humanities in its subservience to Capital. Therefore, the expressions of this sublime excess in socio-cultural affairs requires a secret rendezvous with rationality, once again, to re-secure the gates of speculative intellect in service to no singular this-worldly master—most especially since the shadow of the gigantomachy of Saturnian capitalism as world religion now falls across the threshold of subjectivity itself.

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Kandinsky and Nolde



While analytical treatment of the individual determinations of the work of art and of its reception remains, so to speak, in front of the creative and receptive unity of experience, another direction of reflection, which one may call philosophical, begins behind it. The latter presupposes the totality of the work of art—and seeks to locate the work of art within the full range of the movements of the soul, within the height of conceptuality, within the depth of world-historical antitheses.¹

Georg Simmel

I. KANDINSKY, 1902–1912

In 1913 it is said that the provinces of Art and Nature split, becoming “completely independent realms.”² This is the time of the Blue Rider (*Blaue Reiter*) initiative, which was effectively comprised of two souls, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. The Blue Rider moment was over almost as soon as it started, lasting roughly from 1911 to 1914. It sponsored two exhibitions in 1911–1912 plus an almanac, *Der Blaue Reiter* (1912).³ Astonishingly, in 1911

¹ Georg Simmel, “Simmel’s Preface to the First Edition of 1916,” in Georg Simmel, *Rembrandt: An Essay in the Philosophy of Art*, eds. and trans. Alan Scott and Helmut Staubmann, with K. Peter Etkorn (London: Routledge, 2005), 2. First published as *Rembrandt: Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1916).

² Helmut Friedel and Annegret Hoberg, eds., *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk* (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau; Cologne: Wienand Verlag, 2008), 208; with reference to Wassily Kandinsky, *Rückblicke* (Berlin: Verlag Der Sturm, 1913). Exhibition catalogue, Lenbachhaus, Munich, October 25, 2008–February 22, 2009; Kunstmuseum, Bonn, April 2–July 12, 2009.

³ See Volker Adolphs, “Wassily Kandinsky and the Prints of the Blaue Reiter,” 33–51, in Friedel and Hoberg, *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk*,

alone Kandinsky produced 59 prints (whereas up until 1908 he had created 76 woodcuts).⁴ Most brilliantly, from 1910 to 1911 he produced a series of austere black-and-white woodcuts. The polychromatic touches of the famous print *Archer* (1908–1909) have vanished.⁵ There are 200 prints listed in the Kandinsky catalogue raisonné edited by Hans K. Roethel. The first prints date to 1902–1904, and yet the prints in the series from 1910–1911 remain “out of this world.”⁶ These experiments (studies, if you wish, for more saleable paintings) in reduction, austerity, and precision are signature moments en route to what Kandinsky would call “inner soundings” of the world—the term he used to describe what would later take form in his “Small Worlds” series (c.1922).⁷ This ongoing presentiment crossed his writings from beginning to end, in one form or another, and, of course, comes to its most elegant expression in *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: Insbesondere in der*

33–51.

⁴ Friedel and Hoberg, *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk*, 37.

⁵ This polychromatic print was, nonetheless, included in the 1912 almanac, *Der Blaue Reiter*, a deluxe or luxury edition issued primarily for collectors. See “List of Works,” in *Der Blaue Reiter*, 272. The woodcut *Archer* was dated by Kandinsky 1908, “meaning it was created prior to the painting *Picture with Archer*,” dated 1909 and now at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Other Kandinsky scholars disagree (for example, Hans Konrad Roethel and Vivian Endicott Barnett), with the woodcut coming after the painting: see Friedel and Hoberg, *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk*, 50n26. See also, Hans Konrad Roethel, ed., *Kandinsky: Das graphische Werk* (Cologne: M. DuMont Schaubert, 1970), 158, and Vivian Endicott Barnett, *Das bunte Leben: Wassily Kandinsky im Lenbachhaus*, ed. Helmut Friedel (Cologne: DuMont, 1995), 616. The latter text is an “inventory catalogue of the works of Kandinsky” with “information about studies ... made for woodcuts”: Adolphs, “Wassily Kandinsky and the Prints of the *Blaue Reiter*,” 50n23. Barnett’s catalogue entry dates the *Archer* print 1910. While all of this seems slightly ridiculous, it also underscores the nature of the “studies” undertaken in advance of, or co-terminous with, other works. It is the relationship that counts, or the dynamic tension between rudimentary study and finished or “authorized” work. Yet often the studies tell more than the renowned, acknowledged, finished product.

⁶ These include: *Woodcut for the Salon Isdebsky* (1910); *Vignette Next to Introduction* (1911); *Rider Motif in Oval Form* (1911); *Reclining Couple* (1911); *Vignette Next to the Pyramid* (1911); *Vignette Next to Art and Artist* (1911). See figs. 71.1, 72.1, 73.1, 74.1, 75.1, 76.1, in Friedel and Hoberg, *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk*, 164–68.

⁷ See Christoph Schreier, “The Creation of a Work is the Creation of a World: Wassily Kandinsky and his *Small Worlds* Portfolio,” in Friedel and Hoberg, *Kandinsky: Das druckgrafische Werk*, 53–65.

Malerie (1911–1912).⁸

It is the art-historical bias that reduces Expressionism to a station en route to modernist abstraction that causes the greater part of confusion regarding these austere prints, most especially the very early prints (c.1902). If the figurative content is vaporizing, that does not justify the demotion to studies in preparation for what was to come—both in Kandinsky's work and in Russian art generally. More to the point is the estimation that Kandinsky was attempting to produce an "impoverishment" of the image that suggested the formal moments in the artistic image that would later take precedence. This is, without a doubt, not reducible to simple abstraction, as J.M.W. Turner's atmospheric paintings were not for Turner efforts at early abstraction but studies of light and shadow—of muted luminosity. What is being studied in such cases is what Michel Henry has described as a disruptive phenomenology of painting (and of the painterly image, if the prints and drawings were for artists of this period merely studies for paintings).⁹

Curiously, then, the first casualty was color, only to return as the

⁸ Elegant for its time; elegiac (in retrospect) for present-day, post-, or late-modernist times, which no longer privilege the utopian spirit of Modernism. Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst: Insbesondere in der Malerie* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1912). First published in English, in 1914, as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, by Constable and Company Limited, London, and re-published as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, by Dover, in 1977, translated and with an introduction by M.T.H. Sadler. See also, Wassily Kandinsky, *Gesammelte Schriften 1889–1916: Farbensprache, Kompositionslehre und andere unveröffentlichte Texte*, eds. Helmut Friedel et al. (Munich: Prestel, 2007). Christoph Schreier cites Kandinsky's statement: "Form is ... the necessary means, the means by which the revelation of today sounds forth, manifests itself": Schreier, "The Creation of a Work is the Creation of a World," 54; with reference to Kandinsky, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 454. Thus, by 1916, and well before the "Small Worlds" series (but shadowing publication of *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, 1912–1914), the experiments in ultra-graphic reduction have produced an edifying set of principles that will play out in the rest of Kandinsky's work, the earlier lyricism mostly vanishing for a somewhat eerie and pre-natural geometricism, all denoting the split between Art and Nature. Kandinsky's writings may also be found, in English, in Wassily Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, eds. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo, 1994). First published in two volumes (924 pages) by Faber in London, and by G.K. Hall in Boston (1982). Volume 1 covers the years 1901 to 1921; Volume 2 covers the years 1922 to 1943.

⁹ Michel Henry, *Seeing the Invisible: On Kandinsky*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2009). First published as *Voir l'invisible: Sur Kandinsky* (Paris: Éditions Bourin, 1988).

signature event in many of Kandinsky's abstract works—which he would theorize tonally and which would lead to fruitful cross-pollination with Schoenberg.¹⁰ Fauvism gives way to Expressionist reduction, which then gives way to geometric abstraction and the return of color as musical form or intonation. The reduction is, indeed, temporal—but only given the historical view of art as moving toward apotheosis in its relationship to figuration and mimesis. The world provides the raw materials and the inner world of the art work discloses artistic vision as “in excess of” this world. The Romantic remainder in this formulation is obvious.¹¹ As a result, Blaue Reiter was a crescendo, a pre-WWI dash toward a frontier that was, in fact, vanishing—an unstable détente with the world as such or the world as given.¹²

¹⁰ Schoenberg, *Kandinsky, and the Blue Rider*, eds. Esther Da Costa Meyer and Fred Wasserman (New York: Jewish Museum; London: Scala Publishers, 2003). With audio CD. Catalogue of an exhibition at The Jewish Museum, New York, October 24, 2003–February 12, 2004. For chronologies of Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky, see 165–75.

¹¹ See Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art in the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), especially “What is Philosophical Aesthetics?” and “The Birth of the Speculative Theory of Art.” With the Romantic rebellion, art became a means of “ontological revelation,” reaching a ground above metaphysics (beyond mere “philosophical discursivity”): Schaeffer, 70. See also, Frederic J. Schwartz, *Blind Spots: Critical Theory and the History of Art in Twentieth-century Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), and Hans Belting, *The Germans and Their Art History: A Troublesome Relationship*, trans. Scott Kleager (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). Regarding the re-naturalization of “ontological revelation,” see the section “The Ineluctable Élan of Immodernity,” in Gavin Keeney, “La Présence: The Stigmata of the Irreal,” in Keeney, “Else-where,” 261–84.

¹² Wassily Kandinsky, *Kandinsky: 1901–1913* (Berlin: Verlag Der Sturm, 1913). “Rückblicke”; “Komposition 4”; “Komposition 6”; “Bild mit weissem Rand.” Autobiographical. 41 pages, 67 leaves of plates: illustrations; 24 x 27 cm. Regarding Verlag Der Sturm: “Publishing imprint founded in 1910 by musician, composer, writer, and editor Herwarth Walden (pseudonym for Georg Levin) to publish the periodical *Der Sturm*, an inexpensive, mass-produced newspaper promoting avant-garde art, literature, music, and cultural critique. Originally issued weekly, later less frequently. Last issue (vol. 21) published 1932. First issues included reproductions of drawings by Oskar Kokoschka and Brücke artists Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Emil Nolde, and Max Pechstein, among others; from July 1911 on featured original prints (woodcuts mostly) in some numbers, first by Brücke artists, and later by other individuals and Blaue Reiter artists. In 1912 Walden opened a gallery of the same name to exhibit artists associated with the periodical; began to issue prints published in the periodical

One could argue, along with the Tupitsyns perhaps, that what is at play in such works is “conceptualism” versus rote formalism, and that the austerity of the pre-WWI prints was—historically—an exceptional experiment at reaching an elemental stratum in painterly media without foreknowledge of what was to come.¹³ For the relationship of Kandinsky’s prints to the paintings in this period is undeniable. What is deniable is that they are summaries of some sort of “total work of art” (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) attempting to make itself known to the artist—such being part of the myth of Kandinsky (in part a self-generated myth), and such being the art-historical maneuver that de-values singular works that may have utterly independent value across works in terms of what they represent at the time, versus what they say retrospectively.¹⁴

in separate hand-printed and signed editions, though more affordable reproductions were also often for sale. Gallery hosted more than 170 exhibitions over its 17-year existence, including the *Erster deutscher Herbstsalon* (First German autumn salon), a huge international survey of contemporary art emphasizing Futurists, Cubists, and artists of the Blaue Reiter in 1913. Fostered cosmopolitan, international network of artists, writers, and intellectuals, simultaneously introducing the major European avant-garde trends to Berlin and serving as a central force in defining and disseminating German Expressionist art and literature. Embracing Communism in the post-war period, Walden moved to the Soviet Union in 1932, where he died in 1941, a victim of Stalinism.” Starr Figura et al., “German Expressionism: Works from the Collection,” *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/artist/artist_id-14374_role-3.html, with reference to Verlag Der Sturm, Berlin. Website of the exhibition, “German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse,” curated by Starr Figura, March 27–July 11, 2011.

¹³ See remarks by Margarita Tupitsyn on Kasimir Malevich’s Black Square in the review of the Venice Art Biennale in Appendix B of the present volume. The Tupitsyns are the foremost authorities in the West on Russian conceptual art in the 1980s.

¹⁴ Richard Sheppard, “Kandinsky’s Oeuvre 1900–14: The Avant-garde as Rear-guard,” *Word & Image* 6, no. 1 (January–March 1990): 41–67. Abstract: “Kandinsky was concerned with several media. Not only did he produce theoretical pieces, oil-paintings, paintings behind glass, coloured and black-and-white woodcuts, four abstract dramas and c.50 poems, he was also deeply interested in crafts, architecture, dance, musical composition, opera and stage design. Despite this, several major studies have either focused on one medium to the neglect of the others, or have compartmentalized Kandinsky’s interests. Other studies have, however, tried either to interrelate Kandinsky’s work in two media; or to crossrelate his work and interests against his more global concern with the ‘total work of art’ (*Gesamtkunstwerk*); or to locate his *œuvre* in a cultural context in which an *avant-garde* was grappling, across a range of media, with a set of pro-

For scholars, Kandinsky in Munich seems the critical passage in this regard, though his earliest experiments with prints occurred in Russia and most likely had as much to do with the last aspects of Symbolism and the Silver Age as anything diverting his attention to the West—or that art-historical reduction of modernist works as a reflection of the rootless or cosmopolitan instincts of the time.¹⁵ Works are always rooted in something—in one *terroir* or another, whether abstract or figurative. Every aspect is drawn from lived experience, and most lived experience is neither totally hermetic nor utterly peripatetic. Yet the conceptual art and literature of this period was excessively inner-driven, even as it crossed over into revolutionary agitation. The profound moralism of Soloviev and Tolstoy produced an artistic wave that sensed what was at stake for Russia, and the peregrinations of the artists to come would in many respects transplant that moralism as part and parcel of a new-found revolutionary zeal *for art*.

Kandinsky's editions tell this tale, broadly speaking, as they also collectively support other suppositions for the cosmopolitanism of the later abstract works and the conceptualism of the early Symbolist and Expressionist works. With *Xylographies* (1910), Kandinsky is erasing spent and naïve Symbolist gestures leftover from the immediate past and heading for the gravity field of Expressionism.¹⁶ Gnomonic utterances associated with this period include: "Speaking of secrets through secrets? Is that not the content?"¹⁷

found and intractable problems. Given which, perhaps the most important insights to emerge from Washton Long's remarkable study are that we should stop viewing Kandinsky's *œuvre* in narrowly stylistic or formalistic terms, and, by situating it 'in the context of his time' see it, as Kandinsky did himself in *A Retrospect (Rückblicke)* of Autumn 1913, in terms of a spiritual struggle moving towards resolution": *Taylor and Francis*, n.d., <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02666286.1990.10435420#preview>.

¹⁵ *Kandinsky in Munich: 1896–1914*, eds. Peter Jelavich and Peg Weiss (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1982). Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, January 22–March 21, 1982, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, April 22–June 20, 1982, and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, August 17–October 17, 1982. See also, Igor Aronov, *Kandinsky's Quest: A Study in the Artist's Personal Symbolism, 1866–1907* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

¹⁶ Vasily Kandinsky, *Xylographies* (Paris: Tendances Nouvelles, 1909). Portfolio of eight heliogravures after woodcuts (including front cover, back cover and title page). Prints from 1907. Edition of 1000.

¹⁷ "The Paris-based Symbolist periodical *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, which had previously published thirty-three woodcuts by Kandinsky, issued this

The distance between *Stichi bez slov* (1903) and *Xylographies* cannot be measured in a mere seven years (the prints actually dating to 1907, when he was living in Paris). There is a collapse underway...a collapse of faith on one hand, and a collapse of time on another. The collapse of time is significant for its implosion inward toward purely conceptual issues. Already with the *Stichi bez slov*, Kandinsky was attempting to rid himself of Romantic illusions, those that one might say accompanied the closing years of the Silver Age and Russian Symbolism, and those that might be said to have been transmuted through the a-moral moralism of fin-de-siècle Paris and Berlin. This a-moral moralism was a distinct quality within the cosmopolitanism plus world-weariness that hovered over the artistic brethren of nascent Modernism.¹⁸

II. CONCEPTUALISM AND/OR ABSTRACTION

If attempts to escape the twin dictates of the art world and art-political orthodoxy in the 1980s are one way into the problems of conceptualism versus abstraction—either the abstract expressionism of the New York School (a privileged and highly leveraged position created in the post-WWII period and more or less demolished in the 1960s) or the persistent élan of Russian Formalism, with Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) the touchstone for all trying to escape the enormity of that insurrection (for example, Neue Slowenische Kunst in Yugoslav-era Slovenia or Russian conceptual artists in the pre-glasnost Soviet Union)—on one side of this divide is the highly capitalized art-world phenomenon of Abstract Expressionism, while on the other side is the persistence of Socialist Realism and its politically charged, statist apparatuses (whether Soviet or Depression-era America). If expressionist affect survived

portfolio comprising reproductions of woodcuts from 1907. Kandinsky had befriended the publication's editor, Alexis Mérodack-Jeanneau, while living in Paris from 1906 to 1907": Figura et al., "German Expressionism: Works from the Collection," *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, http://www.moma.org/collection_ge/browse_results.php?object_id=78183.

¹⁸ Vasily Kandinsky, *Stichi bez slov* (Moscow: Stroganov Academy, 1903). Printer: Stroganov Academy, Moscow. "Portfolio of twelve woodcuts, one woodcut title page, one woodcut table of contents, one supplementary woodcut, and one woodcut colophon." Edition: Unknown, as few copies exist of both the regular edition and the deluxe edition with supplementary woodcut. Figura et al., "German Expressionism: Works from the Collection," *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, http://www.moma.org/collection_ge/browse_results.php?object_id=71433.

abstraction (in, for example, the Abstract Expressionist works of Robert Motherwell and Mark Rothko), conceptual art shows the same return of subjective states that indicates such a return is central to art's perennial quest to escape capitalization of one form or another, with each generation "cannibalizing" the previous regardless of all claims to a clean break. The Museum of Non-Objective Painting, New York (1939–1959), Kandinsky appearing briefly in 1945, may have been one influence on the New York School, yet the emigration of Surrealists and the peregrinations of artists to and from Europe was another.¹⁹

Kandinsky's colorless woodcuts anticipate a "nothing" that is also a "something," insofar as they perfect an affective regime that will play out in later works, if, that is, they are to be considered studies at all.²⁰ As now-classic "phenomenal" event—taken as momentary ur-modernist singularity—they are, therefore, purely conceptual works. The formalization of the code of abstraction, the fault line for dismissing iteration as manufactured phenomenon (based on rote or subtle forms of capitalization and/or authorization by external factors), is notably what causes subsequent reaction or radical insurrection, the latter response fully in accord with the origins of abstraction in art—to *portray the invisible*.

Abstraction is conceptualism when it is freed from the codes of its weak or strong forms of capitalization and politicization. The signature Concept operates both in the singular event and across works only when considered in a meta-critical modality, which is not necessarily to say an *art-historical* modality.²¹ The still-born

¹⁹ For art-historical abstractions associated with the emergence of Abstract Expressionism, see Stella Paul, "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History," *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, October 2004, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/abex/hd_abex.htm. See also, "History of Temporary and Traveling Exhibitions, 1936–1959," in Karole P.B. Vail, ed., *The Museum of Non-Objective Painting: Hilla Rebay and the Origins of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009), *passim*.

²⁰ Thus does Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko et al.'s statement in *The New York Times* in June 1943 take on a fabulous tension: "To us, art is an adventure into an unknown world of the imagination which is fancy-free and violently opposed to common sense. There is no such thing as a good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is critical."

²¹ "Concept" in such instances is consistent with Alain Badiou's insistence that it be viewed as *event*—with "event" understood as meta-critical site, which conjoins (or re-establishes relations between) concept and existence. See Alain Badiou, "The Adventure of French Philosophy," *New Left Review* 35 (September-October 2005): 67–77. Badiou traces this bias for

disposition of the aesthetic reserve or remainder (a default position or function of the Concept for accessing conceptual art) is the first sign that art has been capitalized, with affect converted to commodity (yet affect in many such cases hovering as immaterial commodity as reified affect). The politicization of art nonetheless accomplishes the same capitalization of the Concept through its allegiance with historical or revolutionary progress. This more than explains (without justifying) how art history plays at Big History, in all attempts to provide a linearity and ceaselessly progressive lineage to works, schools, movements, and—the ultimate commodity—reputations.²² When the aesthetic reserve also becomes a religious reserve, the focus shifts from invisibility to ineffability....

The art world in 2015–2016 is full of such problems with its relation to forms of exploitation, with the Venice Art Biennale of 2015 exhibiting some of its most-striking problems. Since the prohibition on the *direct* sale of works at the Venice Biennale still holds, the capitalization proceeds via the manufacture and reinforcement of reputations (curatorial and artistic) and via national pavilions as showcase for the internationalization of contemporary art, with a strange whiplash ensuing, with the curated central pavilion almost always failing to provide any serious cachet other than a weak conceptual cachet across pre-ordained categories.²³ The general absurdity of the Arsenale, often converted to sheds or stalls for manufacturing sub-events,

“existential vitalism” in French philosophy from Henri Bergson to Jean-Paul Sartre to Gilles Deleuze. Combining “existential vitalism” with “conceptual formalism” (a second path for French philosophy extending from Léon Brunschvicg to Louis Althusser to Jacques Lacan), Badiou suggests that the program of modern French philosophy is to create a form of philosophical inquiry that might compete with the imaginative reach of literature, while re-inventing “in contemporary terms the 18th-century figure of the philosopher-writer.” Notably, this project also includes reprising “the question of the subject, abandoning the reflexive model,” and therefore engages “with psychoanalysis—to rival and, if possible, to *better it*” (*passim*; italics added).

²² Thus, theories of discontinuity and rupture in conceptual fields of thought versus disciplines—for example, in the epistemological works of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem, notable nevertheless for their relationship to Surrealism and Dadaism.

²³ Peggy Guggenheim’s appropriation of the disused Greek pavilion in 1948 seems a suitable accident in this regard. See Ruth Yeazell, “What Peggy Did: The Artistic, Outrageous Life of a Guggenheim,” *The New Republic*, September 30, 2015, <https://newrepublic.com/article/122968/artistic-outrageous-life-peggy-guggenheim>.

also shows the cross-currents of vanity, prestige, and purpose—the latter term roughly translatable to Concept in service to Capital. Additionally, the national pavilions are an outdated apparatus, especially given the internationalization of the art world via its financialization. What devolves to these localizations of conceptual practice is the fitful posturing of curators attempting to re-naturalize the commodification of art within a statist or nativistic aura, then upturned—the national pavilions serving thus as a strange admixture of forms of art-world hyper-capitalization via globalization plus re-alienation from capitalization via re-naturalization. The 2015 Biennale, in part devoted to questioning art's complicity with Capital (“All the World's Futures” taking on a menacing undertone), was, as a result, strenuously attempting to deconstruct the pavilions, physically or metaphorically, in many cases via affect—the very victim of the double capitalization of art—as commodity or as political concept. Critically, the political concept is rarely the artifact, a point that works in the positive sense when considering why abstraction as Modernism's so-called highest moment has little or nothing to do with the event of singular works *across works*. For in this highest moment (that is, a single work absorbed *across abstraction* as force-field), there appears a not-entirely uncongenial antithesis to life-works proper, in terms of service to the art world; for, abstraction's foremost byproduct—as consummate force-field—is to erase the artist through the extensive force of the work as *singularity* producing the ultimate commodity.²⁴

²⁴ Thus the astronomical rise in the price of Rothko's paintings following his death by suicide in 1970 and the subsequent conspiracy theories that foul play was involved. See Annie Cohen-Solal, *Mark Rothko: The Light in the Chapel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), for Rothko's emblematic and preliminary anti-capitalist maneuvers after visiting the chapel at Santa Maria Assunta on the island of Torcello, Venice, Italy, in the 1950s (reportedly with Peggy Guggenheim), and the subsequent development of the Rothko Chapel in Houston, a commission from the very rich but genteel De Menil family dating to 1964 and opening in 1971. Guggenheim re-settled in Venice in 1947–1949 and Rothko's first visit is said to be in 1950, with a return in 1959. In a sense, his abandonment of the Seagram commission in 1959 is the beginning of his refusal to be appropriated by the increasingly *commercialized* art world of post-WWII, triumphalist New York, the seat of American empire. It is less a statement of asceticism than a statement of resistance to crass appropriation. He subsequently agreed in 1966 to send nine of the Seagram panels to the Tate in London, as a gift. And yet, “A myth has been created about Rothko. He has been painted in colours that are not his own, travestied as a religious artist, a maker of

III. "NOT-PRIMITIVE"

Fauvism and Expressionism, if sharing color as the primary means of producing affect, have another pre-conscious sensibility in common that is not reducible to "primitivism" as such—that is, they share what might be called a "not-primitive" element that underwrites the black-and-white works (or "studies") that both Kandinsky and Emil Nolde excelled at—foremost the woodblock print. Far from smashing conventions, both *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* restored timeless "not-primitive" visual codes to an art en route to a proverbial somewhere else not reducible to Abstraction and certainly not uniformly allied with any one political agenda. If academicism was the main enemy of *Die Brücke*, Expressionism as it came to be defined found its general enemy in bourgeois culture—but hypocritical, consumerist bourgeois culture. Late Expressionism's raucous sublimity, as *Die Brücke's* fin-de-siècle decadence, masks the same a-moral moral forces that would be expressed via Dada and Surrealism. To consider *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* anti-modernist is one way of suggesting that they, as Dada and Surrealism, supersede the art-historical continuum as defined in its linearity, sociality, and progressivity—all immense biases that collapse upon the closer inspection of life-works across works, and of works across forms of a-temporality. Additionally, *Der Blaue Reiter's* obvious messianic senses, via Kandinsky's Russian sensibility, are not reducible to the approach of the apotheosis in abstraction that will ensue—first via Russian Formalism and then via Cubism and Abstract Expressionism.

Where and when Kandinsky and Nolde cross paths is of interest. It does not occur with *Die Brücke* and it does not occur with

spiritual icons of the holy void. This pleases his collectors—it speaks to a certain kind of reverence for art—and it makes Rothko fit into a tradition of abstract painting as spiritual journey that begins in the late 19th century, leads through Kandinsky and Mondrian, and supposedly ends in the Rothko Chapel, maintained by the Menil Foundation in Houston, Texas, which opened after his death and towards which the Seagram murals are a station of the cross. But this mystical Rothko is unapproachable. He is pompous, grandiloquent, asking to be cut down to size. For many visitors to Tate Modern—you can see them walking quickly past the best art in the place—Rothko is a closed case": Jonathan Jones, "Feeding Fury," *The Guardian*, December 7, 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/dec/07/artsfeatures>. See David Cronenberg's 2012 film (based on a novel by Don DeLillo), *Cosmopolis*, which uses the paintings in the Rothko Chapel as the ultimate (unobtainable, yet desired) prize for Capital.

Expressionism proper. Instead, it occurs in the transitional “not-primitivism,” from Fauvism to Abstraction, that merely includes Expressionism. This “not-primitivism” has for its main structural component color and no-color. If Kandinsky’s later works begin an exploration of point, line, and plane, this is not an elaboration but a shift back toward an elemental mimetic function that will arguably sustain the forward evolution of abstraction, or, anchor it in a visual-discursive field (geometry since the Greeks considered the vestibule of philosophy or metaphysics).²⁵ This makes the early black-and-white woodblock prints of Kandinsky and Nolde all the more interesting. For they are “Fauvist” on one level, but without color as primary affect, and “not-primitive” on another, *if not* the same level. What is this level? The “not-primitive” would seem to indicate a pre-conscious level that precedes the affect of color (and, with Abstract Expressionism, color field). This threshold state is the origin of the Concept (Hegelian “independent substantial power”), and this “primordial” pre-conscious affect of the black-and-white image, present in photography and film as well, is the origin of the sublimity that will inhabit abstraction (the so-called drive for the Absolute). How it produces the anti-capitalist sublime of anti-modernism is simultaneously both an art-historical question and an epistemological question. The Concept (or Absolute) of conceptual art configured as incipient anti-capitalist sublime is, in turn, from Fauvism to the conceptual art of the 1980s and beyond, situated astride elective versus enforced forms of nihilism. This elective affinity with nihilism is an apophatic oath more or less silently or solemnly sworn, by artists for life-works. It may be found in many of the art movements of the first decade of the twentieth century, in part those influenced by Nietzsche’s philosophically

²⁵ Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche: Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente*, eds. Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1926). This book signals the incipient system Kandinsky would pursue over the years to re-connect the inner world to the exterior world. See Lisa Carol Florman, *Concerning the Spiritual and the Concrete in Kandinsky’s Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), which concerns a Hegelian reading of Kandinsky’s turn to abstraction, by way of a 1936 essay by Alexandre Kojève, “Les peintures concrètes de Kandinsky.” First published in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 90, no. 2 (1985): 149–71. An English translation of Kojève’s essay is included in Florman’s book. These themes apropos of Kojève’s essay on Kandinsky were previously explored in Robert Brisart and Raphaël Célis, eds., *La voix des phénomènes: Contributions à une phénoménologie du sens et des affects* (Bruxelles: Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 1995).

inflected pronouncement of nihilism as the path (bridge) to the future but also due to earlier modern and pre-modern anarcho-syndicalist influences. The anti-academicism of Fauvism and Die Brücke translates easily to anti-capitalist terms, insofar as the artistic academy is also the foremost place where the conceptual knowledge embedded in art is commodified and politicized—that is, instrumentalized as politicized commodity. Anti-statist, anti-capitalist, occasionally messianic, and nihilist in spirit, Fauvism, Die Brücke, and Der Blaue Reiter are all nonetheless obliterated by the disaster of WWI. Only abstraction plus nihilism survives. The rapid succession of schools and movements pre- and post-WWI (with Zurich Dadaism in-between) suggests a world-historical something has permeated modern art. If this world-historical something is reducible to a pre-conscious mood or presentiment for the Concept, and therefore cannot be properly named, it is also reducible to an incipient sublimity that takes variable forms across the revolutionary spirit of modern art.²⁶ Its conversion to ideology is another matter, superseding the encounter with the Sublime of artistic expression.

Indeed, it is said that Kandinsky's earliest encounter with the elegant primitivity of the woodblock print dates back to Moscow and 1895, when he left the study of law behind and began work as a printer.²⁷ His known early 1900s prints, many made in Munich,

²⁶ One of the most astounding artistic testaments to the destructive power of this period may be found in Chris Marker's *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* (2005), which draws upon T.S. Eliot's poem, "The Hollow Men," but also utilizes disintegrated black-and-white imagery to "paint" its gloomy assessment of post-WWI Europe—that is, a landscape traversed by a generation of hollow men (roughly synonymous with colorless Nietzschean "last men," or the post-war "walking dead"). See *Chris Marker: Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men*, eds. Robert Leonard and Ben Wilson (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 2008). Published following the exhibition "Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men," Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia, 2007. The volume includes the essays: Adrian Martin, "Crossing Marker," 5–11, and Raymond Bellour, "Marker's Gesture," trans. Adrian Martin, 13–19. The balance of the book is a portfolio of images from the video installation. See also, Keith Sanborn, "Shades without Colour," *Artforum* 43, no. 10 (Summer 2005): 79 (a review of *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which also includes a photo of the installation by Elizabeth Felicella).

²⁷ See Jelavich and Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich, 1896–1914*. See also, Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), and Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University

may have been a case of trying to expunge Art Nouveau-inspired or Romantic images of Russia from his psyche (Russia still very much present in the Paris years of 1906–1907, as published in *Xylographies*), or at the least were a self-imposed post-rationalization for the sentimental images produced, while it is also possible that the nihilist reserve in the black-and-white image was a co-conspirator in this purge—intentional or otherwise.²⁸ What is obvious is that, by 1909, the folk imagery has all but vanished with the exception of the horseman (first sighted in 1903) of Kandinsky's personal apocalypse, by then well underway.²⁹

Nolde, with his early reputation tarnished by a proto-fascist aestheticization of redemptive Nature, combined a Nietzschean transvaluation of values in association with an aestheticization of nativistic rural politics that slowly collapsed across the path of the early works (up to 1909), primarily from its own internal discord, yet nonetheless sensitizing him to the risks inherent to Modernism and then-prevalent, though early, post-Romantic currents in German culture, with this latter form of nostalgia plus pessimism in part embodied in German Impressionism and only growing darker with late German Expressionism.³⁰ The proto-fascism proceeded

Press, 1995).

²⁸ "As he explained to his companion, painter Gabriele Münter, 'I must do them, for I cannot rid myself of my thoughts (or possibly dreams) any other way':" Figura et al., "German Expressionism: Works from the Collection," *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, http://www.moma.org/collection_ge/browse_results.php?object_id=71433, with reference to *Stichi bez slov*, 1903, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/71438>. "The imagery in these prints was central to the symbolic vocabulary that appeared throughout Kandinsky's work. Five of the woodcuts repeat previous compositions, and Kandinsky returned to five others in later prints and paintings. Most significantly, Kandinsky used the horse and rider motif, his symbol of a warrior for new art, for the first time here." See also, Annegret Hoberg, *Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter: Letters and Reminiscences, 1902–1914* (Munich: Prestel, 1994).

²⁹ Wassily Kandinsky, *Picture with an Archer* (1909). Oil on canvas, 68 7/8 x 57 3/8" (175 x 144.6 cm).

³⁰ See Steven Eric Bronner, "Ecstatic Modernism: The Paintings of Emil Nolde," in Steven Eric Bronner, *Modernism at the Barricades: Aesthetics, Politics, Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 79–90. Bronner characterizes Nolde's aesthetic as a unique form of vitalism, opposing or bridging both idealism and materialism (82). There is, in fact, nothing unique about Nolde's vitalism other than that it took the artistic form that defined his life-work. Otherwise, it is an age-old reverence for the natural world as all-encompassing blind spot where the objective and subjective states of being merge. In a word, his vitalism was a pietist-inflected mys-

via the clash between this post-Romantic sense of crisis related to rampant industrialization and the anti-modernist ethos of the dissident heroic artist attempting to illustrate a subjective-idealist middle ground. The currents are neither fascist nor strictly reactionary, though they may be deployed in such a way.

Therefore, the year 1909 marks Nolde's self-proclaimed shift from the "external optical charm" of naïve art to the "discovered inner worth" of severe expression *through* art.³¹ The shift is actually marked at first by a turn from impressionist-influenced landscapes to abject religious iconology—four paintings of severe religious merit from 1909 disclosing what he was merely groping for in the earlier works, or such is his own interpretation. These new paintings, *Last Supper* (1909) foremost among them, stared at him morning, day, and night as he worked out the manner by which he would proceed. He considered these paintings a transition to a more complex compositional sensibility, everything subsequently marked by their rites of passage.³² What did he achieve via this passage to "inner worth" for painting, in the same year that Kandinsky painted *Picture with an Archer*? Perhaps the vitalism of the landscapes opened onto another landscape, further afield within painting. Or perhaps the impressionist-infused optical charms he

ticism (Germanic subjective idealism). A small watercolor, *Sunrise* (1901), is used by Bronner to elucidate this mystical apprehension of the world as crisis. Nolde's "modernism" will at first proceed via affect (color). The reputed proto-fascism proceeds via the clash between this post-Romantic sense of crisis related to rampant industrialization and the anti-modernist ethos of the dissident heroic artist attempting to illustrate a subjective-idealist middle ground. The value of this middle ground has not been lost over the years. Nolde's *landscape paintings* were selling at German auction houses, c.2008, for roughly 1 million euro. A 2008–2009 retrospective at Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, "Emil Nolde: 1867–1956," traveling then to the Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France, no doubt helped to re-awaken interest in Nolde that may only be characterized as sensational. Curated by Sylvain Amic, Nolde's religious works, including *Life of Christ*, a nine-panelled work painted in 1911–1912, were given a separate room to highlight their exceptional intensity. See "Emil Nolde: Storms of Color," *The Economist*, October 9, 2008, <http://www.economist.com/node/12376714>. These paintings would eventually also serve to make Nolde persona non grata to the Nazi party.

³¹ William B. Sieger, "Emil Nolde's Biblical Paintings of 1909," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 73, no. 2 (2010): 255–72. This shift is documented in the second volume of Nolde's *Jahre der Kämpfe* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1934), 104–7; cited in Sieger, "Emil Nolde's Biblical Paintings of 1909," 255.

³² Sieger, "Emil Nolde's Biblical Paintings of 1909," 255.

was previously investigating, in part to make money, and which brought him into brief contact with Die Brücke, altogether collapsed from the severe bathos of their longing for a fusion of inner and outer worlds that is not, after all, possible. The subsequent inward turn is, nonetheless, of extraordinary consequence for Nolde's life-work. It is not the religious content per se but the power of the compositional elements worked through—the topology of effects—that will alter his subsequent painting and graphic work. For he returns to landscape later, and the 1909 “revolution” has not receded. If the affective force of the 1909 paintings is “abject,” they are also a mirror for the existential state of Germany in 1909. The anti-bourgeois affect in Expressionism only increases in magnitude over the ensuing decades. Kandinsky's 1909–1912 shift is different insofar as he has in effect already departed both Fauvism and Expressionism for the austerities of abstraction. The common ground here is a reflexive distance from an optic of the Real, and an edging or shading—slowly—toward personal and collective apocalypse.

IV. IDEOLOGIES OF ART

We can construct coherent worlds but their relation to the external world is ultimately unknowable.³³

Margaret Iversen

When and how does ideology spread across the surface of art, as curse or as blessing? And, what constitutes the curse of the ideological “subvention” of art, via its capitalization as ideology, bestowing upon it an instrumentality that is effectively purchased by “subsidy”? The threshold for subvention is, arguably, the same threshold noted above that operates as reserve ground and address for formal innovation, the primitivity of the woodblock print offering up its archaic resources for modernist purposes. Yet if mere formal innovation thereby proceeds outwardly, becoming easily purchased stylistic innovation, the subtending reserve functions of artistic expression located at or beyond the threshold remain invisible. Is not this latter condition the “invisibility” sought by Kandinsky through abstraction—but across works? And, is this not the expressionist ground Nolde re-discovered in 1909 through

³³ Margaret Iversen, “Aesthetics of Disintegration,” in Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 45 [32–47].

his crisis-infused, nominal religious paintings—paintings that would influence his later works inclusive of non-religious works? Indeed, the same flash of intensity Nolde unearthed through his *Last Supper* of 1909 is to be found in the subsequent landscapes, which are far from the sentimental Fauvist- and Impressionist-inspired works he previously created while allied with the pietist-sponsored, anti-modernist nativism that permitted both the ideological appropriation of his work by German fascism and the subsequent turn into apocalyptic expressionist works that effectively “disowned” the naivety of the early works and the ideological aura floating across the surface of these works.

Impressionism and Fauvism, still present today, mine the dual schematics of optical and affective effects while sharing the focus on color that denotes estrangement or experiential (empirical) reflexes given to painting—a restlessness that also proposes the true address for such effects. One step further into the background of painting and color disappears *for other forces*—painting giving way to visual effects that are merely embedded in painting via the mimetic and iconological (not iconographical) or topological conceptual apparatuses of visibility. The non-discursive anterior also erases all traces of ideological appropriations of affect and system (an elective atomization of pictorial premises), abstraction nonetheless working within both fields—with color field serving as an obvious privileging of affect via color and geometric abstraction privileging system (the forwarding of atomization toward process or overt instrumentalized agenda for art as revolutionary process). Such are the schematics of art-historical inquiry as an archaeology of sense plus process.

The other side of this problematic is the existential—or, that which is self-referential in 1909 in both Kandinsky’s and Nolde’s works, and, for some, a rite of passage *for* works that has a Romantic remainder (at this time, 1909, a rite of passage that has a yet-unnamed post-Romantic remainder). These apparent existential rites may, in turn, be further estranged *from* or distressed by the very processes of art-historical inquiry and archaeologies of sentiment that claim to historicize them, to disclose what is otherwise theorized as “universal” or “universalizing” tendencies that inhabit avant-garde art of all forms and all times.³⁴ The ideological

³⁴ Art-historical Mannerism is of this order, especially as it was never quite identified as distinct from either the High Renaissance or the early Baroque until the early twentieth century. Perhaps Jacob Burckhardt’s use of Mannerism has more to do with his attitude toward modernity (that is, the

is not quite present at this existentialist stage, however, though the so-called innovations (always viewed retrospectively) may be a result of ideological pressures within the artist and/or the art work that place or insinuate an historical significance to “radical” shifts in signification. Far from psychoanalytical theories of *jouissance*, though unbridled passion speaks to the same conditions, this “escape” from conventions, of the time in question or retrospectively assigned, signals a “return” as well.³⁵ The perennial, existentially inflected return is sublimity itself (otherwise known as the Sublime). The Sublime can be hypostasized, but it too escapes....No doubt this is what is to be seen in Nolde’s 1909 paintings—the escape of the Sublime and its residue in nominally religious art. His woodcut *Prophet* (1912) would seem to be, with all due deference to the 1909 paintings, the actual presentation of the Sublime as mask for utter inexorability—the return noted above in its existentialist contours becoming irredeemably religious and messianic (thereby irreligious). This non-existential “inexorability” would seem to speak of Justice and Redemption—moments of art-historical sublimity becoming Stations of the Cross for the Concept (universal suffrage) and the Eternal Return of sublimity through Art. Notably, the superimposition of ideology onto this condition or crisis deforms the very premises of the Concept. Any theological reading of this crisis in the arts will then, out of necessity, also have to be

Renaissance forward) than any properly art-historical archaeology of forms of cultural determinism. Whether one sees Mannerism as decadent (the collapse of Renaissance humanism) or as an early version of avant-garde agitation has more to do with whether one privileges the Renaissance, as one might privilege Modernism, or any and all deviations from the conventions of the period. Indeed, the edges of the Renaissance look more radical than its center, with the Venetian Renaissance favored by many, including John Ruskin, and the Mannerist insurrection considered the true High Renaissance by all whom adore Caravaggio. The fact that Michelangelo represents both the emblematic High Renaissance artist and the first Mannerist artist is telltale.

³⁵ The works of innumerable modern and proto- or near-modern artists attest to this, especially those privileged by post-structuralist inquiry. For example, see the assimilation of Gérard de Nerval and Antonin Artaud to post-structuralist and post-modernist criticism in Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), first published as *Soleil noir: Dépression et mélancolie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), and Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), first published as *Antonin Artaud: Dessins et portraits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

a-theological, or inverted, to disallow the re-importation of ideology through theology.³⁶

In 1912–1913, Kandinsky will “close the book” on his early years with a publishing blitz, including: *Über das Geistige in der Kunst Insbesondere in der Malerei*; *Der Blaue Reiter*; *Klänge*; and *Kandinsky, 1901–1913*.³⁷ *Kandinsky, 1901–1913* was published by

³⁶ Terry Eagleton, right or wrong, notes how the precarity of artists in modern times (that is, the state of having no “secure niche”) also permits them to either ignore ideology or subvert it, no longer taking the pieties of the prevailing social order for granted. Eagleton establishes his argument by exaggeration, by stating that in pre-modern times “artists were more thoroughly integrated into society at large than they have been in the modern era, but part of what that meant was that they were quite often ideologues, agents of political power, mouthpieces for the status quo”: Terry Eagleton, “The Slow Death of the University,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 6, 2015, <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Slow-Death-of-the/228991/>. Eagleton’s remarks on artists and ideology appear in the context of a critique of neo-liberal academia and its reduction of the university to the servicing of market ideology: “Education should indeed be responsive to the needs of society. But this is not the same as regarding yourself as a service station for neocapitalism. In fact, you would tackle society’s needs a great deal more effectively were you to challenge this whole alienated model of learning. Medieval universities served the wider society superbly well, but they did so by producing pastors, lawyers, theologians, and administrative officials who helped to sustain church and state, not by frowning upon any form of intellectual activity that might fail to turn a quick buck.” What Eagleton is implying is that artists in the modern era have greater freedom than intellectuals, but only insofar as they operate beyond the *commercium* of the art world. Yet the price for such enhanced freedom is perpetual precarity. The double bind of aesthetics and ideology is the subject of Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

³⁷ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst Insbesondere in der Malerei*; Kandinsky and Marc, eds., *Der Blaue Reiter*; Wassily Kandinsky, *Klänge* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1912); and Kandinsky, *Kandinsky, 1901–1913*. “*Klänge* is one of three major publications by Kandinsky that appeared shortly before World War I, alongside *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*) and the *Blaue Reiter* almanac, which he edited with one of the group’s cofounders, Franz Marc. Fearing poor sales, Munich-based Reinhard Piper only reluctantly published *Klänge*, and Kandinsky had to guarantee the production costs. More than two years after its release, *Klänge* had sold fewer than 120 copies. The planned Russian version never materialized. The publication was nevertheless influential on other avant-garde artists, and Futurists in Russia and Dadaists in Zurich recited and published some of the poems”: Figura et al., “German Expressionism: Works from the Collection,” *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/object/object_objid-123263.

Der Sturm, a Berlin-based publisher representing the international avant-garde of the time:

Herwarth Walden, founder and sole editor of *Der Sturm*, once proclaimed: "I have never been mistaken in my artistic judgments.... In any field." Walden intended *Der Sturm*, which means storm or tempest, to be a force that would sweep away the old culture. Its format reinforced the active role Walden envisioned for his periodical: with text printed in three columns on cheap paper, it resembled a daily newspaper rather than the era's luxurious, glossy art publications.³⁸

Additionally:

Before World War I, Walden championed the work of the Expressionists—especially Oskar Kokoschka and the artists of the *Brücke* and the *Blaue Reiter*—and that of the international avant-garde, including Italian Futurists and French Cubists. After the war, he increasingly focused on geometric abstraction, Russian art, and, especially, the work of Kurt Schwitters. Walden also opened a publishing house, gallery, theater, and art school that extended *Der Sturm's* influence. The gallery, in particular, was a central forum for the avant-garde in Berlin.³⁹

Kandinsky and Nolde definitively cross paths in the pages of *Der Sturm*, c.1911, with Nolde providing the cover image, *Tingeltangel*, for the March 25, 1911 edition.⁴⁰ *Der Sturm*, established

html, with reference to Klänge (1913), <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/26596>.

³⁸ Figura et al., "German Expressionism: Works from the Collection," *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/object/object_objid-123263.html, with reference to *Der Sturm*. "Der Sturm was initially published weekly, but in 1912 its frequency was reduced to biweekly and later to monthly. The final issues appeared in 1932." Kandinsky was not immune to high-end collectable editions and produced both inexpensive and deluxe versions of his now-renowned folios.

³⁹ Figura et al., "German Expressionism: Works from the Collection," *Museum of Modern Art*, New York, https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/object/object_objid-123263.html, with reference to *Der Sturm*.

⁴⁰ Works by Nolde in *Der Sturm: Tingeltangel*, *Der Sturm* 1, no. 56 (March 25, 1911); *Chantant Zeichnung*, *Der Sturm* 2, no. 74 (August 26, 1911); and *Originalzeichnung*, *Der Sturm* 3, no. 133 (October 1912), a semi-abstract calligraphic [ink] drawing of what looks like peasants harvesting

in 1910, increasingly begins to focus on “Expressionist” works in 1911, both popularizing the term and undermining it, at once.⁴¹ Berlin in 1911 also sees the next wave of exhibitions of the Berliner Secession (at Galerie Maximilian Macht), which will include Die Brücke, Cubism, and the first signs of Dada (via Hugo Ball).⁴² Nolde has however already departed Die Brücke by this time, and Die Brücke will soon after part company with the New Secession. The Berliner Secession, originating in 1898, followed upon the Vienna Secession (1897) and the Munich Secession (1892). The New Secession formed in 1910 (with *Der Sturm* as its de facto in-house publication) when the increasingly reactionary Secession refused to show the next wave of Expressionist painting, its primary focus having been an alternative academy and exhibition vehicle to support Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in conservative and imperial Wilhelmine Germany, with a layer of early Expressionist works, including those of Edvard Munch (originator of one of the first scandals in Berlin, c.1892, leading to the Berliner Secession).⁴³

wheat. For facsimiles of these editions, see Blue Mountain Project: Historic Avant-garde Periodicals for Digital Design, *Princeton University*, <http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/>.

⁴¹ Regarding the nebulous nature of these avant-garde groupings, see Milton A. Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group, 1910–1914* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004).

⁴² For a timeline of avant-garde artistic agitation in Berlin 1911–1914, see Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee*, 198–205. For Munich 1909–1914, see 205–11 in the same volume.

⁴³ For a brief summary of the Berliner Secession, see <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/berlin-secession.htm>. For the graphic works of Edvard Munch, see Gerd Woll, ed., *Edvard Munch: The Complete Graphic Works* (Oslo: Orfeus Publishing, 2012), a catalogue raisonné of “748 registered prints” by Munch. Munch’s turn to graphic works (foremost intaglio and drypoint prints, but also lithography and the woodcut) is said to have occurred around 1894. See comments regarding the Meier-Graefe Portfolio of prints from 1895, in Elizabeth Prelinger and Michael Parke-Taylor, eds., *The Symbolist Prints of Edvard Munch: The Vivian and David Campbell Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Catalogue of the exhibition at Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada, February 28–May 25, 1997. The authors of the catalogue text suggest “economic reasons” for this shift, while noting the probable artistic experiments permitted by abject poverty. The Meier-Graefe Portfolio was produced in Berlin, where Munch was observed as of 1894 “wandering the streets hungry and homeless” (Prelinger and Parke-Taylor, 65); with reference to a diary entry dated December 9, 1894 by Harry Kessler, count, art connoisseur, and collector of Munch’s work. See also, Reinhold Heller, “Love as a Series of Paintings and a Matter of Life and Death,” in *Edvard Munch: Symbols*

By 1913 the Berliner Secession in its manifold forms more or less collapsed from internal contradictions and feuds, and with 1914 the apocalypse of WWI arrived.

The optic of Modernism (the positivist version at the least, including the art-theoretical systems of Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, Wilhelm Worringer et al., and containing a kernel of the Hegelian concept of the rational as the Real) died with WWI.⁴⁴ A perhaps controversial reading, it is nonetheless the “optical unconscious” (Rosalind E. Krauss’s term) that had been struggling to emerge across Expressionism and its analogues.⁴⁵ Pre-conscious moods will come to the fore with Dadaism, Surrealism, and the various insurrections to follow, regardless of the momentary points of reference for New Objectivity, in the late 1920s, and the emergence of High Modernism, post-WWII, with its commercially oriented and authorized engagements with Capital and the State to formalize

& Images (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1978). Catalogue of the exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, November 11, 1978–February 19, 1979.

⁴⁴ Foremost Wölfflin’s *Principles of Art History: The Problem of Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M.D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1932). First published as *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1915). First translated into English in 1932 by M.D. Hottinger from the seventh German edition (1929). Thus Herbert Read’s comment that “It could be said of him that he found art criticism a subjective chaos and left it a science”: Introduction to the 1950 English edition of Wölfflin’s *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*. First published as *Die klassische Kunst*, 1899. Michael Podro has subsequently described Wölfflin’s system as “quasi-immanent,” whereas Read also considered it appropriate only to figurative art. See Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); cited in Elizabeth Chaplin, *Sociology and Visual Representation* (London: Routledge, 1994). Yet these arguments for or against Wölfflin’s system rise or fall on how much emphasis is placed on cultural or social factors and their impact on the artist and/or the art work, an emphasis that arguably reduces the art work to a symptom or mere cultural artifact and the artist to a de facto “art historian” for his/her own times.

⁴⁵ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). The book covers Modernism from the 1920s to the 1950s. Various forms of “anti-modernism” are also the subject of Hal Foster et al.’s *Art since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism*, 2 vols. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

and instrumentalize the earlier attempts to fuse inner and outer reality through the visual codes of revolutionary modernism.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ A key transitional figure regarding the reduction of art to a sociological bias is Georg Simmel, who will depart the rationalization of art history via sociology (his own discipline) with his late work on Rembrandt in 1916: *Rembrandt: Ein kunstphilosophischer Versuch*. For a discussion of Simmel's late rebellion against his own discipline, see the section "Proto-structuralism" in Keeney, "La Présence: The Stigmata of the Irreal," in Keeney, "Else-where." "Rembrandt is one of Simmel's last works (published two years before his death), and represents a shift in his later works, commencing with *Goethe* (1913), toward *Lebensphilosophie* (in this case, however, and in his own words, 'reflections on the essence of art')" (Keeney, "La Présence," 270n26). Simmel writes, in the Introduction to the 1916 edition: "Philosophical concepts should not always keep only their own company; rather, they ought to give to the surface of existence what they are able to give, and not attach the condition to it, as Hegel did, that this existence as such should be elevated to the level of philosophical nobility. It would be better to leave it simply as it is and subject to its own immediate laws. Only in this way does it become enveloped by the network of lines that mediate its connection to the realm of ideas. Here, the simple fact is that experience of a work of art that I wish to accept as indissoluble and primary. The view that the philosophical guidelines attached to it necessarily converge at one ultimate point, and thus must be made to fit into a philosophical system, is a monistic prejudice that contradicts the—rather more functional than essential—essence of philosophy." Georg Simmel, "Simmel's Preface to the First Edition of 1916," in Simmel, *Rembrandt: An Essay in the Philosophy of Art*, 3. See Jürgen Habermas, "Georg Simmel über Philosophie und Kultur: Nachwort zu einer Sammlung von Essays," in *Texte und Kontexte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 157–169, for a discussion of Simmel's standing astride conflicting intellectual currents at the close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth. In a similar manner, Alois Riegl eventually shifted from "art as knowledge" to "art as will" (artistic volition or *Kunstwollen*), as laws of style were considered forms of idealism (which were, in turn, forms of ideology). See Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, 97–99; and Margaret Olin, "The Historian's Performance," in *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 187.

Marker's Archive



By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.¹

Hebrews 11:5

I. CULTURAL PATRIMONY

The beauty of Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'archive* (1995) is that there is something in all archival exercises and impulses, formalized or merely incipient or latent, that eludes capture or closure, and escapes.² Configured as Spirit (versus the indeterminate something or other called "trace"), this something that escapes closure speaks volumes to the problems associated with cultural patrimony, cultural heritage, the curious legal and non-legal concept of public domain, plus all current attempts by neo-liberal capitalism

¹ Hebrews 11:5, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, eds. Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). The metaphorically rich sense of this often-cited passage turns on the term *translated*. The Epistle to the Hebrews is considered one of the more literary books of the New Testament.

² Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). First published as *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1995). A type of psychoanalysis of the archive and the archival impulse, Derrida's book resembles in various "structuralist" (or, magical conceptual-formalist) ways Bachelard's surrealist *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, trans. Alan C.M. Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), first published as *La psychanalyse du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938). Indeed, a distended structuralist analysis was always embedded in post-structuralism and deconstruction. Bachelard's upturning of structuralist-inspired formalisms might be said to deepen the structuralist project proper, as typified later by Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes.

to capture both the archive and that which escapes (or hopes to escape) the archival impulse—patrimonial or otherwise. What is this something that seeks to escape, by its very nature—providing intentionality to what seems merely formal in the work, exemplifying as a result what constitutes the failure of the archival impulse itself? The analogue is the sacrifice of archons and aeons (in Gnosticism), and what eludes all attempts to account for the beneficent or malevolent intent of a sacrifice that returns in spectral orders of power, domination, and insinuation as gift.

Formal, representational, and topological assimilations of singular works, or that which proceeds from outside of the work to claim the work, offer a means through which a work's associative power, as figural expression—and, by extension, its cultural significance—can be assessed. Not so much a form of measurement or justification for singular works, as illimitable internal elements of works defy such as spirit *for* works, such complex assimilations create contextual or a-contextual and “apperceptive” tension with other things, oddly re-naturalizing the internalized life of the work itself. The life-work of the artist or scholar anticipates its cultural significance, often formally barring specific and contingent means of assimilation and appropriation—though such contingencies may change to circumvent the embedded prohibition, the proleptic nature of works acting and existing against forms of assimilation that also constitute a death for the work (as life-work).

Yet there are other instances of assimilation where and when the work as life-work sits and waits, loaded from within with immaterial and metrical measures that will burst the bonds of the archive—with cultural merit in such cases serving as a measure of an immeasurability, an excess, and, from the interior perspective, an expression of the founding rites of works. Here the existential rites of passage *for* works return; while they only return through the futural intensity embedded in the work—not a vitalistic, in-born determinism of works (the so-called weak formalism always applied retrospectively through criticism), but the contingent expression as apperceptive excess. Such complexities bring into the realms of cultural patrimony (always multiple) the first-born nature (given expressive force) of the work substantiated from within versus from without, with the short circuit of historical exegesis and socio-cultural or socio-economic justification more than obvious—even if the very path of historical justification and reification is implicated as a means for the survival or discovery of that primitive and apparently archaic impress and imprint. The work substantially “outlives” itself, with historicity serving as ultra-milieu by

which it develops what art history would consider a static given, versus a dynamic futural intensity within that given. The irony is that art-historical reification tends to privilege the futural within the contingent as a given, when, as life-work, the work only exists as a fragment to be re-historicized *within its own history*.

And so, the artist and author perishes, ineluctably and fatefully, a type of archon or aeon for his/her own work. The archive as tomb is the obvious simile, sometimes semaphore, while the resurrection of the work through its futural intensity warrants the theological turn given to high-postmodern, high-art criticism. Thus too the importance of where the life-work goes, of its fate (in the Nietzschean sense of learning to love fate). And so too the significance of the proleptic measures taken from *within* the work—pre-positioned there. Both “loving fate” and prolepsis require, however, that subjective agency be operative from within the work—yet operative within the work as transferred to the work by the agency of the author/artist. All such considerations suggest that the denudation of one genealogical tree in favor of the second tree (a genealogy of intent and assimilation) by forces outside of the work is intentional on behalf of the patrimonial archive.³ If, for example, Capital privileges the tree of material assimilation at the expense of the spirit of the work (its subjective agency), that denudation of one genealogy is premised on the exact opposite principles of the life-work. The exploitation of the material “remains” of works explains the manufacturing of events toward exploitation (plus the manufacturing of outsized reputations, after the fact, for works of low-speculative merit)—with such manufactured events operating in a pervasive economy that has no real relation to the life-work exploited. How that internal tableau of the work is to be redeemed is the vocation of art-critical exegesis—against denudation and de-naturing, and against Capital. Conversely, and since Pop art, works of intentionally low-discursive merit are always pre-positioned in service to Capital.⁴

In the early reviews, in English, of Giorgio Agamben’s last book in the *Homo Sacer* series, *L’uso dei Corpi*, between its release in Italian in 2014 and its planned release in English in 2016, one

³ Such also suggests the irreducible nature of the Moral Rights of Authors.

⁴ Andy Warhol’s troubled legacy as progenitor of “pop everything” is indicative and also the cause for subsequent rebellions against the commercialization of the art world in the late 1960s. Whether “pop everything” is a case of the production of automatically commercialized goods is nonetheless a matter of dispute.

can detect an alignment of meta-critical gestures that attempt to prepare and pre-condition the path of its reception in the English-speaking world.⁵ One gesture from within the work is the recourse by Agamben to the late works of certain writers and philosophers, as if the futural intensity of the works increases in such late works due to the implosion inferred in any possible and any evaded closure per se (for late works generally, and for Agamben's self-imposed closure for *Homo Sacer*). If Agamben, we are told, returns to "inoperability" through the concept of *becoming ungovernable*, it is because that a-political political figure ("bare life" and its analogues) was always present in the immense juridical bias of his series, and that the central figure of *Homo Sacer* is, utterly, the exception that proves the rule (what Agamben extracted quite early on from Carl Schmitt). Foremost in terms of the preparation for assimilation to posterity is the analysis of the tripartite schema of the last work in this series and its return to the concept of form-of-life, the penultimate gesture Agamben extracted from Franciscanism, in *Altissima povertà* (2011), to be de-hypositized—now—in the figure of the ungovernable. Such too was the value of reading reviews of Jean-Luc Godard's last swan song, *Adieu au langage*, before it was widely released in the English-speaking world, as each film in Late Godard became analyzed or positioned from the outside as his last.

II. FUTURAL INTENSITY

The futural intensity of late works suggests that an oblique view of works is the only way to counter the hermeneutic of assimilation that constitutes both criticism and the archival impulse—with the latter in most cases constituting assimilation against the futural intensity of the work as life-work.

The common ground between most late works that begin to exhibit these latent or oblique tendencies is the discord between

⁵ See, for example, Leland de la Durantaye, "To Be and to Do: The Life's Work of Giorgio Agamben," *Boston Review*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.bostonreview.net/books-ideas/de-la-durantaye-agamben>; Richard B., "The Use of Bodies," *Mute*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/use-bodies>; and Flavio Michele Ceci, "Homo Sacer: The Last Act (*L'Uso dei Corpi*)," *Critical Legal Thinking*, December 12, 2014, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/12/12/homo-sacer-last-act-luso-dei-corpi/>. For the structure of the *Homo Sacer* series, see <http://progressivegeographies.com/2014/04/14/giorgio-agamben-the-homo-sacer-series-structure-in-visual-form/>.

memory and history, which are never the same processes in the sense that history presumes one thing (instrumental reason) while memory presumes another (subjective idealism). The late films of Theo Angelopoulos betray this discord, as do the late writings of Paul Ricoeur.⁶ If Angelopoulos pursues cinematic poetry, drawing into his late films an intensified figure of "Ithaka," and if Agamben returns to Guy Debord to close out Homo Sacer (that is, to Debord's late semi-autobiographical films), the oblique view strangely comes into focus as a type of scotomization of the order inhabiting Jacques Lacan's work (against Freud's earlier warnings); yet these processes are all paradoxically universalizing, in terms of the type of de-centered subjective idealism such poeticized late works embody. These transpersonal processes actually begin to re-organize and re-calibrate aspects of Alfred North Whitehead's process-oriented ontology, also notably a "late work" in Whitehead's life-work, in direct opposition to the current neo-realist fashion for object-oriented ontology and the techno-hubris of transhumanism. The trajectory is decidedly "elsewhere" and does not fall to forms of "high contingency" or "pure immanence."

Agamben's own oblique view, denoted "mystification" by his detractors, has always paradoxically had a center or a middle ground, in painterly terms similar in some ways to the speculative anamorphism of visual artists such as Poussin or Guercino. The resulting proverbial blind spot via scotomization achieves a positive outcome as blind spot, with previous discussions of blind spots as projections of subjective states onto the Real serving merely as traveler advisories for late works, which will, in time and across time, evoke or invoke another time and another subject alien to all Lacanian exegesis and to the elective nihilism Agamben is also wrongly accused of. Agamben's return to forms of intellectual anamorphosis to rid the subject of enforced forms of anamorphosis (the fallen forms attributable to a mechanistic and Manichaeic or Lacanian worldview) are, within his own late works, the very signals he exposes in other late works as semaphores. The blind spot repeatedly threatens to expand and consume the Real. Yet

⁶ In the case of Angelopoulos it is instructive to consider his relationship to the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, especially in terms of the bleak visual tableaux utilized and against which are staged the human dramas. In the case of Angelopoulos there is a self-evident amplification of magical-realist tendencies only marginally present in Antonioni, as for example in the story of the pink beach in *Il deserto rosso* (1964). Late Angelopoulos almost disappears into magical-realist terrain with *Τριλογία: Το λιβάδι που δακρύζει* (2004), a.k.a. *The Weeping Meadow* (2005).

this occlusion of normative vision, in terms of its relationship to the oblique view required to identify futural intensity in works (early or late), to witness the *semaphore*, is the very subject of philosophical chiaroscuro (another charge leveled at Agamben over the years of *Homo Sacer*). The world occluded by one, all-encompassing blind spot is the very image of revelation—arguably the goal of any elective nihilism that is not also a form of elective defeatism, abject solipsism, or totalizing ideology. Certainly futural intensity exists across the arc of works, while its force or internalizing spirit increases across the time of the overall life-work as extensive singular work. This possibility, versus necessity, of futural intensity for works, across works, as many single works remain merely episodic versus integral, while others intentionally resist any such categorical imperative to become universal through subjective implosion, is what permits Agamben to even speak of ungovernability as a desired state. What is ungovernable in such life-works as forms-of-life is the “subject of the work,” not the subject per se involved in the production of the work. Here the political fallout from Agamben’s project becomes obvious. For he is more or less adamant about political projects, per se. (One critic notes that his deep hostility toward Marxism finally emerges with this last book in the *Homo Sacer* series.)⁷ His “subject,” or his “object” for the subject, is unmistakably a semi-sacred, semi-profane ground within all discussions of an ontological bent. His subject is the ungovernable sacred subject simultaneously present before and beyond the broken premises of all quotidian systems and worlds. There are this-worldly analogues, but they fail just as all systems fail. This-worldly signs fail to indicate the location of this ungovernable subject because “it” is not a person or place per se. It is, instead, a state of, or pretext for, Being—not Being and certainly not Becoming, nor a vaporous post-structuralist or pre- and/or post-humanist state in-between. Its community is inoperative because it is, ultimately, premised on futural intensity—incompletion, abandonment, sacrality. It is the “waiting for” as the “waited for” passes into the archive of memory—Nietzschean *belatedness*. Thus Angelopoulos’s recourse to “Ithaka,” whereas Agamben has shown us the “Ithaka” for Being in/for itself—not for singular, rebellious subjects. To be ungovernable means to affix one’s vision to “Ithaka” (not to fix one’s vision upon, but to *affix one’s vision to*), and to embed that desire in all predicates or assertions based upon such immemorial antecedents for desire. Time-senses collapse inward.

⁷ Richard B., “*The Use of Bodies*.”

It is effectively a Christic vision, yet a-theological or trans-historical in the extreme, especially given the universalizing tendencies invoked. The highest ecstatic motives notably transfigure all lesser motives, and all merely contingent biases, with "high" and "low" often trading places to intentionally de-stabilize or "profane" time-honored, yet bankrupt forms of so-called cause and effect. A new or renewed consubstantiality is the result. Indeed, "cause and effect" become suspect terrain for such works that upend and overturn normative time-senses. Such life-works are always already found "reaching for the stars," for the catasterism given to the "timeless" or "immortal" work of art. Strangely, with this last installment of *Homo Sacer*, we may now depart company with Agamben's somewhat claustrophobic *Homo Sacer* project—necessarily claustrophobic, given what it deals with—and pursue its implied intentions for works.

Therefore, the prospects for new works of an ungovernable agency of this order might be sought through structuralist-inspired analyses of posthumous archives (patrimonial and otherwise), with the analysis structured toward sightings of/for "Ithaka"—but across the singular works that comprise the archive. Far from biasing in advance any proper "Annales-style" objective-historical analysis of archives, such a premise includes the admission, by way of John Berger's *Here Is Where We Meet* (2005), that "the dead do not stay where they are buried." Indeed, one need not physically enter an archive to assess the spirit of an archive, foremost if one is concerned with how the life-work becomes an archive. For the life-work overflows any artificial or official boundaries imposed.

III. BELATED ASSIMILATIONS

Chris Marker's "Ithaka" was always the very-still image, plus the literary-critical, if not critical-political aspects, of the very-still image. It is for this reason that the processes of his assimilation to diverse forms of cultural or collective patrimony, including for-profit forms in the last decade of his life, are worthy of examination. These processes involve both a return to the still image and his first conventional exhibitions of photography in the mid-2000s, reflecting a further distancing of his work from the primary discipline in which it had been situated since the late 1950s—that is to say, cinema.

In 2002 Marker donated to the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC), Abbaye d'Ardenne, Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe, Ville de Caen, France, a collection he personally

deemed somewhat insignificant.⁸ This donation, arguably, established an intention that IMEC would receive further works. The collection is effectively a cache of documents and media files, as yet uncatalogued and apparently unexamined by scholars:

Analyse : Chris Marker a déposé une partie de sa vidéothèque. Il s'agit d'enregistrements d'émissions de la télévision, de reportages de documentaires et de films souvent accompagnés de l'article descriptif découpé dans la presse. Quelques uns de ses films et rushes inédits complètent cette collection. Accroissements : Fonds clos.⁹

From 2002 forward, as if beginning a process of calculated indifference to genres and markets, or at least a studied indifference (assiduously avoiding the high *commercium* of the neo-liberalized art world while beginning to market his works across markets), Marker developed relationships with cultural institutions and semi-commercial art galleries that privileged his shift toward edited photography and/or very short enigmatic and primitive films and videos. His 2005 video installation for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men*,

⁸ Characterized as such by Étienne Sandrin. E-mail dated October 21, 2015. This donation was comprised of “his personal video library: VHS recordings of programs or films broadcast on television”: Marjorie Delabarre, IMEC. E-mail dated March 2, 2016.

⁹ “Notice historique/biographique : Cinéaste mais également photographe, essayiste et écrivain, proche des Éditions du Seuil dans les années cinquante et soixante, Chris Marker—pseudonyme de Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve—a tourné partout dans le monde, en Chine, en Sibérie, à Cuba ou en Israël. Son œuvre, résolument avant-gardiste et engagée, compte de nombreux courts métrages et documentaires au style très personnel dans lesquels le rôle du commentaire semble compter autant que les images : *Dimanche à Pékin* (1955), *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958), *Cuba Si!* (1961) et plus récemment *Level Five* (1996) ou *Andrei Tarkovski* (2000). Célèbre pour son chef-d'œuvre *La Jetée*, court-métrage de science-fiction réalisé en 1963 à partir de photographies fixes uniquement, Chris Marker a édité en 1997 un CD-rom, *Immemory*, immense assemblage de fragments où se concentrent sans distinction de genre (textes, citations, images, animations, extraits de films) les archives liées aux grands centres d'intérêt de sa vie. Également auteur d'installations vidéo multimédias et multiécrans, il a notamment présenté *Zapping Zone* (1990, Centre Pompidou) et *Silent Movie* (1995, Wexner Center, Columbus).” “Les Collections: Chris Marker,” *Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine*, n.d., <http://www.imec-archives.com/fonds/marker-chris/>.

his masterwork from this period, and his previous video installation at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, *Silent Movie, Starring Catherine Belkhodja* (1995), were both positioned within major public art galleries, albeit in the US, which his work had previously favored, such as the various solo and group Pompidou exhibitions over the years.¹⁰

Yet from 2007 forward Marker was represented by Peter Blum Gallery, New York, New York, with many of his late works being converted to semi-marketable wares, as the Wexner Center also served as an entrepôt for Marker works of a merchandisable vein (t-shirts, etc.) as of 2008, including an exclusive, though temporary agreement with the US-based Icarus Films for online and retail sales of DVDs in a new wave of transfers of post-1962 films to US (Region 1) commercial and consumer products.¹¹ Prior to this mid-to-late 2000s' Region 1 release, or graduated *re-release* via the US market, select major and minor Marker films, produced from 1962 forward, had been sporadically transferred to DVD in Europe

¹⁰ Pompidou events include: *Quand le siècle a pris formes* (1978), part of "Paris-Berlin, 1900–1933: Rapports et contrastes France-Allemagne 1900–1933"; *Zapping Zone: Proposals for an Imaginary Television* (multiple versions, 1990–2009); *Immunity One* (1995–1997); *Chats perchés* (2004); and *Airs de Paris* (2007).

¹¹ Icarus Films subsequently released ten Marker films to the Region 1 art-film market: *Le joli Mai* (1963); *Far from Vietnam* (1967); *The Sixth Side of the Pentagon* (1967); *À bientôt, j'espère* (1968); *Class of Struggle* (1969); *Three Cheers for the Whale* (1972); *The Embassy* (1973); *A Grin Without a Cat* (1977); *The Last Bolshevik* (1993); *Chris Marker's Bestiary* (1994); *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich* (1999); *Remembrance of Things to Come* (2001); and *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (2004). Marker did not always permit translation of titles to English. Laurence Braunberger of Films du Jeudi acted as formal and informal "agent" (Marker-appointed intermediary) in this time frame for the release to DVD of most Marker films, those of Films du Jeudi and others. The suppression of pre-1962 films and select post-1962 films (*Cuba Si!*, *Le mystère Koumiko*, and *La bataille des 10 millions*) was, therefore, an agreed upon strategy—regardless of the owner of the technical copyright. The explanation of Braunberger's role, as above, is courtesy of Christophe Chazalon, via e-mail dated February 16, 2016. Chazalon's role in investigating the archival record of Marker is unparalleled and was utilized by the Pompidou for the "Planète Marker" exhibition in 2013, an exhibition that resulted in a 10-DVD boxed set of Marker films released by Arte (six of the films promoted as "restored"). See http://boutique.arte.tv/f9298-planete_chris_marker. Long documented on his website, <http://www.chrismarker.ch>, Chazalon's research has since been donated to Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain (FMAC), Geneva, Switzerland.

(Region 2) by comparatively benign “non-commercial” French distributors, such as Centre National de la Cinématographie (a division of the French Ministry of Culture), the early La Sept/Arte Vidéo (Arte established in 1991 as part of the public television network Arte-France and re-named La Sept/Arte in 1993), and Bibliothèque Publique d’Information (a library and media center that is part of the Centre Pompidou). No doubt these were mainly state-sponsored “public-affairs” offerings aimed at film libraries and cinemathèques across Europe. And no doubt they primarily benefited the producers, at least in the financial sense, who controlled rights to the films.¹² Yet Marker had begun to market his works in ways previously shunned. In the era of VHS (before the DVD arrived, c.1997), the film-production houses proper—for example, ISKRA, Films du Jeudi, Sofracima, Films de l’Astrophore, and Argos Films—directly released many of the films they produced with Marker to a no-doubt-limited audience. Region 1 audiences, for VHS or DVD, would obviously require an additional level of adaptation/investment, primarily subtitles. Regardless of these at-first-measured releases in Europe via VHS and DVD, many of Marker’s more marketable films would subsequently undergo conversion to DVD through major international distribution agreements (explicitly commercial Region 2 DVDs handled, for example, through both the increasingly commercialized auspices of state-sponsored Arte Vidéo and UniFrance). Many of Marker’s shorter, non-feature-length films, such as *Le tombeau d’Alexandre* (1993) and *A.K.* (1985), in part due to their original context, were often folded into non-Marker DVD collections (complementing works by, in the case of *Le tombeau d’Alexandre* and *A.K.*, Alexandre Medvedkine and Akira Kurosawa respectively).

While this wider diffusion of DVDs represents the perhaps casual or incidental marketing of the artist’s proverbial back catalogue, by the producer or rights holder, it also inaugurates a wider audience for the world’s “most-famous unknown filmmaker.”¹³

¹² A yet-to-be-made study of copyright transfer plus licensing and e-licensing of film rights from this period would properly clarify who was benefiting financially versus who was benefiting through increased exposure, plus how increased exposure is often used to justify the transfer of copyright without financial reward. Symbolic capital versus mere monetary value is the issue.

¹³ The qualifications “best-known unknown filmmaker,” “most-famous unknown filmmaker,” or “best-known filmmaker of unknown films” are generally applied by film-studies scholars to so-called engaged filmmakers of the order of Marker, Agnès Varda, Harun Farocki, and Chantal Aker-

Whether a campaign to widen the audience for these films and/or a means to finance other works, the release to DVD of select works, especially in Region 1, signals a shift to a commercial terrain (popular merchandise) either previously more or less ignored or previously inaccessible due to Marker's relative obscurity outside of art-house film. "Staring Back," exhibited in 2007 at both the Wexner Center and Peter Blum Gallery, plus the diffusion of films via DVD to Region 1, thus seem to indicate the beginning of a formal relationship with the US art market, albeit a tentative relationship haphazardly begun at the very moment when the hyper-commercialized US art market, characterized by its appetite for media as spectacle, was about to temporarily collapse with the 2008 global financial crisis.¹⁴ Yet if Marker assiduously avoided the hothouse of commercial media, his rapport with the neo-liberalized art world was graduated and tentative.

What was Marker up to? "Staring Back" at Peter Blum Gallery was followed by three more photography exhibitions, in fairly rapid succession: "Quelle heure est-elle?" (May 16–September 19, 2009); "Passengers" (April 2–June 4, 2011); and "Koreans" (September 4–October 18, 2014). The editioned prints from the exhibitions were modest, neither expensive nor extensive. They were priced to go up in cost as the edition sold down. Blum subsequently operated as Marker's agent and dealer, facilitating traveling exhibitions and loans, and he often acted as curator for exhibitions in Europe.¹⁵ Blum also became custodian for an edi-

man, among others. The implication is that the engagement with radical or critical political and cultural issues makes such filmmakers automatically obscure. While true up to a point, the explosion of new media across the art world in the 1990s to 2000s, facilitated by festivals and art fairs, permitted many of these formerly obscure filmmakers to become "household names" among the art-world cognoscenti—that is, beyond cinema studies, *per se*. Given Marker's shunning of the celebrity culture associated with *nouvelle vague* cinema in the 1960s, it is also obvious that he shunned the celebrity status afforded engaged filmmakers in the 2000s, perhaps explaining his general absence from filmmaking post-2000 and his return to still photography.

¹⁴ See *Chris Marker: Staring Back*, ed. Ann Bremner (Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts/Ohio State University, 2007). Exhibition catalogue, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, May 12–August 12, 2007. Also exhibited at the 2nd International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Seville, curated by Okwui Enwezor; Peter Blum Gallery, New York, September 8–November 3, 2007; Galerie de France, Paris, "Staring Back: Un choix de photographies," February 23–April 5, 2008.

¹⁵ For example, *Les Rencontres d'Arles 2011* and the *Arsenale* portion of

tioned version of *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* and *Silent Movie*—with both appearing in conjunction with the photographic exhibitions “Staring Back” and “Quelle heure est-elle?”

Throughout this period, post-2000, Marker’s presentation of his work became increasingly focused on the presentation and manipulation of the photographic image. With the major multimedia projects behind him, mostly conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, and with any forays into cinema restricted to the briefest and most archaic forms imaginable, a dual process was underway. The exhibition of digitally altered photographs from his analogue archive (with “Staring Back”) and the photo-edited digital images from “Quelle heure est-elle?” and “Passengers” all figure prominently in the event yet to come—his death in July 2012 and the donation of the entire contents of his studio (including presumably unedited and unreleased digital work stored on two Apple Macintosh hard drives). It is this posthumous bequest that sets in motion the retrospective analysis of how he arrived at the doors of the Cinémathèque Française, offering them what can only be a treasure trove of works that will serve to facilitate his forthcoming canonization by official French patrimony—yet in the semi-commercialized and neo-liberalized halls of the Cinémathèque Française. As yet uncatalogued and off limits, the posthumous bequest supplements the Cinémathèque’s Marker collection of dossiers, photos, and videos purchased or gifted prior to the posthumous bequest (a bequest notably contested by IMEC, given that no written agreement has been found with the Cinémathèque).¹⁶

Numerous other exhibitions of a late-Marker return to photography proper appeared, as did numerous screenings and re-screenings of his pre- and post-2000 installations, with the Arles Festival being an example of the privilege accorded his work as of 2011, and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art serving as outpost for a 2012 exhibition of photography, posters, and photogravure prints, all presumably facilitated by Peter Blum Gallery.¹⁷ These solo shows were supplemented, via Blum, with inclusion of Marker’s work in group shows, especially following his death. Include

the Venice Art Biennale 2015. Arles included a retrospective of 300 works covering the years 1957–2010.

¹⁶ As of February 2016.

¹⁷ There was also a single-screen version of *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* shown on an outdoor screen at the Garage Center for Contemporary Art, Moscow, c.2008. Rumors persist that multiple versions of this work exist, primarily due to copyright issues with T.S. Eliot’s poem, “The Hollow Men.”

the retrospectives such as at Whitechapel in London, in 2014, and the posthumous formal assimilation begins to take shape, with official and unofficial means nonetheless being conditioned by late-Marker moves to focus on ontologies of and for images—or of/for works—versus media and/or filmic genres, per se. It is this bias that permits the examination of his archive for traces of sightings of “Ithaka.” For in the Markerian universe, ontologies of the image open onto ontologies for life-works proper, his own assessment of Andrei Tarkovsky’s life-work serving as exemplary mystification for such works.¹⁸

Marker’s finances are the submerged continent in all analyses of his post-2000 marketing campaign, a campaign intimately tied to conditioning how his works would be assimilated to for-profit and not-for-profit forms of cultural patrimony. His bequest to the Cinémathèque Française was eventually priced at 40,000 euro, a paltry sum given it may contain treasures dating back to the 1940s or earlier.¹⁹ His estate was settled without a great deal of fuss, and his major films are no doubt owned by the film production companies that commissioned them. It is unclear if he received royalties for the transfer to DVD, though European intellectual property law would suggest that he did. While monetary issues are at play here, they are not the main motivation for what transpired post-2000.

What then are the motives behind the late shift? What if anything was the financial strategy of aligning himself with Peter Blum—a New York gallerist with a modest and rarified stable of artists but considerable reach? In the world of high-commercial New York art galleries, Blum is something of a saint, as is Marian Goodman—both preserving the old relationship of gallerist to artist that preceded the explosion of the neo-liberal art world of post-2000. Is it not likely that Blum simply managed the distribution and loans associated with these last works and Marker received modest payments from that operation? Did Blum take the customary 50-to-60-percent commission that New York art galleries command? Certainly there is no sign of major sales and no obvious attempt to capitalize or hyper-financialize these last

¹⁸ *Une journée d’Andrei Arsenevitch* (1999). See Gavin Keeney, “Something about Nothing,” in Gavin Keeney, *Dossier Chris Marker: The Suffering Image* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 151–213.

¹⁹ “Les archives de Chris Marker confiées à la Cinémathèque française,” *Télérama*, April 30, 2013, <http://www.telerama.fr/cinema/les-archives-de-chris-marker-confiees-a-la-cinematheque-francaise,96923.php>. The sum apparently went to distant heirs “several times removed.”

works. The entire operation is more or less discreet. Other motives are more compelling.

The distribution of Marker's last works resembles a careful diffusion across, versus an assimilation to, markets—a diffusion across markets toward the most unmarketable of products, *artistic influence*. This is a nascent form of what has come to be called “hyper-media” or “transmedia,” a dynamic perspective for works that may be said to be buried in the overall trajectory of his life-work, but which emerges emphatically, as force-field, in the 2000s. For Marker, as of 2000 (full inventory pending): Argos Films initially owned or controlled at least four films (from *Dimanche à Pékin* and/or *La jetée* to *Sans soleil*, crossing the years 1956–1982); ISKRA owned or controlled at least 17 films (from *Dimanche à Pékin* to *Level Five*, crossing the years 1956–1996); Films du Jeudi owned or controlled at least 15 films (from *The Sixth Side of the Pentagon* to *Ouvroir, the Movie*, crossing the years 1967–2010); Electronic Arts Intermix controlled and/or distributed at least 10 videos (from *Matta* to *Slon Tango*, crossing the years 1985–1993); The Wexner Center sold kitsch (with Marker's approval) and early release Region 1 DVDs; Peter Blum exhibited Marker's late works, sold editioned prints, and served as agent for loans of works across artistic outlets (including after Marker's death); Éditions du Seuil owned and controlled at least five of Marker's books (all effectively out of print);²⁰ Poptronics and YouTube were the venue for short and acerbic works notably not directly attributed to Marker (that is, they were posted via “avatars”); Second Life served as a portal to Marker's ongoing archival project;²¹ transfers of films to DVD

²⁰ *Le cœur net* (1949); *Giraudoux par lui-même* (1952); *Commentaires I* (1961); *Coréennes* (1962); and *Commentaires II* (1967).

²¹ *Ouvroir: Second Life* (2008–). Created by Chris Marker with Max Moswitzer. A virtual museum created in Second Life (c.2008), commissioned by the Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich, Switzerland. “In conjunction with the 2008 exhibition *Chris Marker. A Farewell to Movies [Abschied vom Kino]*, [March 12–June 29, 2008], at the Museum of Design in Zurich, Chris Marker presented a series of exhibits of photography, film clips, video installations and other media work, all contained within a radically futuristic museum created in the popular virtual world and free Internet portal, Second Life. Designed and frequently updated by Viennese architect and computer guru Max Moswitzer and Margarete Jahrmann, Marker's museum hovers motionless above the virtual archipelago *Ouvroir*, a creative geography of mysterious islands, sculptures and uncanny architecture. Over time, *Ouvroir* has continued to transform and expand as an interactive environment with new structures and exhibition spaces appearing regularly and often containing content related to Marker's work”: “The Second Life

(for example, via Icarus and Criterion), "Guillaume-approved" or otherwise, may or may not have benefited Marker directly (other than one-time payments); and the IMEC and Cinémathèque Française bequests had no direct commercial applications (Marker having salted IMEC and the Cinémathèque with various works over the years anyway in advance of the final, posthumous bequest). Add to these modest prospects other repositories of Marker's intellectual output, such as manuscripts donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and early Marker writings archived at *Esprit*, the journal he wrote for in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the posthumous archive "at large" becomes critical for situating life-works in the dynamic field of the art-critical continuum. Each of these moves suggests a measured disdain for the art-historical continuum insofar as it represents the canonical arrogance of authority. The bequests and the Markerian moves across diverse markets are situationally art-critical, by default, but also, no doubt, by intention. The monetary value is of no major consequence to Marker. It is even possible that Seuil has claims on parts of the IMEC and Cinémathèque bequests, at least in terms of any literary works present that either might try to leverage. "Work for hire" is the legalistic term that permits copyright to remain with whomever commissioned the work. Additionally, the works archived at the Pompidou are commissioned works that are loaned but never marketed as such—that is, never capitalized as such. "Zapping Zone," for example, part of the 2014 Whitechapel exhibition, may be updated technologically to permit its periodic re-screening (and as it went through multiple iterations under Marker's direction this is not entirely misguided), and there may be fees attached for its loan, but its assimilation is transversal—the work formally resists commodification, along the lines of the installation "Immemory" (issued in CD-ROM format and fated to become a technological relic, as did his other multimedia experiments with early Apple IIG software), by its abstruse content and primitive apparatus. The irony is that these mediatic wonders resist the campaigns of neo-liberalized new media to monetize all such works, such as through the release and re-release of editions, via diverse licensing strategies and via vertical integration of

of Chris Marker," *Harvard Film Archive*, 2009, <http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2009mayjun/marker.html>. A virtual tour of "Ouvroir" was conducted by Marker at the Harvard Film Archive on May 16, 2009. *Second Life with Chris Marker* (2009), Cambridge: Harvard Film Archive, 2009. Videocassette (DVCAM), color, 4 minutes; Videodisc (DVD), color, 4 minutes.

the product line.²² Yet such is the risk of archives—that one day, with the proper manipulation of an artist’s aura, works might be monetized. In terms of the Moral Rights of Authors, this often constitutes “breach of contract.” In the case of Marker, any overt attempt to capitalize his works will proceed in violation of the spirit of those works. For this reason, it is his written work that is most at risk today of being manipulated, while it is his unfinished or suppressed video and film work that begs proper assessment before it is leveraged as spectacle. An avalanche of newly discovered or newly refurbished Marker works, after his death, will override the delicacy of all that he accomplished through the life-work.

Thus Marker’s films have their specified homes at ISKRA et al., his major multimedia works are stashed in places where they can be updated and re-issued, and his photography has been either collected, published, or archived for posterity. What has escaped the archival impulse however is that which we see him conditioning in the last decade—the discursive/non-discursive discord of the work across works. The active archive is part of the art-critical continuum, whereas the static archive (for example, the museum) is part of the art-historical continuum. The place where both forms of the archive cross paths is in the realm of connoisseurship. The art-critical connoisseur counters the static archive of the cinémathèque and the museum. The art-historical connoisseur counters the active archive of the life-work turning it into fetish or commodity. In the Cinémathèque Française bequest (or bequests), there are no doubt time bombs of this abstruse-primitive order awaiting discovery. Foremost are the hoped-for apocryphal 8mm experiments dating to the 1940s or unissued chapters of the *Owls at Noon* project.²³

²² Poptronics has released simulations of his early Dialector experiments. See <http://dialector.poptronics.fr/>. See also, “Dialector, en conversation(s),” Arte Creative, Art numérique, Arte, October 18, 2013, <http://creative.arte.tv/fr/episode/dialector-en-conversations>. “DIALECTOR était une ébauche de programme, interrompu lorsqu’Apple a décidé que programmer était réservé aux professionnels. Il en reste des bribes, probablement incompréhensibles, ainsi qu’un spécimen de dialogue. L’original est quelque part sur des disquettes 5.25 illisibles aujourd’hui. Il est certain que si j’avais pu continuer au rythme de quelques lignes par jour, le programme aurait sans doute une réserve de conversation plus riche.” Chris Marker, “Dialector 6: Histoire,” *Dialector*, <http://dialector.poptronics.fr/>.

²³ For example, *La fin du monde, vu par l’ange Gabriel* (1946). Directed by Chris Marker. 8mm. Apocryphal. The title of the film is a reference to Blaise

The threat to Marker's archive comes not from its assimilation to cultural patrimony, per se, but from the likely manufacturing of events such as occurred with the Whitechapel exhibition in 2014, where a subtle monetization of his works was accomplished by issuing a catalogue that contained previously unavailable works translated into English.²⁴ This penchant by the art world for discovering "lost works" and then converting them into capitalization and spectacle is one of the greatest threats to Marker's legacy insofar as many works are meant to remain lost or at the least many such works are meant to remain provisional (part of the *studium* that accompanies the life-work).

The destruction and/or manipulation of such works by authors or by trustees is, ironically, often a signature gesture toward preserving the value of singular works across life-works, versus preserving the life-work as singular work—for example, by not permitting dilution of the life-work by outtakes and juvenilia. John

Cendrars's ciné-roman *La fin du monde, filmée par l'ange N-D* (Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1919). The novel was originally written as a screenplay but later published as a novel with illustrations by Fernand Léger. See Chris Mayor (Chris Marker), "Les vivants et les morts," *Esprit* 122 (May 1946): 768–85. One of two articles from 1946 preceding the adoption of the nom de plume "Chris Marker," in *Esprit*, in 1947. See also, Chris Mayor (Chris Marker), "Pierre Schaeffer: *Amérique nous t'ignorons*," *Esprit* 126 (October 1946): 511–13.

²⁴ "Chris Marker will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue. It includes key essays by the curators; texts by critics Raymond Bellour and Arnaud Lambert; plus the first English translations of two key early writings by Marker, an essay on Jean Cocteau's film *Orphée* (1950) and his short story *Till the End of Time* (1947), which takes place the day after VJ day amidst a torrential rainstorm and features a demobilised soldier subject to apocalyptic visions, anticipating Marker's most famous film, *La Jetée* (1962)": "Chris Marker," Press Release, *Whitechapel Gallery*, 2014, <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/about/press/chris-marker/>. Marker was opposed to his early writings being translated into English as illustrated by the fact that the editors of *Exact Change* requested exactly such in the 1990s and were offered instead the English version of *Immemory*. Additionally, the curators managed to find "a rare version of Chris Marker's masterpiece *La Jetée* (1962) with an alternative opening sequence" ("Chris Marker," Press Release). Another version of *La jetée* at the Brussels Film Archive with a second instance of moving images suggests that Marker made multiple versions of this film, reducing the film to its final version in steps that eliminated the use of the moving image. There is speculation as well that the film might have been first made as a motion picture and then converted to a sequence of stills, contravening Marker's story that he only had access to a movie camera for one day.

Ruskin's supposed handling of J.M.W. Turner's bequest to the National Gallery is instructive—as story versus as fact.²⁵ The drawings reputedly “excised” by Ruskin (the nudes) were those that Ruskin found offensive to his own perceptions of Turner's significance. Yet Turner's life-work was conditioned by Ruskin's life-work—a curious turn for both artists insofar as Ruskin most famously defended Turner in *Modern Painters* (1834), to then more or less manage his posthumous reputation as trustee of his estate. The great scandal of official or authorized works is that they are part of a process of canonization and monetization that runs up against the grain of life-works (since the authentication of works is the official form of controlling an artist's output).

The production of saints is a socially determined affair. Marker's archive, while no doubt brimming with forms of “incompletion” and “ungovernability,” is the perfect or exemplary instance of a bequest that requires sequestration from authority versus by authority. In particular, it is the Cinémathèque bequest that will test the capabilities of authorized archives against the integral spirit of works that tempers and conditions all archival impulses. The spirit of the life-work transcends the singular work, as the life-work transcends mere monetization and canonization.

There is no sign that Marker was concerned with the monetary issues of intellectual property other than to prevent the exploitation of his work by for-profit and hyper-commercial interests. Most critically, it is possible to detect in Marker's approach to diffusion and assimilation the ordinary impulse of *droit moral*—the safeguarding of the legacy at the expense of its rote capitalization. This legacy is the spirit of the work, and Marker's works may all be judged by their expression of art work as “gift”—the idea of “bequest” then turning upward, toward origins, and toward mythic landscapes for origins. Magical-realist prospects are the intermediate result. The bequest as primordial gift suggests the foundation for resisting assimilation (for evading the dictates of genres and markets for and toward other purposes).

²⁵ The lion's share of the Turner Bequest (300 paintings, 30,000 sketches and watercolors) is now at the Tate Gallery, London. See David Blayney Brown, “J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours,” *Tate Gallery*, December 2012, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/project-overview-r1109225>. See also, Sarah Lyall, “A Censorship Story Goes Up in Smoke,” *The New York Times*, January 13, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/13/arts/design/a-censorship-story-goes-up-in-smoke.html>.

IV. EDITIONED WORKS

Marker's primary means of pre-positioning his work across disciplines toward its reception and assimilation is not to be found in the multimedia installation proper, in which he cannibalizes his and others' works, but in the serialization and editioning of works, such as when he indulges what has come to be known as *découpage intégrale*—the conflation of effects he produced for film magazines but which he also produced in his two-volume *Commentaires* for Seuil and in a late book-length presentation of *La jetée* for Zone Books.²⁶ Much has been said about his weaving of image and text (and the often-distressed relationship in films between image and voice-over), whereas less has been said about the subtle shifts between iterations of key works.²⁷ Given *La jetée* (1962)

²⁶ Chris Marker, *La jetée: Ciné-roman* (New York: Zone Books, 1992). First versions produced in the 1980s by Kargo. Re-issued as *La jetée: Ciné-roman* (Paris: Kargo/Éditions de l'Éclat, 2007). *Découpage intégrale* implies a "complete" versioning of the film in print form, though this is effectively impossible and print versions generally serve to re-purpose the work through selective presentation. At the least, stills or photograms are extracted from the film and the narrative (or portions of the narrative) is reproduced as accompanying text.

²⁷ Regarding minor shifts in the composition of the layout for *Commentaires 1*, between its first edition in 1961 and its second edition in 1967, see Rick Poyner, "The Filmic Page: Chris Marker's *Commentaires*," *Design Observer*, March 22, 2014, <http://designobserver.com/feature/the-filmic-page-chris-markers-commentaires/38371>. While these may be minor from a design point of view, they are indicative of a pattern in Marker's work that appeared with print presentations of *La jetée* in the early 1960s when key discursive images vanished (including an associated line of text). See Réda Bensmaïa, "From the Photogram to the Pictogram: On Chris Marker's *La jetée*," trans. Alison Rowe, with Elisabeth Lyon, *Camera Obscura* 24 (September 1990): 139–61 (in special issue, "Unspeakable Images," eds. Elisabeth Lyon and Raymond Bellour). First published as "Du photogramme au pictogramme: À propos de *La jetée* de Chris Marker. Pour une analytique future des fondus-enchaînés et des fondus-au-noir," *Iris* 8 (1988): 9–39 (in special issue: "Cinema and Narration II"). Also delivered as a paper at the 4th Symposium Internacional de Teoría del Espectáculo, "Discursivo televisivo y cultura de masas," organized by the Instituto de Cine y Radio-Televisión and the Department of the Theory of Languages, University of Valencia, Spain, June 30–July 3, 1987. The first print presentation by Marker of *La jetée* was Chris Marker, "*La jetée*," *L'avant-scène du cinéma* 38 (June 1964): 23–30. "*Commentaires* presents the scripts of five films directed by Marker: *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953, co-directed with Alain Resnais), *Dimanche à Pékin* (1955), *Lettre de Sibérie* (1957), *Description d'un combat* (1960) and *Cuba Si!* (1961), as well as an [unmade

is his cinematic masterwork, after which he more or less refused to talk about anything that came before, the subtle variations in its presentation, dissemination, and assimilation suggest that the 29-or-so-minute work has no actual internal time constraints applied to it—internal in the sense applied by Agamben to literary works that exhibit an eschatology embedded in a metrical apparatus (an incarnational spirit that has theological implications for singular works, but in Marker's case, across works).²⁸ This also accounts for the outsized speculative range given to criticism of,

or unreleased] project, *L'Amérique rêve* (1959). In each case, Marker puts stills from the film into or alongside the text. It would be easy to take such plasticity for granted today, although this degree of integration of text and image in a film book, or any kind of small-format book for continuous reading rather than reference, is still unusual. At the time, it was a remarkable accentuation of the image in relation to the text. Marker uses wide fore-edge margins, and spaces between the paragraphs and other kinds of writing, such as song lyrics, to create open, dynamically organized layouts. The effect is to make all the elements appear to float in loosely placed, almost provisional arrangements. Turning the book's pages, text and image strike the eye as being equally important" (Poyner, "The Filmic Page," italics added). Marker's use of *découpage* also appears in service to others; for example, "Cuba Sí," *L'avant-scène du cinéma* 6 (July 1961): 45–51; "À Valparaiso (Court métrage de Joris Ivens, 1963)," *L'avant-scène du cinéma* 76 (December 1967): 50–57; "Europort–Rotterdam (Joris Ivens, 1966)," *L'avant-scène du cinéma* 99 (January 1970): 43–54; and "A.K.: Texte des commentaires et photogrammes," in Akira Kurosawa et al., "Ran: Suivi de AK," *L'avant-scène du cinéma* 403/4 (June–July 1991): 124–41. *Cuba Sí! Cuba, Yes!* (1961) was directed by Marker, with assistance from Dervis Pastor Espinosa, Saul Yelin, Eduardo Manet, and Selma Diaz. "Shot rapidly in January 1961 during the first alert period (you know, at the time when the majority of French papers were hooting over Fidel's paranoia in imagining himself threatened with invasion), it aims at communicating, if not the experience, at least the vibrations, the rhythm of a revolution that will one day perhaps be held to be the decisive moment of a whole era of contemporary history" (Chris Marker, "Preface to the Script," in Georges Sadoul, *Dictionary of Films*, trans. and ed. Peter Morris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 74–75). Censored from 1961–1963. For a summary, see Sarah Cooper, *Chris Marker* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 32–37, and Birgit Kämper and Thomas Tode, eds., *Chris Marker: Filmessayist* (Munich: CICIM, 1997), 232–36. Production: Les Films de la Pléiade. 16mm (blown up to 35mm), black and white, 52 minutes.

²⁸ The primary example used by Agamben is the sestina. See the origins of this line of thought in Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), first published as *Uomo senza contenuto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1970), and, subsequently, its further development in Agamben, *The Time that Remains*.

and commentary on, *La jetée*—its mnemonic resources accessing a reserve ground in images that might be said to be the origin of cinema. Thus the specular relationship between *La jetée* and *L'ambassade*, bracketing 1962 and 1972, which are both warnings in a sense, as Marker was no doubt aware of the artistic significance of ten-year cycles.²⁹

Thus Marker's long-term archive as life-work represents one analogue for the existential rites of works as rights for works and authors:

"Chris Marker" himself can be thought of as an archive, not just possessing one. He is a repository of 60 years of historical, social, and cultural thought and he uses any means at his disposal to make this wealth of material available to the world. Of course he does not do so dispassionately; he enriches whatever he comes in contact with. This is Marker the artist at play. He is both the archive and the researcher mining it (himself), unearthing memories and images to shape and share....

This archival impulse is manifested in many differing ways in Marker's work: the "serialization" of the *Petite Planète* travel guides of the 1950s and '60s, the collective film series *On vous parle* and *Ciné-Tracts* of the 1960s and '70s, and the 13-part television documentary *L'Héritage de la chouette* (*The Owl's Legacy*) from 1989; his documentation of significant cultural figures of the 20th century: Alexander Medvedkin, Akira Kurosawa, Andrei Tarkovsky, Simone Signoret, Yves Montand; his impulse to record and preserve the world around him via film, video, and photography; producing "open" associative works which require viewers to make connections and discern meaning: *Le Fond de l'air est rouge* (*A Grin Without a Cat*, 1977), *Sans Soleil*, the various installation works; and publishing "archival" signposts and roadmaps to his own cultural legacy: his photography books and collected film scripts, his CD-ROM *Im-memory*.³⁰

²⁹ "Warning" in the sense that Michelangelo Antonioni's *Eclipse* (*L'eclisse*, 1962) was also a warning.

³⁰ Patrick Friel, "Chris Marker and the Archival Imperative: *La Jetée*: *Ciné-roman* and *Staring Back* by Chris Marker and *Chris Marker* by Sarah Cooper," *Senses of Cinema*, September 2009, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/book-reviews/chris-marker-and-the-archival-imperative-la-jetee-cine-roman-and-staring-back-by-chris-marker-and-chris-marker-by-sarah-cooper/>.

What escapes this summary of a life-work as serialized archival project based in the archival impulse for life-works, positioned as superimposition atop other such works (for Marker, Giraudoux et al. as exemplar), is that the forward or positive drive for such works also contains that internal time-sense that negates the linearity and the positivity of the motion toward producing archival “dead” weight (a *con*-substantial body of authorized works)—a figurative “weight” that offers gravity to works that seek nonetheless to propose worlds within worlds (the making of alternative, “ungovernable” worlds). Marker’s worlds and works are a-politically political and a-temporally temporal to *remain* ungovernable in the Agambenian sense. The paradoxes contain a grain of the Real (of Truth), while the magical-realist reckonings across the works suggest that internal time-sense that opens onto what can only be described as an apparent limitlessness for images that speak of other worlds. The editioning of works across life-works produces a “dialogue” across works and amongst works, permitting permutations that otherwise were suppressed or disallowed—or not noticed at first. This, in part, explains the longevity of the discourse of *La jetée*, of its eternal return (within itself and within film studies). There is a universalizing spirit operative in the editioning of *La jetée* not quite of Marker’s making.³¹ Indeed, Marker once said that the still images produced the film anyway; an admission that comes as close as possible to a confession that his life-work as archivist (some would say *bricoleur*) is to let life speak for itself (to give life to works).

Ouvroir (2008) and *Immemory* (1997) are the densest of Marker’s provisional archival projects en route to the imposed gravity of the life-work, the former set in Second Life (an Internet portal and virtual world established in 2003), and the latter designed and marketed in CD-ROM form. Both require a type of aimless wandering by anyone wishing to access the internal resources of the work. Indeed, *Ouvroir* is notably marked by its extreme temporal measures—the events staged in its diverse architectural tableaux and the tours conducted by Marker between its inception in 2008

³¹ One can detect this in the elaborate formal, analytical, and semiological-structuralist study based upon both a *découpage* of *La jetée* prepared at the Université de Lyon II, under the direction of Jean-Louis Leutrat, and a copy of the film in the CRDP de Lyon. The *découpage* “plan par plan du film” was realized by the “Cinéma” section of the Centre de Linguistique et de Sémiologie, with reference to the theoretical writings on cinema of Albert Laffay, Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, Jean Mitry, Edgar Morin, Pierre Schaeffer et al.

and his death in 2012.

Both are classic mnemonic-architectural tableaux—memory theaters—yet divisively disposed to an indeterminate plurisignation that borders on the incomprehensible, as contemptuous archive.³² If in the classical Memory Theater (as detailed by Frances

³² Regarding *Ouvroir* and 2008, see Jean-Michel Frodon, "Hyper Marker," *Cahiers du cinéma* 634 (May 2008): 82–84. Regarding multiple Marker events c.2008 ("excès de publicité"), see "Chris Marker: Staring Back" (with versions at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, Peter Blum Gallery, New York, and at the Galerie de France, Paris, February 25–April 5, 2008); Arté Vidéo release of *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (with À bientôt, j'espère, *Puisqu'on vous dit, 2084, La sixième face du Pentagone, L'ambassade*); the book version of *La jetée* (Kargo and Éclat); and "Ouvroir (Second Life)." See also, Michel Favre's "Chris Marker's L'Ouvroir": Part One, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jelpcHh7mjk>, Part Two, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1cey1umml0>, and Part Three, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9A1H7wokkU>. The most complicit aspect of *Immemory* in terms of indeterminacy and incommensurability, the twin pillars of the post-modernist condition, was "Xplugs"—never resolved and constantly shifting from iteration to iteration. Divided into seven principal zones: Cinema, War, Travel, Photography, Poetry, Memory, and Museum (X-plugs). See Michael Wood, "Immemory Lane," *Artforum* 41, no. 6 (February 2003): 33. "The most recent topography of Marker's memory presented as a CD-ROM.... The fluid, multidirectional navigation of the CD-ROM liberates Marker's memory from the linear constraints of film and allows the user to digress at their own pace through the hypermedia fabric of his past": Catherine Lupton et al., "Total Recall: Film, Video and Multimedia Works by Chris Marker," *Film Comment* 39, no. 4 (July–August 2003): 50. "Immemory is the first CD-ROM project by French filmmaker Chris Marker. Marker's recent works have explored computers, multimedia, and non-linearity, traversing the passages between documentary and fiction. In *Immemory*, Marker charts a haunting journey through memory, cinema, photography, war and literature, tracing an itinerary or map of an imaginary country. This voyage takes us from the 'Madeleine' at the intersection of Proust and Hitchcock through an archive of image and text, and culminates as a self-portrait. Marker states that his object was to 'present the "guided tour" of a memory, while at the same time offering the visitor a chance for haphazard navigation': "Immemory: Chris Marker," *Electronic Arts Intermix*, n.d., <http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=2061>. See also, Laurent Roth, Raymond Bellour, *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine? À propos du CD-ROM "Immemory" de Chris Marker* (Brussels: Yves Gevaert Éditeur; Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1997), and Kämper and Tode, *Chris Marker*, 331–33. *Immemory One* (1995–1997) is more or less contiguous with *Le 20 heures dans les camps* (1993), *Silent Movie* (1994–1995), *Casque bleu* (1995), and *Level Five* (1996). See Raymond Bellour, "The Book, Back and Forth," in *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine?* 125. For comments on the migration of the zone "Xplugs" to the Internet, see Bel-

Yates), thoughts are associated with architectural forms so that they might be recalled with ease, for Marker they are placed in the theater of memory such that they might form a surreptitious architecture of memory, suggesting a momentary arrest of the transmigration of ideas, if not the Proustian transmigration of souls (souls committed to trees, and trees as a result ensouled). The difference is that Marker is attempting to recall a stream of images, not ideas or words, per se, for recitation, and the theater he creates in *Ouvroir* and *Immemory* is intended to permit others to—hopefully—access some small part of that universalizing tableau of images in his works that shade into abstract ideas (and vice versa). Some of the loveliest images in *Ouvroir*, almost idylls within the more complex wildernesses of the site, occur when rectilinear pools of water appear in one of several galleries, with images flowing across the surface, with the viscous immersibility of memory portrayed in the ability of visitors to Second Life, via stylish or clownish avatars, to stand “midstream” unscathed, reveling or bored with the flow of images rising and falling in waves. As both *Ouvroir* and *Immemory* have Guillaume-en-Égypte (Marker’s feline familiar) as nominal guide, the faux-frivolous nature of the ventures represent what many have portrayed as Marker’s sense of humor and laissez-faire attitude toward popular culture. The frivolity of these provisional archives is, however, exceptionally temporal, as are almost all instances of Marker playing with popular culture—or, the so-called street. The gravity field of the life-work apparently requires the occasional dalliance with light-heartedness, as compensatory rite, even if that light-heartedness is primarily presented via cats, elephants, owls, or whales. The entire premise of *Chats perchés* (2004) is its elusiveness in the face of socio-political vacuousness.³³

lour, “The Book, Back and Forth,” 130–31, 152n35, 152n36. *Immemory*: Interactive, CD-ROM-based installation (two video projectors, one video monitor, three computers with a mural of Guillaume-en-Égypte); published in France, in 1998, by the Centre Pompidou, and in the US, in 2002, by Exact Change.

³³ “In his latest film Chris Marker offers a lively, roaming examination of political dissent in 21st-century France and an energetic return to the film essay form that he pioneered. Intrigued by the enigmatic appearance of an insouciant graffiti cat, grinning from ear to ear, perched defiantly high across the walls of Paris, Marker set out to track the feline pattern and the broader mood of the post-9/11 city. Marker’s search eventually leads him to discover a sudden reassertion of political voice by Parisian youth, a spirited defiance to the American invasion of Iraq and the insurgent French ultra-right, with the grinning cat icon and emblematic participant”: “The

The weight of Marker's life-work is only momentarily countered by such whimsical moments. If they are a significant trend, they are also a classic "sign" (or anthropomorphic-anamorphic semaphore) that is the equivalent of the natural wonders that appear from time to time within his filmic works (the sequoia section of *La jetée*, borrowed from Hitchcock's *Vertigo*)—or of the innocence that lies at the far side of his life-work, such as the three Icelandic blondes (the three young graces) of *Sans soleil* (1983):

The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland, in 1965. He said that for him it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images, but it never worked. He wrote me: one day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader; if they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black.³⁴

V. PRE-1962 MARKER

It is not necessary to invoke Gilles Deleuze to discuss affect in cinema, for in many ways 1962 was the beginning of what J.G. Ballard has called, by way of the novel *Super-Cannes* (2000), the "death of affect." So too can Marker's *La jetée* be seen as a consummate defense of affect, but for reasons that have little to do with what would come to be a cottage industry in film studies by the 1990s.³⁵ If Marker summarily dismissed discussing everything he had done pre-1962, it was in part because 1962 marked the end of idealism and naivety in post-war, leftist political engagement as

Case of the Grinning Cat (Chats perchés), Harvard Film Archive, 2009, <http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2009mayjun/marker.html>. *Chats perchés* was Marker's last major film.

³⁴ Chris Marker, "Sans soleil/Sunless," *Marker Text*, n.d., http://www.markertext.com/sans_soleil.htm.

³⁵ See Nadine Boljkovac, "Mad Love," in Nadine Boljkovac, *Untimely Affects: Gilles Deleuze and an Ethics of Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 91–112, for a discussion of *La jetée* in terms of its use of affect but also the admission that Deleuze avoided mentioning Marker as much as Marker avoided mentioning Deleuze—meaning, they ignored each other. "As its contemplation of experience in an often intolerable world profoundly calls upon the senses, this short film imagines an emancipatory freedom or potential beyond our bodies' corporeal, fragile human suffering through the most productive and creative means possible" (Boljkovac, 110).

well as the onset of the first waves of post-Marxism that would find temporal refuge in stylish forms of intellectual agitation as typified by, for example, *Tel Quel*.³⁶ Alain Resnais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1962) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'ecclisse* (1962) are of the same intellectual and art-historical provenance—a shift in emphasis toward meditations on “loss of meaning.” The darkening prospects of the Cold War period included multiple cross-currents, including the prospect of nuclear annihilation, endless modernist anomie and unrest, incipient post-modernist alienation, and the repeated internecine battles of the Old and New Left through the 1960s to the late 1970s. Pre-1962 becomes in such a scenario a paradoxically rich ground by which to further explore how and why Marker editioned and archived works, leaving them behind as he moved forward, dodging anything politically correct or incorrect, including popular acclaim, personal success, or any position resembling political or cultural authorization of works in the increasingly commercialized milieu of art cinema.³⁷

³⁶ Regarding *Tel Quel*, the journal, see Fredric Jameson's review of three books on the subject: “Après the Avant Garde,” *London Review of Books* 18, no. 24, December 12, 1996, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v18/n24/fredric-jameson/apres-the-avant-garde>. Jameson: “The new journal had somehow to affirm its originality in an already crowded field. Thus, it could not have anything in common with the hegemonic Sartrean journal, *Les Temps modernes*, but must be more pragmatically literary, and non-engagé (something all the more striking when we remember that France was then still in the throes of the Algerian war). In this sense, the Nietzschean motto of the eternal return, which gave the journal its name, stands as something of a deliberate provocation: ‘I want the world, and I want it as it is’—*tel quel*.” As harbinger of post-Marxist theory and post-structuralism, the group ran into considerable trouble c.1968 and subsequently re-fashioned itself several times before dissolving in 1982.

³⁷ In this regard, it would be useful to examine the dossiers Marker authorized over the post-1962 period, usually assembled by film critics. He famously used these opportunities to sow disinformation and to perpetuate myths. The generation of Marker criticism has suffered ever since 1962 with critics operating too close to the source of their fascination. Kämper and Tode's *Chris Marker: Filmessayist* (1997) remains the primary “bible” for comprehensive documentation of Marker's output. The all-German text includes a comprehensive listing of Marker's writings and an extensive bibliography of secondary sources organized chronologically by film, plus a filmography that includes details of first screenings and awards. Technical details and production credits in the filmography (362–76) include direction, commentary (screenplay), camera (photography), editing, sound, narration (voice), lighting, music (direction and content), production house, format, and length. The book is organized into five sections: “Texte über

In an article published in *Artsept* in 1963, Roger Tailleur summarized Marker's pre-1962 works in seven sections or branches of a genealogical tree, Section VII involving travels that distinguished that period as a peripatetic practice based in sampling a shrinking post-war world that would come to expression in the *Petite Planète* series of travel books he edited for Éditions du Seuil between 1954 and 1958:

Instead of Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, or Cocteau, or Morand's *In 80 Francs*, Marker substitutes an "around the world in 80 revolutions", and we hope to one day grasp its complete ledger. But, different to all the rest, he hardly "travels light". His eye is alive and pure, but it is far from virgin. Armed with memory, i.e. culture, bracing himself at every step with Nervalian dreams, he uses this memory and culture to illuminate and orient his path.³⁸

Marker" (15–160); "Texte von Marker" (161–96); "Rendez-vous des amis" (197–217); "Kommentierte Filmographie: Filme—Videos—Installationen—CD-ROM" (219–333); and "Anhang" (335–81). The publication follows on the Marker retrospective, October 1–26, 1995, in Berlin. Section IV, "Kommentierte Filmographie," summarizes 49 of Marker's films and multimedia installations, individually and chronologically, from *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953) to the installation "Immemory One" (1997). Section III, "Rendez-vous des amis," examines Marker's relationship with Joris Ivens, Jorge Semprún, William Klein, Gérard Lorin, Remo Forlani, and Alain Resnais through re-published texts by each, with the exception of Resnais, whom Kämper and Tode interviewed in Paris, in September 1995. For these various extracts see Robert Destanque and Joris Ivens, *Joris Ivens, ou, La mémoire d'un regard* (Paris: Éditions BFB, 1982); Jorge Semprún, *Yves Montand: Das Leben geht weiter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 234–36; *William Klein: Photographe etc.* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou/Éditions Herscher, 1983); "Gérard Lorin: Schauspieler," *CICIM: Revue pour le cinéma français* 13–14 (November 1985): 30–31; and Remo Forlani (interview with Robert Benayoun), in Robert Benayoun, *Alain Resnais: Arpenteur de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Stock, 1980), 257–58. A vast compendium of "Markeriana," the original, critical-interpretive material is restricted to the 11 essays of Section I, "Texte über Marker," and the one-to-two-page sketches of the films and multimedia projects in Section IV. The bibliography also includes a short list of radio transmissions by Marker and collaborators, including *L'aube noire* (February 10, 1949), *Cirque de notre vie* (July 23, 1949), *Jusqu'à la fin des temps* (December 30, 1949), and *La peur à la radio: Le fantastique* (May 16, 1950), all on Paris-Inter, ranging from 17 to 34 minutes (with the length of *L'aube noire* not noted).

³⁸ Roger Tailleur, "A Scarcely Critical Description of the Work of Chris Marker," trans. Adrian Martin, assisted by Grant McDonald, *Rouge*, 2007,

To situate Marker's literary-critical works of this period, only occasionally punctuated by forays into film and primarily as assistant to others (such as Alain Resnais, François Reichenbach, Walerian Borowczyk, Paul Paviot et al.), TAILLEUR describes the complex relations or influences that characterize Marker's work in the 1950s:

The reading and systematic rereading of Giraudoux in 1952 gave [Marker's previously tense and tragic work] a new aspect. Giraudoux opposes happiness to tragedy. To lived experience (Marker was a product of the Resistance, the war, the *Forthright Spirit*), he proposes the antidote of imagination. It is a proposition that Marker will adopt only partly, abandoning (by contrast) semi-fictive constructions for the sake of a more conceptual relation to everything he continues to do and see. But the tone changes completely. From the opening of *Sunday in Peking*, where Marker seizes the "I" all the more to set it free, familiar humour levels things out, emotion pierces situations, memories buzz, and irony shows its teeth. An enormous spirit of freedom sends out words to play in all corners. Such architectural and verbal virtuosity exists, no doubt, in his first novel [*Le cœur net*]: the achronological construction of its first section gives way to masterful heterogeneity in the second, the epistolary fragment leads to an inner monologue, and memory slides into hallucination, while a bravura chapter-fragment, unanimist like (maybe) the "Tonight" sequence of *West Side Story*, fuses and connects storm and concert, fireworks and special effects, in orgies of images, rattling ellipses and lush superimpositions worthy, at moments, not only of Saint-John Perse but also the best automatic writing.³⁹

<http://www.rouge.com.au/11/marker.html>. First published in *Artsept* 1 (January-March 1963), ed. Raymond Bellour; re-printed in Roger Tailleur, *Viv(r) le cinéma*, eds. Michel Ciment and Louis Seguin (Arles: Institut Lumière/Actes Sud, 1997).

³⁹ Tailleur, "A Scarcely Critical Description of the Work of Chris Marker." Of course Isaiah Berlin's well-known, often-repeated comments (in the essay "Two Concepts of Liberty," 1958) on the word *freedom* as so porous that it lacks all meaning and is open to endless interpretation contains by default what Tailleur here is giving breadth to via enormity. Berlin thus examines two instances concerning freedom that are phenomenologically or existentially oriented toward the individual versus legalistic or abstract: what progressive or regressive conditions allow a person to do or be as they wish *for others*, or not, and what imposed progressive or regressive conditions prevent a person from doing or being *what they wish*, the latter

Marker's films of this period will be utterly infused with this literary-critical "spirit of freedom" though the tense and tragic chord is also present (contra Tailleux's intention to minimize this Saturnian quality). It should be noted that this "spirit of freedom" is also marked by a "fearful symmetry," a visionary excess, or that Marker's pre-1962 works betray a synoptic vision of collective human nature as inexorably flawed, suggesting that the true address for his politics is effectively no-where or utopian. Even the post-1962 work is riven by this same discord, a Gramscian-Chestertonian pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the heart, all the way up through *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (1977; 1993) and the auto-destruction of the New Left, and further, in the incredibly complex and epistolary *Le tombeau d'Alexandre* (1993), an interrogation of Alexander Medvedkine and his complicity with Stalinist Russia.⁴⁰

instance privileging the collective in its positive or negative state. This is, of course, exactly the form or line of a "post-Kantian" critique that crosses Marker's overtly political works and inhabits the extensive humanistic *habitas* of his literary-critical works as socially and ethically determined versus merely self-indulgent and/or "artistic." Such porosity also defines the a-political political senses of his life-work across singular works that might seem merely "artistic." For an extended summary of Berlin's reflections on liberty, see Ian Carter, "Positive and Negative Liberty," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2016, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>.

⁴⁰ The voices of Péguy, Mounier, Giraudoux, and Michaux are all to be found competing for his attentions. Which one of them became the voice of Guillaume-en-Égypte? See "Guillaume-en-Égypte au Brésil/da Brasil," *Poptronics: Pop'lab*, October 2009, http://www.poptronics.fr/Guillaume-en-Egypte-au-Bresil?var_recherche=guillaume-en-egypte, and http://www.poptronics.fr/IMG/pdf_Poplab_GEE-Brazil.pdf. These documents lead to an incorporation/compilation of news-related designs Marker submitted under the pseudonym "Guillaume-en-Égypte" to the electronic review *Un regard moderne*, starting in 2004. *Un regard moderne* was founded by the collective Bazooka, going offline sometime in or around 2011. There are innumerable entries in the *Poptronic* pop'art section, from around 2007 to 2010, from, or related to, Guillaume-en-Égypte (Chris Marker). The voice of Guillaume-en-Égypte is a conflation of voices, yet it is essentially sardonic and magical-realist, channeling Michaux's fictional alter ego Plume. See, for example, Elisabeth A. Howe, "Irony in Michaux's Plume," *The French Review* 56, no. 6 (May 1983): 896–903; and Adrienne Monnier's characterization of Michaux as "Kafka Revised," in *The Very Rich Hours of Adrienne Monnier*, trans. Richard McDougall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1996), 487–89. Indeed, it was the hallucinatory literary savant Henri Michaux who reportedly suggested tearing down the Sorbonne and

The films of the 1950s leading up to 1962 include, taking into account minor and/or apocryphal roles (such as writing the non-existent subtitles for William Klein's *Les lumières de Broadway*): *Les statues meurent aussi* (1950–1953), directed by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker; *Olympia 52* (1952), directed by Chris Marker, with Jeannine Garane; *La clé des songes* (1954–1955), directed by Chris Marker; *Nuit et brouillard* (1955), directed by Alain Resnais, with the assistance of André Heinrich, Chris Marker, and Jean-Charles Lauthe; *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956), directed by Alain Resnais, with Jean-Charles Lauthe, André Heinrich; *Les hommes de la baleine* (1956), directed by Mario Ruspoli; *Dimanche à Pékin* (1956), written and directed by Chris Marker; *Les lumières de Broadway* (1957), directed by William Klein; *Le mystère de l'Atelier Quinze* (1957), directed by Alain Resnais and André Heinrich; *Django Reinhardt* (1957), directed by Paul Paviot; *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958), directed and written by Chris Marker; *Le siècle a soif* (1958), directed by Raymond Vogel; *La mer et les jours* (1958), directed by Raymond Vogel and Alain Kaminker; *Des hommes dans le ciel* (1958), directed by Jean-Jacques Languépin, with A. Suire; *Les astronautes* (1959), directed by Walerian Borowczyk; *L'Amérique insolite* (1960), directed by François Reichenbach; *Description d'un combat* (1960), written and directed by Chris Marker; and *Cuba Sí!* (1961), directed by Chris Marker, with Dervis Pastor Espinosa, Saul Yelin, Eduardo Manet, and Selma Diaz.⁴¹ Notably, Tailleux mentions only *Dimanche à Pékin*

putting up Chris Marker in its place. This elegant conflation of voices might also explain why Marker ignored post-structuralism, post-modernism, and other fashionable schools of thought in the post-1962 period. In effect, he did not need them. He already was armed with the ultimate anti-modernist, pro-humanist weapon—magical-realist utopianism and the attendant literary-critical sensibilities to outmaneuver all passing intellectual trends.

⁴¹ Marker's primary role in terms of his contributions to the collaborative projects of the 1950s was to "take up his pen" on behalf of his colleagues, though Tailleux claims, perhaps half-disingenuously, that he never imposed his own voice: "He never presses others into the task of speaking for him" (Tailleux, "A Scarcely Critical Description of the Work of Chris Marker"). For example, in Resnais's 1956 *Toute la mémoire du monde*, Marker is merely listed as one of many collaborators. In Resnais's 1955 *Nuit et brouillard*, he is listed as one of three assistant directors, though by 1995 "Resnais states that the final version of the commentary was a collaboration between Marker and Jean Cayrol": Sam Dilorio, "The Truth about Paris: Reconsidering *Le joli mai*'s Investigation of French Social Attitudes in the Early Sixties," *Film Comment* 39, no. 3 (May-June 2003): 46–47. Additionally, many of Marker's recurring technical or editorial biases in his later films may be

(1956); *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958); *Description d'un combat* (1960); *Cuba Sí!* (1961); and, indirectly, *Statues meurent aussi* (1952) and the unmade *L'Amérique rêve*, the latter which exists only as text in *Commentaires I* (1961).

Thus it is possible to dismiss most of these films, with Marker, as unimportant, and focus instead on what demonstrably represents significant archival moments for his life-work, or those projects that formalize and crystallize the voice he is developing across these otherwise minor projects on behalf of others who share his political and aesthetic point of view. For this reason the numerous projects with Seuil from 1949 through 1961 are telling, including *Coréennes* (1959; 1962), which closes a long chapter of epistolary work that will influence almost everything he does afterward anyway.⁴² As it is this literary-critical voice that has marked his contri-

traced to *Nuit et brouillard*. See Virginia Ann Bonner, "Reinventing Documentary in Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard*," 96–142, in Virginia Ann Bonner, *Cinematic Caesuras: Experimental Documentary and the Politics of Form in Left Bank Films by Resnais, Marker, Varda*, PhD dissertation, Institute for Women's Studies, Emory University, 2003. For Resnais's 1953 *Les statues meurent aussi*, Marker is generally given credit as co-director and author of the commentary. For Ruspoli's 1956 *Les hommes de la baleine*, Marker hides behind the pseudonym "Jacopo Berenizi" to contribute the commentary. For Borowczyk's *Les astronautes*, his role is unspecified, and for Vogel's 1958 *Le siècle a soif*, he seems to have contributed the commentary, as he did for Resnais and Heinrich's 1957 *Le mystère de l'Atelier Quinze*, whereas for Reichenbach's 1960 *L'Amérique insolite*, it appears that parts of Marker's unmade *L'Amérique rêve* were woven into the film, although Marker is not credited. With Vogel and Kaminker's 1958 *La mer et les jours* we find him again contributing to the "voice" of the film. Many of these films hover between post-war documentary and neo-realist fantasia or hallucination, with *Nuit et brouillard* in particular, serving as a middle ground that Marker's voice was eminently capable of commenting upon. For at this point objectivity had flown out the window and forms of subjective idealism were in play (combining elements of pietism, poetism, and surrealism), an elemental "threshold" that perhaps explains the genesis of French New Wave, a label Marker would dodge like a bullet.

⁴² The published photos for *Coréennes* date to 1957 and their "return" in the form of a 2014 exhibition at Peter Blum Gallery, and as editioned prints (starting as early as 2009), indicate their seminal nature across works. For example, "Koreans, Untitled 24, 1957, photograph mounted on black Sintra, 9 7/8 x 13 7/8 inches (25.1 x 35.2 cm), edition of 3," Peter Blum Gallery. "Coréennes is a project made in 1957 when Chris Marker was one of the few journalists who could still explore North Korea freely. The resulting photographs give an uncensored record of daily life, four years after the end of a devastating war. Those strolls were amusingly rejected by both sides of the 38th parallel: the North because it didn't mention Kim Il-Sung

bution to the films he made or assisted in making in the 1950s, it is the forms of *literary* adventurism that tell the greater part of this pre-1962 phase in his life-work.

Moving backward across the pre-1962 period, but focusing primarily upon the 1950s, Marker published three major works with Seuil: *Commentaires I* (1961); *Giraudoux par lui-même* (1952; 1959); and, slightly earlier, the novel *Le cœur net* (1949)—plus *L'homme et sa liberté: Jeu dramatique pour la veillée* (1949), “‘a play that is not a play’ on the theme of freedom” combining “literary extracts and poems by (among others) [André] Malraux, Jacques Prévert, Jean Giraudoux, Henri Michaux, John Dos Passos and Jean Cocteau with popular songs, street cries and black spirituals.”⁴³ Tailleur makes great claims, in particular, for *Le cœur net*.⁴⁴ In-between 1949 and 1961, Marker oversees the *Petite Planète* series of travel guides for Seuil. The travel series was intended as “user manuals for life on a small planet.”⁴⁵ Within these

and the South simply because it had been made on the other side of the frontier”: Peter Blum, “Chris Marker,” *Rencontres d'Arles*, 2011, http://www.rencontres-arles.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=ARL_3_VFForm&FRM=Frame%3AARL_9&LANG=English.

⁴³ Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 26. Or, Chris Marker, *Veillée de l'homme et sa liberté: Jeu pour la veillée utilisant des textes recueillis par Chris Marker*, Collection “Veillées” 4 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1949).

⁴⁴ Chris Marker, *Le coeur net*, Collection “Esprit” (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1949). Subsequent editions include Collection “Romans,” preface by Jean Cayrol (Paris: Le Club Française du Livre, 1951) and Collection “Le petite ourse” (Lausanne: La Guilde du Livre, 1960). Extract in Marcel Berger, ed., *Les plus belles histoires d'aviation* (Paris: SEGEP, 1952), 57–68. Translations in German and English: *Die Untrüglichen*, trans. Walter Maria Guggenheimer (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag des Frankfurter Hefte, 1951), re-issued in Basel by Die Brigg in 1956; *The Forthright Spirit*, trans. Robert Kee and Terence Kilmartin (London: Allan Wingate Publisher, 1951). For a brief discussion of this novel, see Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 28–30. “A slightly mythical affair about an airman, tense yet sometimes sentimental”: Jean Queval, “Chris Marker’s *Commentaries*,” *Sight & Sound* 31, no. 3 (Summer 1962): 152–53. Tailleur echoes Bellour regarding the supremacy of the word in Marker’s work: “Marker begins with the book. But the book, for him, has always been more or less a book of images. His novel, in 1949, was already riddled with invisible images. His essay on Giraudoux, in 1952, bears witness to a very sure feel for the montage of texts and images” (Bellour, “The Book, Back and Forth,” 138).

⁴⁵ Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 44. The *Petite Planète* series would return in Marker scholarship in the 2000s with a 2006 poster created by Jason Simon for Orchard Gallery, New York, showing the covers of 31 issues of the series.

books, which he contributes photographs to and for which he developed an early form of "film-essay" in passages that invoke cinema, there is the a-political political sensibility of his life-work carefully situated astride what otherwise passes as a half-surreal, half-literary guide to the countries portrayed. The use of the face of a woman on the cover of each, while often noted in Marker scholarship as privileging the feminine gaze, curiously also includes "statues"—a mnemonic gesture that sits uncomfortably within the typical presentation of the sentimental treatment his life-work is often accorded regarding the gaze of the Other. If the Other in Marker's work is often presented as the gaze of a female interlocutor, the *Petite Planète* series betrays other reasons for this supposed bias. This Other, whose gaze he seeks, only comes to its fullest expression—for Marker—in the female gaze.

Again the "psychopathy" of the death of affect comes to the fore—the precise dark and foreboding aspects of Marker's work that Tailleur attempts to discount. Such moments are, however, always there. The deep melancholy for the fate of the world is only occasionally overcome by the levity of restored affect. In this sense, the incredibly moving section of *La jetée* by way of the only moving images in the film makes much more sense, given that the film is a post-apocalyptic tragedy on one level and an ill-fated love story on another. The psychopathology of 1962 extends its tentacles forward and backward:

Cuba Si! evades nothing: neither history, economy, politics, war nor statistics, causes, consequences; neither sugar cane nor the United States. The ineluctable simplicity of this report mimics—after the virtuosities of his preceding work—the nation's program of austerity, where vigilance and tranquil strength affirm

This poster would then generate attempts to collect and exhibit all editions edited by Marker, culminating in a vitrine full of books at the Whitechapel exhibition in 2014 and a parallel event at London's ICA's art-book fair presented in association with Claire de Rouen Books, London. See "Room&Book: Chris Marker's *Petite Planète*," *Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)*, June 1, 2014, <https://www.ica.org.uk/blog/roombook-chris-markers-petite-plan%C3%A8te>. Capitalizing on this renewed interest, "a rare complete set" was offered for sale by Claire de Rouen Books at Room&Book, involving "a hunt that would take many months of following up leads and trawling French auction sites" (ICA, "Room&Book"). This manufactured event was also covered by Isabel Stevens for *Aperture*. See Isabel Stevens, "Chris Marker's 'Petite Planète,'" *Aperture* 127, Winter 2014, <http://aperture.org/blog/isabel-stevens-chris-markers-petite-planete/>.

themselves in an unshakeable feeling of justice finally won. The slogans have the limpidity of fact: revolution makes what is obvious true, culture also belongs to those at the “grass roots” ... This tone resembles—in a less ardent, more serene way—that of *Statues Also Die*: the two films are the head and tail of the same coin, negative and positive of the same photograph, defeat and victory in the same war. That, today, these two works find themselves locked up in the same vault (alongside another black sheep of the family, Jean-Claude Bonnardot & Gatti’s *Moranbong, aventure coréenne* [1958]) shows well enough how pathetic the public cries heard in France 1962 truly are—whether on behalf of a magnanimous decolonisation, or genuine independence from the United States.⁴⁶

Petite Planète could not but embody this affective trembling that supplies the significance for works across works (noted elsewhere as the cause for the trembling of images), its subtle currents coming to expression in the editorial processes Marker indulged, burying a sentiment in the images that could not be spoken of directly in the textual component.⁴⁷

Commenting upon the letter that closes *Coréennes*, for example, Tailleux notes:

The subtle, generous slalom that he traces between the penants embossed with a capital H (History, Humankind) is, without a doubt, the best possible form of humanism. The slalom is, moreover, an old specialty of this ski champion who knows how to keep his balance. Apart from Man and History, let’s recall some of the alternating gates along his path: word and image, action and contemplation, lightness and seriousness, interroga-

⁴⁶ Tailleux, “A Scarcely Critical Description of the Work of Chris Marker.” Both films were initially censored by the State.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Susana S. Martins, “Petit Cinéma of the World or the Mysteries of Chris Marker,” *Image [&] Narrative* 11, no. 1, “Chris Marker (II),” 2010, <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/57>, an analysis of the *Petite Planète* edition for Portugal, produced in 1957 (text by Franz Villier) in the middle of the Salazar dictatorship (1932–1968). For similar reasons Marker’s films would often be shelved or dismissed. In the case of the “censored” films, was it the voice or the image that disturbed the authorities the most? Or was it both? Marker wrote at least *Italie*, Collection “Petite planète” 3 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1955), under the pseudonym “Paul Lechat.”

tion and oracle, yesterday and tomorrow.⁴⁸

If with *Le joli Mai* (1962), the film that might be said to have accidentally produced *La jetée* as spectral outtake, Marker indulged so-called direct cinema, yet another genre he would later abandon, the early works extending from 1962 backward toward the originating mists of his artistic and literary output, the as-yet uncharted 1940s, indicate that his archive is an affective and echoing tableau. Voice and image approach each other, intertwine, and flirt uncomfortably, yes. But the proleptic or often-ominous non-discursive silences crossing the works like shadows curiously permit almost anything to be said whatsoever against the image.⁴⁹ Thus his hermetic existence (avoidance of interviews and cameras) and his refusal to discuss anything pre-1962 when he did comment.

Stretching toward the 1940s, associations with various artistic and political schools of thought may be found. Marker is, at

⁴⁸ Tailleur, "A Scarcely Critical Description of the Work of Chris Marker." He continues: "The other face of Marker's truth is his art. And perhaps his finest victory is the one he is in the process of winning upon these forms that he has invented and perfected. Now it can be said: André Bazin's theories of 'horizontal montage' owe too much to facility and friendship to be completely convincing. Moreover, Bazin always maintained that there was a certain visual poverty in these films—something the maker of *Sunday in Peking* would be the last to deny. Brilliant and poetic, fanciful and incisive, *Letter from Siberia* never entirely dissipates the malaise born of the disparity between the mass of its original material and the lamination of the finished product. *Description of a Struggle* and *Cuba Si!* have, on the contrary, the density of flawless works; one supposes that their maker has achieved virtually everything he wanted, how he wanted it. Marker's evolution has followed the process of an interiorisation that has enriched the image—always the densest core of his work. The banal and the exceptional, the typical and the unusual, the daily and the exemplary—between which, camera in hand, Marker continues his coming-and-going, of which we have seen above the most abstract milestones—these constitute the big-game to be tamed, within an ever more fruitful 'taking from life.'" Tailleur is referring to two notoriously complimentary reviews by Bazin: André Bazin, "Chris Marker: *Lettre de Sibérie*," *France-Observateur* (October 30, 1958), and André Bazin, "*Lettre de Sibérie*: Un style nouveau; l'essai documenté," *Radio-cinéma-télévision* (November 16, 1958).

⁴⁹ This is the "literary-critical" chord that subtends most of these early works. Narration for Marker is never merely "voice-over," but, instead, a form of discursive dissonance battling the visual regime. Yet he favors neither the discursive nor the non-discursive. This tension is traceable to the 1940s, when in avant-garde circles the image was considered superior to the word.

first, effectively operating as a journalist. The artistic and political groups include: Jeune France; the left-wing, existentially inclined journal *Esprit*; Travail et Culture; Peuple et Culture; and Le Groupe des Trente. The artistic and political journals he associated with include: *Esprit*; *Positif*; *Filmforum*; *Mercure de France*; *Film*; *Cinéma*; *Lettres françaises*; *La nef*; *DOC*; *27 rue Jacob*; *Cahiers du cinéma*; *Parallèles*; *La boîte à clous*; and *Spectacles*. Critical editions produced with others include: Doré Ogrizek, ed., *L'Afrique noire* (Paris: Éditions Odé, 1952); André Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Gavin Lambert, Chris Marker, Jean Queval, Jean-Louis Tallenay, *Cinéma 53: À travers le monde*, Collection "Septième art" (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1954); Christian Marker, Benigno Cacérès, eds., *Regards sur le mouvement ouvrier*, Collection "Peuple et culture," 5 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1951); Jacques Chevalier, ed., *Regards neufs sur le cinéma*, Collection "Peuple et culture," 8 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1954); and Pierre Barlatier, ed., *Regards neufs sur la chanson*, Collection "Peuple et culture," 9 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1954).

Marker's writings for *Esprit*, while generally considered an important milestone in his development in the early post-war period, were mostly consigned to the subsections, "Chroniques," "Les livres," and "Journal à plusieurs voix." Thus the *Esprit* years may be more critical in terms of his alliances across alliances than in the short journalistic works produced. Additionally, the *Esprit* period is given added weight by Marker scholars as it is the period when he adopted the *nom de plume* "Chris Marker."⁵⁰ The critical point re-

⁵⁰ To be exact, 1947. Two articles in 1946 signed "Chris Mayor" indicate that this was the year he began writing for *Esprit*. The year 1946 is also significant as it is the year of Jean Cayrol's *Poèmes de la nuit et du brouillard* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1946), or what will become the basis for Resnais and Marker's *Nuit et brouillard* (1955). See Roy Armes, *French Cinema since 1946, Vol. 2, The Personal Style*, 2nd edn. (London: Tantivy Press/A. Zwemmer; Cranbury: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1970). See also, Jeremy Howe, "Shorts and the Real World: The Relationship between the Short and the Feature Film," *Journal of Media Practice* 4, no. 3 (October 2003): 177–80; regarding Roberto Rossellini's *Paisa* (1946), Jacques Tati's *L'école des facteurs* (1947), and *La jetée* (1962). Lastly, 1946 is the year of Joris Ivens's 22-minute *L'Indonésie appelle*, a film that will show up on the Arte Vidéo DVD, *Joris Ivens: Cinéaste du monde* (2009), a showcase for Marker and Ivens's joint project, *À Valparaiso* (1963). *À Valparaiso* also suggests a first circumstantial link between Marker, his post-1962 Latin American sorties, and Patricio Guzmán, a then-young Chilean filmmaker he will assist during the Pinochet coup in 1973, by first supplying film stock to the young filmmaker for *The Battle of Chile* (1975–1976), a four and one-half hour doc-

garding cross-pollinations via *Esprit* and the cultural organization *Peuple et Culture* is 1947–1949. Here Marker produces “Till the End of Time,” for *Esprit* (dated “Octobre 1945,” but published in 1947), “a vivid, disquieting short story”⁵¹ that was subsequently broadcast on December 30, 1949, as *Jusqu’à la fin des temps* (a 17-minute “essai radiophonique”), by the post-war, public radio station Paris-Inter (precursor to France Inter). A true milestone would then be “L’imparfait du subjectif,” *Esprit* 148 (September 1948).⁵² Here *Esprit* and *Peuple et Culture* cross, and here we see a first sign of a shift of emphasis from objective filmmaking to subjective filmmaking in early post-war film criticism. This is also provocatively the exact timeframe (1947–1949) of the rumored

umentary trilogy about Salvador Allende’s final year, and then helping to smuggle the film out of Chile by way of Cuba. Guzmán was an assistant cameraman on *À Valparaiso*. See <http://icarusfilms.com/filmmakers/guz.html>. See also, Patricio Guzmán, “What I Owe to Chris Marker,” *Sight & Sound*, February 10, 2015, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/what-i-owe-chris-marker>. An extraordinarily elegant, if not mystifying homage by Guzmán to Marker upon the latter’s death in July 2012, the original text is dated August 2, 2012. Notably, Guzmán pays his respects to Marker at Père Lachaise cemetery where everyone thinks his ashes have been scattered. His official “resting place” (tomb) is actually at Montparnasse. Guzmán tells the story of first meeting Marker in May 1972 and the subsequent troubles leading to Marker’s intervention. After receiving the film stock, care of Marker, Guzmán describes his plan for shooting *The Battle of Chile*. It could be a summary of any filmmaker’s worries or a model for protecting one’s work from misappropriation: “We developed a plan of the conflict areas, drawn on one of the walls of our office. It was a ‘theoretical map’ that took up half of our time. It was written with black markers on white card sheets. It outlined the economic, political and ideological problems. Each of them opened onto a second layer: control of production, control of distribution, relations of production, the ideological struggle with regards to information, the approach to battle...” (Guzmán, “What I Owe to Chris Marker”). In a word, more than too much to worry about.

⁵¹ Chris Marker, “Till the End of Time,” *Esprit* 129 (January 1947): 145–51. See Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 27. “Set after the war in an unspecified location, ‘Till the end of time’ hallucinates the dissolution of the world in the mind of a shopkeeper who becomes transfixed by the mouth and voice of a mysterious woman after she has taken shelter in his shop during a rainstorm. With its descriptive economy and abrupt shifts of viewpoint, the story anticipates the cinematic construction of *Le Coeur net*” (Lupton, *Chris Marker*, 27–28).

⁵² Chris Marker, “L’imparfait du subjectif,” *Esprit* 148 (September 1948): 387–91. This essay, published in the section of *Esprit* entitled “Journal à plusieurs voix,” 372–95, was also published in German as “Der Subjektive Film,” in *DOK* (1950): 67–68.

8mm experiment by Marker, *La fin du monde, vu par l'ange Gabriel*, reputedly shot in a devastated Berlin, presumably while working with *Peuple et Culture*, and Alexandre Astruc's famous essay on *caméra-stylo*, or film as a form of writing, a concept reputedly derived from comments by Jean-Paul Sartre.⁵³ Indeed, one of Marker's first contributions to *Esprit* was "Les vivants et les morts," *Esprit* 122 (May 1946), yet published under the pseudonym "Chris Mayor." Epigraph: "...car ce n'est pas à des anges que Dieu a soumis le monde à venir...."⁵⁴

There is only one other major sighting in the public record of "Marker" pre-Marker prior to the *Esprit* years.⁵⁵ This is an enigmatic engraving by the Surrealist artist Louis Marcoussis, dating

⁵³ See Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-garde: La caméra-stylo," in Peter Graham, ed., *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 17–23 (first published in *Écran français* 144 [March 30, 1948]). Astruc's essay is considered one of the major influences on the development of Marker's approach to the film-essay. Cinematic-political links between Marker and Astruc proceed via *Travail et Culture*, and later via *Le Groupe des Trente*, whereas cultural-political links between *Travail et Culture*, *Peuple et Culture*, and *Esprit* proceed via André Bazin, Joseph Rovin, and Emmanuel Mounier. Rovin and Marker briefly co-edited *DOC*, the journal of *Peuple et Culture*, and Rovin was a "sub-editor" of *Esprit*. A split occurred, however, when *Travail et Culture* aligned itself with the French Communist Party and *Peuple et Culture* resisted. On Marker's role in the development of early post-war German cinema through *Peuple et Culture*, see Thomas Tode, "Le détonateur de la culture cinématographique allemande d'après-guerre: Les rencontres cinématographiques franco-allemandes (1946–1953)," *1895: Revue d'histoire du cinéma* 60 (2010): 100–21, <http://1895.revues.org/3871>. See also, Marie-Bénédicte Vincent, "Démocratiser l'Allemagne de l'Ouest après 1945: Une association française d'éducation populaire sur le terrain, *Peuple et Culture*," *Le mouvement social* 234 (January-March 2011): 83–101.

⁵⁴ Mayor (Marker), "Les vivants et les morts": 768; epigraph, with reference to Hebrews 11:5.

⁵⁵ Minor sightings include five articles written for *La revue française* in 1941, plus the poem "Chant de guerre," in the Lausanne-based journal, *Formes et couleurs*, January–February 1945 issue, all published under the pseudonym of "Marc Dornier" with the exception of a single *La revue française* article, November–December 1941 issue, published under the pseudonym "Le palotin giron." Marc Dornier ("pseudonyme de Christian Bouche-Villeneuve," or Marker before he was Marker) was editor of *La revue française*, which lasted a mere two issues, July–August 1941 and November–December 1941. See Christophe Chazalon, "Articles, nouvelles, poèmes, lettres...de Chris Marker," *Chris Marker*, n.d., <http://chrismarker.ch/articles/index.html>, and "La revue française (1941)," *Revue littéraire*, n.d., <http://www.revues-litteraires.com/articles.php?pg=1780>.

to about 1940. Part of a folio of engravings entitled *Les devins*, Marker who is not yet Marker appears as a young man swooning in front of a pair of spectral hands.⁵⁶ Marcoussis was in Cusset (near Vichy), in hiding, and Marker was there because his father, a banker, had been dispatched to Vichy from Paris.⁵⁷ After that

⁵⁶ Louis Marcoussis, *Les devins* (Paris: La Hune, 1946). Marcoussis died in 1941, permitting the supposition that the execution of the dry-point engraving in question dates to c.1940. "Le médium," plate 10 (19.8 x 19.8 cm.), is notated in pencil on the verso of a copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (FRBNF40285724), "Il s'agit d'un portrait de Chris Marker." The editioned folio includes a text by Gaston Bachelard and a preface dated 1943 by art critic and champion of Cubism, Maurice Raynal. It is not known who inscribed the BNF print, or when, though it was probably Bachelard. The inscription does not, however, suggest that Marker was Marker earlier than 1947. It is more likely that the notation was made after 1947, or after the folio was accessioned to the BNF. The "scènes symboliques" represent different forms of "divination."

⁵⁷ "Planète Marker," *Centre Georges Pompidou*, 2013, <http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-chrismarker/>. Under the section "Vingt Ans en 40" of this biographical sketch provided by the curators of the Pompidou exhibition (text by Bamchade Pourvali), a curious moment in 1940–1942 is noted when Marker was briefly aligned with Jeune France, a short-lived movement that he found disturbingly "moralistic" (according to this biographical summary). The movement is dissolved shortly afterward and Marker disappears into the *maquis*, joining the Resistance. Yet Jeune France, based in part on Emmanuel Mounier's concept of Personalism (socialism plus nationalism, said to be derived from the works of Charles Péguy), will lead to Marker's late-1940s work with Mounier's journal *Esprit*, founded in 1932. Thus his objections were not with Personalism but with Vichy France. Bamchade Pourvali, author of this elliptical biographical sketch, is the author of *Chris Marker* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/SCEREN-CNNDP, 2003), a book that notably examines his fictional-documentary films in relation to his travels in "Chine, Sibérie, Cuba, Israël, Japon, Paris...." Regarding Mounier's marginal role in Vichy-funded Jeune France, which he did not initiate, see William R. Rauch, *Politics and Belief in Contemporary France: Emmanuel Mounier and Christian Democracy, 1932–1950* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1972), 220. Personalism, in effect a form of left-wing Catholicism that is nominally anti-modernist, and stridently anti-capitalist, has a strange parallax associated with it that permits leftists to claim it is rightist and rightists to claim it is leftist. Its shift further left after WWII in part explains Marker's role in *Esprit*. Marker's politics, neither Social Democratic nor Christian Democratic, suffers or enjoys this same a-political political parallax—mass society of any form, consumerist or otherwise, of the left or of the right, is the enemy. This parallax also permits Jean Queval, in 1962, to compare Marker's cultural politics to that of the *New Statesman* (the London-based political journal founded in 1913 with the support of George Bernard Shaw and the Fabian Society). See Queval,

event, from the a-temporal perspective of the life-work, forward and backward in time nonetheless, “Marker” vanishes. Forward in time, from 1940–1942, he disappears into the *Maquis*, the French Resistance operating in the countryside of southeast France. Backward in time, from 1942–1940, he vanishes into his school years in the posh suburbs of Neuilly-sur-Seine, just outside of Paris. Right around the time of this double disappearance (c.1940 or c.1942), agent provocateur Henri Langlois is setting up the first versions of his ramshackle operation that will later become the Cinémathèque Française, the eventual spiritual home for Marker’s posthumous archive.⁵⁸

1936–2016. Roughly eighty years on from the double disappearance of Chris Marker who was not yet Chris Marker, “Marker” has re-materialized at 51 Rue de Bercy, Paris. Will he be well-served by the current custodians of his archive? The recent retrospective events since his death in 2012, inclusive of manufactured events typical of a sensation-crazed art world (discoveries, re-issued works, variations on works, translations of works, misrepresentations of works, etc.), suggest that his legacy is at risk of becoming yet another authorized pseudo-event, the cadre, or those who think they own him (including quite a few reputable film critics), guarding his tomb, unable to assimilate the spirit of Marker’s intentionally “ungovernable” life-work—an assemblage of archival moments that belongs to no one and to everyone, at once.

Curiously, Marker’s life-work does not lend itself to being monetized, and that is not the first-order risk that attends the management or mismanagement of his posthumous bequest to the Cinémathèque Française or other collections he has established. What is at risk is the attendant moral right not to be misrepresented and not to be subjected to an authorized reception that will only benefit those who claim control of his legacy. These mechanisms of control are mostly subtle and can be hidden, with

“Chris Marker’s *Commentaries*.”

⁵⁸ Around 1968, the Cinémathèque Française was taken away from Langlois, creating an uproar in the film world and an eventual capitulation by the State. See Louis Menand, “After the Revolution: Bernardo Bertolucci Revisits Paris,” *The New Yorker*, October 20, 2003, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/20/after-the-revolution-4>. Official French patrimony appears to include capitalizing the works of many who resisted all forms of assimilation to Capital during their lifetimes. The case of Guy Debord is also instructive, with portions of his literary estate being purchased by the Bibliothèque Nationale in 2009 to block their sale and exportation to the US.

their existence easily denied. The denizens of the cultural affairs apparatuses of the State, plus the innumerable film critics who facilitate the manufacturing of events, publications, new discoveries, translations, exhibitions, screenings, theoretical revisions, and numerous aspects of the cottage industry of film criticism proper (including the paid lecture circuit), are the likely suspects in making Marker's "ungovernable" life-work governable. Governable in this case means the dictation of the terms of engagement and control of the interpretive apparatus attached to the archive—all anathema to the spirit of Marker's work.

Yet circling back to Derrida one last time, what escapes the archive is irreducibly ungovernable anyway. What will result from the games of control, authorization, and domination is the management of relics, the veneration of the manufactured saint, and the production and maintenance of privilege and secondhand sanctity for those in control. The open secret is that the miracles embedded in Marker's work will generate new miracles—the archive will be, quite simply, the tomb for the memory of the miraculous. The mediatic white spaces of the Cinémathèque Française can hardly contain the arcanian black spaces that inhabit his work. That is to say, no archive can capture the great ellipses that govern Marker's work, nor the literary-critical echoes that leap beyond the grasp of mere film studies.

VI. POSTSCRIPT

The battle between IMEC and the Cinémathèque Française for Marker's posthumous bequest was won on the side of the arcadian and lost on the side of the arcanian. What comes to mind is Resnais and Marker's film on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956), where books arrive only to disappear into the "tomb" that is the National Library. Would it have been better for Marker's works to disappear into the vaults of the "quasi-monastic" IMEC versus into the quasi-public archives of the Cinémathèque Française, leading toward eventual "capitalization"? The question can only be answered with another, apparently unanswerable question: Which would Marker have preferred? Yet somehow the arcadian white spaces of the Cinémathèque Française are less interesting than the arcanian black spaces of IMEC.⁵⁹

In some ways it would have been more appropriate for Marker's

⁵⁹ Again: "The first image he told me about was of three children on a road

posthumous bequest to have taken up residence in the “vaults” of IMEC, where it might have been slowly studied and assimilated by non-aligned scholars, versus in the mediatic smooth spaces of the Cinémathèque Française (no longer resembling Langlois’ legendary bathtub), where it will be assessed by the authorities of cinema and new media to be capitalized by way of manufactured cultural events—new art-historical spectacle (the new norm for contemporary art). Additionally, IMEC’s collections are more conducive to the assimilation of Marker’s singular works *across disciplines*, as cinema was but one of many of his ways of working. Marker’s work across the life-work he left behind is, arguably, a matter of literary-critical and socio-cultural (socio-political) merit—first and foremost. What distinguishes life-works from mere serial works is not accomplished through simple assimilation to established forms of cultural patrimony, but, instead, by how life-works alter extant, and extensive, established forms of cultural patrimony with the assimilation of such works constituting a transformation of the terms of collective cultural assimilation toward new forms of/for life-works.⁶⁰

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in Iceland, in 1965. He said that for him it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images, *but it never worked*. He wrote me: one day I’ll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader; if they don’t see happiness in the picture, *at least they’ll see the black*” (Marker, “*Sans soleil/Sunless*,” italics added). Marker’s voice (the voice-over) in *Sans soleil* (1982) is no less ironical and sardonic than in *Le joli Mai* (1962), for which he was heavily criticized. From 1962 to 1982, the only thing that changes is the distance within the films between the subject and the object (France in 1962 and Japan in 1982). By the time of *Sans soleil*, Marker has vanished into specular regimes that encompass multiple defractions of his own voice via doubly ironized, pseudonymous voices. Sandor Krasna, in *Sans soleil*, is Marker at his most distant. The voice-over of the film is comprised entirely of letters by Sandor Krasna, read by Alexandra Stewart, returning Marker to the epistolary origins of the pseudonym “Chris Marker” in the late 1940s. Sandor Krasna re-appears in the credits of *L’héritage de la chouette* (1989) and on Flickr in 2005–2006 with photos of street demonstrations in Paris associated with the French malaise during the Chirac regime. *Sans soleil* received four prestigious awards in 1983, including Honorable Mention at the Berlin International Film Festival.

⁶⁰ Direct cinema as a form of direct action (political intervention) is but one way of reading the literary-critical and socio-cultural merit embedded in Marker’s serial works. Such might be said to inhabit key singular works or sections of the life-work (for example, the films of the late 1960s and

early 1970s produced with the SLON collective). Yet Marker's life-work transcends even these quotidian socio-political concerns, as it deploys forms of subjective and collective agency that take both discursive (linguistic) and non-discursive (pictorial) language back to a threshold where language and image begin to disintegrate and the "onto-theo-political" substrate thus deconstructed opens onto meta-critical and meta-ontological issues that are irreducibly immemorial. Such is one explanation for the incessant focus by film scholars on the theme of "immemory," plus de-familiarization or disintegration of memory, with the figure of futural intensity emerging as the primary affect for Marker's life-work.

“No-media”



The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.¹

John 3:8

I. PATRIMONIAL CAPITALISM AND ACADEMIA

The re-application of regimes of control to academia by neo-liberal capitalism is a return to pre-1900 forms of patrimonialism, a return that proceeds on several fronts all at once—yet, notably, from within and from without. “Within” connotes complicity by universities with what is imposed from “without,” while complaints against what is imposed from without from within illustrate the incomprehension and/or apathy of those actors reduced to serfdom by the new system that constitutes what Max Weber understood, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922), as the arbitrary measures required to effectively administrate a “royal household.”² Today it is the managerial class from top to middle that institutes and maintains the various regimes of control with constant re-branding campaigns plus capital projects covering the tightening of the immaterial and material means of control and domination. It is the absence of free or independent agency that constitutes the status of retainers or slaves who participate

¹ John 3:8, *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible*, eds. Donald Senior, John J. Collins, and Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, Rev. edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al., 3 vols. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968). First published as *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/P. Siebeck, 1922).

in the regimes of power that lead, increasingly, in incipient “royal households” to the suppression of transformation—either social, economic, or cultural. The creeping determinism of such systems is palpable, and the intellectual class (the faculties) is the most malleable or, per Antonio Gramsci, the most traitorous. This petite bourgeoisie will go whichever way the wind is blowing, according to Gramsci, following the perks and incentives to conform, while it is the peasant class (the students) who will rebel first, which also explains why universities today pretend to privilege students over faculties. The obvious attempt to co-opt revolt at the lowest levels includes converting students to consumers, with the ability of students to rate their faculties serving as the most blatant inverted marketing device instituted via faux-democratic auspices that are part of the conversion process. For this reason, any significant change within the present-day, neo-liberalized academic system (one that is beginning to resemble a factory for the production of cultural goods, with students as future serfs and faculty research as hoped-for marketable commodity) will need to originate in the lower echelons and proceed to the upper echelons via increasingly Balkanized faculties. In a rather complex equation that is also not reducible to conventional revolutionary intervention, the Name of the Father will need to be replaced with the “Name of the Holy”—the Name of the Holy being, in this case, roughly equivalent to speculative inquiry proper. Speculative inquiry in this scenario will also have to have an anti-utilitarian lining that appears, at first, as anti-capitalistic. The Name of the Holy thus becomes the temporal address of the anti-capitalist sublime.

The abject social-media aspects of academia today (both at the level of marketing the university and/or the marketing of scholarship) mirror the abject research and publication strategies that have overtaken formerly integral processes of conducting, disseminating, and archiving works—the primary vehicle for archiving works having been actually existing books in actually existing libraries (or actually existing books in the hands of actually existing readers). Mass digitalization is the equivalent of Pandora’s Box for such “old-world” concerns, permitting the mining of scholarship without the intermediary prospects of a reader (the presence of a conscious and critical subject). It is the purview of metrics that drives research today; and it is metrics and research assessment frameworks that have facilitated the internal capture of research with the aim of commodifying it beyond academia proper. Cognitive Capitalism is a direct result of digital technologies run amok. Complaints from within academia against

the predatory practices of for-profit publishers (for example, obscenely overpriced subscription rates for high-end journals) are hollow insofar as the research assessment regimes established from within privilege quantitative means for calculating the so-called return on investment, a reductive measure that focuses primarily on faculty budgets, faculty salaries, and the cost of visiting research fellowships and the like, but rarely includes administration costs or physical plant. A 60–40 split favoring administration is not unusual in simple salary outlays. These more or less self-imposed strictures trap scholars within the corrupted cycles of peer review, digital and analogue publications via prestigious and preferred journals, and the subsequent toxic capture of value via citation, replication, and conformity.³ Additionally, "outsourcing" the evaluation of research via peer review, approved publication venues, and associated platform-based metrics confers upon research a litmus test that supports the very loss of agency faculties now bemoan—for example, the loss of autonomy and the death of critical inquiry within the increasingly digitalized world of cultural production. The Digital Humanities, for example, promotes the quantitative cannibalization of works, using the new technologies of data- and text-mining, suggesting that a larger data set automatically connotes a higher quality for the conclusions of any such "study." The result is an inward-spiraling vortex of intellectual determinism that further distresses any normative definition of an open field—the first prerequisite for speculative works that might alter the terrain of cultural production (with cultural production here figured as aesthetic field). New forms of past insurrections (such as Paris

³ One possible model for subverting intolerance or corruption in peer-reviewed journals in the Arts and Humanities, short of avoiding such journals altogether, is to use the model to test works—submitting preliminary works with full knowledge that if the submission passes the overt biases of the editors and goes out to peer review, the results may then be used to judge just how offensive or acceptable the work is to prevailing protocols within a journal or discipline. If the result is negative, then the comments can be *détourned* by amplifying the relevant passages and publishing the work elsewhere (such as in long-form monograph, where it may be buried amidst more permissible material, if necessary, or in an edited long-form book where it may actually be acceptable as a contribution to a collection of works by multiple authors). In the case of no response whatsoever, a common phenomenon (especially in peer-reviewed journals that are also private clubs), the author is left with his/her own conscience to consult. "No response whatsoever" is also the default position for academic and non-academic publishers today, insofar as the courtesy of weighing and responding to submissions has become entirely optional.

in 1968) by which the architecture of patrimonial closure might be challenged look less and less likely given the tightening strictures of the processes in play, plus their immaterial agency, with the slow-university movement or the open-access movements signaling shifts that will only protect certain forms of scholarship already given to an ameliorative humanistic agenda resembling the failed social-democratic bias of liberal civil society. In fact, one of neo-liberal capitalism's prime targets *is* civil society, or what remains of open networks that mediate between patrimonial systems and the so-called "people." Yet campaigns for open-access publication are one of the few instances where the predatory excesses of market fundamentalism may be countered within the university, even if the entire rebellion proceeds via digital means. The likelihood of new patrimonial clubs being formed within the open-access movement is, however, a case for concern insofar as the more pernicious aspects of *de facto* censorship will proceed via re-calibrated forms of peer review and alliances across disciplines that are serviced by the conference circuit and the social-media practices associated with academic narcissism. For the latter to collapse, the necessary correctives include exiting viral networks, excluding certain disciplines from authorized venues of reproduction and circulation, and the creation of new walled gardens resembling the confraternal monastic enclaves of the so-called Dark Ages where the Name of the Holy may once again be acknowledged.⁴

From such "quarters," configured without the historical baggage of segregation, enforced penury, and *de facto* slavery to religious or political ideology, it is possible that new-old forms of confraternal production might emerge. It is also possible that the equivalent of distributed-ledger accounting *for works* might be instituted as substitute for the bankrupt forms of authorship and control of intellectual property operative today. In fact, the presence of an *invisible ledger*, versus utilizing off-the-shelf blockchain technology, a system currently undergoing its very own neo-liberal conversion to financial service industry standards, leads to the provocative image of "no-ledger"—"no-ledger" a noetic image for a renascent communitarian ethic that reverses the technocratic rush to accounting for, monetizing, and

⁴ See the importance of writing for the Carthusians, in Michael G. Sargent, "The Transmission of the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27, no. 3 (July 1976): 225–40.

controlling works. With the specter of cryptocurrency becoming a prominent post-capitalist response to the crimes of late Capital, apparent age-old forms of cultural production come back into view, not so much exterminated over the centuries but forced into the wildernesses of speculative inquiry and marginalized practices that generally do not register for Capital other than as anomalies to be studied from a distance and co-opted if/when value might be extracted.

II. TOPOLOGIES OF INDIFFERENCE

There are topologies of difference (theorized beautifully, here and there, in philosophical exegesis as caesuras and aporia) and there are topologies of indifference (theorized, here and there, as alienation, abjection, and anomie), the latter exemplified by the novels of Hermann Hesse and, to a degree, Thomas Mann. While both topologies are primarily existential states, experienced as crises to normative or everyday consciousness, the latter has increasingly become a professional state inside of neo-liberal academia as it increasingly comes under the control of market forces.⁵ What must be noted in terms of topologies of difference, is that crisis is productive of positive change—doubt and reflection induce introspection and a form of critical-aesthetic revelation that produces re-birth for subjects without the attendant baggage of ideological or authorized systems. Under such auspices, re-birth for subjects and citizens proceeds without mediation. This is, in effect, veneration of the Name of the Holy in an a-theological modality.

Enforced or elective indifference cuts two ways, thus constituting a chiasmus (arguably, the first sign of an emergent topological knot). On the one hand, academics are increasingly begrudging of the assault on academia that is primarily externally imposed, while at the same time it is managed from on high from within academic bureaucracies (the invasion of management strategies, to maximize results and profits, resembling invasive species that

⁵ For an analysis of the expansion of managerial and administrative regimes within academia, see Benjamin Ginsburg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-administrative University and Why It Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a review of Ginsburg's book, see Alan Ryan, "Review: *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-administrative University and Why It Matters*," *Times Higher Education*, December 1, 2011, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/books/the-fall-of-the-faculty-the-rise-of-the-all-administrative-university-and-why-it-matters/418285>. article.

colonize and de-stabilize entire so-called native ecologies). The ersatz walled garden of the academy is thus caught in the double bind of serving two masters: enlightenment-era universalist precepts embedded in public universities since at least the nineteenth century, and late-modern neo-liberalism intent on disciplining and extracting tribute from what is perceived as publicly funded institutions that have for too long been indulged under the rubric of “institutions of higher learning.” Thus the second cut is on the reverse bias: neo-liberal capitalism, which seeks rent wherever there might be untapped or undervalued resources, is intolerant of dissent and expects compliance or capitulation. One of the defining characteristics of neo-liberalism is that it is excessively non-democratic.⁶ Those who disagree may leave for whatever version of “Canada” they might find, in whatever corner of the world the functional equivalent of a “socialist paradise” might yet exist. For similar reasons, and to simply escape the overwrought state of their own critical-aesthetic milieu, novelist and critic John Berger long ago chose rural southeast France, while filmmaker and second-generation contrarian Jean-Luc Godard chose the hillsides of Lake Geneva.⁷ Yet both fired back from their elective idylls missives aimed at what they perceived as the injustice and hypocrisy rampant within Western, now-globalized capitalist society. Will exiled academics engaged in critical-aesthetic inquiry

⁶ “Neoliberal policies aim to reduce wages to the bare minimum and to maximize the returns to capital and management. They also aim to demobilise workers’ organisations and reduce workers to carriers of labour power—a commodity to be bought and sold on the market for its lowest price. Neoliberalism is about re-shaping society so that there is no input by workers’ organisations into democratic or economic decision-making”: Benjamin Selwyn, “Neoliberalism is Alive and Well,” *Le monde diplomatique*, December 2014, <http://mondediplo.com/blogs/neoliberalism-is-alive-and-well>.

⁷ Regarding Godard’s move to Rolle, Switzerland, in 1978, see Richard Brody, “An Exile in Paradise,” *The New Yorker*, November 20, 2000, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/11/20/exile-paradise>. “In Godard’s futuristic film ‘Alphaville’ (1965), the hero, Lemmy Caution, Secret Agent 003, is warned that as a romantic individualist he is out of date and doomed. ‘You will suffer something worse than death,’ he is told. ‘You will become a legend.’ This prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Jean-Luc Godard” (Brody, “An Exile in Paradise”). Regarding Berger’s move to the Haute-Savoie in 1974, see Philip Maughan, “I Think the Dead Are with Us: John Berger at 88,” *New Statesman*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/i-think-dead-are-us-john-berger-88>. Regarding Berger’s archive at the British Library, see <http://www.bl.uk/johnberger/>.

(Marxian, anti-capitalist, anarcho-syndicalist, and otherwise) do the same? And from where?

This schism suggests that a possible solution to precarity for the many brought on by the enrichment of the few (the primary symptom of the neo-liberal catastrophe sweeping the planet, from climate change to mass migrations, as diagnosed from Paul Krugman to Thomas Piketty) is, after all, new forms of radical scholarship that are creative and generative versus merely critical and ponderous.⁸ Humanists would claim that such is what precipitates renaissances, cultural and otherwise, with any attendant paradigm shift long ago established as proceeding from outside of normative discourse within any field, but always developed in tension with what passes as normative discourse within a field or discipline.⁹

The mechanistic and Darwinian nature of what is encroaching within the walled gardens of academia today would, given most analyses, pre-empt any such radical or unforeseen shifts ever occurring. The foremost mechanism of control or conquest, argued for and against from within academia and from without, and yet another topological knot, is the value of research metrics, peer review, and allied issues such as the merits of open-access publishing. The battle for true open-access publishing is but one example of a campaign to counter the persistence of apparently ineradicable invasive species, insofar as academia has long been thoroughly colonized by for-profit publishers earning billions at the expense of those who pay for, create, and manage the intellectual property expropriated (the pre-appropriation "value chain" including, in diminishing order of return, the public university, the research institute, and the author). Yet the antidote currently on offer is far worse. Open Access, as it is practiced from within academia, especially in the Arts and Humanities, is an ideology posing as resistance.¹⁰ It is formulated from the exact same

⁸ The recent emphasis on economic justice by figures as diverse as Krugman, Piketty, and Joseph Stiglitz underscores just how far neo-liberal capitalism has advanced in terms of commanding the lion's share of global capital (measured as wealth). Yet all economic analyses miss the fundamental right of citizens to not have all of life converted to socio-economic units—to be traded on the stock exchanges of the world. This bias mirrors the general statistical bias of neo-liberal capitalist machinery as such.

⁹ In this regard, Thomas Kuhn's "spiritual" or "intellectual" dependence on the work of Bachelard is instructive, as is Michel Foucault's. Indeed, Giorgio Agamben's work is indirectly fed from the same mountain streams.

¹⁰ The original version of "open access" was, of course, the public or uni-

premises as those models it opposes. The premises switch position based on perspective—a form of parallax or anamorphism. The new invasive species are the hybrids produced by the warring dictates of the for-profit versions of academic publishing (including the university presses) and the not-entirely-benign open-access movement within academia, the latter established as response to the former but then forced to make deals with the very presses they are supposedly disciplining. The mutations in the rhetoric and construction of the open-access camp are truly frightening given that the author-pay aspect is spiraling out of control. Authors may soon be forced to pay up to \$10,000 to publish an open-access monograph with a prestigious academic press. Thus, the neo-liberalization of Open Access creates the exact same straightjacket for authors as the for-profit and predatory model it attempts to displace. The same straightjacket also induces suffocating conformity across disciplines.

Curiously, this displacement of the author seems to represent the caesura by which one might locate the ultimate contest for domination from without, serviced by neo-liberal forces from within academia. Notably, the author or scholar today has virtually no rights, those rights previously conferred by copyright law generally subsumed by the discordant and fractious processes of academic and neo-liberal privilege—another topology of enforced indifference or compliance representing not so much a knot as a tightening noose around the neck of authors and scholars. In a nutshell, the author writes for nothing—or else. The next step, on its way care of corrupted open-access protocols, is that the author writes for nothing and pays fees for the right to write for nothing. The justification is that he/she is seeking prestige and/or patronage, climbing the ladder, well-paid already, or any number of variations on the theme. Royalties? Only celebrity academics are likely to ever see royalties for their published works. Perks? Privileges come in innumerable forms. Some are well known and relatively benign, insofar as they are not locked into the systemic corruption noted above, while others only feed the circularity

versity library. The physical book has, however, been demoted to cultural artifact by both the predatory pricing strategies of for-profit academic publishers and the slashing of public expenditures in the name of “austerity.” In each instance physical books have simply become “too expensive” to acquire. The twin practices of slashing library acquisition budgets associated with the administrative regimes of neo-liberal academia and the conversion of libraries to digital emporia has further facilitated the conversion of the book to a form of digital media to be mined versus read.

noted, narrowing the field and forcing extinction across ecosystems. Yet the first perk for a scholar today is to merely have a job. The argument is circular. Precarity produces the self-loathing and perpetual anxiety that permits the non-celebrity scholar to give their work away, whether to the corporate hegemon running the for-profit academic presses or the open-access networks increasingly being neo-liberalized as the game shifts back toward arguments about cultural patrimony, public good, and public commons. In the shadows meanwhile lurks the next wave—full-bore text- and data-mining operations that will securitize knowledge in ways hitherto thought unimaginable. It is possible under such a scenario that only the arts will escape this next wave, given that visual media is resistant—thus far—to assimilation as data. Such is the glamour of post-cinema. Such extravagances are also why the visual arts remain one of the principal venues for anti-capitalist agitation, while critical inquiry is slowly being exterminated.

This holds true in almost every market in developed countries where academic publishing and humanistic scholarship are productive of wave upon wave of speculative work, foremost in the imperiled Arts and Humanities, which are caught in yet another form of colonization known as the Digital Humanities, a stalking horse for practices associated with Cognitive Capitalism's thirst for digitalizing everything. It is not difficult to track the money flowing into the Digital Humanities to see that its dual origin is mostly well-meaning philanthropic foundations (for example, the Mellon Foundation) and governmental agencies (in the United States, the National Endowment for the Humanities) attempting to prop up the failing public domain and private-equity firms looking for last chances to commandeer intellectual property in the same manner that they buy up water rights in Third World countries in anticipation of a drought or due to rampant pollution and environmental degradation. The drought in intellectual affairs that is coming, however, seems epochal and likely to cut off any chance for "redemption."¹¹ These inordinate games of brinkmanship

¹¹ In the topological inversions and games of reification associated with Cognitive Capitalism, the Moral Rights of Authors become—by default—universal Civil Rights. The inversions include conversion of private rights to private corporate property at the expense of authors and artists—a shift facilitated by law through the graduated granting of personal rights to corporations (rights otherwise known as "corporate personhood"). The counter arguments on the side of Open Access only further the difficulties for authors and artists to produce works that resist for-profit forms of commodification (including knowledge production as careerist fetish),

insofar as Open Access devolves in almost all *radical* cases to the conversion of works to online media or publication via one form or another of platform culture. For those scholars wishing to produce an actually existing book, without signing away their rights, options are increasingly limited. As Civil Rights, the Moral Rights of Authors become the foundation for a possible and sustained cultural revolution, roughly equivalent to the Civil Rights movement in the United States in the 1960s. When enough people have been enslaved, robbed, raped, beaten, and killed through the inhuman mechanisms of cognitive-capitalist conquest, and when enough people who have nothing to do with knowledge production have become enriched while hiding behind the privileges of corporate personhood, Moral Rights will become the rallying cry for a new dispensation across disciplines. Already a rallying cry is detectable in socio-political terms in social-justice movements associated with calls for economic justice across capital markets—"labor" (immaterial or material) being the fundamental point of access for what is otherwise a highly abstract and moral issue. Thus does the triumphalism of capitalism begin with the demolition of labor unions in the 1970s and 1980s, plus the collapse of communism and socialist states in the late 1980s and 1990s. The emergence of the Red Left in Europe in 2015 mirrors this process of an emergent democratic-communist movement at the level of State, while the majority of capitalist criminality is essentially conducted extra-legally and transnationally (via the movement of de-materialized capital to emerging markets or safe havens). The only political corollary for a sustainable cultural revolution is, therefore, some form of Democratic Communism, yet in a localized form (at least initially) as last experienced in the West in a pre-capitalist form through the guild systems or the confraternal religious orders of the Middle Ages, with economic and moral rights restored to their origin as common rights. Given the late failure or corruption of Democratic Socialism worldwide, through its facilitating of neo-liberal capitalism, Democratic Communism suggests one path toward the restoration of collective rights as personal rights and vice versa. The anti-capitalist sublime is, in some ways, also the voice of a millennialist version of Democratic Communism—yet across life-works versus markets. For a discussion of this topology in terms of political economy, see Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou et al., *Democracy in What State?* trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). First published as *Démocratie, dans quel état?* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2009). The model of not-for-profit co-work spaces is indicative of a post-2007 (post-crash) initiative to form new walled gardens for cultural production that elude the clutches of Capital, per se. See, for example, Brooklyn Institute of Social Research, Brooklyn, New York, USA, <https://thebrooklyninstitute.com/> or Poligon, Ljubljana, Slovenia, <http://www.poligon.si/>. While of a second-order status, at least in terms of the permissibility or desirability of new and hopefully sustainable abstract work in the Arts and Humanities, these experiments are generally descendents of the event space of contemporary artistic practice, plus the pop-up gallery or shop phenomenon of the late 2000s—the latter mostly the result of empty storefronts in cities left slightly or fully devastated by

now at play in what is being billed in social-science circles as the Anthropocene, an irreversible geological shift underway based on the calamities visited upon the natural world by human activity, will play out in a far more spiritually destructive way once the rich ecologies of difference in forms of scholarship are exterminated.¹²

the socio-economic fallout of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis. On the other hand, first-order examples of such initiatives are rare, with the various semi-independent, bespoke institutes established within neo-liberal academia over the past several decades representing walled gardens that are also all too often corporate-sponsored bastions of new elitism (mimicking in a retro-avantgarde fashion the Institutes of Advanced Studies they are based upon). For co-work space as fashion statement, with neo-liberalization of the model now underway via fee structures, see Nick Bilton, "The Temptation of Co-working Spaces," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/04/fashion/co-working-spaces-neuehouse-rvcc-wework.html>.

¹² The term *Anthropocene* has become a particularly trendy subject in the arts as of 2015, especially those arts that have a supposed "documentary" or critical socio-cultural bias, such as forms of transmedia. Thus Edward Burtynsky has shifted his attentions to this concept at the same time (2015–2016) that he has shifted from large-format, industrial-strength photography to filmmaking. Burtynsky's work has increasingly fallen prey to digital editing to such a degree that his series "Water" can no longer be considered documentary photography. The work has crossed over to a new terrain where digital post-production has superseded verisimilitude (or any pretension to verisimilitude), yet without coming anywhere near the charmed auspices of meta-photography, as in, for example, the recent work of Thomas Ruff (as exemplified by "*Nature morte*"). See Appendix B. Such also is the trend with photography, generally, when large-format, expensive chromogenic prints are the desired final output (even though the life-span of the chromogenic print is as yet unknown). See *Burtynsky: Water* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2013), a book with no obvious author or editor, per se, and symptomatic of packaged products and/or the glossy, high-end coffee-table books favored by art publishers since the visual arts became a parallel fashion world. Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, October 5, 2013–January 19, 2014. See also the 2013 "documentary film" *Watermark*, directed by Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal, which upon close examination is not a documentary film about water, but, instead, a documentary film about the God's-eye, aerial gaze of Burtynsky. Needless to say, Burtynsky is the antithesis of Sebastião Salgado. And his documentary is the antithesis of Wim Wenders's and Juliano Ribeiro Salgado's *The Salt of the Earth* (2014). There is no comparison beyond the superficial family resemblance. Both have a certain neo-colonial air to them (invoking Susan Sontag's critique of photography as a form of *Schadenfreude*), and both exploit art-world vanities toward perhaps the same superficial end. But Salgado is less opportunistic than Burtynsky; and Salgado's work has a humanistic depth not to

Willful extinction of species and enforced extinction of speculative inquiry are the two monumental blunders now being perpetrated by—and it is impossible not to name it—predatory Capital.

III. THE NAME OF THE HOLY

It is critically important to state that the Name of the Holy (versus the Holy Name) is an irreligious concept—and that it is only embedded in religion as religion's most dynamic feature. All of Agamben's archaeological excavations of religious practices buried or hidden in secular practices may be reduced to this fundamental truth. Since *Uomo senza contenuto* (1970), Agamben has been flirting with an elective nihilism that is a mask for the Name of the Holy—bracketing an explicit evocation of the Holy Name which opens onto Christic themes not permissible in orthodox secular scholarship today. Massimo Cacciari investigated the same critical-aesthetic field with *Dallo Steinhof* (1980) and *Architecture and Nihilism* (1993).¹³ Both scholars then went on to study patristics—

be found in Burtynsky's work, which is, in fact, cold and calculating. Would that Burtynsky might also re-plant an Atlantic rainforest, in Canada no less, as compensation for his own photographic cynicism induced by despair (a product of the apparatus of the mechanistic distance embedded in the camera-eye—Vilém Flusser's great insight). Steidl is but one of many of the go-to publishers for photographers (Taschen is another) wishing to convert their works into high-end commodity fetish. Salgado primarily used Aperture, a more modest New York art-photography publisher. The artists are notably incarcerated at Steidville during the production of the books. "Steidville is a superabundant and hypnotically repetitious place: the stacks of books on the staircases, the rows of computer monitors, the pallets of paper, the unceasing rhythm of the press, the artists circling in and out, the relentless schedule, a new book, another, another. So many names, so many numbers, and here is one more: last year, Steidl received something north of 2,000 unsolicited submissions. He printed none of them": Jim Lewis, "Bound for Glory," *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, March 30, 2011, <http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/30/bound-for-glory-2>.

¹³ Massimo Cacciari, *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point*, trans. Rodger Friedman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), first published as *Dallo Steinhof: Prospettive viennesi del primo Novecento* (Milan: Adelphi, 1980); Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). See also, Massimo Cacciari, *The Withholding Power: An Essay on Political Theology*, trans. Edi Pucci (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). The Introduction for *The Withholding Power* is by Howard Caygill, author of *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (Lon-

not so much a coincidence as a telltale sign of what they were truly in pursuit of. The fact that both circle back to 1900 is also instructive. The conversion of the Name of the Holy (and the Holy Name) to modernist ideology proceeds from roughly 1900. Its previous, mainly secular-aesthetic incarnations via academia and art academies, while compromised by the same forces that always command ideology in the name of patrimony, tend to indicate the post-Hegelian version of ideological insurrection simply reverted to form, servicing the political, which is not full justification for dismissing ideology per se but, instead, for dismissing its complicity with arbitrary regimes of power. For ideology or, more properly, ideation is not automatically disposed toward this-worldly power, while its corruption certainly is. Speculative inquiry as ideology as the Name of the Holy is consistently co-equal to the Bachelardian "right to dream" beyond mere politics.

Thus the highest flights of speculative intellect are always on the side of the lowliest (the most-humble and often-debased) forms of being—for example, the "ready-to-hand" of Martin Heidegger or the decrepit "shoes of Van Gogh."¹⁴ This contradictory nature of the Name of the Holy works *through* works both socially and politically, but across ethics and morals (therefore always transversally, as if to be tested on two parallel planes). It also serves to reduce the elitist functions of mere intellectual or aesthetic inquiry to shambles, insofar as such are part and parcel of systems of patrimony or pointlessness itself.¹⁵ The infinite largesse of speculative inquiry is to be found in its re-naturalization, which, in turn, serves as a means for a proper reading of the ready-to-hand of Heidegger and the shoes of Van Gogh.

There is another game within academia that is based in other problems, and wholly practiced from within, but leading to the same crisis. It is called "moving the goalposts." This is practiced by scholars and constitutes what passes as the production of

don: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁴ A common subject of Van Gogh's still-life painting from the Paris period.

¹⁵ Aquinas: "The speculative intellect by extension becomes practical (*De Anima* iii, 10). But one power is not changed into another. Therefore the speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 22 vols. (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne Ltd., 1920–1924), "The Intellectual Powers," Q. 79, Art. 11. From Kant to Hegel, "speculative intellect" as "speculative inquiry" will be de-theologized and de-dogmatized toward other purposes—the common ground for Kant and Hegel being "Logic" or rationality in service to rationality.

intellectual fashions. Such is also used by the new conservative bureaucratic regimes associated with disciplining faculties to dismiss disciplines. The Humanities have partly been savaged for this reason. Thus did critical inquiry shrink by a thousand cuts to be displaced by Digital Humanities (the architecture of the pseudo-discipline funded from civil society as an attempt to prop up the shrinking public-domain side of cultural property).¹⁶

These twin ravages, from within and from without, leave a narrowing gap through which dissent may maneuver. The question remains *where* that maneuver takes speculative inquiry—or, *where* it may survive and *what* form it might take to evade the collapsing premises for revolutionary praxis in the Arts and Humanities. The present rebellions are at best symptoms of this collapse versus orchestrated or true and sustainable confraternal attempts to organize fields of resistance to capitalist exploitation of knowledge production. It is *in* the uselessness of certain fields that the promise survives, and that uselessness is always defined in terms of what may not be capitalized (whether because “not wanted” or “not appropriable”).¹⁷ Patrimony of all forms, over the trajectory of

¹⁶ It is almost impossible to define the Digital Humanities. At its rudest or most elementary level, it is the manipulation of data sets (computational strategies) to arrive at spurious, pseudo-scientific conclusions at the intersection of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. At another level it is the juggernaut of Cloud-based studies, online archives, and cross-disciplinary activism toward the ideology of Open Access. The term Digital Commons denotes the latter iteration. See Domenico Fiormonte, Teresa Numerico, and Francesca Tomasi, eds., *The Digital Humanist: A Critical Inquiry*, trans. Desmond Schmidt, Christopher Ferguson (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2015), <https://punctumbooks.com/titles/the-digital-humanist/>; and Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, and David Golumbia, “Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 1, 2016, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neoliberal-tools-archives-political-history-digital-humanities/>.

¹⁷ For the probable future of the research PhD in the Humanities, see Robert Barsky et al., “White Paper on the Future of the PhD in the Humanities,” *Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas*, December 2013, <http://iplai.ca/what-we-do/research-public-exchange/future-humanities/>. The Introduction is an elegant description of the merit of the research PhD, while the balance of the White Paper is primarily prescriptive in nature, detailing the necessity of customizing the PhD process toward making it marketable in the global, neo-liberalized economy. This mirrors efforts elsewhere to expand professional doctoral programs while shrinking research doctoral programs. The primary problem with the current marketability of the research PhD is neo-liberal academia and its exploitation of sessional and adjunct labor at the expense of full-time or tenure-track positions.

modernity, is reducible to escalating battles for supremacy of one form or another of patrimonial exploitation, and the rent-seeking practices of the more recent neo-liberal assault are merely amplifying trends evident over centuries. Weber's insight that one system merely replaces another is applicable to leftist and rightist insurgencies, the latest being an extreme instance of a rightist ideology serviced by ideologies of markets (with the left bought off by perks and privileges from within the somewhat monolithic architecture of neo-liberalism). The university as marketplace is under attack because it both represents a bastion of so-called liberality, a former aspect of civil society that may be mined and exploited, and one of the prime addresses for periodic revolt. Yet what was the source of past revolts from inside the academies fundamentally transcends the academies. In the end, one does not need academia to prepare the way for the requisite resistance to the campaign to hyper-financialize knowledge itself.¹⁸ The sublime maneuvers through that narrowing gap seem to lead away from academia, toward new wildernesses of thought and direct action. "Direct action," far from an instance of the further production of mere words, involves the resurrection of the word in service to the Name of the Holy—paradoxically, the return of a de-naturalized form of conceptual thought in service to "nothing."

IV. "NO-MEDIA"

It may be argued that the primary means of exploitation of discursive knowledge is to convert it to media (to digitalize it and mine it). The same is true for the visual arts. The perverse coming singularity that neo-liberal capitalism seeks is the conversion of collective cultural property to corporate private property via its mass digitalization. The alt-capitalist projects in the Arts and Humanities that pass as critique of Capital, claiming to bypass capitalist exploitation, are quietly supporting that coming capitalist singularity, which will be duly totalitarian in practice. The intellectual-ecological devastation is easy to foresee. What Capital wishes for all to

¹⁸ Arguments for or against the idea that this process of forced, vampy- rized, or cannibalized subjective states has always been the case (for example, by way of the theories of subjectivization promoted by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, but also in the darker fictionalized accounts of the post-modernist novel) miss the point that the technological means at the disposal of Cognitive Capitalism are unparalleled, and they are only becoming more sophisticated and more pervasive—indeed, this is something the novel tells more clearly than the bio-political critique proper.

see is a flowering of entrepreneurial and disruptive exuberance, across platforms, across media, and across works that will provide the long-term rent sought. It is, in fact, a *de-flowering*. This returns to academia in terms of the diminished prospects for what might be serviceable for Capital through academic exuberance. It would seem, then, that the alternative to this coming singularity is to restore diversity across the intellectual-ecological systems of exchange through refusing rent to Capital. With economic value being withheld, the speculative value might then circulate beyond the authorized venues, platforms, scales of production and reproduction, means of dissemination, and attendant systems of patrimony, thus denying the “royal household” its tribute.¹⁹

One task of Late Modernity is to return to lost causes; that is, to projects prematurely evacuated or to projects vanquished. An example is how certain discrete disciplines have been lost to super-disciplines over the course of time (decades or centuries)—with the contemporary terms *interdisciplinary* or *transdisciplinary* quite often translating into meaninglessness, lack of focus, or anti-intellectualism. Visual Culture is an exemplary instance of

¹⁹ For a somewhat glamorous portrayal of the prospects for new, integral, and cross-platform media as model for a form of the quantum production of knotty objects through the *studium* of heroic anti-disciplinarity (representing a “Pangea of information”), plus claims that such is productive of “world citizenship,” as fundamental identity for practitioners, see Neri Oxman, “Age of Entanglement,” *Journal of Design of Science*, January 13, 2016, <http://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/AgeOfEntanglement>. In this model, “knot” becomes “the ultimate form of entanglement,” connoting complexity and self-conscious emergence for engineered systems, echoing the ethos of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as announced at the 2016 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The singularity invoked, via MIT’s Media Lab no less, is the hyper-mediatic world where Science, Design, Engineering, and Art merge—with Art notably subsumed by technology. Prosaic examples of knotty objects include: “a phone, a brick, a bitcoin, and a steak” (Oxman, “Age of Entanglement”). What is missing in this summary of complex intellectual and material forces that, in turn, produce knotty systems is an analysis of the practices of capitalist exploitation and its command of emergent systems. The essay closes with an homage to John Donne: “The MIT Media Lab—‘Ito’s Pangea,’ or the ‘Negroponte supercontinent’—can entangle precisely because it makes the stuff that makes the [Krebs Cycle of Creativity] spin: media. And I don’t mean news, or electronics, or digital media, not even social media. But that which possesses one world: ‘each hath one, and is one.’” Thus the “production of souls” is enshrined in the coming technocratic singularity—an extremely honest appraisal of techno-capitalism combined with Cognitive Capitalism. “The goal is to establish a tentative, yet holistic, cartogra-

a super-discipline absorbing relatively benign or outmoded disciplines. The examination of many of these new "schools," however, shows signs of external and subtle market forces driving the convergence—as if the super-discipline was merely in service to a super-market of cultural products that converge beyond the academy under the rubric *media*.

Therefore, "no-media" is one answer—no matter how temporal or circumstantial. Already post-digital everything is on the way as latest radical-chic fashion statement. Under the above auspices, "no-media" is also no digitalization, which translates roughly into no capitalization, since the perversity of the prevailing model is that capitalization proceeds via digitalization. Previously, part of the post-digital, radical-chic posture was "part-digitalization," whereas now, with the prevailing model approaching closure and a new totalitarianism of market-driven patrimony, the most avant-garde practices will eschew digitalization for analogue practices antecedent to the hegemony of the digital. In terms of academic practices and scholarship, the Digital Humanities are the venue for the last campaign to subdue intellectual inquiry on behalf of quantitative-determinist practices operative in the public

phy of the interrelation between [Science, Engineering, Design and Art], where one realm can incite @evolution inside another; and where a single individual or project can reside in multiple dominions" (Oxman, "Age of Entanglement"). In this scenario, "@evolution" becomes the hallmark of the expropriations across disciplines invoked as entanglement. MIT Media Lab's *Journal of Design of Science*, launched in January 2016 and formally published by MIT Press, utilizes a platform for academic publication (PubPub) that is a variation on earlier pre-publication strategies associated with Open Access that privilege versioning and prototyping, or the transfer of lab-based studies to *pro tem* forms of knowledge production, including—in the rhetoric of MIT Media Lab's director, Joichi Ito—feedback loops associated with cybernetics. As an intervention in the complex systems of Cognitive Capitalism, to which the model ultimately belongs, it is questionable that the radical-chic premises serve any other purpose than the further reduction of speculative inquiry to mediatic spectacle and the crowd-sourcing of scholarship, albeit in the name of Open Access. See Joichi Ito, "Design and Science," *Journal of Design of Science*, January 11, 2016, <http://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/designandscience>. For the details of this hybrid online publications platform (PubPub was developed by MIT Media Lab students Travis Rich and Thariq Shihpar, in association with Andrew Lippman's Viral Communications group), see <http://pubpub.media.mit.edu/>. *JoDS* articles are all published under a CC BY 4.0 License. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Note that CC BY 4.0 includes a vague and vaporous nod toward the Moral Rights of Authors in its attendant sub-clauses.

domain and in neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of cultural property. The two domains overlap, and they are competing for the same intellectual property rights, with the same result for scholars, artists, and whomever else is in the line of fire. The lost cause in this case is immaterial labor, with the result for the laborer the same regardless of which side of the battle one's work falls within. Extolling the virtues of the public domain, the apparent agenda of those favoring Open Access is to make immaterial labor universally available. Yet the campaign is no less at the expense of the author when the work is made universally available through mass digitalization.

The solitary scholar is another lost cause worth re-visiting, as is the loose confederation or confraternal order where the solitary and contemplative soul might work toward a different model of universally accessible immaterial capital.²⁰ Intellectual inquiry as the Name of the Holy, as with the mythic rose of Medieval romance, is the signal gesture of all stirrings toward renaissance. The Ivory Tower or the tower of the solitary scholar are semaphores in a gathering storm for the great lost cause—Bachelard's "right to dream" as founding right for speculative inquiry itself. For this reason, the Moral Rights of Authors as defined by the Berne Convention open onto the anti-capitalist sublime. The battleground vis-à-vis neo-liberal academia is co-equivalent to the right of authors to determine how their works are to be assimilated to the

²⁰ For an appalling vision of the future of the arts, see Jonathan T.D. Neil, "Goodbye to All That," *ArtReview*, May 2016, http://artreview.com/opinion/may_2016_opinion_jonathan_td_neil_goodbye_to_all_that/. This opinion piece, written by the head of Sotheby's Institute of Art, Los Angeles, California, USA, proposes three versions of the future, though each is hardly mutually exclusive. The first is that China will become the "global capital of the artworld." Note that Neil uses Arthur Danto's term, *artworld*, which is, in this particular scenario, a confluence of artists, critics, gallerists, and—presumably—auction houses and hitherto unforeseen versions of the secondary market (including venture capitalists). The second version of the future is that *everything* will become intellectual property, but that authenticity will be replaced by endless replication. All successful artists will, therefore, need lawyers. The third version (or vision) is that "individualism will be replaced by inclusionism." This is Neil's most slippery prophecy. It implies that artists will thrive based on participation in multiple markets—and across multiple platforms. To justify this claim, Neil resorts to a bizarre statement that individual rights are a modern invention and there are older models that better serve the future of the arts. Given the state of copyright law, his model resembles a new feudalism for artists and a new windfall for rent-seeking Capital.

public domain—privatized, securitized, or otherwise.

With such a "station" from which to begin a defense of the Arts and Humanities (all other major disciplines having been sold down the road long since), a proverbial crossing of the Alps appears near Giffre River Valley in the Haute-Savoie—the place of John Berger's exile—south of Geneva and Lausanne (and Lac Léman, site of Jean-Luc Godard's exile), toward Saas-Fee, Switzerland, nominal home of the European Graduate School, the site of a very delicate appropriation of intellectual inquiry as stylish *modus vivendi* and the latest model for the alternative academy insofar as those who attend the annual Summer Sessions are privy to some of the most astute critiques of the prevailing model of academicism and the parallel realities subsumed under media and cross-disciplinary studies, inclusive of the specter of "no-media," even if it is not quite acknowledged as such in the exquisite and surreptitious annuals of the EGS's public relations machine, and even if the latest additions to the curriculum prop up the visual studies side at the expense of intellectually and critically focused works.²¹

²¹ See European Graduate School, <http://www.egs.edu/>. Founded in 1994, the EGS is a late-modernist version of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College. The Media and Communications division has recently been re-branded as Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought. Combined with the Arts, Health, and Society division, "the two divisions compose an outstanding and diverse community of artists, theorists, scholars, and practitioners, making the EGS one of the most important sites in Europe for anthropological, socio-political, philosophical, psychological and artistic inquiry" (EGS website). The fact that few scholars are ever in residence (including many of the distinguished faculty who are used to push the reputation of the school) is covered by the academic neologism "low-residency." A parallel "Spring Session" has also recently been created in Valletta, Malta, in part to align the School with EU educational directives (that is, full EU accreditation). "Conceived with the [idea] of questioning the human condition, the EGS was created to be a university that would function beyond the constraints of traditional academic norms and practices while also offering the achievement of traditional, fully accredited, well-recognized academic degrees. For The EGS, education is an experiment and learning is a critique. By having research pursued through intensive seminars, public forums, and lively debate, The EGS has created a place for a renewed and genuine 'professionalism' through the singularity and independence of its thinking and doing.... Situated at the intersections of philosophy, health, and art, the EGS is a community of intervention, orchestrating gestures of change. In this way, The EGS has become one of the most prominent teaching centers in the world, challenging both its students and faculty with the active discovery of what a university can be" (EGS website). A similar "low-residency" graduate school, perhaps modeled on the EGS, is

The EGS might be exemplary were it not for its celebration of celebrity intellectual culture, its faculty stacked with the most famous academics rentable by the School. Its intellectual output is difficult to measure due to the de-centralized model, with students working independently around the world toward completion or incompleteness of their degrees.²² Here the socially progressive capitalization of knowledge is achieved by converting apparent speculative inquiry to privileged Cloud-based “enclave,” SaaS-Fee serving merely as base of operations while the EGS mimics a “university without borders,” an elaboration of an alternative model that is nonetheless market driven. Since 2015, its market orientation has become increasingly obvious, with an expansion of bespoke programs and the opening of a second campus in Malta. The EGS’s market share is the moneyed international graduate student, able to pay the fees and able to attend the required annual sessions fronted by the celebrity faculty. The exclusivity is the point, regardless of denials, and the possible introduction of an authentic anti-elitist or anti-capitalist ethos is all but impossible.²³ Clearly such is also not the goal, despite the leftist creden-

the US-based Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, <http://www.idsva.edu/>.

²² For an insider’s view and a defense of the EGS, see Dan Hughes, “The School for Social Hackers,” *Medium*, November 15, 2015, <https://medium.com/the-workshop/the-school-for-social-hackers-b3797caf3a7b>. This *apologia* for the EGS credits it with sponsoring both Occupy Wall Street and Podemas, albeit by way of former students. “Some have said that EGS is Davos for the Occupy set. In fact, Occupy Wall Street was one of the projects started by EGS students during the course of their study. One of the school’s alumni, Micah White (2012), was the Adbusters editor who kicked off OWS with the iconic call to gather in New York for an occupation on September 17, 2011. Related to Occupy Wall Street is the debt incineration project Rolling Jubilee started by EGS alum Chris Casuccio (2011) among others. In the EU, EGS alumnus Pablo Iglesias (2011) started the political party Podemos soon after he graduated and has been at the forefront of the anti-austerity movement in Spain and across Europe. These three contemporary political projects are in the headlines and are great examples of the social hacking—design, technology, and theory skillfully woven together—that EGS exudes” (Hughes, “The School for Social Hackers”).

²³ “I have learned that the EGS has been perceived by some as an ‘elite’ institution because it has never actively publicized its programs, relying on the renown of its faculty (communicated via YouTube in filmed lectures) and word of mouth. And the faculty do constitute a kind of ‘elite,’ though only in the sense that their quality is globally recognized as exceptional—only distinguished professors and highly regard[ed] practitioners from the

tials of its illustrious faculty.

It is the neo-liberal destruction of public and private universities that makes the EGS possible, while it is all but impossible to expect the EGS to offer anything critically sustainable *from within* to counter the worst trends in the reduction of intellectual inquiry to either a support mechanism for quasi-criminal capitalist activity (the theft of intellectual property) or the conversion of immaterial labor to commodity status and the elimination or marginalization of anything incapable of servicing capitalist ideology. Indeed, the EGS rents the bulk of its esteemed faculty from the same prestigious public and private universities that are slowly succumbing to market ideology, the same cadre hedging their bets and banking their last privileges. As a high-end version of the Gramscian petite bourgeoisie, such an elite faculty is caught between two winds blowing in opposite directions: a rightist wind, which fills their sails in terms of propping up their radical-chic credentials, and an anti-capitalist wind, which will topple their glamorous clipper ships as they tack between Saas-Fee and Valletta, all intellectual goods sinking to the bottom of the sea.

Somewhere between the modernist (not post-modernist, neo-liberal) Ivory Tower and the lonely tower of the solitary scholar (Yeatsian or Hölderlinian) the answer to this strange chiasmus

arts are invited to teach courses. But the fact is that the EGS is an institution that is open to any qualified student capable of independent work and motivated by the possibility of being exposed to the highest level of cross-disciplinary teaching in the world": Christopher Fynsk, "A New Future for the European Graduate School," *European Graduate School*, October 28, 2015, <http://egs.edu/news/a-new-future-for-the-european-graduate-school>. Fynsk is Dean of the PACT Division. According to Hughes in "The School for Social Hackers" (cited above), "There have been charges of elitism and celebrity mongering leveled at EGS in the past. What critics miss in this hasty, superficial critique is that the success and sustainability of the school is in its students, not its faculty. A school is what it produces. EGS has consistently produced interdisciplinary scholar-practitioners of the highest calibre over the past twenty years, and it has done so in an era of pedagogical flattening and tuition inflation across higher education—without itself succumbing to the financialization of the university. An entire degree at EGS costs less than one year of tuition at most schools. The independence, rigor, and value of the EGS experience is one of the unsung successes in a difficult time for educational institutions globally. That the best students from dozens of countries are able to learn with the best scholars and practitioners from key fields is not an elite structure, but one of skill encountering opportunity. That it can be done cost-effectively, even in a tuition-supported institution, is nearly unheard of."

is to be found—yet only where a true communitarian spirit dwells on behalf of the required rebellion against the coming singularity of capitalist capture of immaterial labor. The discussion of rights of authors is only of use insofar as those responsible for laws governing Intellectual Property Rights are listening. It is more than apparent that they are not—at least as of early 2016. The author is effectively stranded between the forces of capitalist appropriation and the well-meaning, yet utterly provisional premises for assimilation of works to open-access or public-domain repositories, the latter intended to bypass or subvert corporate piracy but in other ways, as noted above, merely compounding the problem of the absence of author rights and forcing the issue of “no rights” as rite of passage into perpetual precarity and/or elsewhere.

The spirit of speculative intellect qua speculative inquiry would best be re-positioned within public universities versus in private and privileged schools which service the revolutionary pretenses of the intellectual class at the expense of actual revolutionary praxis.²⁴ The required, culturally determined re-naturalization of the paradigmatic (the non-ideological aspects of speculative intellect) will only succeed if the syntagmatic or horizontal bias of the neo-liberal Arts and Humanities is countered by a strenuous ascent of meta-criticism in service to both the physical and immaterial “commons”—a project not reducible to the bathos of intellect in service to the heart. Quite the opposite is called for. If speculative inquiry is to produce the required revolt to counter the last campaigns of the neo-liberal capture of cultural production, it is also—out of necessity—to remain a confraternal, non-paternalistic force-field that permits and admits all that its opposite suppresses.

May 30, 2016

A version of this essay, “No-media: Against the Coming Singularity,” appeared in *Contemporary Aesthetics* 14 (2016): <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=754>.

²⁴ The same is true, at least in the United States, regarding the battle between public high schools and for-profit charter schools.

Breaking the Glass



Ich trete vor Einem zurück, der noch nicht da ist, und beuge
mich, ein Jahrtausend im voraus, vor seinem Geiste.¹

Heinrich von Kleist

I. ACADEMIC NARCISSISM

Intellectual vanity (academic narcissism) and bastions of elitism are the two conditions operating within conventional academic systems, in addition to reactionary postures against theory and criticism, that dismantle all pretensions to intellectual inquiry in service to the anti-capitalist sublime. Most scholars, for obvious reasons (including keeping their “day job”), have no such pretensions or intention toward such a form of sublimity, while those who claim to support such a project fall short by surreptitiously including in the production of works the very same protocols of the capitalist project they often claim to disdain—disdain of capitalist exploitation countered by narcissism and elitism. Intellect in service to the heart is not the same thing as the heart in service to intellect.

¹ “I stand back before One who does not yet exist, and supplicate myself, a millennium in advance, before his spirit”: Heinrich von Kleist, *Briefe an seine Schwester Ulrike* (Berlin: Schroeder, 1860); cited in a review by Hermann Marggraff, in “Deutsche Dichterbriefe,” *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* 12. The capitalization of “One” is perhaps spurious. See <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/briefe-7043/5>. See also, Geoffrey Waite, “Letter Bomb from Kleist, or, Ontology of Warfare,” unpublished paper for the international conference, “Containment and Subversion: The Work and Person of Heinrich von Kleist,” University of London, School of Advanced Study, October 4–5, 2007, “the 230th anniversary of Kleist’s birth.” “Solicited for inclusion in the eponymous proceedings of the conference and then—appropriately enough—rejected without explanation on the eve of publication” (Waite, “Letter Bomb from Kleist”).

Radical-chic postures on the left, versus the rightist strictures of capture and control of intellectual or immaterial labor, resemble Lacan's Mirror Stage in the development of the Ego, with all of the attendant promises of an incipient reflective consciousness primarily concerned with admiring its own reflection. Bespoke intellectual projects (products) are similar to boutique projects (firms) in that they rely on the mediatic spectacle that provides artificial aura, the latter reducible to the acceptance of the architecture of neo-liberalism to haphazardly or otherwise promote the product and, hopefully, the project. Projects as such are composed of episodes, and works fail in their attempts to produce a life-work under the auspices of the processes of capitalization and reification that should, in fact, be utterly antithetical to the speculative intentions of the project (works operating across works).

Topology is the inference of this order of works. Thus the obvious market ideology associated with the branding, re-branding, and re-re-branding of bespoke academic works is the first chasm that opens onto an abyss that engulfs any and all forms of truly possible, independent speculative inquiry that might otherwise operate at either the level of the paradigmatic or at the level of the Real (the Hegelian "rational as the Real," and/or the Bachelardian surrational as the irrational, the latter also known as the "right to dream").² The hoped-for revolutionary force or force-field

² In Marxian critique, the "paradigmatic" is the vertical axis of ideo-cultural production, ideologically disposed in relation to the horizontal axis of syntagmatic relations (which is also the axis of historical determinism and socio-cultural critique). The former is summarized by Ernesto Laclau as the location for all forms of projective hegemony—the compass of the Blakean demiurge the corresponding image for "projective hegemony." In the arts, the paradigmatic axis is also the locus for speculative works that either support or undermine ideology—arguably, William Blake's point. This geometrical and abstract topology is also the origin of Walter Benjamin's statement that Eugène Atget's photography operated at the "Pole of utmost mastery." "[Atget] reached the Pole of utmost mastery; but with the bitter modesty of a great craftsman who always lives in the shadows, he neglected to plant his flag there. Therefore many are able to flatter themselves that they have discovered the pole, even though Atget was there before them": Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927–1934*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999), 518 [507–30]. Benjamin claims Atget as a forerunner of Surrealism. Notably, the paradigmatic is the axis that Bachelard traverses in his late, magical conceptual-formalist works on reverie. See Richard Kearney, "Bachelard and the Epiphanic

is thus endlessly deferred and/or co-opted—an article of faith in the pessimistic universe of post-Marxism. Yet such “paradigmatic” works will only ever become force-field when and if the individual episodes or works produce the paradigmatic life-work, the very process of the *life-work* negating the incipient or entrenched narcissism of the system and bespoke works per se.³ The post-modernist “death of the author” is, in this case, the circumstantial catasterism (astromorphism) that accompanies so-called immortality (crudely or rudely reducible to the manufacturing of saints when, and only when, immortality is conferred upon the author versus the life-work). The “if” or the “as if” of this topological knot is, in effect, and across works, the conceptual viewed and/or experienced transversally as an emergent some-thing or other (with conceptual-formalist thought serving as field, productive of the fearful and fearsome Concept), the term *emergent* having been long corrupted within academia by its misappropriation across multiple and poorly synthesized fields.⁴ In fact, the terms *trans-disciplinarity*, *cross-disciplinarity*, and their depleted antecedent, *interdisciplinarity*, are productive of another chasm engulfing possible speculative inquiry—that is, the production and maintenance of the proverbial mediatic smokescreen for projecting or statically simulating self-importance related to the branding of intellectual property as spectral commodity.

Bespoke intellectual production of the order of the “branded work” interacts with all of the semi-criminal regimes of exploitation and promotion embedded in academic systems, with the architecture of these ancient regimes not entirely subsumed by neo-liberal management strategies. Many key aspects of the old regime are,

Instant,” *Philosophy Today* 52, Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy Special Issue (Fall 2008): 38–45. The “Pole of utmost mastery” is, across genres, representation about representation (representation as critique of representation, “representation in its pure form,” or meta-representation as epistemological inquiry as meta-critique), precisely what Michel Foucault, in *Les mots et les choses* (1966), saw (via a complex of crossing gazes) in Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* (1656). See Chapter One of Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Anonymous (London: Tavistock, 1970), 3–18. First published as *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

³ This is not to say that the *apparent* “bespoke” work—whether pop, trash, or erudite edition—cannot be *détourned* or suitably subverted in service to the higher operation of the production of the life-work.

⁴ For example, in the disciplines of Architecture and Urbanism, but foremost in Landscape Urbanism.

in fact, retained by neo-liberal academia as *de facto* means for disciplining faculties—with tenure and peer review of research being the most obvious. Indeed, the Left would do away with both, primarily because they have substituted their own corrupted versions via ideological networking to preserve their privileges. The privileges have simply gone extraterritorial. The commodification of such bespoke works rarely requires the appearance of institutional approval or rational review, with the evasion of these dictates becoming a badge of courage for radical-chic works (even if, all the while, the processes of review, approval, and dissemination proceed from behind the smokescreen via the elite networks that also serve as a form of extra-institutional tenure based on the revolving door of privilege). The mutually beneficial corruption of works produced and circulated amongst elite networks serves additionally to undermine their supposed universality. They become tainted by the incipient or overt narcissism transferred to them.⁵ Any commoner amidst these circular games can see that the so-called progressive circuit is equally self-serving as the reactionary rightist regimes behind the worst ravages of Cognitive Capitalism. Either through cross-appointments in various schools or via select presses that operate as clubs, the distinguished radical-chic academics who might otherwise mount a serious explication of anti-capitalist sublimity have already gone over to the other side of the mirror as self-appointed guardians of left-ish sublimity itself. The irony is that there is no sublimity in such works, and the guardians on the left are as equally responsible for its absence as the enemies of sublimity on the right.

II. BOOK, LIBRARY, ARCHIVE

It is the monstrous scaleability of digital media that is the enemy of the book, the library, and the archive. The fact that all three are the target of corporatized media indicates the stakes—the money to be made. For the author/artist, and for the Moral Rights of Authors, this sustained attack is also an apocalypse. The end result is a debris field with cultural production reduced to data and/or ashes.

Reversing the direction of Subcomandante Marcos's magical-realist spiral leading out of the Library of Aguascalientes in

⁵ Such is also how the contemporary art world operates, suggesting that (a)voiding the architecture of neo-liberalism is, after all, the first line of resistance.

south-east Mexico to the jungles of Chiapas, painted in such a way that the library is reduced to a spectral turquoise that then turns emerald green, a return to the book and the library as archive can be found, along with a return to Borges's preternatural archive of books (the Library of Babel). In Marcos's vision, incorporating Borges, the books open their own pages, the pages switch places, and the book as archive for experience generally confounds assimilation. Traveling further afield, this reverse trajectory arrives at the pages of Renaissance emblem books and the figure of a disembodied hand—a *writing* disembodied hand.⁶ What does this disembodied writing hand portend, then and now?

The Library exists *ab aeterno*. From that truth whose immediate corollary is the eternal future of the world, no one can reasonably doubt. Humanity, the imperfect librarian, can be a work of luck or of malevolent demiurge; the universe with its elegant dosage of cupboards full of enigmatic tomes, indefatigable ladders for the traveler and latrine for the sedentary user, can only be a work of a god.⁷

Borges's library is, notably, the work of a demiurge, even if Borges brackets his opinion on the origin of Humanity proper; it is as "ladder" that the book has any value. In/for itself the book is always a relic, or a tomb for experience. Yet as ladder, it leads "upward," a spatial determination that can have multiple meanings. As astral

⁶ See Gavin Keeney, "Kant Nietzsche Undo Lacan," in Keeney, "Elsewhere," 81–94, for comments on this hand that would seem to represent a form of "writing that writes itself." In the context of "Kant Nietzsche Undo Lacan," this spectral hand is discussed in relation to Maurice Blanchot's concept of the dark gaze (a form of a-theological sublimity).

⁷ Jorge Luis Borges, "La biblioteca de Babel" (written in Mar de Plata, 1941); cited in Subcomandante Marcos, "The Library of Aguascalientes," *La Jornada* (January 18, 1995): 15. See "The Library of Aguascalientes," trans. Cecilia Rodriguez, *Flag Blackened*, n.d., http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/mexico/ezln/marcos_library_jan95.html. See also, Gavin Keeney, "Circular Discourses," in Gavin Keeney, *Knowledge, Spirit, Law: Book 1, Radical Scholarship* (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2015), 105–22, for a discussion of this fantasia apropos of the Zapatista, anti-capitalist insurgency. "At night, the Library shelters and agitates transgressors of the law and professionals of violence (like the one who writes this). They gaze at the shelves filled with books looking for something which is missing, and which they're sure was once there" (Marcos, "The Library of Aguascalientes," 15). This is Marcos's description of the library at Aguascalientes, but it contains Borges's Library of Babel as well.

ladder to the moon and stars, the image is a Blakean hypostatization of desire. Marcos draws out the implications via experience, with each end of the spiral connoting competing images of experience, with the reverse trajectory noted above leading nonetheless back to the artifact of the book, dead or alive, and the fact that experience is embedded in books. The Borges-Blaquean ladder “upward” leads, arguably, back to the experience embedded in the book. For the sedentary user, versus time-traveler, the book is a latrine.

The conflation of low or banal and commercial interests of Pop art in the 1960s, with the impossibly high prospects of meta-critical art (or, that which underwrites art for art’s sake) mirroring the shift around post-Ruskinian 1900 to an earlier version of art for art’s sake (with this later instance strenuously resisted by Mark Rothko), suggests that the mirror of art-historical reflection is equally responsible for reifications of market ideology in cultural production. The emergence of transmedia in the late post-modern period, where conceptual art must also more or less do what it says it is doing (versus merely fake it), would thereby seem to be an attempt to return to art the high intentionality of altering the socio-economic regimes of the *commercium* of art through the restoration of a type of operative criticism that is also critical of the premises for conceptual art. While transmedial practices in art include activist aspects, collective or solitary, they are also indissolubly wed to mediatic practices that condition their relationship to market forces.⁸ If, in Pop art, the art work could both speak and squeak, or reflect upon itself through the meta-critical apparatuses of art for art’s sake (a form of formalism derived from modernist antecedents), while ironically or self-consciously engaging the *commercium* of the contemporary art world, the purely speculative then-various aspects of art as a form of intellectual capital departed company and crossed over into a post-modernist terrain that is, in part, magical realist.⁹

The intellectual component (the conceptual field) can, in such

⁸ The primary modalities of transmedial art practices are performance, installation, and video.

⁹ “The only place where one can live in the past is the present and if the present ceases to feel the life of its own past, then the museum and art, which are the most well known images of that past, become problematic places. In a society that no longer wants to have anything to do with its past, art finds itself trapped between the Scylla of the museum and the Charybdis of commodification. And since our museums of contemporary art are so often temples of the absurd, both of these things go hand in

cases as Pop art and transmedia, be seen to be struggling with the threshold at which the rational becomes the real. The mirror in this situational reading, however, is both the spectral nature of the art-historical continuum, never quite what it appears and given to eliding the fact that different time-senses inhabit the teleological senses of Art History, *and* the retrospective gaze that traverses in reverse chronological steps the path of art-historical reflection. It is the classic two-way gaze (or two-way mirror), with the past recovering its lost agency through the meta-critical erasure of the positivist drive of Big Art History and artistic production that dares look back at the debris field of historical agency. The reflective glass surface on both sides of the mirror is also given to the appearance of phantasmatic effects—from one side, abstractions appear bordering on phantom effects, while, on the other side, historical apparitions bordering on “carnival” speak to the same duplicity of the art-historical gaze. The combined effect is abstract thought looking at and judging quotidian experience and vice versa. The evocation of high and low prospects for art is not merely

hand. Duchamp was probably the first person to become aware of the dead end in which art had become interred. Just what did Duchamp invent with his ‘ready-made’? He took some ordinary object, a urinal, for example, and by introducing it into a museum he compelled the museum to show it as a work of art. Naturally—after a brief period of surprise and shock—nothing can be attributed to its presence there: not the work because it is an ordinary object, just any industrially-produced object, and not the artistic work because it involved absolutely no ‘poiesis’, no production—and much less the artist, except as a philosopher or a critic or as Duchamp liked to say, as ‘one who breathes’, a mere living being. In any case it is certainly true that he did not claim to have produced a work of art, but to have cleared the way for art, which was stuck between the museum and commodification. As you know, what happened instead is that a class, one that is still active, of clever speculators transformed ‘ready-made’ into a work of art. And so-called contemporary art does nothing but repeat Duchamp’s gesture by filling the museums, which are nothing but organs of the market devoted to accelerating the circulation of merchandise which, like money, have attained a state of liquidity and which they want to continue to value as if they were works of art, with non-works and non-performances. This is the contradiction of contemporary art: it abolishes the work of art and then puts a price tag on the result”: Giorgio Agamben, in Agamben and Savà, ““God Didn’t Die, He was Transformed into Money.”” The context for this statement is an homage to the work of Piero Guccione, a painter of “lacerated farewells” and “contradictions and ambiguities of the real”: Enzo Siciliano, *Guccione: The Painter of Life* (Milan: Fabbri Editori, 1989), passim. See also, <http://www.pieroguccione.it/testi-integrali/en-pittura-vita.htm>.

rhetorical in this situational reading; for the agency of Art History contains a corrupted trace of the utopian drive embedded in high art, while the engagement with low or merely commercial forms of art (not merely craft elevated to Fine Art, as Pop art accomplished) oddly speaks of the quotidian expressions of the hoped-for cultural embrace between transcendence and immanence—a merger of two otherwise discordant time-senses that inhabit the artistic gaze proper. What is (good) also was.¹⁰ This hoped-for merger of these two primary categories of experience embedded in artistic and intellectual production may also be said to be the origin of the revolutionary conditions for representation and mimesis—that is, for the possible engagement with the primordial excess that is also the foremost hypostatization of anti-capitalist sublimity.¹¹

The failure of this hoped-for, perhaps impossible merger between two affective regimes within speculative artistic-intellectual praxis is, arguably, both the failure of History and the failure of Art History. The failure accounts for the appearance of phantasms—Francisco Goya’s exceptional depiction of the same connoting, nominally, the failure of Reason, but a failure of a *failed form* of Reason, not rationality itself. The two-sided mirror is merely a symptom of mimetic failure, or an apparatus that has outlived its usefulness. The monstrous figures Goya paints and sketches from the mirror of early nineteenth-century historical reason represent the debris field noted above that only makes its appearance through retrospection via this non-existent mirror—in Goya’s case, an artistic form of retrospection as introspection that

¹⁰ This is meant in the Platonic and pre-incarnational Christic sense; or, the economy of “what is” preternaturally includes the economy of “what was,” since the foundation of the world. This is essentially a semi-archaic metaphysical concept that crosses over to theological speculation in instances of the consideration of time-senses. It is embedded, for example, in the Nicene Creed. It also inhabits the poetical dimensions of discourse, and discursive praxis generally, when metaphysical or theological precepts are at play. Such also is the justification for the Moral Law in the Kantian critiques. See Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals* (*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, 1785). The universality of this conception is nothing short of astounding. “What is” becomes the dynamic predicate of “what was,” and vice versa.

¹¹ In a-theological terms this excess becomes a libidinal economy. The swerve between a-theological and theological readings of art is dealt with at length in Gavin Keeney, *Art as “Night”: An Art-theological Treatise* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), *passim*. On the theological side of the equation, the apparitional nature of art becomes an analogue for an incarnational reading of the *spirit* of art.

includes its own elided time-senses and supports all arguments for artistic measures that are timeless and timely, at once. This abstract simultaneity as incipient sublimity confers upon the topological field of such works the imprint of sublimity. The order of the de facto critique conveyed by such works as Goya achieved is, without question, moral and ethical. Far from moralistic, the charges leveled by works are condemnatory and mark the timely side of the expressive campaign. The timeless (or untimely) side, or that which pushes the topological inversions that ultimately produce the monsters, is constituted by the sublime coordinates of reflective consciousness as intellectual inquiry with no precise ideological or commercial agenda. The anti-capitalist sublime is, therefore, not a relation of capitalist exploitation, nor strictly a political or socio-cultural agenda. Its origins pre-date all such re-naturalizations through or in historical terms. It is a-historical in its sublime time-sense, and it is historical and revolutionary in its quotidian, everyday reduction. Abstract works preserve the origin of the reduction; or, abstract works are the reduction without the elimination of sublimity. Abstract intellectual inquiry is of the same order as abstract works of art. Writing that writes itself is the magical-realist figure for abstract intellectual inquiry. The apparent oxymoron is misleading. For intellectual and conceptual inquiry to be abstract requires smashing the mirror. For such futural intensity to inhabit art is to make art revolutionary at the moral and ethical level versus the merely political or socio-economic level. The socio-cultural rises as a result, with the reduction of the moral imperative fusing—through the auspices of the work of art—the two affective registers noted above, which are, in effect, immemorial.

The singular work endlessly returns—for example, the book or the painting. The return is premised upon the spent premises of the mediatic performances associated with the *commercium* of the art or publishing worlds. These real or virtual performances pre-date digital media per se, and digital media has only amplified the performance value of works on behalf of Capital. Thus Rothko's chapel and the Library of Aguascalientes as exceptional states, for the most part operating "outside of" or "beyond" prosaic socio-economic and/or socio-political time-space. In this sense, the book is to be seen not so much as book-object, but as "book-library." And the library is to be seen not so much as library-object, as "library-book." Equally, the topology of "painting for chapel" (painting-chapel) and "chapel for painting" (chapel-painting) illustrates the transversal schematics of the sublime arrow that crosses two parallel planes, justifying works of this order—the order of the

primordial anti-capitalist sublime. The two planes are this world and the next world. Grammar and syntax become notably terse under such auspices, as do time-senses become hallucinatory or phantasmatic and spectral.

These two worlds are two distinct magical-realist archives. They are produced by the two-sided mirror as elective and generative mirages. They are generative in the sense that they work through the nihilist remainder that is indicative of a fracture in the extensive facture of speculative inquiry proper—the book, the library, the archive. To smash the glass is to destroy the Manichaeian foundation of the schism; or, to indulge the Nietzschean transvaluation of (spectral mimetic) values. Yet this revolution in mimetic agency, both on the abstract and the quotidian side of the glass, can only proceed via the moral register. All other attempts simply restore yet another two-sided glass, with the dialectical machinery of rationality foreclosing any restoration of a suspect primordial unity or any historical development of an originary unity that appears as revolutionary resolution *through* time. Concepts of time are the key. The time-senses of works betray this discordant capacity in works—a discord that suggests the nature of a universalizing life-work that encompasses the human condition. This life-work of the human condition is the speculative as the quotidian, which is productive or generative in the sense that it produces a magical-realist archive of the Real. Far from a simple re-enchantment of the world, this magical-realist archive of the Real is—quite simply—the world as such (with this “as such,” a Kantian figure of speech and thought, being dynamic versus static or statist). The re-enchantment proceeds by way of the speculative caesura within abstract thought. The highest reaches of the book, the library, and the archive only touch upon this mystery. Yet mystery it must remain. The magical-realist archive of the world is—paradoxically—the return of the Real, and the real that returns is unreal.

The capitalist assault on this mystery, to capture and command its ever-implicit immeasurable wealth, is accomplished by constructing the proverbial prison-houses of language and of spirit. The prison-houses are constructed extra-legally, with law following course through the imposition of the rule after the fact of theft and piracy. The anti-capitalist sublime is ageless; yet its re-appearance in the neo-liberal capitalist era is the very foundation for the revolutionary praxis that seeks the magical-realist archive of the real world and the Real itself. And thus we also have the reifications of Capital—the spectral commodity nature of knowledge, and the capture of speculative intellectual agency in the Arts and Let-

ters by the mechanisms of advanced media and the complicity of those intermediaries who benefit. The *commercium* that engulfs cultural production today, as in the past, requires the complicity of the key intermediaries. What proves the point of where such a revolution may begin—that is, on the side of the author/artist—is that without the complicity of the petite bourgeoisie of the academies, and the resultant complicity of the free agents who require the intermediary architecture of the academies, nothing much can or will ever happen against the capitalist theft of the immemorial gift of the world—a gift accomplished over aeons, and a gift conditioned by the sacrificial rites of aeons.¹²

III. ANTI-PRIVILEGES OF “NO CAPITAL”

Non-capitalization and free use are relative to the purposes of works. Obviously both are contingent expressions of the expressive and gestural payload of works. Both Goya and Velázquez, practitioners of meta-painting (though in very different ways), had royal patrons, and the champion of anti-patronage, Guy Debord, used Gallimard to disseminate his writings. What is required today to avoid or void the dictates of Capital for authors and artists are new forms of both independence and patronage. Indeed, the latter holds the greatest promise insofar as within neo-liberalism there yet reside liberals whom have not yet fully gone over to the other side in order to become privileged intermediaries for the neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of cultural production. Though the art world is nearly totally submerged as of 2016 by the financialization of artists' collective assets, the written word by its very nature as immaterial asset has resisted complete assimilation and the subsequent imprisonment of authors, who oddly do not have the same rights to their works as artists, but who might seek a rapport with abject expropriation to merely escape circular or endless

¹² In the Gnostic sense, or neo-platonic/gnostic worldview, the sacrificial rites of angels, archangels, and aeons literally produce *time* (or *times*). The sense of time invoked is, however, also a matter of agency; as the times so produced have periodicity and expire. This also pertains to figures of speech and thought that infer regions within speech and thought that substantiate levels of activity that are utterly inexplicable and/or “out of this world.” Here there is a certain resonance with the so-called rules of art—for example, the internalizing properties of metrics, meter, etc. The precocity of certain forms of transmedia is of this order in contemporary art—for example, the performative works of Joan Jonas or Peter Greenaway.

precarity. Changes in copyright law continue to favor artists while ignoring authors. Yet the written word still pays dividends that escape capture, in part because the written word may be withheld from the primary means for capitalization via its conversion to digital or spectacular media. For artists—versus for authors—the system works toward the illusion of benefiting individuals, enriching successful artists through capitalist patronage. For authors—versus artists—the prospects of capitalization of works are less compelling, primarily because of the architecture of copyright law, but also because the written word is not conducive in most cases to conversion to spectacle, and visual media is the bias of the age.

The true campaign behind the marginalization of the author is the conversion of the written word to media via its conversion to data—not spectacle per se. Works are assimilated as data, on the digital side of publishing, while actual intellectual content (context and nuance) is demoted. In some ways it is discursivity itself that is demoted, while the short-circuiting of critical inquiry is the outcome. The traditional long-form work within scholarship is also effectively marginalized for the same reasons. Whereas it may not disappear as such, it nonetheless becomes less prominent in the ecosystems of publication that favor packaged pseudo-empirical studies and data-driven analyses secured in advance by defining “research” as scientific inquiry. Within the annals of scholarship, this process is foremost a case of the assimilation of speculative and critical inquiry to commodity status, by way of mass digitalization, with singular or bespoke works vanishing into the locked digital vaults of publishers and accessible only via toll-access or subscription. The advances of platform cultures facilitate both the conversion of research to rote commodity and the evisceration of author rights. The greater issue nonetheless is something other than this mass acquisition of intellectual property, while the first order of defense for authors is to refuse digitalization without rights. What is hidden, on the other hand, is the elimination of the critical spirit of inquiry through both the demotion of content to data and the conversion of scholarship to servicing Capital.

Beyond academia the book remains the main venue for critical forms of writing, while the author enjoys the anti-privilege of increasing and escalating levels of precarity. The anti-privilege of on-rolling precarity is staged from within academia and from without by the standards imposed by the machinery of publishing, which is increasingly punitive and/or elitist. The anti-privileges of the author and the artist also escalate in proportion to the level of resistance to Capital embedded in the works, while the tilt toward

“no capital” opens up the positive privilege of “no privileges.” How, then, to turn these negative or anti-privileges into positive privileges is a task that is both personal and collective; yet it is only collective insofar as a system of patronage exists for authors and artists who might produce works toward the antidote. If the anti-capitalist sublime in its timeless sense has nothing much to do with Capital per se, and if—as historically determined anti-capitalist antidote to neo-liberal capitalism—this timelessness might be deployed in new works that signal the refusal *by works* to be reduced to intellectually impoverished commodity (notably bracketing the subjectivity and/or moral rights of the author), then the systems of patronage required toward this temporal end already exist in principle. The enlightened principalities for the resurrection of such works are present in the half-light of “no capital”; they exist beyond identity politics and need to be re-found and re-honored. What generally blocks the same are the terms of engagement historically defined *by*, and part and parcel *of*, patrimonial operations on behalf of power, operations and protocols generally constructed for inducing anomie and alienation *in* subjects. Where, then, is this already existing nebulous realm or principality for such works? Oddly, it is both spectral and real—a doubled identity that permits its occlusion. Yet it is hiding in plain sight, under cover of the Name of the Other (also known as the Name of the Holy).¹³

This Name of the Other is the potential of the insurrectional *for* the insurrectionary, the former given human agency through the collapse of normative subject-object relations. Notably, the terms *Other* and *Holy* (while offensive to authority and secularists) combine in a semi-apocalyptic time-sense for works. Time actually collapses inward in such works, opening outward “on the other side”—out of view. The spatial forms are the “given” of the metric of the art form utilized. The collapse occurs through the conflation of identities versus the preservation of distinct identities. It is a difficult subject to parse, given that it implies that the field of cultural

¹³ The coming community, the inoperative community, potentiality, etc., of Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy et al. This line of thought crosses Continental philosophy from Blanchot to Nancy and comes to particularly potent form in Agamben. It is, in effect, an anarchist line of thought dressed up as Critical Theory and elides forms of nihilism present in pre-Marxist political economy, foremost on the proto-existentialist side of the equation. This anarcho-existentialist vein has only been appropriated by Continental philosophy and is best found in literature and art where the semi-religious aspect may be retained.

politics has a reserve function that is ultra-humanistic and transpersonal. Yet it is from within such a “principality” that the systems of patronage and new forms of independence will emerge in the age of Cognitive Capitalism. Human agency will provide the necessary will to counter total closure and complete subjection. The necessary works to foster the re-birth of the necessary human agency and will to counter absolutist closure comes, as it always comes, through the alternative power of life-works oriented toward new life—new works. The author and the patron are simply the vehicle for the re-introduction of the necessary speculative coordinates. If patronage is controlled by high-handed patrimonial or statist forms of power, potentiality remains in its neutral or negative state. The suppression of such works is achieved directly or indirectly. Present-day regimes of control, while operating semi-mechanically, nevertheless betray conscious intention. The darker intentions are only visible once in play, lending a particularly sinister aspect to the global neo-liberal putsch.

René Girard’s controversial anthropology of violence is instructive in understanding the psychosomatic functions of much of what passes as cultural oppression. The fundamental problems, while psychosomatic, are only discernible across intersubjective states. They are both socially determined and individually embodied. The expulsion of the cryptic symptom (that which operates below visibility) comes through catharsis. Catharsis is pre-figured in the agency of the Name of the Other—its evocation is possible through the incarnational spirit of the Arts and Letters. Such an admission raises the stakes for works that are also life-works; for the life-work is the incarnation of that spirit that crosses a life—an image of sacrifice that in Girard takes on cosmological and cosmographical significance. It is the re-made image of the suffering aeon, or the re-made image of the sacrificial rites of the highest speculative agency available to works. In Franciscan exegesis, it is the six-winged seraph.

The battles for the open-access publishing of academic research have partly been won as of 2016 due to the enforcement on the neo-liberal institutional side *for academia* to control its own output, with for-profit publishers conceding ground in part to curry favor with the regimes of power that will capitalize works on the public-domain side of the battlefield. This “enforcement” has primarily taken place in regimes of review of research, but also by way of the consolidation of funding in quasi-governmental bodies overseeing the public purse. If research defines the modern university, capitalization of research defines the neo-liberalization

of academia. “Review and punish” is the general trend in manipulation of research-funding schemes, with the pendulum currently heading toward disciplining the research community through increased surveillance of output. Mass digitalization oddly remains the main engine in this sweeping reversal of fortunes, with metrics the whip. The battles between advocates of open-access publishing and for-profit publishers, while played out in the university (and often the courts), remain nonetheless symptomatic of a global problem with intellectual property rights and a sideshow to the main event—the loss of rights for authors. This battle has partly been driven by hacktivist scandals associated with proprietary databases owned and operated by Capital.¹⁴ The bad news is that the neo-liberal side of the institutional insurrection has offered nothing new to authors. Author rights are equally ignored or subverted on both sides, for the same reasons—there are great privileges involved *for some* in running the institutional databases and publishing operations, whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit. Profit is malleable in the emergent models, with the capitalization of intellectual property taking less obvious forms on the public-domain side. The next battleground, therefore, is what type of works are permissible in the open-access environment, all signs indicating that overtly anti-capitalist or critically inflected works are the nemesis of the prevailing models, regardless of their public or private nature.

Economic determinism is shared across the public-private divide in these games of brinksmanship concerning the commandeering of intellectual property. The models that are succeeding are also, for the most part, heedlessly proprietary; public or private press, it hardly matters. The neo-liberal academic machinery driving the open-access revolt against privatizing intellectual property from the outside, by the for-profit platforms, exhibits other tendencies endemic to academia that are equally disposed toward the denial of rights to authors. The strangest outcome of all is that the long-form book may be the last vestige of non-authorized “research,” inclusive of radical scholarship, and that same long-form book might best be published outside of academia through any other means than open-access publishing (short of self-publishing) to safeguard authors’ moral and other rights and the Bachelard-

¹⁴ This, of course, includes the self-martyrdom of Aaron Swartz. See Laurie Penny, “Why We Should Remember Aaron Swartz,” *New Statesman*, March 4, 2016, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/education/2016/03/why-we-should-remember-aaron-swartz-prodigy-who-wanted-information-be>.

ian “right to dream.” The paradox is that the for-profit publisher may offer the best arrangement for such works for authors. As the pendulum swings back toward public-domain control of publicly funded research through academic consortiums that are half-embedded in the corporatized world of publishing, the privileges of the singular book gain significant stature for authors. The next step is for the patrons of such works to step forward and sponsor a whole new category of research in the public spirit but out of reach of the self-appointed, neo-liberal guardians of both the open-access and the public-domain machinery that has clawed back some rights from Capital but converted those for-profit proprietary rights to new patriarchal, so-called not-for-profit institutional rights. The rights of the author and the rites of passage for books again intersect. The rites of passage for books, since the inception of the codex, include the confraternal production and dissemination of the work. The rights of the author include an elective distance from ideological systems of exchange, if the author is to offer a critique of morally and socially bankrupt forms of exchange.¹⁵ These two paths—the rites of passage of the book and the author’s right to their own voice—might only intersect in the most arcane of situations. The *commercium* of the neo-liberal academic model combined with the opportunistic maneuvers of the neo-liberal for-profit model indicate the revolution must move to the shadowy world of transpersonal and confraternal orders. These “heterotopias” exist beyond the two prevailing models, and often in spite of such models. From within the “wildernesses” of such subjective-objective territories, analogous spaces in which to begin again are to be found. These spaces, however, are primarily literary-artistic, and in the extreme; for they will appear, shift, and vanish as often as required to build the works required to counter closure before neo-liberal hegemony and to counter full capitulation to Capital.

The arcanian provinces of the book are self-identical to the arcanian provinces of spirit.¹⁶ The past principalities of libertinage and decadence, from the High Renaissance to Modernism, are

¹⁵ This is what neo-liberal academia likes to call *knowledge transfer*, a term that resembles—in its uselessness—the equally absurd term, *human capital*.

¹⁶ Arcanian implies the act of shutting within, concealing, and hiding—connoting a space that is mysterious, dim, and dark. Louis Marin, *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 281–82. First published as *De la représentation* (Paris: Gallimard,

insufficient to sponsor the revolt required by the present-day, dire circumstances associated with the neo-liberal capitalist putsch that has undeniably advanced to the door of the human soul. It is from within the tomb of capitalism that the hoped-for resurrection is to proceed. And yet the death throes of capitalism seem interminable—calculated and positioned to last forever, or until the whole system collapses and takes down what is left of the given world. Whether Maurice Blanchot’s “book to come” or the book that opened to found the world, it hardly matters. The arcanian provinces of spirit are the source of the life-work that the book belongs to, and the provinces of the book are what Cognitive Capitalism seeks to conquer. Whether or not Capital now has the tools at hand to accomplish this conquest is an open question.¹⁷

The spectral disembodied hand that writes the anti-capitalist

1994). “The inner space of things is black: black is dense, totally enclosed space, the space of the coffin. No longer the tomb seen from the outside in Arcadia, but *arca*, chest, cupboard, casket, coffin, prison, cell, sealed tomb—impossible to know—to see—what is happening within. It contains, but what? Caravaggio’s black space, arcanian space; Poussin’s white space, Arcadian space.... If, in that arcanian space, a luminous ray is introduced on the basis of a unique source, then the light will be carried to its maximum intensity and will provoke an effect of lightning: dazzling, blinding, stupefying. Caravaggio’s paradox is the paradox of death as a metaphor for effacement: that is what allows me to say that one can say nothing about it” (Marin, *On Representation*, 281–82). For a discussion of aesthetic carnage as a path to the Real, see Gavin Keeney, “The Way Out,” in Keeney, “*Else-where*,” 119–36.

¹⁷ The social-democratic critique of capitalism has it only half right, especially given that European Social Democracy failed and the EU’s euro zone, if not the entire apparatus of the EU, is a transnational bureaucracy created to service neo-liberal capitalism. “Only if the trend towards deepening social division—the signature of capitalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—were reversed would it be conceivable that modern society could free itself from the compulsion to assure domestic peace through the unchecked production of toxic assets to engineer synthetic growth”: Wolfgang Streeck, “Markets and Peoples,” trans. Tessa Hauswedell, *New Left Review* 73, January–February 2012, <http://newleftreview.org/II/73/wolfgang-streeck-markets-and-peoples>. “We can only wonder what form of opiate of the people the profiteers of late capitalism will come up with, once the credit doping of the globalization era stops working and a stable dictatorship of the ‘money people’ has yet to be established. Or may we hope they have run out of ideas?” (Streeck, “Markets and Peoples”). Streeck’s complaints are symptomatic of the shrieks from the center-left after the insufficient mobilization of forces to counter the wholesale abdication of European-style socialism to neo-liberal capitalism. There is sufficient evidence that the center-left is only howling because

sublime is thus *writing the capitalist tomb*. This book is also always written from the arcanian provinces of spirit.¹⁸ This book is the life-work that is written across all other works of the same order. That it is a life-work that is also written across ages is its foremost sign as a collective work for *Spirit*. Its last major installment was, arguably, G.W.F. Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807).¹⁹ The arcanian depths of the archive are where the anti-capitalist sublime is encountered and its annals recorded. Jean-Luc Godard's "art as exception" is of this order—and Godard's second-generation "Swiss" contrarianism preserved this exception.²⁰ The neo-liberal foxes outmaneuvered the modernist Social Democratic experiment. The ongoing disaster of the European Union is far more telltale than the dysfunctional United States, home address for hyper-capitalism, for the very reason that the center-left Social Democrats actually facilitated the conversion of the EU to capitalist playground. The outcome, here and there, inclusive of the ravaged peripheries, is the collapse of both the socialist experiment and civil society (notably post-1900 and ultimately, or doubly, *post-war* progressive attempts at a form of polity that does not turn its back on the Name of the Holy).

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they are being removed from power. Previously they were wholly complicit in permitting the expansion of the EU without political integration, as long as their own political privileges were preserved. Streeck, for example, as of early 2016 opposes further European integration, if not the dissolution of the euro zone. His unflattering depiction of the South is also typical of the rhetoric of the North, even if he uses it to show the hypocrisy of the northern states in permitting the southern states their subsidies in order for the North to sell further consumer products back to the ever-increasingly dependent South.

¹⁸ Note that Adam Smith's "invisible hand of the market" today mocks the disembodied hand of the work that writes itself. This Renaissance emblem, of course, has no absolute meaning—though it also contains the incipient image of ideology, which, in turn, suggests why the hidden hand of the market might mock the disembodied hand of incipient ideology. As the Slovene Marxist, Slavoj Žižek has indicated elsewhere, across his own works, all ideology has an empty center and, *pace* Franz Kafka, is often obscene.

¹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). First published as *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg/Würzburg: Verlag Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807).

²⁰ Jean-Luc Godard, *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1993).

Neo-Hegelian Spirit



The law which is studied but no longer practiced is the gate to justice.¹

Walter Benjamin

I. IDOLATROUS DISCIPLINES

If Hegel's concept of world-historical Spirit coming to *self-consciousness* through collective consciousness (*pleroma*) favored teleological time and the Real, and if all such instances of an incarnational spirit (*parousia*) overriding the abstractions of onto-theology are suspect after Auschwitz, etc., then the universalizing traits of his project may only be found today trans-historically and/or transversally (both across times and/or across works)—a bias that nominally favors eschatological time, or that time which interrupts time (at the least, chronological or linear formations *for* time). Trans-historicity and transversality are also the very terms that distinguish critical inquiry in the Arts and Humanities from the mere production of serviceable cultural products or deterministic formulations for the production of serviceable

¹ Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death" (1934), in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927–1934*, 815 [794–818]. Also published in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 111–40. Both Benjamin and Agamben (who, as editor of the Italian edition of Benjamin's collected works, derived this approach to law from Benjamin) reduce this condition (*studium*) to the interplay of operativity and inoperativity (privileging the Arts and Letters as primary and principal site for such a *studium*)—the latter state the "state of exception" that plays out in Agamben across his Homo Sacer project, and which leads, as with Benjamin, to messianicity (or, to the curious though not intractable problem of messianicity without the Messiah).

cultural products—these two terms re-loading universality through their non-linear and non-relational tendencies, yet only when they are also conceptual-formalistic or, at the least, *semi-conceptual-formalistic*. Universality returns to primitivity without violence. A possible neo-Hegelian spirit of this order would also counter late-modernist trends toward a-theological and atheistic discourses that underwrite new forms of super-disciplines that are structurally disposed toward facilitating capitalist reification of speculative inquiry toward its exploitation across diverse media. Surprisingly, many of these incipient super-disciplines share a concern for immanence (horizontal relations) versus transcendence (vertical relations), while it is transcendence as universality that is required for conceptual-formalist critique to be waged. Whether these “transcendent” aspects are conceived as immanent to abstract thought (the so-called *transcendentals* of Badiou et al.) or as a retro-avantgarde sensibility that concludes its inquest through the simultaneously archaic and futural formulations of transversal rhetoric as developed through phenomenological and deconstructivist practices, it hardly matters. What does matter, in terms of justifying an immemorial anti-capitalist sublimity for thought itself, is that the very idea of transcendence be developed non-dialectically (tautologically through works), yet as an apparent apparitional-eschatological source or force-field for the incarnational nature of works and life-works. As “apparitional-eschatological source,” transcendence as force-field has an operative state roughly equivalent to thought in/for itself, and thought under the sign of transcendence, therefore, returns as a condition of Being, versus a modality for Being. The result is, at first, subtle and given to possible distensions that lead away from sublimity as a site for transcendence (“no content”). Yet the fact of thought as primordial site for the introduction of the voice of philosophical or speculative inquiry proper suggests that the spatial bias of modernity is the primary origin for the dialectical subsumption of the different orders present in thought. The universal is thus reduced to serviceable forms of abstraction and the horrors perpetrated in the name of the onto-theological are supported by the same structures of ideological usurpation that are effectively imposed from without but nonetheless have nothing to do with the spirit of the onto-theological or the spirit of transcendence as embedded in onto-theological speculation (theological or otherwise). It is for this reason that Hegel’s aesthetics can demote a discipline such as Architecture to “craft”—all the while retaining for the Fine Arts a Kantian, “moral” (disinterested

and non-utilitarian) remainder.

To speak of transcendence *trans-historically* (across times) is only possible, therefore, tautologically or *through* universals—an argument that perhaps permits or privileges immanence via the incarnational nature of works. If speculative thought is a “condition” of Being, to demote such to a modality is the first step in the usurpation and capitalization toward the misuse of sublimity and the immemorial transcendental code within language—where the ur-language is invariably approached through phonetics or prosody (the Dada moment/epiphany) or deconstruction (the Derridean moment/epiphany). Conversely, to raise any “craft” (for example, Architecture) to the level of the Fine Arts (to invert Hegel and invoke Ruskin) is to transplant such moments of sublimity to such disciplines. Regardless, any re-substantiation of the anti-capitalist sublime through transversal orders in the Arts and Letters will err on the side of caution concerning the “political” (as distinct from politics), insofar as the politicization of aesthetics is—arguably—a first step in reification and ideological exploitation of the Arts and Humanities, with the aestheticization of the political being a second step.² These two steps when reversed (aestheticization preceding politicization) produce a rightist regime, while politicization followed by aestheticization typically is the hallmark of leftist regimes. These two steps, considered as prototypes for the capitalization of conceptual-formalist thought, constitute the minimal time-signature for works in the process of being subsumed by ideology, on the left or the right. To step outside of such formulations (*to resist*) is to introduce a timely or timeless “inoperativity,” yet only to counter the claustrophobia of ideologically contaminated systems of ideation—with ideation no longer reducible to mere ideology, whereas ideology is almost always reducible to forms of idolatry.

Super-disciplines operate in a similar fashion to capitalist appropriation, foremost since they are subtle means toward the enforced re-politicizing or re-policing of subservient disciplines. In the case of the neo-liberal Ivory Tower, the construction of super-disciplines is not developed from within the disciplines under subsumation—that is, transversally or organically—but externally imposed by both managerial regimes and by intellectual fashion. The forces of assimilation resemble forms of market-based

² While this contradicts Benjamin’s well-known appeal to “politicize the arts,” that appeal was notably mounted in response to the aestheticization of politics in the 1930s via fascism.

ideological subsummation. While in all instances the only proper super-discipline for the Arts and Humanities is Philosophy, with all other disciplines subsumed being transversally and singularly transformed—in a positive sense—by philosophical inquiry, in the production of super-disciplines under the spell of Capital, subsummation proceeds by way of a de-based form of “stereometry”—formerly distinct disciplines re-measured by convertibility and scalability within a regime of marketable products, whether careerist products or patents and copyrights. As with Philosophy, this logic extends, arguably, to the super-disciplines of Theology, Philology, and Epistemology. The torsion is palpable with the measurement made aimed at either a more comprehensive, intellectual synthesis or a more comprehensive regime for the appropriation of formerly implicit value. However, the common suggestion that extant or incipient external cultural transformations subject singular disciplines to forced incorporation into larger disciplines (under the auspices of so-called transdisciplinarity or interdisciplinarity) is valid if and only if the larger discipline has socio-economic baggage attached (for example, Media Studies, Visual Culture, etc.) and is subtly or overtly attached to markets or market criticism. Otherwise the damage is done from within by the disciplines, large and small, from endogenous factors and from Darwinian features given to the university as marketplace for intellectual fashions. Yet, in almost all cases of the neo-liberal academic assimilation of singular disciplines to super-disciplines (for example, Digital Humanities), the processes of capitalization of knowledge drive the expropriation. These assimilations to Capital occur today primarily through technological appropriation, making the case of the Digital Humanities the poster child for neo-liberal capitalist expropriation of academic research.

This abstruse chiasmus between abstract or universalizing knowledge and quotidian or serviceable forms of research and scholarship in the Arts and Humanities is a condition of the modern university and its unresolved relationship to non-secularity—to theistic urges that play out in disciplines that permit or tolerate the same. These forms of embedded agency are surreptitious in the cases where they operate unconsciously, while they are self-consciously deployed in the instances where they are permitted or merely tolerated. In many ways, the “theistic urges” also devolve semi-naturally to mediatic spectacle and the cultivation of reputations (celebrity and its privileges).³

³ An instance of academic celebrity, which also brings to the fore the is-

Consequences for speculative inquiry through a-theological or anatheistic studies convey an unsettled rapport with what has become (what is left) of an apophatic tradition in theological speculation that bridges speculative inquiry and revelation—the latter taking the form of primitivism in the arts and topological lyricism in critical inquiry proper. This primitivity or lyricism betrays other fields operating within the disciplines concerned, which is an implicit transversality that often leaps from contingent to universal

sue of the vanishing “public intellectual,” may be found in the presence of French philosophers in *Le monde* throughout the 1980s and well into the 1990s. See Richard Kearney’s arguments, *passim*, that this only works today in cases where the academic is no longer vying for tenure and engaged in the brinkmanship associated with collecting “academic points” through publishing in authorized venues: Andrew Hines, “Interview with Richard Kearney,” *Figure/Ground*, July 1, 2012, <http://figureground.org/interview-with-richard-kearney/>. *Figure/Ground* is a self-styled “open-source, para-academic, inter-disciplinary” journal. “When I arrived to study in France in 1977 you only had to open *Le Monde* and one day it would be Ricoeur, the next Foucault, then Lévi-Strauss, Deleuze, Barthes, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Lacan, Kristeva, Althusser, Derrida. Practically every major philosopher in France at that time was contributing to the discourse of public reason. And in Germany, people like Habermas, Honneth and the whole critical theory school were doing something similar” (Kearney, quoted in Hines). Kearney avers further that, “There are new figures emerging, it is true, such as Slavoj Žižek and Anthony Appiah and most recently, Simon Critchley with his ‘Opinionator’ column in the *New York Times*. And one can still find terrific philosophical arguments in the columns of the *New York Review of Books*. That’s all commendable. But, it’s hard to know if these are residual energies or emergent ones? Maybe a new generation of public intellectuals is emerging? Though the current academic situation in North America does not seem to me to be conducive to such a philosophical revival in public reasoning.” Yet Kearney’s argument falls apart upon closer examination, as it is only the celebrity academics that the mass media is interested in today—or it is only on the mediatic side (for example, *The New York Times*’s Opinionator column, “The Stone”) that mass media will tolerate philosophical discourse to appear—albeit, the so-called thought-piece. To counter the paucity of this phenomenon, “public intellectual” being a figure usually appearing on the center-left (Noam Chomsky typically cited as the exemplar in the United States, especially since the passing of Susan Sontag), the US National Endowment for the Humanities inaugurated on its fiftieth anniversary a “public scholar” grant. The inaugural 2015 NEH Public Scholar call was made under the auspices of “The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square.” See <http://www.neh.gov/grants/research/public-scholar-program>. “In its initial competition, the Public Scholar Program received 485 applications and made 36 awards, for a funding ratio of 7 percent.”

concerns and back (for example, forms of Expressionism in the Arts and Letters). Such is also the premise for a “magical-realist” form of scholarship to come that will privilege no one time nor any one conceptual field—belonging to neither a singular discipline nor to a super-discipline. And yet, this is a form of scholarship that will rise or fall on the merits of multiple time-senses and the perspicacity of distended verb tenses. From these immemorial auspices within language, a new language may be formed, but this is a “new language” that serves as a critically inflected discursus/excursus toward the re-introduction of sublimity to scholarship (art work as form of scholarship and scholarship as work of art).

Meta-criticism, or meta-critique, has long been traversing this abstruse chiasmus—with, perhaps, Hegel’s life-work reducible to a critique of Kantian critique. Or so some would say. For, if Hegel re-naturalized the abstractions of Kantianism (as did much of neo-Kantianism), a possible neo-Hegelian spirit for the Arts and Humanities today would focus on the very problematic of meta-criticism and re-naturalization, without recourse to so-called projective practice or the shibboleths of post-theory, which merely succumb to the dictates of spectral markets that are suffused with deformed ideological pretexts (capitalist and otherwise).⁴ Projective practice (for example, in Architecture) or relational aesthetics (for example, in super-contemporary art), while simulating the re-naturalization of theory and criticism, suffers the same ongoing fate as a-theology and atheism (both, notably, late-postmodernist disciplines in the process of formation and de-formation), and the resulting modalities of cultural production are effectively anti-speculative, pro-immanent, relational, and fully immersed in the *commercium* of cultural production.⁵ What forms of re-naturalization might resist conversion to capitalist or ideological exploitation by privileging the transcendental aspects of speculative praxis is the issue most needing valorization today,

⁴ This problem, of course, plays out philosophically in the deliberations of Late Habermas and the theory of communication he utilizes as an attempt to bridge metaphysics and historical materialism. See Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). First published as *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).

⁵ This late-postmodernist bias, present from Bruno Latour to Nicolas Bourriaud, signals a socio-cultural turn in the Arts and Humanities that is also the cause for the pseudo-scientific bias of much academic scholarship today.

given that speculative orders produce the superstructure that historically and trans-historically determines conditions for Being (conditions “on the ground,” or states of Being). The Hegelian *détournement* of Kantian critique suggests that a neo-Kantian *détournement* of neo-Hegelian critique might reveal aspects of what the processes of de-naturalization and re-naturalization share. This seems possible to recover, in part, by returning to pre-Marx and Left Hegelianism, at least for discarded linguistic or tropic resources. Might not this shared economy between estranged cousins (de-naturalization and re-naturalization) reveal non-libidinal (pre-psychic) resources for thought that subvert the ideological continuum of the *commercium* of cultural production, a continuum that arguably *requires* libidinal investment? Left Hegelianism plus pre-Marx forms of communitarianism might then serve as justification by proxy for re-introducing ethical and moral precepts as distinguished within the original Kantian critiques and as developed through post-Kantianism and Romanticism—with non-instrumentality and non-utility the chief characteristics.

II. CONCEPTUAL FORMALISM(S)

The apparent “bad infinity” of conceptual formalism in the Arts and Humanities is one example of a basis for the re-naturalization of abstract inquiry without the elimination or neutering of the transcendental field. If the transcendental is only permitted in such cases as a higher-level instance of speculative agency (and, therefore, eminently supra-immanent), the result is nonetheless an incipient re-naturalization of universals that need not be justified through the second-order philosophical inquest denoted as “existential vitalism.” This neo-Hegelian bad infinity does, however, contain the existentialist moment/epiphany that re-loads high-Romantic idealism. What transpires, for subjects, is the evocation of revelation—the return of the Word and the re-registration through historical agency of the a-historical Name of the Holy. Transversality intersects with conceptual formalism in non-Euclidean time-space, the result being an order of cultural production that exceeds the dictates of cultural property and abject power relations. Yet higher power relations are retained in the figure of the Name of the Holy (which, in turn, justifies apparitional, often-Gnostic aspects in the transversal rhetoric of a-theology and post-phenomenology). What emerges as the prime address for further inquiry into these convergent states, which are existentially denominated through works, is the prime

defense of first-order works across life-works—the locus for decisive resolution to the crisis of the neo-liberal capitalist assault on knowledge. This prime address concerns “rights,” and the class of rights disclosed through the conceptual-formalist moment/epiphany in cultural production is the Enlightenment-era gift of “moral rights,” which, by definition, cannot be relativized (though they can be re-naturalized through and across works). In the case of the Arts and Humanities, these rights are the historically developed complex otherwise known as the Moral Rights of Authors, or *droit moral*. What remains, then, is to elucidate a trans-historical reading of these rights, in association with the a-historical origins for speculative inquiry, and the hoped-for re-instantiation (and re-substantiation) of an anti-capitalist sublimity for such works. In fact, it is highly possible (though not proveable) that moral rights are the anti-capitalist sublime writ subtly (versus writ large) through such works that invoke that threshold in inquiry that stands between transcendence and immanence—at the crossroads of revelation and experience. The immanent is, in such works that cross life-works, the incarnational spirit that inhabits the Arts and Humanities as semi-divine or divine gift. Such works, therefore, serve to re-naturalize the divine in the semi-divine.⁶ Thus we have the apparitional rhetoric of the Arts and Letters and the possibility of its transference and elaboration in forms of scholarship that are also works of art. The gift is immemorial, and that very immemoriality (its forgotten status) permits its theft. Platonist anamnesis serves as one path toward its recovery—and as one path for deflecting ideological expropriation. Another path is the artistic work of scholarship to come—that futural-past event that is described today simply as “event” for the Arts and Humanities—though Badiou, through *L’être et l’événement* (1988), extends its grace to the realms of Love and Revolution.⁷ What transpires between works that cross works to form life-works is the impress of the existential (the experience of the event). To privilege existential vitalism is to re-privilege horizontal, not vertical orders,

⁶ Such also implicates the age-old adage that divine agency is only activated through human agency, or, that the peculiar semi-divine but inverted bias of atheism is—in part (but only in part)—correct. Heinrich von Kleist’s marionette theater comes to mind insofar as to become re-animated marionettes is to become agents for supra-humanistic concerns. His millennialist “voice” makes sense in this regard.

⁷ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005). First published as *L’être et l’événement* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988).

and to indulge again teleology (and variations on Bergsonian *durée réelle*). If Hegel's great error was to side with onto-teleology, the antidote is to be re-found in the "onto-theological" register in the form of the eschatological and incarnational approach of sublimity in and for works. The echoes that such works induce will shatter all pretenses to a strictly historically determined (or, historicized form of) Spirit. The trans-historical side of such production will also be notably "capacious"—producing a privileged address for a possible neo-Hegelian Spirit for works, co-existing effectively "no-where and every-where," at once. The re-naturalization for such a schema will occur through the book, and the de-naturalization of the book will occur through *re-writing the book*....

The transposition of the Hegelian collective responsibility for re-naturalizing Spirit would occur in such works across works that serve to re-situate speculative inquiry in a transversal and trans-historical plenitude that might, in turn, justify a class of works to be denoted "new life-works"—new life, then, for the life-work as form-of-life. Forms-of-life would distinguish the impress of the anti-capitalist sublime through the work's configuration as non-assimilable (useless) to Capital. This paradoxical *cultural* state would also confer upon such new life-works a form of capitalization that embodies the concept of "no capital"—an aspect of cultural production that is both antecedent to and resists or survives the excesses of Capital.⁸

III. THE OWL OF MINERVA AND LATE WORKS

The Owl of Minerva now departs her attic roost at Living Midnight—*rather than at dusk*.... She answers to the call of Clio, Muse of History, in an oracular and prophetic "voice"—revolutionary and iconoclastic (in diametrical relation to the neo-liberal capitalist assault on life itself). The book opens and closes—like a tomb. When open, it is the open work of Umberto Eco, invoking inter-subjective consilience. When closed, it is the life-work entombed (waiting quietly to be re-opened). At times, when re-opened, the book/tomb re-arranges its pages, as in Borges's magical-realist Li-

⁸ Thus Agamben is right to return repeatedly, in *Homo Sacer*, to the very idea of "use"—a term most prominently deployed in his discussions of Franciscanism, in *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-life*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). First published as *Altissima povertà: Regole monastiche e forma di vita* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2011).

brary of Babel, its scrambled, often-demented passages serving as rites of passage for new life-works.⁹

Trans-historicity becomes the fundamental underwriting agency when the Owl of Minerva answers to the Muse of Big History, with such a trans-historicity embedded in both Marxian and post-Marxian critique, but certainly no longer unique to post-Marxian critique and its embodied pessimism. What is important now, however, under the threat of capitalist capture of both Owl and Muse (speculative thought and history), is that the book/tomb no longer conforms, as book and/or tomb, to the objectivity of its censorial sponsors—its patrons and the apparatuses of power and privilege—nor to the production of mere anti-spectacle or mediatic frisson (the art world's excuse for resistance). In other words, it need no longer serve ideology, nor utility—nor ideological utility as a form of resistance. In fact, what is different now is that extra-strenuous measures are required for this model of the book to merely survive. There is nothing new in the performative value nor in the apparatus of the book proper. If the means of dissemination and exploitation have multiplied and become threatening to the rights of authors and the rites of passage for such works, that in itself is sufficient cause for alarm. Totalitarian closure signals the death of such works and the Bachelardian “right to dream” through such works. In the sense of a neo-Hegelian rapport with Spirit, this right to dream becomes a collective right, while its inordinate non-monetary value is to be found in the moral rights that attend the production of knowledge (whether via lonely tower or Ivory Tower). That is the new battleground. Beneath the paving stones we may still find the beach, but the beach is now policed by Capitalism Triumphant (as Heaven was patrolled by US Marines in Godard's 2004 film, *Notre musique*). Capitalism Triumphant is the new Church Triumphant. The new Church Penitent belongs to those who enjoy endless precarity as the gift of Capitalism Triumphant (also known as the New Calvinism). Most religions have long since collapsed into variants of capitalist exploitation and/or the servicing of neo-liberal and/or neo-fundamentalist privilege. The antithesis is, therefore, poiesis without *commercium*.

⁹ This is the value of Franz Kafka's works, as found in the literary-philosophical works of both Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben. It is most often a case of assimilation by “shades of gray” however—and no doubt Kafka and Benjamin are one, combined source for Agamben's alleged “philosophical chiaroscuro” (a charge leveled at Agamben by critics on the left such as Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou).

Inoperativity is, as a result, a transitional state within states that resist the diktat of claustrophobic instances of the closure of law and its associated resort to mythic violence.

Being of the status of “no capital,” such works speak of an order for words that restores the transcendental and immemorial rights of authors to the central place of and for speculative inquiry in the Arts and Humanities. Within the Arts and Humanities, the Arts and Letters take precedence, and, within or under the auspices of the “super-discipline” of Philosophy, the Arts and Humanities serve as proverbial keel for renascent forms of rationality that govern the arts through the imaginative inversion of the rules of the Weberian “royal household.”¹⁰ Perhaps Capital is de-throned; or, perhaps Capital returns to its role as handmaiden to the ethical and moral imperatives of cultural production without cultural hegemony (rule by “royal household”). The jury is forever out in this regard, or it has been stacked with partisans of parasitical capital. For the Owl of Minerva heads, wings spread at Living Midnight, toward the aubade that the multiple arts represent under the sign of immemoriality. What is oracular is the prescient present in such works (the age-old authenticity)—as if “they” (works) remember both what was forgotten and—paradoxically—the future, at once; to remember the future being the very mark of the prophetic “voice.” The recollection is conducted across works, and the memory of the event is entombed in the archive that constitutes collective memory (quaintly reduced to “the public domain” through modern copyright law). The “voice” that the Owl of Minerva employs in inscribing these truths in time, yet across time, becomes that ur-language that always precedes literal dawn and figurative renaissance—often via insurrections (overturning laws that are outmoded). Such works configure Hegelian *parousia* in a manner that suggests the book without such a “voice” has no transversal value (no moral intention); or, it has a value that is of the order of the simple commodity fetish. Aubade, dawn, and renaissance require, therefore, the anti-commodity as moral imperative, and the perpetual re-birth of the immemorial anti-capitalist sublime is its phenomenally determined impress.

Thus does the late work become the penultimate moment/epiphany in the production of the life-work, for authors and/or artists, with the final work being the construction of the archive/tomb by or for authors and/or artists. In any phenomenology

¹⁰ Thus Goya’s statement regarding “the sleep of reason” (in “Los Caprichos”) is not reducible to a simple valorization of Reason.

of scholarship, the late work will also become the work most requiring protection from abject capitalization—with all previous works across the life-work perhaps having used the processes of capitalization against the grain, to disseminate works toward the materialization of the life-work (as Debord used Gallimard, or as Late Marker used Criterion, etc.). If it is the late work that breaks free of the capitalization of works as cultural fetish, radical chic or otherwise (leaving the realm of, for example, Late Willem de Kooning churning out “de Koonings”), the mask of the animist-capitalist fetish slips to reveal what was always latent in singular works, no matter how apparently utilitarian. Late works of this “antique-yet-futural,” anti-utilitarian order feature that “voice” that speaks of and for the anti-capitalist sublime in and for itself—often, incidentally, without naming it as such (or intentionally not naming it at all). In this way, the anti-capitalist sublime as expressed in late works curiously aligns itself with a trans-historical reading of the emergence of monotheism—with idolatry serving as the primary enemy. Indeed, anti-nominal and “antinomial” (immoral-moral) forces reside in late works that often present themselves as unpublishable or non-assimilable. The book in such cases struggles to contain what prefers to burst the confines of the pages. This is the same magical-realist impulse to be found in the arts, where détente or uneasy accord with the art world serves to override closure for works in archive and/or tomb—artist as author resisting the production of works as ready-made commodity. This pre-emptive strike *by works for works* forecloses total closure and prevents the substitution of the aura of eternal sanctity (when a tomb truly becomes an idealized crypt and no one knows, or is permitted to know, what is inside).¹¹ Such works no longer stand

¹¹ Regarding how magical-realist literature privileges the Real, see Salman Rushdie, “How Cervantes and Shakespeare Wrote the Modern Literary Rule Book,” *New Statesman*, April 10, 2016, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2016/04/salman-rushdie-how-cervantes-and-shakespeare-wrote-modern-literary-rule-book>. “[Cervantes and Shakespeare] are both as fond of, and adept at, low life as they are of high ideas, and their galleries of rascals, whores, cutpurses and drunks would be at home in the same taverns. This earthiness is what reveals them both to be realists in the grand manner, even when they are posing as fantasists, and so, again, we who come after can learn from them that magic is pointless except when in the service of realism—was there ever a more realist magician than Prospero?—and realism can do with the injection of a healthy dose of the fabulist. Finally, though they both use tropes that originate in folk tale, myth and fable, they refuse to moralise, and in this above all else they are

in for the invisible iconostasis associated with metaphysics or onto-theological topologies that conceal ideological systems of repression, mediation, and exploitation—if not outright lies and outright violence. Boundaries are relative to the work proper, and late works of a high or paradigmatic order have boundaries that only serve to inscribe or encircle the time-sense of the work—the metric plus its semantic, mnemonic, and rhetorical gestures. Such works are said to tell the truth *by lying* (by parable).

The aubade, then, *is the work* (plus echo and reprise across time). But it is the *opening* of the work—in the peculiar tenses and

more modern than many who followed them. They do not tell us what to think or feel, but they show us how to do so” (Rushdie, “How Cervantes and Shakespeare Wrote the Modern Literary Rule Book”). In terms of cinema, Neo-realism meets Magical Realism in the work of Abbas Kiarostami; for example, in *Copie conforme* (2010). For a review of *Copie conforme*, see Stephen Holden, “On the Road, Packing Querulous Erudition,” *The New York Times*, March 11, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/11/movies/juliette-binoche-in-kiarostamis-certified-copy-review.html>. Holden cites Roberto Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia* (1954), Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’avventura* (1961), and Alain Resnais’ *L’année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) as precursors for *Copie conforme*—that is, the post-WWII passage from Neo-realism to Nouvelle Vague, which Holden calls “European Modernism” (even if it more or less coincides with the onset of post-modernism). In the case of *Copie conforme*, the magical-realist shift in the narrative that occurs halfway through the film is played out through Kiarostami’s extended metaphysical meditation (a distended Platonic meditation) on the theme of the copy and the original, or verisimilitude and authenticity—an apparent discursive operation first set up through art-historical arguments, but then applied existentially to interpersonal relations. Arguably, it is within magical-realist cinema that the Real most properly may be interrogated in relation to, or through juxtaposition with, the Irreal—as the reduction of the unknowable Real to the knowable natural world and the superimposition of the imagined Irreal as the unknowable supernatural world is performed primarily in the visual versus the verbal register. Yet Kiarostami is—not unlike Alain Robbe-Grillet, screenwriter for *L’année dernière à Marienbad*—more inclined to confine the magical-realist content of *Copie conforme* to the dialogue, even if the surreality of Florence, Italy, with its mash-up of modern and ancient *mise-en-scène*, provides the backdrop for the contretemps that ensue, just as the baroque chateau of *L’année dernière à Marienbad* serves Robbe-Grillet’s circular and claustrophobic dialogue. This metaphysical or formalist Real/Irreal conundrum—both in literature and in cinema—is only resolved through lived experience, even if the existential, literary, and cinematic settings for its resolution are utterly speculative (that is, artistically rendered and confined to the arcanian space of the novel or the film). Thus Rushdie’s statement, above, that the magical works best in “service to realism.”

double senses of overture and re-visitation (reprise)—that confers the proper time-sense for the life-work that is just beginning; or, for the life-work that has come to an end only to be re-opened. These peculiar temporalities embedded in the topological reading of the life-work, and at any stage (but always viewed retrospectively by others), indicate that the author's rights and the rites associated with the production of such works remain sacrosanct *for authors*—dead or alive. Without circumscribing and roping off such rights and rites, personally or collectively, the totalitarian closure of Capital's claim on knowledge will be complete. The archive/tomb will be sealed and in its place will be the toll-access crypt—a double abomination, especially given that knowledge should not be en-cripted and the holy crypt should never become yet another vehicle for the rapacious appetites of rent-seeking Capital.

IV. SUBLIMITY AND FIRST-ORDER WORKS

And if by grace, then is it no more of works [observance of the law]: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.¹²

Saint Paul

Hegel's violation of theological exceptionalism (which permitted Left Hegelians and Karl Marx to subvert or invert it toward other, more radical purposes), while favoring world-historical determinism for the possibility of *pleroma*, is nonetheless based on a second-order time-sense that privileges evolutionary versus revolutionary (first-order) praxis. Such a point of view also privileges redemption through the super-consciousness of collective subjective states, a process-based ontology that quickly devolves to statism, both on the left and on the right. The additional privileging of the Real makes the processional nature of historical World-Soul a pantomime of socio-political aspirations through the agency of world-historical contingency. The undoing of this historical determinism (and historical-materialist bias), in turn, liberates what might be said to have been valid despite the insistence upon historical agency as the primary vehicle. Transferred to intellectual in-

¹² Romans 11:6, *The Holy Bible: According to the Authorized Version (A.D. 1611): With an Explanatory and Critical Commentary and a Revision of the Translation*, eds. Frederic Charles Cook and Henry Wace (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co., 1881), 192.

quiry proper, or artistic inquiry and the austere interiorizing territories of the Arts and Letters, other things are possible, while these other things may also “leak” into the slipstream of socio-political space-time, altering our terms of engagement with the world. The rhetoric of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s transcendentalism was of this order, as was Henry David Thoreau’s lived version (yet lived through the literary event of writing *Walden*).

Sublimity, by its very nature (or, more properly, *anti-nature*), is explicable/inexplicable. Its image is the work or artifact (via iconicity), while its dynamic is its incommensurability across works (the life-work). This is the early-to-late German Romantic reading of the Sublime transferred to creative praxis (from Novalis to Schiller), a-historically opposed to Hegelian system (albeit, preceding Hegel). There is no obvious or overt dialectic involved, as there is no synthesis required or sought. The world is simply perceived as a gift. In some ways the encounter with the Sublime produces a subjective state, with normative or conventional subjectivity altered in the encounter or event, with normative subjectivity represented by socially determined forms of identity, and sublimity represented by subjective-idealist sleight-of-hand. The first-order status of sublimity is not directly reducible to second-order systems, the latter almost preternaturally devolving to dialectical states or to structurally complex systems (hence deconstruction proceeds via either reduction to tautologies, paradox, and incommensurability, or by way of an archaeology of phantasmatic orders that signals repressive regimes of reification). This first-order status is the experience of sublimity (and the subjective states associated with the encounter), while the second-order work is its possible signature across systems and across states.

First-order works are, therefore, simply those works antecedent to complex cultural systems that produce, once embedded within complex cultural systems, the signature of sublimity. Insofar as such works “write themselves” (exhibiting an incommensurable dynamic state that is transpersonal in the extreme), these works may stand in or speak for the inexplicable anti-nature of sublimity (via Muse, inspiration, event, etc.), yet they become, paradoxically and ineluctably, first-order works of a second order (defaulting to the status of cultural products). To directly produce first-order works, without second-order mediation, is the goal or sacred quest of the anti-capitalist sublime applied to cultural production. The likelihood is that such works would have to be lived versus merely “written,” introducing the dynamic that otherwise hides behind the iconic stature of the literary work of art.

In this scenario, Saint Paul's notoriously rigid and faux-dogmatic chiasmus and/or injunction regarding grace versus observance of the law may be turned toward a quite different horizon (that is, toward the production of works aimed at overriding the very law that negates divine grace and messianic time). Therefore, the structurally determined antidote, "If not by grace, no works..." / "If not by works, no grace..." interpolated as such from Romans 11:6 (via Agamben and others), subverts all second-order clauses preserved in the injunction. This negation of the paradigmatic, first-order injunction of Saint Paul creates a syntagmatic, second-order injunction for works that may speak for the election of grace. All who might place limits on the work of art should also consider that, under certain conditions, a first-order work of art may actually encode that "remnant" Saint Paul speaks of *by way of* such limits. These complex and associative statements by Saint Paul, blamed for all manner of mischief and articulated nominally in reference to the "remnant" (an embodied exception to the law, or Agamben's "messianic subject"), take on the signature of the Sublime for life-works by shifting the tenses and reversing the second-order negations, as above. And yet, sublimity in this case is written through the election of the arch-sublimity of the Christic (The Holy Name). The negations of this injunction are only valid when the arbitrariness of the law is abolished and messianic time is invoked—through works as grace. Such works are first-order works. They lead back to community ("public domain" as Democratic Communism) through their intensely situated transpersonal agency.

Such a reading, or intentional misreading, of Saint Paul's anti-legalistic injunction (against outmoded forms of law and interpretation of law), suggests antinomial sublimity (Badiou's "senseless superabundance") for works that transgress ideological formulations that pass for law. This schism, or the inference of a socio-political blind spot in biblical exegesis, introduces the ontic/ontological torsion of much of the criticism associated with appropriations of Saint Paul on the left for political, sociological, and/or historical-materialist purposes.¹³ Anti-capitalist sublimity,

¹³ See, for example, Mathew Abbott, *The Figure of this World: Agamben and the Question of Political Ontology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), a defense of Agamben and his categorical refusal to side with merely ontic or historical aspirations in his deconstructions of political economy and political theology through the Homo Sacer project. See also, Charles Barbour, "'Separated unto the Gospel of God': Political Theology in Badiou and Agamben," *Seattle University Law Review* 32, no. 279 (2009): 279–92. In situational terms, to meet, exceed, and subvert the

while but another name for a-historical sublimity, escapes capture by systems through first-order works. The insistence of sublimity for such works raises the stakes for all works that might also constitute a state of collective grace (cultural redemption, restoration of moral rights, and renaissance).

At the center of this mystery of first-order works is the Gnostic (semi-heretical), "pointless," or "useless" self-sacrifice of aeons over aeons to produce worlds (the "remnant" as immaterial remainder)—the message of the Franciscan, six-winged seraph of Mount Alverno. This primordial form of grace as un-repayable gift is the very justification for the Good that inhabits first-order works—the literary work of art as gift. That the Arts and Letters are a possible safe house (plus turquoise-emerald spiral as means of dissemination) for such revolutionary works is the premise for the anti-capitalist sublime as immemorial "voice" inhabiting such works. As refuge for this "voice" and the production of first-order works, the Arts and Letters take on a sublime significance ("senseless superabundance"), yet only as an a-historical and a-temporal way station for the supervision or subvention of mere quotidian or arbitrary forms of law.

* * *

Indeed, the Owl of Minerva now departs her attic roost at Living Midnight—*rather than at dusk*... At dawn she lands on the archive/tomb—faraway or close by, it matters not. This gothic image is also a Gnostic image. "Living Midnight" is a Tibetan Buddhist image that connotes revelation.¹⁴ Dawn and tomb connote the

law through works is roughly equivalent to Saint Paul's "*katargesis*, which means to abolish, preserve, and fulfill" the law. Further, "[f]or Agamben's messianic tendency suggests, not that we can do away with law as such, but that, in treating law as a pure means, rather than an instrumental means to an end, we might preserve it while rendering it inoperative—preserve, we might say, the 'form' of law without its force or its content" (Barbour: 289, 289–90). Regarding the allure of "false contingency" (assuming all forms of contingency are "random, accidental or arbitrary" and therefore should be abandoned), or the possibility of a positive contingency for law, see Susan Marks, "False Contingency," *Current Legal Problems* 62, no. 1 (2009): 1–21.

¹⁴ Laurie Anderson's recent short film, *Heart of a Dog* (Abramorama/HBO Documentary Films, 2015), attempts this "midnight" departure but errs on the side of a glamorous and poeticized form of post-modernist nihilism, in part sponsored by its "Buddhistic" ruminations on death. The combination of lush sonic landscape (distended digitalized music), disintegrating

resurrection of the Name of the Holy. Any historical urgency in the resurrection of anti-capitalist sublimity through first-order works is an archaic-futural task on behalf of Spirit. In the a-theological and anatheistic, neo-Hegelian fashion of the day, Spirit is once again our personal and collective responsibility. We are now responsible not only for the death of the onto-theological God, but also for God's eponymous archive/tomb.

The work of scholarship as work of art is one way forward, *from midnight*, as it has been since at least the time of the early German Romantic quest for the literary work of art. The work of art as a form of scholarship is another way forward, *from dawn*, toward the identical goal. Why the author departs at midnight has to do with the supremacy of the word as form of revelation, *for authors*, an Augustinian privileging of its incarnational power (with the Word working in reverse to reach into the future).¹⁵ Why the artist departs at dawn, from the tomb, results from the incorporation of the Word (the Name of the Holy) into the work of art as form of scholarship. Thus the Word is the explicit and implicit moment for the archaic-futural tenses of such works—connoting an inherent futural intensity for works. In each instance, between author and artist, the corresponding terms switch places—with the Word becoming an image in the work of scholarship as work of art (privileging the Word as image), and the image becoming the Word

imagery (both found imagery, plus imagery produced with primitive camera equipment), and “plain song” (the cadence of Anderson’s narrative) all favor a lachrymose, often-morbid (darkly sardonic) full immersion in contingency—with the film’s laconic beauty serving as compensation for its nihilism. Ludwig Wittgenstein appears midstream, via citation, to situate the poeticized, discursive-reflexive content of the film in the undecidability of language that Anderson favors and has made the hallmark of her life-work. The film’s main flaw is its affected avant-garde anti-intellectualism. Its favoring of the never-land of pure reverie is compromised as a result. Superficially resembling Jean-Luc Godard’s *Adieu au langage* (2014), *Heart of a Dog* lacks what critics often bemoan in Godard’s work—the literary-critical anchor that pre-empts total drift. Though marketed as an art-house documentary, the film is actually a film-essay, in the spirit of Chris Marker’s *Sans soleil* or *Chats perchés*. Thus Marker appears in the credits of *Heart of a Dog*. For a brief review, see Manohla Dargis, “Review: ‘Heart of a Dog,’ Laurie Anderson’s Meditation on Loss,” *The New York Times*, October 20, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/21/movies/review-heart-of-a-dog-laurie-andersons-meditation-on-loss.html>.

¹⁵ The Benjaminian-Agambenian-Derridean focus on reverse messianicity is one version of this topological “inversion,” a provisional first-order rhetorical gesture toward restoring transversal relations in the Arts and Letters and a new non-ideological politicizing of the Arts and Humanities.

in the work of art as form of scholarship (privileging the image as the Word). In the latter case, the silent image speaks. In the former case, the Word encompasses a preternatural silence that speaks *for words* through the silent image (Stéphane Mallarmé's interminable and deceptive "unsayable," which he insists must be said). The stillness is nonetheless telltale as opposed to the noise of the everyday *commercium* of neo-liberal capitalist spectacle and its rent-seeking apparatuses. The concourse between the two stations, between word and image, between author and artist, is the transversal value of the anti-commodity (book and/or art work) and the sounding of the depths, imaginative and rhetorical (yet real), of anti-capitalist sublimity as rite of passage for the resurrection or *parousia* of the Word (the Name of the Holy) as mnemonic image—creative catachresis as anamnesis.

The opening/closing gesture or mnemonic image for both the book and the archive/tomb is "when" (an un-timely "when") the Owl of Minerva spreads her wings and leaves her dawn roost—when she leaves her vigil at the tomb (not crypt) of speculative inquiry. Trans-historically and transversally, she then flies over the horizon, out of the field of vision, and into the "field" of the present moment/epiphany—the proverbial "Now." (Similarly, the hawk that leaves the archive/tomb travels via the turquoise-emerald spiral that emanates from the Library of Aguascalientes to appear in the self-same sky denoted—here and there—as "Now"....)¹⁶ Thus is the return of Hegelian Spirit, which is no longer confined to rote temporality, and no longer serving the simple re-naturalization of abstract thought (the rational as the Real). Rationality gives way to reverie (where reverie is co-equal with revelation when and if the evocation of sublimity instantiates and substantiates the return of what has been forgotten, or what we have forgotten to remember). That return would seem to be the present moment as epiphany, the "Now" plus "Then"—but with the added provision of "Over There" (as if the Name of the Holy was always already hiding in plain sight).¹⁷

April 13, 2016

¹⁶ As semaphore, this is the "hawk" of Robinson Jeffers's "Hurt Hawks." "Hurt Hawks" was first published in Robinson Jeffers, *Cawdor: And Other Poems* (New York: Horace Liveright/Marchbanks Press, 1928).

¹⁷ The *studium* combining trans-historicity and transversality in the Arts and Humanities leads, inevitably, to transpersonalism (the intersubjective analogue for "over there"). Thus abstract topology becomes topographical.

APPENDIX A

Tractatus logico-academicus



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The following draft White Paper—with its singular, “black” subsection, *Tractatus logico-academicus*—is the result of a series of four three-hour, multimedia and performative lectures conducted at the University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia, in April 2015, under the title “Knowledge, Spirit, Law: A Phenomenology of Scholarship.” The lectures were sponsored by the United States Fulbright Specialist Program (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State, in association with the Institute of International Education), with local support provided by the Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and the Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory.

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The White Paper, written in an arch-polemical style, concludes with a set of recommendations for safeguarding scholarship in Slovene universities from expropriation by predatory publishers from the greater EU and the United States.

The version presented here has been modestly re-edited for style and content.

Tractatus logico-academicus v.1.1



1.0—Neo-liberal capitalism’s assault on academia is an assault on academic freedom.

2.0—The assault proceeds by way of dictates imposed on faculties by the bureaucratic regimes of the university in concert with corporate and quasi-governmental entities.

3.0—The practices associated with so-called Big Data are the primary concern of scholars as they attempt to protect their Intellectual Property and/or circulate and network their research.

4.0—The first order of exploitation via Big Data is to collect and control academic research with the double agenda of monetizing it and selling it back to the university and/or scholar on a pay-per-view or subscription basis.

4.1—This includes current practices associated with e-books, e-journals, e-licensing, and e-aggregation.

5.0—The monetization of research proceeds by the imposition of metrics on academic performance in the form of approved or recommended venues (lists) for publication of research with the attendant metrics imposed measuring its “value” (“impact”).

5.1—This practice discourages the writing of books and favors the publication of papers and essays in journals and proceedings generally owned by or controlled by the corporate platforms that control the data.

5.2—In discouraging the publication of books by awarding few points in the research output mechanisms associated with per-

formance, neo-liberal academia is further conceding ground to the e-aggregation of research and the marginalization of conventional publishers of books (academic or otherwise).

6.0—The corporate entities engaged in exploiting academic research offer two primary means for academics and scholars to “give their work away”: (a) The construction and rental of publication platforms and databases for the e-aggregation of the same, and the control and marketing of academic books and journals; and (b) The sale and/or rental of the same back to the very institutions that create and often fund the production of Intellectual Capital.

6.1—Open-access platforms for publishing research, while nominally outside this model, are an insufficient means for protecting Intellectual Property insofar as publication of works to The Cloud (university-owned or otherwise) generally leads to piracy, plagiarism, and the loss of copyright control.

6.2—Alt-academic Open Access (not-for-profit presses and “pre-publication” platforms) is, as well, a questionable practice, given that it circumvents predatory publishers yet proceeds as above—viz., tacitly facilitates piracy, plagiarism, and loss of copyright control.

7.0—The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Commission (EC) have done nothing to update the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (est. 1896) to reflect the digitalization and corporate (for-profit) exploitation of Intellectual Property.

7.1—The United States (US) has instituted a non-punitive update to US Copyright Law in the form of avenues for filing complaints and issuing “take-down” orders. This applies exclusively to the Internet, not the proprietary databases of corporate e-aggregators.

8.0—The universities engaged in converting research in the Humanities to scaleable and saleable data (with data- and text-mining serving as the most recent examples of the mutability of the model) have either capitulated to the global model or are part of its very construction.

8.1—The administrative regimes currently associated with neo-liberal academia generally conform to what is called “vertical integration” in the corporate world, a term that is, in turn, derived from media empires of the order of News Corp., Miramax, and Facebook.

9.0—The result of all of the above is both general confusion (on the part of academics and scholars unaware of the reasons for metrics-driven performance) and increasing anger and rebellion (by academics and scholars well aware of the implications for metrics-driven performance).

9.1—Rebellions are currently underway in the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and the Netherlands.

9.2—The very definition of neo-liberal capitalism confirms the non-democratic nature of its practices. Thus, the rebellions noted above have been ignored by the administrative regimes at which they are aimed, with no resultant conversation of any significance.

9.3—The second line of defense for the Humanities is to forestall further inroads into faculties by such practices by strenuously invoking and installing multiple and diverse paths for PhD and Master’s students.

9.4—This might take the form of alternative PhD models, such as Thesis by Exegesis (creative work plus written exegesis) and Thesis by Publication (written works published along the path of the PhD with a summary, submitted upon completion, justifying the overall project). Such creative substitutes for the conventional thesis, which is increasingly the primary location for the imposition of the above-mentioned metrics-driven practices on students, might serve to circumvent the mechanisms of control and discipline otherwise visited upon faculties and students from above.

10.0—There are creative ways of dealing with all of the above that are productive of a nuanced and intentionally spirited defense of the Humanities and speculative inquiry. Foremost, it is the Humanities (Arts and Letters) that might best develop alternative new-old methodologies for the production and dissemination of scholarship that restores to academia the inalienable and timeless

rights associated with the very production of knowledge as theoretical praxis.

10.1—The primary mode for this defense is the creation and safeguarding of a combination of media types and platforms that includes conventional publication but also addresses in a critical manner the proliferation of mediatic practices in the Arts and Humanities.

10.2—The types and modalities of scholarship (experimental and otherwise) to be protected include: Exhibition; Folio; Limited Edition; Lecture (public or otherwise); Performance; Visual Essay; Visual Poem; Film-essay; etc.

10.3—In terms of analogue publication or print media (books, articles, essays), the lists associated with metrics-driven performance must be amended and expanded.

10.4—In terms of digital and non-analogue works, new conventions must be created for assessing and protecting from piracy the author's moral rights.

10.5—The Moral Rights of Authors are included in the Berne Convention. It is these rights that have, in fact, been fully neutralized by predatory practices in academic publishing while also neutering the contractual concept of "derivative work" (any work created after the primary work).

10.6—The re-definition of "derivative work" is, thus, the primary course of action for protecting the Moral Rights of Authors in the digital age. These moral rights, inclusive of copyright, represent the Achilles' Heel for predatory capitalist practices and the campaign to data- and text-mine academic research.

10.7—The Moral Rights of Authors remain the primary address for all adjustments to, resistance to, and the possible overturning of the most pernicious aspects of the current crisis in the production, protection, and preservation of Intellectual Property.

Threshold/Analysis v.1.1



1.0—Neo-liberal capitalism’s assault on academia is an assault on academic freedom.

The underlying purposes of metrics-based research output standards, while somewhat obscure, may be reduced to a concerted attempt to appropriate and financialize Intellectual Capital.

The for-profit enterprises involved in this appropriation have established inroads into institutions via the creation and control of the mechanisms of reporting, circulating, and controlling research.

One outcome of these practices is to marginalize and de-fund programs and disciplines that offer no obvious or real reward for the attendant appropriations—disciplines that have traditionally been involved in speculative work that has no obvious utilitarian value other than its collection and distribution across platforms that serve the dwindling numbers of scholars involved.

It is with the acquiescence of the highest levels of university administrations that this agenda goes forth. The proposed universality of the model involves feedback procedures that make it increasingly reductive: forms of scholarship that do not fit the model are not recognized, remain non-assimilable, and/or are de-funded due to the shift from publicly supported institutions of higher learning to privately capitalized units within the whole.

The appearance of stand-alone institutes within universities, with firewalls between one another and a competitive and carefully crafted insularity, while nominally a system of preserving the integrity of a singular discipline or interdisciplinary discourse, undermines the historical purposes of the university as a community

of scholars one or two steps removed from fully instrumentalized or socio-economic forces associated with the collection and control of knowledge, per se. (The consequence is the demise of collegiality.)

This former collegiality is further eroded by internal competition between scholars seeking to preserve privileges by way of scoring systems associated with metrics-driven research output schemes, which vary nonetheless between the countries involved and the schools and universities within countries involved.

The faux-universality of the neo-liberal model falls apart upon closer examination, foremost when corporate practices are examined in terms of who benefits from the practices. While the universities agree to adopt these measures, the majority of value accrues to economic agents beyond the university. The re-capitalization of universities from without (as public funds are replaced by private capital) is entirely circular, with a narrowing of options for maintaining any vestige of autonomy from the socio-economic apparatuses involved and the reduction of the socio-cultural to socio-economic concerns.

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2.0—The assault proceeds by way of dictates imposed on faculties by the bureaucratic regimes of the university in concert with corporate and quasi-governmental entities.

While the dictates of the external engines of exploitation are accepted within the university as a *fait accompli*, the origins remain similar to the procedures of the financialization of commodities and services associated with the worst practices of global financial markets.

The acceptance of these "imposed" terms has as much to do with the conversion of the administrative regimes of universities to corporate-style models (forms of vertical integration) as it does with the shift in funding from public (not-for-profit) to private (for-profit) sources. The ensuing imbalances between money spent on instruction and money spent on administration, marketing, and real-estate speculation indicates that the university—beyond the mere production of Intellectual Capital—is one of the last frontiers for neo-liberal capitalism. Thus, it is both the "Children of Marx and the Children of Coca Cola" (Jean-Luc Godard's terms from *Masculin Féminin*) that are most imperiled. While established scholars are somewhat immune, it is the "emerging scholar" that is the prime target for such practices. (The relative immunity of established scholars also accounts for their somewhat blasé attitude toward such measures.)

The survival of elite schools, functioning in relation to this model but exempt from some of its worst practices, is only possible insofar as faculties remain the chief determinant in the equations that provide "identity" and "value" versus the top-down model of the so-called public universities. While endowments and/or historical agency (aura and its analogues) might protect the elite schools, programs within such schools will be slowly altered as the field of cultural production overall shifts to utilitarianism and disciplines vanish and/or move outside the academy. (While not necessarily

negative, for programs and/or disciplines to “cut and run” merely services the expectations and aspirations of neo-liberal academia.)

The imposition of governmental control of curriculum, the imposition of regimes of monetizing research, and the imposition of competition between schools through de-funding and fee structures in the near run creates the chaos that permits the model to be imposed without serious objections, while in the long run it ironically re-naturalizes all forms of abstract or purely speculative studies for and in tandem with neutralizing anything implicitly or explicitly threatening.

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3.0—The practices associated with so-called Big Data are the primary concern of scholars as they attempt to protect their Intellectual Property and/or circulate and network their research.

Scholars caught in the machinery of the neo-liberal academy have few options, should they wish to remain there, other than to play by the rules.

The main option for subverting the rules is to meet, exceed, and subvert *by example* the narrowing perspectives of the model. (This introduces experientially based research methodologies, modalities, and practices—viz., the production of intermediate works that privilege or foreground subjective agency and serve to short circuit circular and pseudo-scientific and/or pseudo-objective practices.)

This would involve producing unclassifiable works, finding alternative means for their dissemination and networking, and annulling the purview of metrics through the creation of platforms and organic peer review whereby such works are registered in the greater record of cultural production, but are institutionally neutral or resistant to forms of expropriation by for-profit entities allied with the administrative regimes of the university system.

These works would include traditional and non-traditional modalities that might by way of feedback loops within the existing system actually alter the field of scoring such works, especially if faculties remain involved in privileging alternative ways of both conducting research (research methodologies) and disseminating the same (publication strategies).

While Big Data remains the primary means for mining Intellectual Property today, the game will no doubt shift in the near future toward its more obvious purposes—viz., the reduction of difference, the elimination of dissent, and the marginalization of the Humanities other than the celebrity regime (which universities tolerate as part of their PR and fund-raising campaigns).

The negation of privileges for academic celebrities is unlikely, while those very same luminaries are one path toward the elimi-

nation of emerging scholarship that does not conform to the replication of authorized discourse and/or the social-media driven PR aspects of marketing universities.

Additionally, the gaming of the system by celebrity scholars leads to the incestuous and circular practices that have increasingly shown peer review and journal citations to be utterly un-scientific and essentially a smokescreen for other practices (noted above and below).

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4.0—The first order of exploitation via Big Data is to collect and control academic research with the double agenda of monetizing it and selling it back to the university and/or scholar on a pay-per-view or subscription basis.

4.1—This includes current practices associated with e-books,

e-journals, e-licensing, and e-aggregation.

The models for financializing knowledge through the control and exploitation of academia proceed by way of the two-way street otherwise known as “vertical integration”—a system where a top-heavy branding of products is diversified further down the food chain (in EC parlance, “value chain”) with the resultant sub-categories controlled by the aggregation that occurs at the top. (For example, see the licensing strategies, pay walls, and subscription services of e-journals.)

The functionality of this model in terms of academic practice today is guaranteed by the importation of managers into the university system, but schooled in business management techniques versus research or instruction.

Big Data, in turn, while analogous to the practices of the NSA or Google (or any form of the aggregation of metadata), may only operate within academia through the engines it sells to academia for performance and reduction of research to data. The data are, thus, suspect sets insofar as they have been shown to be flawed and incomplete, with no possible closure given the algorithmic nature of the production of such research, foremost in the Sciences, but also in the Arts and Humanities. While the latter are marginalized, it is this very attempt to neutralize dissent that is the Achilles’ Heel of the model.

Therefore, scholars have the right to have no rights—an elective position roughly analogous to aspects of the Franciscan refusal of property rights, or the embrace of no rights for a higher right of universal accord with the benevolence of the world as given.

The right to have no rights, as transferred to scholarship, is the right to refuse e-publishing, e-aggregation, and all manner of foreclosing on the independence of one’s work—whether by the de facto theft by Big Data (which equates a right to be appropriated for no return) or the paradoxical refusal to monetize one’s work for or against one’s own interest in that work. Far from capitulation, this model opens onto all of the previously proposed alternative methods for producing and disseminating works of scholarship and works of art.

The right to have no rights means, therefore, the right to prevent others from assuming the rights one has refused. In the case of Big Data, the refusal of electronic reproduction short circuits the model.

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5.0—The monetization of research proceeds by the imposition of metrics on academic performance in the form of approved or recommended venues (lists) for publication of research with the attendant metrics imposed measuring its "value" ("impact").

5.1—This practice discourages the writing of books and favors the publication of papers and essays in journals and proceedings generally owned by or controlled by the corporate platforms that control data.

5.2—In discouraging the publication of books by awarding few points in the research output mechanisms associated with performance, neo-liberal academia is further conceding ground to the e-aggregation of research and the marginalization of conventional publishers of books (academic or otherwise).

The increasingly narrow prospects for research output (approved lists of high-impact journals, publishers, and subsequent measurement by citation) is of concern for academics seeking re-appointment, re-funding of research, and allocation of duties associated with cyclical internal review practices. De-funding of scholars, departments, and schools proceeds by way of these multiple means for accessing the instrumental value of research. The conversion of the Humanities to applied-science methodologies is one outcome of these practices.

The points-based system (typically assembled, evaluated, and audited every two or three years) determines both internal funding and external funding. In the case of governmental allocations to

universities, the periodic sweepstakes involve pressure applied to faculties to quantify otherwise qualitative research.

The valorization of the “scientific method” of research and the production of papers for conferences (often co-written), in turn, has served to de-value the writing of monographs other than by the celebrity cadre that serves the PR aspirations of the university bureaucracy. The fact that peer-reviewed journals often take longer to evaluate and publish a paper than the time required for publishing a conventional monograph has been lost on the purveyors of this system.

While this seems counter-intuitive in the extreme, the de-valuation of monographs actually serves the purposes of Big Data, which cannot necessarily data- and text-mine books they do not own (even though they have instituted programs for scanning analogue books in libraries worldwide with the intention of collecting and selling the resultant data). Furthermore, traditional academic presses have developed their own versions of e-aggregation, as have universities privileged their own Cloud-based databases, all to the detriment of the author and the Moral Rights of Authors.

The inability or unwillingness of WIPO or the EC to update the Berne Convention signals that the crisis within academia is perceived as a temporal shift, versus a chronic and likely instantiation of a perpetual crisis.

These mechanisms imposed from above and outside (from within the university on behalf of forces outside the university) have the synergistic effect of narrowing prospects within universities for variable and diverse forms of scholarship, while also driving traditional relationships between scholars and publishers closer to the prevailing ethos that author rights are malleable and to be contravened on a case-by-case basis. Contracts today typically require authors to renounce their copyright (with little hope for royalties, given that academic books generally sell 100 to 200 print and/or e-copies at best and e-licensing destroys both print and e-book sales). The arrival of author-pay models heralds the birth of yet another regime of punitive practices that will further undermine authenticity and serve to drive the patterns of in-authenticity given to circular and predatory practices in the production and dissemination of scholarship. (The lead-time for the release of a book has shortened, yet it is determined by the discipline of the

scholar/author and not the publisher. This includes time required for editing, formatting, and indexing works, with time to press and distribution of less significance than in the past.)

Indeed, the circularity of discourse is one means for the perpetuation of sameness (or incrementalism as conservatism), while the attendant rules of publication (within the corporate platforms or the commercial publishing houses) seek to privilege the few at the expense of the many, with the author-pay model being the latest means for disciplining emerging scholars (with in-house or university publications providing little or no cover/cachet for scholars beyond their own doors).

6.0—The corporate entities engaged in exploiting academic research offer two primary means for academics and scholars to “give their work away”: (a) The construction and rental of publication platforms and databases for the e-aggregation of the same, and the control and marketing of academic books and journals; and (b) The sale and/or rental of the same back to the very institutions that create and often fund the production of Intellectual Capital.

6.1—Open-access platforms for publishing research, while nominally outside this model, are insufficient means to protect Intellectual Property insofar as publication of works to The Cloud (university-owned or otherwise) generally leads to piracy, plagiarism, and loss of copyright control.

6.2—Alt-academic Open Access (not-for-profit presses and “pre-publication” platforms) is, as well, a questionable practice, given that it circumvents predatory publishers yet proceeds as above—viz., tacitly facilitates piracy, plagiarism, and loss of copyright control.

Insofar as the apparatuses noted above are effectively requiring that authors “give their work away” for dubious and often endlessly deferred rewards is telltale, the double bind of open-access publishing and its origins in the attempt to circumvent predatory practices of academic presses is indicative of the widening gulf between Intellectual Property Rights and the digitalization of knowledge (the conversion of knowledge to data).

Open Access, with its badge of anti-capitalist fervor, has managed to buy the same model for somewhat different purposes. The outcome for the author, however, is the same.

The double-headed empire of e-licensing and e-aggregation merely proceeds by more conventionally liberal means with Open Access, even as the author concedes rights to the platform, and even as anything uploaded to The Cloud is infinitely re-scaleable and easily pirated.

Thus, the control of one's Intellectual Property is increasingly a matter of avoiding both the e-cannibalization of works and the well-meaning but misguided purview of alt-academic practices (pre-publication platforms, Open Access, academic Social Media, etc.).

Open Access in the alt-academic sense suggests that "giving one's work away" might be used against the grain or to promote a larger project. The notoriety of the open-access publisher is one element of such a strategy. Its return to the metric-based system of scoring and evaluating research output however remains in question, as increasingly the lists of approved publishers exclude such platforms.

In terms of open-access publishing via pre-publication platforms (ostensibly to network one's work prior to conference or publication), plus the vagaries of institutional open-access publishing via The Cloud, it is more than obvious that the proliferation of works via the Internet or electronic platforms of a proprietary nature will automatically compromise any possible conventional publication of the works in question. Most publishers will balk at printing works freely available on the World Wide Web, and any attempts to argue that the work has been "substantially revised" or such will have little or no effect.

Thus, Open Access compromises or forecloses on the conventional publication of works—in book or journal form. Additionally, the very idea that works can be quickly distributed in this manner is effectively the main reason for indulging it, while the time required to produce a conventional monograph or journal article (with or without peer review and editorial intervention by the publisher) is only slightly longer, thereby erasing or minimizing the desirability of the model.

E-books, e-platforms, etc. carry the additional problem of editioning, with the likelihood of changes in the text being undetectable and thus violating the conventions of revised texts. The means for denoting these changes are not yet codified and publishers have failed to take into account the possibly pernicious side of multiple editions with variable content. (See the Duke University repository for e-books, which buys and archives e-books versus renting copies which reside on the publisher's platform and can be revoked and/or changed without notice.)

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7.0—The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Commission (EC) have done nothing to update the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (est. 1896) to reflect the digitalization and corporate (for-profit) exploitation of Intellectual Property.

7.1—The United States (US) has instituted a non-punitive update to US Copyright Law in the form of avenues for filing complaints and issuing "Take-down" orders. This applies exclusively to the Internet, not the proprietary databases of corporate e-aggregators.

As of April 2015 the EC is still "studying" the impact of Big Data on Intellectual Property Rights. Given the internal agendas for funding research that redounds to the EC as a curious version of transnational cultural patrimony, it is self-evident that the Berne Convention will not be updated anytime soon.

The funding mechanisms of the EC Horizon 2020 initiative, for example, exclusive of EU structural funds, are utterly biased in favor of instrumentalized research. Science and technology receive the lion's share of funding through these periodic (cyclical) schemes, while the Humanities is permitted to survive in increasingly narrow subsets of socio-cultural projects that address the problems generated by the socio-economic practices of the EU-EC (viz., the

“ameliorative model” of humanistic research as triage for capitalist exploitation).

The Humanities, in this manner, is reduced to forms of remedial education for the masses, with projects that address macro-social problems at the local level permitted.

Thus, the likelihood of EC funding for any initiative that challenges the extensive campaigns of neo-liberal capitalism within the EU's borders is unlikely to be funded.

While the EU continues to fight US monopolies operating on EU soil, especially media empires, the agglomeration of financial concerns circling the public universities (notwithstanding the proliferation of for-profit private universities) represents a fast-closing, transnational monopoly aimed directly at Intellectual Capital and the Moral Rights of Authors.

8.0—The universities engaged in converting research in the Humanities to scaleable and saleable data (with data- and text-mining the most recent examples of the mutability of the model) have either capitulated to the global model or are part of its very construction.

8.1—The administrative regimes currently associated with neo-liberal academia generally conform to what is called “vertical integration” in the corporate world, a term that is, in turn, derived from media empires of the order of News Corp., Miramax, and Facebook.

Models of “vertical integration,” while derived from corporate media conglomerates, are increasingly applied to the production and dissemination of scholarly works insofar as the for-profit entities involved own or control all aspects of the so-called food chain.

These models are generally the cause of e-licensing of print works (agreed to by publishers), arguments regarding “discoverability” (the justification for e-licensing), the e-aggregation of journal contents (which drives the citations machine), the proliferation of fees and pay-per-view options (with the return of the work to the authors or discipline as rentable content), plus all of the knock-on effects of anything that rises above the leveling exercise—viz., the privileging of the elect, the paid lecture circuit, and the keynote

speaker game associated with academic conferences (paid for by fees leveled on the general attendees).

In turn, all of this has generated a parallel universe of fictitious journals and fictitious editors prowling the e-corridors of academia in pursuit of scholars naïve enough to submit work and then be hit with fees for publishing it. The e-journal, being an inexpensive template easily appropriated, has become the favored platform for the manipulation of emerging scholars caught in the web of deceit emanating from the e-commerce model superadded to measuring academic competence or incompetence.

Combining the apparently legitimate or authorized forms of e-aggregation and appropriation with the illicit shadow world of predatory journals and presses, plus the incumbent effects of the technologically sophisticated brinksmanship of schools competing for dwindling public funds, the scholar today is caught in a complex and shifting landscape of options that all return to the loss of the Moral Rights of Authors.

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JSTOR—As of early 2014, JSTOR, a not-for-profit e-aggregator, announced they would begin offering e-books. The likely outcome is that JSTOR will become the antidote to EBSCO et al. As a not-for-profit enterprise, and given that they offer free access to their databases for Third World universities, JSTOR is

positioned to lower the profile of the predatory giants. In some respects JSTOR is the compromise position between the earlier attempts by universities to privilege Open Access and the subsequent corporate takeover of academic research. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

9.0—The result of all of the above is both general confusion (on the part of academics and scholars unaware of the reasons for metrics-driven performance) and increasing anger and rebellion (by academics and scholars well aware of the implications for metrics-driven performance).

9.1—Rebellions are currently underway in the US, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and the Netherlands.

9.2—The very definition of neo-liberal capitalism confirms the non-democratic nature of its practices. Thus, the rebellions noted above have been ignored by the administrative regimes at which they are aimed, with no resultant conversation of any significance.

9.3—The second line of defense for the Humanities is to forestall further inroads into faculties by such practices by strenuously invoking and installing multiple and diverse paths for PhD and Master's students.

9.4—This might take the form of alternative PhD models, such as Thesis by Exegesis (creative work plus written exegesis) and Thesis by Publication (written works published along the path of the PhD with a summary submitted upon completion justifying the overall project). Such creative substitutes for the conventional thesis, which is increasingly the primary location for the imposition of the above-mentioned metrics-driven practices on students, might serve to circumvent the mechanisms of control and discipline otherwise visited upon faculties and students from above.

The rebellions currently underway are being more or less ignored by the administrative regimes that have placed the Humanities in jeopardy. Generally, and as proof of neo-liberalism's strained relationship to democracy, there is no real discussion and the academic bureaucracies imposing the new rules intentionally ignore

any and all complaints and/or demonstrations by faculties and students.

Established academics (following the above refusal of the administrative regimes to discuss metrics-driven performance) have begun leaving the academy.

Students unaware or uncaring of these procedural shifts have a rude awakening coming once they apply for teaching positions and/or postdoctoral fellowships in major institutions. The alternatives for students include seeking grants and funding opportunities outside of academia proper to further their research and publications agenda.

Additionally, faculties might develop and coordinate alternative paths for recognition of student work in alliance with the more open-minded levels of administration outside the metrics-obsessed practices imposed by the marketing and PR departments within the neo-liberal university. Provosts versus Chancellors or Rectors are the historic link to faculties (instruction) whereas the present-day "CEOs" of universities are primarily concerned with leveraging Intellectual Capital and fundraising.

The primary opportunities for resisting and countering the exploitation of research, therefore, reside in graduate and postgraduate programs within the established universities which have yet to acknowledge the necessary firewall between intellectual inquiry and venal and abject utilitarian concerns derived from market-driven practices from outside of the university.

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10.0—There are creative ways of dealing with all of the above that are productive of a nuanced and intentionally spirited defense of the Humanities and speculative inquiry. Foremost, it is the Humanities (Arts and Letters) that might best develop alternative new-old methodologies for the production and dissemination of scholarship that restores to academia the inalienable and timeless rights associated with the very production of knowledge as theoretical praxis.

10.1—The primary mode for this defense is the creation and safeguarding of a combination of media types and platforms that includes conventional publication but also addresses in a critical manner the proliferation of mediatic practices in the Arts and Humanities.

10.2—The types and modalities of scholarship (experimental and otherwise) to be protected include: Exhibition; Folio; Limited Edition; Lecture (public or otherwise); Performance; Visual Essay; Visual Poem; Film-essay; etc.

10.3—In terms of analogue publication or print media (books, articles, essays), the lists associated with metrics-driven performance must be amended and expanded.

10.4—In terms of digital and non-analogue works, new conventions must be created for assessing and protecting from piracy the author's moral rights.

10.5—The Moral Rights of Authors are included in the Berne Convention. It is these rights that have, in fact, been fully neutralized by predatory practices in academic publishing, while also neutering the contractual concept of "derivative work" (any work created after the primary work).

10.6—The re-definition of "derivative work" is, thus, the primary course of action for protecting the Moral Rights of Authors in the digital age. These moral rights, inclusive of copyright, represent the Achilles' Heel for predatory capitalist practices and the campaign to data- and text-mine academic research.

10.7—The Moral Rights of Authors remain the primary address for all adjustments to, resistance to, and the possible overturning of the most pernicious aspects of the current crisis in the production, protection, and preservation of Intellectual Property.

Forms of New Media combined with post-digital publishing are both the address for and against the consolidation of the capitalist assault on academia and Intellectual Property. Such platforms permit creative endeavors of traditional scholarship and forms of experimental scholarship.

While the updating of the Berne Convention remains under discussion, it is imperative that scholars protect their work by creating new forms of production, review, and dissemination. The likely avenues are to refuse digital publishing other than as a means for promoting analogue forms and to protect analogue forms by using publishers that honor the rights of authors. Whether or not these publishers are on the approved lists (as above) is irrelevant. Such publishers will only be placed on such lists once they have a critical mass of credible scholarship in their back catalogues.

Universities are, paradoxically, one of the few places where the required pressure may be found toward the protection of Intellectual Property and the inculcation of new regimes of producing the same, which might then alter the field for non-predatory relationships with the apparatuses of power currently assimilated at the highest levels of the university. It is, finally, the Moral Rights of Authors that must be studied, re-defined, and protected through both practices by and for scholars and by universities clamoring for authenticity and moral authority at either a local, national, or international (global) level. The quantification of knowledge might only be countered by a strenuous and concerted effort to safeguard qualitative means and practices both historically derived and contingently updated through experimentation, liberality, and collegiality.

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As of December 2013 the European Commission began "a public consultation on the modernisation of copyright (deadline: 5 March 2014)." Additionally, the remuneration of authors was "one important topic included in the consultation." "In particular, the consultation document recognises that concerns continue to be raised that authors and performers are not adequately remunerated, in particular but not solely, as regards online exploitation. Many consider that the economic benefit of new forms of exploitation is not being fairly shared along the whole value chain. Another commonly raised issue concerns contractual practices, negotiation mechanisms, presumptions

of transfer of rights, buy-out clauses and the lack of possibility to terminate contracts": http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2013/copyright-rules/index_en.htm.

Summary Judgments v.1.1



1.0—Creative protocols and practices might be established *with* or *against* (but not *for*) the machinic processes described above.

1.1—Such creative protocols might be developed unilaterally by faculties or individual scholars, but they would require the imprimatur of the Provost for approval within the university system proper.

2.0—The primary concern/goal of these machinic processes (behind the smokescreen of providing “invaluable” services) is data- and text-mining of research and scholarship and the vertical-integration strategies associated with the same. The vertical-integration model is the primary means of monetizing such appropriations.

3.0—The Humanities is Ground Zero for the elimination of non-utilitarian disciplines and discourses via these quantitative models.

3.1—The Humanities will survive only in the elite universities that enjoy the embarrassment of riches associated with sizeable endowments or in institutes within universities that are externally funded.

4.0—Digital Humanities is a pseudo-discipline only half-embedded in the neo-liberal practices noted. Yet it is likely, in time, to be totally subsumed by the model (by the deterministic or neo-Darwinian aspects of the practices involved and valorized).

5.0—Disciplines that swallow other disciplines (while paying lip service to “interdisciplinarity”) are complicit in the destruction of the Humanities, a process that generally proceeds by the produc-

tion of increasingly circular and self-referential argumentation and citation and the utilization of platforms and processes associated with New Media and Digital Humanities.

5.1—The super-disciplines, as above, are coveted by universities only insofar as they eliminate discrete disciplines that have historically little or no use value (public relations-wise or otherwise).

5.2—The PR machines embedded within universities have converted faculties to service providers and students to consumers. “Flash” or “chic” programs draw students and fees and are tolerated as “billboards” for the larger brand. (Occasionally there are *actual* billboards circling the city, plastered to buses.)

6.0—Those scholars who choose to leave the university due to the increasingly punitive measures noted above have the choice of so-called alt-academic positions (librarians, editors, etc.) or singular artistic and creative practices underwritten by the value of their work and/or fellowships and grants.

6.1—The value of independent work in the Arts and Sciences outside of academia is increasingly commandeered nonetheless by the same forces operating within the university. For example, publicly funded works are expected to be “freely” available and/or held in trust by the funding agencies. Additionally, grant- and fellowship-funded projects are subsumed by the PR machines of the host institution, often compromising the artist’s or scholar’s ability to capitalize the project in support of their larger endeavor. Lastly, there is the emergence of the double bind where funding source determines the outcome (while also restricting the dissemination or capitalization of the work by the author).

7.0—Grants and fellowships rarely support work that does not somehow service the expectations of the grant-awarding entity. There are also more and more scholars and artists chasing fewer and fewer grants, residencies, and fellowships due to the overproduction of degrees and the tightening monetary regimes of not-for-profit, grant- or fellowship-awarding institutions. Additionally, the review of grant and fellowship applications both within and beyond the university is ring-fenced by the traditional gatekeepers who impose bland or extreme ideological judgment on all pro-

spective grantees. This form of review is the same process that has been incorporated into academic peer review (via journals, conferences, etc.).

7.1—The classic system of patronage by the well-off (now a virtually dead practice) is of marginal use in the calculations required of scholars and/or artists wishing to escape the dictates of the university or the for-profit publishers and media companies, both of which have adopted the vertical-integration model noted above. Scaleability remains the mantra of both corporate for-profit companies involved in garnering control of Intellectual Capital and institutional, not-for-profit agencies purporting to support the Arts and Letters. The author is generally the last person consulted in these hierarchies of appropriation.

8.0—Thus, the best location for the necessary forms of resistance to the above practices is from within the university versus from the *outside*. The restoration of independent scholarship and intellectual inquiry is the first step in a re-vitalization of the Humanities, while the protection of the Moral Rights of Authors is the first step toward rewarding scholars for their work versus punishing and disciplining them in a perverse game of appropriation by opprobrium.

Words to Cross Out (Until the Berne Convention is Updated) v.1.1



I. GENERAL TRENDS AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH COGNITIVE CAPITALISM

~~Author-pay Publishing~~

~~Celebrity Intellectuals~~

~~Citations~~

~~Conventional Thesis~~

~~Creative Commons~~

~~Creative Industries~~

~~Crowd-funding~~

~~Data-mining~~

~~Digital Humanities~~

~~Discoverability~~

~~E-books~~

~~E-journals~~

~~E-licensing~~

High-impact Journals

Open Access

Open Source

Peer Review

Pre-publication

Re-branding

Research Integrity

Research Metrics

Social Media

Text mining

The Cloud

II. PRACTICES AND DISCIPLINES THAT ARE EATING AND/OR SUPPLANT- ING OTHER DISCIPLINES

Big Architecture

Circular Discourses

Critical Theory

Cultural Ecology

Cultural Studies

Discourse Analysis

Environmental Studies

Film Studies

Media Studies

New Media

Visual Anthropology

Visual Culture

Topological Glossary v.1.1



Alt-academia—Locations and/or positions outside of academia proper or in support of academic processes. Places where academics may flee to (e.g., libraries or presses).

Arts and Humanities—A confluence of disciplines distinguished primarily by its traditional distance from purely instrumentalized disciplines (bespoke professions).

Arts and Sciences—A confluence of disciplines distinguished primarily by its traditional privileging of instrumentality. A borderland between disciplines often formalized within universities via distinct schools or faculties (e.g., Faculty of Arts and Sciences).

Big Data—The construction, maintenance, and imposition of gigantic databases as a primary means for mining Intellectual Capital. Justified by its massive serviceability and utility.

Celebrity Intellectuals—Branded personalities associated with academia and other institutions (e.g., media empires) that form a de facto consensus or subtle version of Gramscian hegemony while insisting otherwise. Such figures are given *carte blanche* by publishers and serve as keynote speakers at academic conferences, due primarily to their PR value. See also, TED Talks, TEDx Talks, etc.

Circular Discourses—Generally any discourse that is premised on circular and repetitive citation as a means for establishing its credentials, but also disciplines that form closed networks of servants, experts, and—by default—censors. A late-modern version of hermeneutics.

Cognitive Capitalism—The third phase in the development of Capitalism after Mercantile Capitalism and Industrial Capitalism. Intimately tied to the financialization of knowledge through the technological apparatuses of appropriation associated with Big Data. An orchestrated assault on the immaterial aspects of cultural production (e.g., Intellectual Property).

Collegiality—A quaint term used to describe former and/or lost versions of debate, democratic consensus, and such. When applied to academia, collegiality connotes “colloquia” and “symposia,” versus “conferences” and “marketing campaigns.” Academic Social Media is a virtual, late-modern version of collegiality, but generally without the civility.

Conventional Thesis—The default model for PhDs that is generally unpublishable without major triage. Spurned by publishers, which leads to such theses and dissertations being consigned to university libraries and/or The Cloud.

Creative Commons—Various licensing schemes (est. c.2001) for primarily web-based open-access works that may or may not protect the Moral Rights of Authors.

Creative Industries—The neoliberal-capitalist term for the Arts and Humanities. Related to crowd-funding, grant and fellowship competitions, and other mechanisms of support that collectively constitute the specter of perpetual fundraising and branding for the Arts and Humanities and/or individuals engaged in independent scholarship and creative arts. Related to postdoctoral fellowships, grants, residencies, and such. Foundational bias of governmental programs such as the US National Endowment for the Arts, the US National Endowment for the Humanities, and the EU–EC Horizon 2020 initiative. Stalking horse for identifying and capitalizing any emergent trends in the disciplines invoked.

Cultural Memory—A re-calibration of classic historical studies (e.g., Historiography) that focuses on the return of past times in present times through the elaboration of complexes and “ghosts” persistent within ideological and cultural practices. Derived in part from Deconstruction (Continental Philosophy).

Cultural Patrimony—Nominally invented by the French, a type of branding of cultural production that reverts to a form of naïve na-

tionalism only retrospectively, as in the recent case of the French blocking the sale and exportation of the papers of Guy Debord (founder of the Situationist International) or the adoption and marketing of artists such as Jean-Luc Godard and Anselm Kiefer (once successful).

Data-mining—The practices associated with Big Data, where scholarship is collected (through e-journals, e-licensing, etc.) and converted to tranches similar to the financial instruments utilized by Wall Street prior to, but also after, the 2008 global “crash.”

Derivative Works—A sacrosanct and key element or term of the Berne Convention safeguarding any secondary work that follows upon a primary work (e.g., conversion of a book to a film, production of a play from a published version, etc.).

Digital Humanities—The importation of the edicts and practices of Big Data and pseudo-scientific scholarship to the Humanities.

Discoverability—The excuse used by e-aggregators for justifying their practices. Also utilized by open-access advocates for collecting and marketing metadata.

E-aggregation—The collection, assembly, and marketing of vast tranches of research by not-for-profit and for-profit publishers and platforms. Proceeds by way of the appropriation of tens of thousands of books, journals, and archives and the licensing of the same to institutions (with both the platform and the content provided on a non-transparent fee structure paid by the university). The origin of Google’s experiment with scanning books in libraries worldwide plus the practices associated with HathiTrust Digital Library. Foundation for all companies engaged in the academic library-services industry.

E-licensing—The wholesale collection, digitalization, and sale of private Intellectual Property without remuneration by for-profit or nominally not-for-profit corporations and entities in collusion with or by academic and mass-market publishers. The model defaults to the “vertical integration” strategies of corporate media. Additionally, the model extends to otherwise innocuous organizations such as MIT Journals and Project Muse (hosted by Johns Hopkins University).

E-platforms—The collection, marketing, and sensationalizing of “knowledge as such” as a late form of New Media. Instrumental in the reduction of scholarship to data and the conversion of the arts to entertainment. As compensation, conventional (old) New Media has become an unorthodox place or non-place by which to pursue experimental forms of scholarship (e.g., political critique).

Edufactory—The imposition, elaboration, and perpetual fine-tuning of academia to serve neo-liberal capitalist pursuits. The conversion of academia to a factory for the production and extraction of knowledge by for-profit corporate entities in collusion with the highest levels of governance within and outside of the university proper, plus the reduction of former public research universities to trade schools (with the over-production of degrees being in direct proportion to the desire of neo-liberal capitalism to manage and discipline disciplines through lowered expectations and the production of captive subjects).

Film-essay—A means for using the visual image in tension with the spoken word, as practiced by Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard. Arguably, the film-essay is the synthesis of discursive and non-discursive knowledge, taking the problems of the essay and its voice (or, its criticality) out of one register (literature as such) and placing it in a second register (the visual arts as such).

High-impact Journals—The shibboleth associated with measuring academic performance by scholars (operative primarily in the Arts and Sciences) and their capacities for gaming the system through high-profile networking and brinksmanship associated with the celebrity intellectual circuit.

Humanities—The last outpost for totally “useless” intellectual inquiry. Arguably, the primary address for pure speculative intellect.

Intellectual Capital—Anything produced that may have socio-cultural and/or socio-economic value.

Intellectual Property—The conversion of Intellectual Capital to personal or corporate property. Orderly and legal transfer of the former to the latter is the origin of copyright law.

Limited Edition—The primary means for producing a book or art work that might also retain its “aura” (its singular status as art work

or physical artifact). Despite arguments regarding reproducibility, the limited edition and its provenance suggest that it is a key aspect of post-digital print strategies and the cross-platform practices associated with post-digital print. Not to be confused with the high-end limited editions perpetrated by art publishers.

Moral Rights of Authors—The catch-all term in the Berne Convention for the inalienable rights of the author/artist to resist the cannibalization and theft of their work, their identity, and their reputation. In reverse order, Moral Rights revert to “derivative works” and to copyright per se. The Berne Convention states that such rights may not be renounced or transferred (even if the author/artist prefers to do so). In most cases the Moral Rights of Authors survive the physical death of the author/artist. Related to the Romantic concept of “immortality” for authors.

Neo-liberal Academia—The Edufactory.

Neo-liberal Capitalism—The conversion of life to infinitely malleable economic units and an assault on the last frontier—immaterial labor.

New Media—The traditional multimedia aspects of the Arts and Letters in association with advances in digital technology and the production of online platforms for the same.

Non-exclusive License—The usual means (or, stalking horse) via signed contract for the collection and transfer of Intellectual Property without remuneration by and to media platforms (“publishers”), and its subsequent conversion to licensed content (data sets, supply periods, etc.). The term or life-span for these non-exclusive contracts is, generally, “Until we no longer need or want it.” Includes usurpation of underlying works (photographs, musical compositions, etc.).

Open Access—The sometimes admirable attempt to circumvent the worst ravages of predatory publishers. Arguably, a devolution of lost arguments made by academia to rout piracy of scholarship by corporate fiat through institutional open-access models. Now a prominent alt-academic business model, but also the semi-pernicious basis for pre-publication platforms (aimed at collecting scholarship prior to publication) and academic Social Media widgets of various and sundry types.

Pay-per-view—The practice associated with for-profit e-aggregation whereby the author or institution that created the content is asked to pay a fee to access it. Related to “Discoverability.”

Peer Review—The incestuous process now approved worldwide for vetting works by scholars prior to publication. One of the great fictions of academic metrics—viz., “Peer review proves that your work is valid.” The process de-values experimental works and places emerging scholars in jeopardy insofar as they will tailor their works for such approved venues (journals, conferences, etc.) and to appease and/or please the attendant gatekeepers. Also the smell test for alt-academic publishers insofar as scholars wishing to concede to the practice of peer review must choose “reputable” presses (with nominal or real peer review). Often utilized by private foundations, universities, and governmental agencies for vetting grant and fellowship proposals, with the added provision that any books in an author’s Curriculum Vitae must have had an “editor” (viz., any book must have undergone substantive editing). Begs the question, “Cannot a book be evaluated on its merits versus its provenance?” (Which, in turn, begs the unanswerable question, “Does anyone read anything anymore and/or why have metrics and approved lists of publishers become the primary means for measuring quality?”)

Piracy—Corporate or personal for-profit theft of Intellectual Capital.

Post-digital Print—Various and sundry practices following the near demise of print media to both restore print media to its Early Modern role as physical artifact (with traditional “aura”) while using digital media to push and promote the same (and vice versa).

Predatory Publisher—A term usually used to describe unscrupulous journals and presses (often with fictitious editors) that lure academics into author-pay schemes. Also applicable to some of the most renowned names in academic and mass-market publishing that offer punitive royalties schemes via impossible-to-achieve sales and Hollywood accounting measures.

Re-branding—A persistent marketing protocol, first associated with the 1990s (“Cool Britannia,” etc.), utilized for re-positioning any commodity that has lost its “aura” and/or fallen from grace with the sea. Within academia, the re-naming of schools, depart-

ments, or programs to reflect new corporate sponsorship and/or the decimation of traditional disciplines. Includes the establishment of “stand-offish” institutes within schools that are generally self-funded to escape the financial dictates of the university proper (though the university takes an “administrative fee”).

Research Citations—The game by which scholars are measured—i.e., rewarded or punished by university bureaucracies and faculties. Often proceeds by institutional databases created internally and/or by outside for-profit interests.

Research Metrics—The overriding system of measurement of research in the neo-liberal university. Tied to the regimes of reward and punishment and the elimination of “non-productive” or so-called useless disciplines (those with no obvious utilitarian value).

Scaleability—The conversion of knowledge to data sets for and toward financializing the same.

Scientific Scholarship—The default status of the Sciences and Social Sciences in terms of methodology. Usually invokes “objectivity” and the repression of the author’s voice (subjectivity). Countered in the Arts and Humanities by interpretive and non-objective biases that often revert to mere unsubstantiated opinions in the eyes of pseudo-scientific scholars.

Socio-cultural—The register within cultural production where the socio-economic is demoted.

Socio-economic—The register within cultural production where the socio-cultural is demoted.

Speculative Intellect—A Hegelian term that verges on mysticism. Arguably related to aphasia (arguably the origin of philosophical inquiry). Also the reason that instrumentalized disciplines (e.g., Architecture) were demoted by G.W.F. Hegel to non-art status. The “ghost” in the machinery of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Super-disciplines—Those disciplines that are eating traditional disciplines while quietly servicing the machinery of neo-liberal academia.

Text-mining—The reduction of scholarship to tranches of information (data) available on a pay-per-session basis by for-profit corporate entities.

The Cloud—The all-purpose online repository for knowledge-as-information. Intimately tied to Digital Humanities insofar as the research associated with the same is to be networked versus published.

Thesis by Exegesis—A hybrid PhD model that proceeds from creative work and involves a 10,000-word document (exegesis) explaining the overriding themes of (and connections between) the project or projects. Generally only an option in the Arts. Leads to problems of evaluation, which in turn justifies the exegesis.

Thesis by Publication—The PhD model that is usually a collection of essays published in peer-reviewed journals with a 10,000-word document submitted to the university explaining the overriding themes of (and connections between) the essays. Alternatively, a book or series of books with a 10,000-word document submitted to the university explaining the overriding themes of (and connections between) the project and/or projects.

Toll Access—The practice associated with e-journals whereby the schools and individuals who provided the content are charged a fee to access it.

Utilitarianism—Nominally a nineteenth-century practice associated with the late Industrial Revolution when Utopia was perceived as a well-managed society and pragmatism was the prevailing ethos. One of John Ruskin's foremost nemeses.

Vanity Press—A colloquial term applied to any press that charges authors fees to edit, produce, and market their books (inclusive of high-end publishers specializing in coffee-table books), although Amazon has irreparably lowered the bar for the term by vigorously promoting self-publishing through print-on-demand services often as a nod toward alternative (e.g., alt-academic) presses.

Vertical Integration—Strategies associated with media companies to leverage their assets. Includes acquisition and/or extermination of rivals. Conventional print media is subsumed in the model (viz., analogue models are converted to digital models).

Visual Poem—Arguably, related to Concrete Poetry, but concerned instead with the non-discursive cachet of the photographic or hand-rendered image. Often accompanied by music.

Ljubljana Accord v.1.1



1.0—The University of Ljubljana is in the unique position of safeguarding forms of academic freedom now under threat by neo-liberal capitalist exploitation. This is primarily due to the lag between implementation and conformity plus “endogenous” factors given to the University as such (e.g., language barriers, publicly sponsored economies of scale, and professional and/or administrative post-socialist regimes unique to the region and representing both opportunities and hurdles).

1.1—As a type of enlightened “else-where” (half Western European and half Eastern European), Slovenia might serve the privileged role *for Europe* of inventing a hybrid model based on countering the worst ravages of neo-liberal exploitation of academia while preserving its unique cultural heritage.

2.0—While adopting many of the practices of contemporary academic research and publication, the University of Ljubljana has a long history of internal autonomy associated with past concerns for cultural patrimony and the preservation of scientific research standards in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

2.1—These practices are in no way similar to the predatory models outlined above, while they also deserve careful recalibration, especially given the imposition of the global system for measuring research and research impact. The main publication platforms for the University and schools within the same produce an enormous amount of scholarship that rarely leaves Slovenia due to language issues (lack of translation into English, the lingua franca of present-day neo-liberal academia). This is both an opportunity and a hurdle that, in fact, prevents and forestalls the foremost mechanisms of theft of Intellectual

Property by Big Data and for-profit publishers. In the long run, however, this “nativism” is detrimental to the higher purposes of scholarship as pure speculative inquiry.

3.0—Cultural patrimony is intimately linked to issues of cultural memory and the preservation of unique characteristics given to Slovenia. Cultural memory, in turn, is linked to freedom of speech and thought—arguably, the very issues most threatened by the neo-liberal machinery installed or to be installed in universities to siphon off Intellectual Capital.

4.0—A Slovene Accord would create a striated model based on conventional and “avant-garde” methodologies and modalities while also registering these new and old practices within the apparatuses of the research and publication models associated with the EU-EC and with the larger international scene; viz., a form of striation that counters the smooth and pernicious elements that serve to level scholarship and make it scaleable, saleable, and generally exploitable.

4.1—The primary structure of this Accord would require the examination, elaboration, and re-definition (or re-calibration) of the Moral Rights of Authors as a keystone or central pillar for any and all accommodations of the machinery associated with the neo-liberal university.

5.0—By installing the Moral Rights of Authors as a keystone or central pillar in the architecture of a unique version of research and publication strategies, a Slovene Accord would accomplish at the local level what might be done at the EU-EC level while safeguarding local differences—i.e., vital concerns such as cultural patrimony, plus issues related to the marginalization of Slovene scholarship as it is subsumed by the EU-EC version of the global Edufactory.

5.1—If the current and/or projected system closes before changes are made to safeguard the Moral Rights of Authors, the holes or lacunae (as opportunities for creative resistance) in the present machinery will also close and the result will be a totalitarian model of appropriation of cultural patrimony and Intellectual Capital.

May 1, 2015

APPENDIX B

2015 Exhibition Reviews



Defining Beauty (Backwards)



"Defining Beauty: The Body in Ancient Greek Art," The British Museum, Great Russell Square, London, England, March 26–July 5, 2015. All citations, dates, and titles of works taken from the wall text of the exhibition.

More false dichotomies—"fixed archaic smile" versus "softened archaic smile," from Egypt to Cyprus to Hellas, in a little under 200 years (664–525 BC to c.490 BC). Yet the *Greek Youth* is luminous, from head to toe. The torso is effeminate—the rigid posture of the Egyptian and Cypriot model melting by 490 BC into incorporeal and ethereal "youthfulness." Clearly the world has been re-born with the Hellenes. What is this infusion of pathos plus Eros via archaic humanism? Two thousand years later Michelangelo is to be transfixed by the same question—studying the *Belvedere Torso* (1st-century BC Roman copy after a lost Greek bronze, "all bronze melted down as scrap") for his *Study for Adam* (c.1511). Art versus Nature? Again the binaries pile up—with Michelangelo looting the archaic for expressive purposes, "Ideal and utopian form" versus rote mimesis. Friedrich Schiller sees in the "shattered mass of stone" the embodiment of "unfathomable contemplation." The British Museum tells us it may be Herakles or Ajax.

The ever-controversial, purloined Elgin Marbles have been "rolled" into place, anchoring this subtle inquisition of visual culture. *Iris* (torso, Athens, 438–422 BC) is paired with a Lycian Nereid or sea nymph (*Spirit of the Sea*, 390–380 BC), the latter wearing nothing but sea foam. *Dionysos* (438–432 BC, from the East Pediment of the Parthenon) is paired with the *Belvedere Torso*, close to the exit, the former a product of the School of Pheidias (removed to Britain by the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire) and the latter (borrowed from the Vatican) sketched by Benjamin Robert Haydon in 1809, for its excellence in the portrayal of

compressed musculature.

Stale Roman copies abound. A Greek bronze retrieved from the Adriatic (somewhere off the coast of Croatia) holds the place of honor, saved from the post-Hellene scrap yard by the sea nymphs. Perhaps it too is a copy. Who knows? Was *Laocoön* a copy? Did Michelangelo create a copy of a copy, bury it, and dig it up to the astonishment of the Renaissance humanists?

The opening gestures via wall text are strange art-historical understatements of artistic will and, needlessly, near bromides. "Nudity is both beautiful and moral" is followed by an homage to "physical and moral excellence." Maximus of Tyre is quoted, as is Socrates ("Sokrates"). Realism and Humanism collide in the art-historical imagination—pure material form and immateriality somehow collude to produce Hellenic art. The problematic gods appear here as patrimonial and matriarchal poseurs: they are not the progenitors of archaic humanism, the main theme of the British Museum mini-show. Their guileless roles betray the sole purpose of arch-patrimony—to survey by unholy gaze the human (sublunary) world. Void forms worlds through the two-way exchange (as Lucretius never quite said). Euripides gives to Helen of Troy her best line: "To be ugly, like statues with their colors removed"—that is to say, to be immaterial, white, chaste (invisible to the polychromatic world of phantom ideological formulations and, therefore, not-hostage).

Maximus of Tyre tells us that "the Greek custom is to represent the gods by the most beautiful things on Earth—pure material, human form, consummate art." Yet this statement needs further elaboration: It leads to pure (im)material form (or, pure material form *made* immaterial through eliding the terms of the characterization, through condensing the terms to their point of maximal exchange where the syntactic collapses into the semantic and the semantic vanishes in a flash of sea foam). This is the illogical heart of the otherwise logical statement regarding Greek art by Maximus. Immateriality and immanence produce humanism. Humanism produces the inhuman (the gods and the god-like). The paradox is played out with Michelangelo and others (including Ruskin), yet the Greeks clearly invented the conundrum. Luminous marble and bronze, as art-historical phenomenon, is inhuman (it was and it *is*). The archaic spirit may be discerned in the materiality, yet the Spirit, per se (in the Hegelian sense), is to be detected in the doubled luminosity of the immaterial form. This doubled luminosity is, of course, the Sublime (since Longinus). The Sublime is Not-beauty. To define beauty in any other way is to privilege a

perverse economy of essentially bankrupt signifiers (via classical antinomies, modernist dialectics, etc.). It is for this reason that the ugly is sometimes most lovely (or, *most beloved*). Pale Helen versus virtuous, robust (voluptuous) Helen.

June 8, 2015

Memento Mori: A Day in the Life of the Venice Art Biennale



A magical-realist sampling of “All the World’s Futures” and the national pavilions, La Biennale di Venezia, 56th International Art Exhibition, Venice, Italy, May 9–November 22, 2015.

Time is the one thing we can all agree to call supernatural. It is at least neither energy nor matter; not dimension, either; let alone function; and yet it is the beginning and end of the creation of the world.¹

Unfailingly, works of art make known their creator, for who, as he looks at statues and paintings, does not immediately form an idea about the sculptor and the painter?²

I. PRÉCIS

If Rem Koolhaas’s Venice Architecture Biennale of 2014 circled and pre-figured the Death of Architecture, why does Okwui Enwezor’s Venice Art Biennale of 2015 circle and pre-figure the Death of Art? Furthermore, as both Architecture and Art have been totally savaged by Capital, has Hegel’s Pleroma/Parousia arrived by way of the enemy? If Hegel’s Pleroma/Parousia (always a half-mystical conception) is the total self-consciousness (self-knowledge in the

¹ Halldór Laxness, *Under the Glacier*, trans. Magnus Magnusson (New York: Vintage, 2005), 81; cited in Joan Jonas, *They Come to Us without a Word* (New York: Gregory Miller & Co., 2015).

² Philo Judaeus; cited in Margot and Rudolf Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists* (New York: Random House, 1963), xvii.

Platonic sense) of Spirit/Geist—or, when Spirit comes to know itself—how has Capital managed its own simultaneous perfection and defeat? Is Karl Marx laughing? Such are the questions animating all debates on the political bastions of the Left and the Right—the Center having been long since foresworn and exhausted as absurd posturing in service to nothingness. What obtains in “La Biennale di Venezia: 56. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte” is a partial answer by way of Art proper, which Hegel predicted would (pace Plato), one glorious day, become absorbed into everyday *utopian* life—that is, no longer needed as such (as self-inflicted torture). Sampling the Biennale (Arsenale excluded), via a “day in the life,” suggests that artistic representation has, indeed, exhausted itself again in the early twenty-first century. Whether it might be revived depends on the outcome of the current global battles and the conquest of life itself by Capital. Whether it needs to be revived, as such, is another question.

II. NATURE AS COMPENSATION

The presence of installations and videos presenting the human relation to nature (primarily as negation, no less) in semi-tragic or ritual and compensatory forms counters much of the overt political and anti-capitalistic tenor of the 2015 Biennale Arte, with the main discursive operations proceeding anyway by video and performance (“Arena Events”). References to Marx abound—from art work to bookshop (with the complete *Kapital* available as boxed set, in Italian, in the bookstore). One wonders, semi-naturally, if someone did not “curate” the book selection, even if the array remained unfocussed and the Swatch limited-edition wristwatches seemed out of place and, à la Shakespeare-Marx-Derrida, “out of joint.”³

Marx’s ghost certainly pervaded the Central Pavilion, the main responsibility of Okwui Enweso and his team, as it often appeared in the national pavilions as they aligned themselves with the mission of the curator, a “day in the life” only permitting a sampling of the latter, as there were somewhere around 50 national pavilions participating this year, plus the epic sideshow of the Arsenale,

³ See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), *passim*. First published as *Spectres de Marx: L’état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1993).

devoted to individual artists and collectives, and the usual parallel events all over Venice (hidden and not-hidden).

The natural world as semi-tragic antithesis to the ravages of socio-economic anomie was exceptionally interpolated in Joan Jonas's outstanding United States Pavilion. While the videos, functioning in operatic fashion, were the heart and soul of her homage to *Bees* (2014–15), *Wind* (2014–15), *Fish* (2013–15), *Mirrors* (2015), and *Children (Homeroom)*, (2015), the narrative and textual elements were troubling and unsettling—no doubt intentionally. Nine trees bundled together in the entry court just outside of the pavilion (from the wooded Isola della Certosa, held together with copper wire, with a small basin of water, and circumstantially traversed by ants) seemed an apt visual analogue for the perpetual crucifixion of Nature in the name of Positivism (so-called rationalist progress, all forms of historicism, rote teleology, etc.)—such “capitalized” terms required, as it is Capitalism proper that is on trial in this year's Biennale Arte.

Epigraphs from John Berger and Halldór Laxness completed and competed with Jonas's multimedia installation and the high-definition videos produced in association with MIT's List Visual Arts Center—MIT, a renowned research station associated with the plague known as Cognitive Capitalism. Perhaps Jonas was unaware, or was using the beast against the beast. Recourse to Laxness, in particular, summarized aspects of what was on display in the videos—generally, a ritual re-enchantment of the world via visual-narrative and aural *meditations* on Time and Memory (with music by Jason Moran).⁴ Discursive mediation is on its way out of the “historical door,” again, as each generation must produce its own “Black Square” (Alfred H. Barr Jr.'s quip), to empty representation of spent, signifying non-sense. Utopia, always a fictional else-where, is—*then*—the peculiar absence of all such non-sense.

Unsettling, however, was language: for example, an opening denunciation of theology (via wall text, via Laxness) and subsequent comments from Berger regarding how animals were the first subjects of art—with Berger always exaggerating things, for effect. These appropriations dated Jonas's project somewhat, throwing it backward in not so much a nostalgic manner but in a retrograde and oppositional trajectory that gave the entire pro-

⁴ Nominally via Cape Breton “ghost stories,” but classic red herring insofar as it is the agency of the tales that is required versus the literal content. The appropriation of Laxness by Jonas opens useful “literary” channels for Jonas.

duction an elegiac air—as much for Art and Literature as for Nature. For a retrospective article on Jonas’s work, inclusive of this possible swan song, see *Artforum* (Summer 2015).⁵ For the internal and literary affects of the pavilion, *tout court*, see the book, *They Come to Us without a Word*.⁶ Indeed, while most art events of this order produce an avalanche of attendant publications, it is all but impossible to comprehend what one sees, whether spending a day or a week, without investigating the internal prospects of the works—the artistic pedigree of the work. Not double-coding in the post-modernist sense, the attendant or supporting apparatus is as important as the works, *per se*. Additionally, with few exceptions, it is rare for the art-tourist today to sit through an entire video when the doors will slam closed at 6:00pm and admission is paid per entry.

III. NATURE AS INDEX

It is as though in that need for a list, or proliferating string of terms, that there is prefigured an image of personal freedom, of multiple options now open to individual choice or will, whereas before these things were closed off through a restrictive notion of historical style.⁷

This focus on natural systems and their inborn ability to shape-shift and/or adapt is also the putative subject of the French Pavilion, “Céleste Boursier-Mougenot: Révolutions” (the primary installation entitled *transHumus*). In effect, the artistic ruse performed here involves three very large conifers (Scotch pine, two outside, one inside), roots encased in terracotta bowls, with the three captive subjects (stand-ins for subjective agency itself) only liberated by the fiction that they are “on the move” (freed “from determinism as [the artist] leads them towards a new natural state”). The removal of the glass panes from the skylight of the pavilion’s central hall turns the event of their un-holy transposition (if not migration) toward a type of catharsis for humans, not trees—the interior flooded with rainwater whenever a thunderstorm arrives such as it did on a “day in the life,” June 23, 2015, at 2:45pm, drowning out the artist’s attempt to audibly map the sap rising in

⁵ Pamela M. Lee, “Double Takes: Pamela M. Lee on the Art of Joan Jonas,” *Artforum* 53, no. 10 (Summer 2015): 308.

⁶ Jonas, *They Come to Us without a Word*.

⁷ Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,” *October* 3 (Spring 1977): 68 [68–81].

each tree. The provision of cushioned (foam) steps (“*les marches*”) on the three sides of the interior surrounding the central hall permits visitors to recline and observe the solitary tree within the pavilion—waiting, perhaps, for it to rise, however notionally, in the mind’s eye, ark-like, to sail elsewhere, as, indeed, it will upon closure of the Biennale.⁸

Trees as spectral presences appear elsewhere. A re-creation of Robert Smithson’s *Dead Tree* (1969)—a toppled beech tree, roots and all, adorned with mirrors—haunts the Central Pavilion. Nearby is Nancy Holt and Smithson’s *Swamp* (1971), a 16mm film transferred to video (via Electronic Arts Intermix, New York), re-supplying a terrestrial habitat for any thoughts one might have about the artistic expropriation of nature for polemical or indexical purposes. Similarly, Marcel Broodthaers’s *Un jardin d’hiver* (1974) seems a deliberate juxtaposition to a nearby, highly didactic videotaped lecture/conversation on Capital (Isaac Julien’s *Kapital*, filmed at the Hayward Gallery, London), more or less assembled under the rubric “Choreographing Capital” and featuring a loquacious David Harvey and a mostly silent Isaac Julien. (Julien is also staging the reading aloud of the entire *Kapital*, over the entirety of the Biennale, in the Central Pavilion—a type of art-world filibuster.)

Indeed, Broodthaers seems yet another ghost, however minor, trailing through both the Central Pavilion and the national pavilions, foremost the Greek Pavilion, the latter featuring a bizarre conceptual piece (Maria Papadimitriou’s *Agrimiká*) on a perhaps invented furrier in Volos, Thessaly, featuring an old man’s memories of the rise and fall of the trade literally constructed on the backs of wild animals. The ghosts (major and minor) in many cases are the early installation artists—that generation of *agents provocateurs* who gave birth to Conceptual Art and post-conceptual art; and, arguably, those savants whom today’s post-conceptual, post-contemporary, and super-contemporary artists either mimic or mock. (In these latter instances, the terms are not proper as such. Each is a provisional site for nay-saying and an altogether perverse economy of borrowed and purloined signifying agency with few exceptions. The art world has turned upon itself in a bizarre feeding frenzy that is, in part, cannibalistic.) The 2015 Biennale devotes an entire room, for example, to an “anthology” presentation of Hans Haacke’s museum profiles, the half-sarcastic,

⁸ See Céleste Boursier-Mougenot: *Révolutions* (Paris: Institut Française/Analogues, 2015), exhibition catalogue with texts by Emma Lavigne, Hervé Brunon, and Emanuele Quinze.

faux-anthropological surveys he conducted of early art-tourism—for MoMA, the Guggenheim, and Documenta, c.1971–1972. The re-staging of so many now-classic acts of artistic, late-modern anarchy only proves the perhaps subtle point that super-contemporary art is an utter fiction perpetrated by the bubble-like appurtenances of a super-glossy art world on the verge of collapse (2008 being nothing compared to what is most likely coming). Clearly, in terms of the Biennale, there is no agenda present, overtly or otherwise, to condemn the hyper-commodification of the art world; but one senses that the recourse to the 1960s and early 1970s is not an accident. One does not want to insult one's hosts or one's audience, after all. Better to just turn their heads. The super-contemporary is, nevertheless, super-naturally condemned by such ghosts (its definition becoming, simply and ironically, "not-dead" by default).

Hence the ultra-spectral presence of Chris Marker: in one case, Marker's short film, *L'ambassade* (1973), oddly shunted to a side room in a large splash of "retro-Gursky"; and, in another case, *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* (2005), poorly folded into a large room of makeshifts—a mélange of drawings, vitrines full of newspaper clippings, and a multimedia wall installation devoted to an artist's heartbeat (medical charts and audio provided). Marker's *Owls at Noon* presides nonetheless over all of the other works in this room, badly presented in improperly sized monitors that clip off part of the text that rolls across the six screens amid disintegrated imagery associated with WWI (alternating with purloined snippets of T.S. Eliot's monumentally post-apocalyptic poem, "The Hollow Men"). Reflected in the glass of the sixteen, clippings-filled vitrines that physically anchor the room, *Owls at Noon* moves around the room via the perambulation of the art-tourist, vying for attention—yet in a state of accidental *dishabille*. Shabby, but forever chic.

IV. MEDIA AND "NO-MEDIA"

In a "day in the life" of a Biennale it is impossible to see and/or sample everything. It is best to keep moving until something stops you in your tracks—and to circle back when something passed suddenly regains and attains relevance. Thus did Broodthaers's Winter Garden seem to bracket the talking heads of *Kapital* and the assault of the high-definition media-driven installations, as well as the faux "no-media" aspects of the room of drawings and low-tech newspaper clippings (heart monitor pulsing on the end

wall). Marker's presence, midstream, with *Owls at Noon* notwithstanding, this very complex conflation of affects and/or interplay of effects (classic intertextuality) trends toward a promiscuous or almost-secret singularity that compels the art-tourist to circle such events as if the ghostly guides inferred were actually present (some half-consciously sensing them)—pointing this way and that way, but otherwise silent interlocutors via gestural mischief. The salient elements of these "tidal" zones, not unlike salt air, are also corrosive, for the leakage from room to room confers the apparent stillness of the ancient (or, archaic) on all works of art—that much sought after lost thing called authenticity and aura. As all works are constrained and contained by the maelstrom of art-historical narrativity (the teleological/ideological underpinnings of collection and presentation), the dance with Capital orchestrated by the curators is—utterly—apt (spellbindingly so).

This "archaic" silence, noted or unnoted, is the foundational mark or index (an evolving Spirit in the Hegelian sense) of failed attempts at "no-media" (no mediation)—something the curator and curators seem to be reaching for, but an altogether different or modest something that defies spectacle (artistic and/or capitalistic exploitation). Marker's work was out of joint, in this situational complex, for the very reason that his entire oeuvre was precisely a mediatic *danse macabre*—an attempted dance with "no-media"—with each work assembled from the detritus of socio-cultural forces forever on the verge of disintegration to and for what is always buried beneath (hoped-for and/or reviled, revolution or apocalypse). The threshold nature of Marker's works resides uneasily in events construed as synthetical, contrived, and convivial feasts for spectacular purposes—their own singularity betrays, from film-essay to multimedia mash-up, the assimilative forces of Art proper and the artist's distinct dis-ease with the production of abject spectacle, commodity, and ideology. If anti-capitalism is a form of ideology, it will fail insofar as it is also preserved and presented as spectacle—Dostoyevsky's exact point regarding revolutions.

V. BLACK CURTAINS

Perhaps the great unacknowledged theme operating in the shadows of the 2015 Biennale Arte is "Art and Capital," an old subject—foremost the assault on Intellectual Property by Capital. It is, nonetheless, un-written and unseen. No one appears to care much these days unless it is their own hide being played. The pre-

eminence of works sponsored by high-end galleries suggests they are in full control of their own patrimony (on behalf of the artists or the artists' estates), as these works proceed to the market by way of the Biennale via gallery and via publisher in most all cases. We need not worry too much about established or dead artists. "Rising" artists beware....Even the retrospective works (Marker, Haacke, Broodthaers et al.) are "licensed" to the Biennale, for the duration. The Biennale, in turn, "licenses" the Biennale to the art-tourist, for the duration, and all is licensed and authorized (as event) by Venice, in perpetuity. Venice is, after all, sacred to Art—since Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* (1585). All works presented will be catalogued, documented, and archived. Reputations will rise and fall, while not far away, in Basel, Switzerland, Big Art as ultra-transparent transactional model persists—Basel being the preferred venue for gallerists and collectors to openly conduct business. The difference between the two venues is that the art works at the Biennale are "not for sale," from the walls that is; whereas at Art Basel, where the elite of the art world troop after the opening parties and gala events of the Venice Art Biennale close, all works are for sale from the walls and only the most prestigious gallerists are permitted to exhibit, a selection process reserved for a secret committee that resembles a de facto politburo for Art as *commercium*.

Danish filmmaker and *enfant terrible* Lars von Trier recently announced that he was taking up drinking again, as his Depression Trilogy—*Antichrist* (2009), *Melancholia* (2011), and *Nymphomaniac* (2013)—did not cure him of his misanthropy. Somehow it is easier to love (and/or pity) Humanity when under the influence (e.g., Dorothy Parker, "Just a Little One," *The New Yorker*, May 12, 1928: "Three highballs, and I think I'm St. Francis of Assisi."). Such is one commentary on black moods. Another is the array of black flags (resembling black curtains) adorning the portico of the Central Pavilion—*Signalling Devices in Now Bastard Territory* (2015), by Oscar Murillo (courtesy of the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London). Like the Rorschach-like drawings of bees in Joan Jonas's pavilion, one can see almost anything in this term, *Bastard Territory*. The 20 flags are also one of the most strenuous and grave formal-aesthetic operations of the Biennale, or, at the least, one of the most prominent—all other media and the exceptional attempts at "no-media" included. *They are, fully, things given.* (One can re-arrange this statement endlessly to confirm or test its archaic power: *They are given things, fully. They are things fully given*, etc. The same language obtains in Saint Paul.) Indeed,

they pre-figure the on-rolling Black Mass of neo-liberal capitalism—with its hideous, “gothicized” assault on life itself (and Art proper as part of life itself). The recourse to natural wonders does not quite help, alas—for, the extermination of natural rights has proceeded to the doors of the souls of citizens and artists. Poor Jean-Jacques Rousseau—his ghost is not present, nor wanted anywhere today. Marx as godfather to anti-capitalism is an easier mark. He is, strangely, enjoying a field day.

VI. MIMESIS AND “NO-MEDIA”

It is hard to “do nature” without slipping into bathos. Artists do, however, wistfully attempt to invoke “no-media” (no mediation) and the liminality of all mimetic practice—it is a type of perennial litmus test. If it is Romantic (or, proto-Romantic), it is also suspect terrain to orthodox humanistic sensibilities, whereby it is anathema to post-humanist sensibilities. The tragedy is doubled. This same war over mimetic agency is played out today in multiple disciplines, as if the end of humans is also the end of Nature (an obvious and grotesque “category error” on the part of futurists and post-humanists). If such attempts at mining Nature for Art are perceived as “neo-classical,” they are dismissed as an embarrassment or merely nostalgic (again by measures imposed, by edict, by the cognoscenti)—the Scottish magus, Ian Hamilton Finlay long ago fought and lost this battle. To invoke nothing is all but impossible—and why try? Mere things inhabit “no-media,” and to allow them to speak is not to ventriloquize. Smithson’s dead tree had, after all, mirrors to re-animate it. And Holt and Smithson’s swamp was mostly Smithson’s instructions to Holt as to where to walk and what to beware of. If we threw his dead tree, with his help or permission, into the swamp and all left (artists, camera-person, and art-tourist/voyeur) there would still be a tree that had fallen into a swamp—mediated and abandoned, at once. The equivalent is to give up on forcing *things given* into forms of *things taken*, with “given” and “taken” signaling a primordial economy with inordinate pre-capitalist (and arch-Franciscan) overtones and undercurrents. The undercurrents were always present with the land artists, signaling from within the flames (as Antonin Artaud hoped for artists to be heretic-saints burned at the stake by virtue of their works)—for, language as mediation was being deconstructed by Smithson and colleagues, with the great remainder being spectral linguistic agency. “They come to us without a word,” indeed. Thus, too, Jonas’s putative retrospective gaze. Yet, given the com-

plexity and length of many of the videos present at the Biennale Arte, the art-tourist has little choice but to make assumptions. Few video installations in this “day in the life” compelled visitors to sit long enough to fully absorb them, with the exception of John Akomfrah’s *Vertigo Sea* (Smoking Dogs Films, 2015), a 48-minute, 30-second, three-channel “2K HD” affair with surround sound, and one of the few rooms of the Biennale where a handful of visitors were parked on a long bench for the duration. Others had exited for the surround sound of the thunderstorm that passed over Venice at 2:45pm.

All of the above (regarding Art, Nature, and Representation) begs the question as to why the grounds of the Giardini are such a mess—and why out-of-door, in-situ works seem lost or half-hearted. What would it take to curate the grounds as well—to turn into magic the current forlorn *mise-en-scène* of the immortal Biennale? To honor Venice as garden: if one curates the bookshop, why not the grounds? If an architect is hired to construct the stage sets of the Central Pavilion, why not a garden-artist (not landscape architect) to take on the greater environs of the Giardini? Why the amusement-park tenor? Why the unacknowledged but numbered trees—for example, “Tree Number 8” (an old linden) forming an unnatural diptych with an unnamed frieze of worn stone, removed from a façade, presumably, and deposited haphazardly in the Giardini to further decompose?

The forecourt to the Greek Pavilion is one such example. With the toilets to the left, the approach is a field of barren and beaten earth plus sullen paving stones and stranded art works (contemporary sculpture). When it rains, the site becomes Smithson’s swamp—an art-world miasma. This is also a dead end—the art-tourist is here forced to retrace their steps upon exiting the cul-de-sac. It is possible to feel morose for holy Venice, with full knowledge that it was settled c.1000–1100 AD by refugees from the mainland, fleeing rampaging hordes, “from the North” most likely. Or, at least, that is the myth.

Beneath the paving stones of Venice (to turn John Ruskin’s beautiful and neurotic, late-Victorian vision of the city upside-down and backward) we do not find Guy Debord’s “beach” but, instead, the bleached, preternaturally white bones of the past (miraculously preserved from the muck and mire of Big History). For the beach, one must go to the Lido and endure further chaos and/or indignities visited upon Venice from near and far—thinking all the while, perhaps, of Shelley’s fate (lost at sea, washed up dead in 1822 on the Lido, buried, dug up, heart removed, given

a proper Viking burial by Byron and friends); or, of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912). The Lido is now the principal site for the Venice International Film Festival, by default, the 72nd edition due this year—barren beaches now fulsome cinemas. Will its focus be the Death of Cinema?

VII. THE RUSSIANS (AGAIN)

There are two moments where the Russians appear somehow at odds with the overriding themes of the Biennale, one through the direct encounter and provocation of the Russian Pavilion and another, indirectly, in the Central Pavilion. The second instance is when Alexander Kluge's *News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx, Eisenstein, Capital* (2015) develops, through three simultaneous videos and a book, a re-reading of "world-scale revolutionary change," this term coming from a story told in the small book attached to the installation (chained to a cushion), published by Swantje Grundler/Thomas Mayfried.⁹ The section of the book of note is entitled "Hermetic and Associative Forces" and concerns the tale of Ilse von Schaake and her Russian lover's research at the Science Center, Akademgorodok (Novosibirsk, Siberia).¹⁰ The short text focuses on his secondary guiding question: "Which forces in humans tend toward association and which ones hamper the unification of these forces?"¹¹ Tom Stoppard's trilogy, *The Coast of Utopia* (2002), comes to mind; for, it is this period in Russian pre-revolutionary praxis that is both spellbinding and tragic and, arguably, it all goes haywire with the Russian Revolution, presumably the timeframe Kluge references. Regarding the fictional Ilse, however,

She came to the following conclusion: There are strong forces in people (*my family, my progeny, my property*) that have a hermetic impact. They allow for no comprehensive associations. They are unsuitable for revolution. In contradistinction to these strong forces, there are weak and still weaker forces (the

⁹ Alexander Kluge, *News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx, Eisenstein, Capital*, trans. Martin Brady, Helen Hughes (Munich: Swantje Grundler/Thomas Mayfried, 2015). First published in German in 1981. See Devin Fore, "An Introduction to Kluge and Negt," Verso Books, 2016, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2513-an-introduction-to-kluge-and-negt>.

¹⁰ Alexander Kluge, "Hermetic and Associative Forces," in Kluge, *News from Ideological Antiquity*, 40–42.

¹¹ Kluge, "Hermetic and Associative Forces," 41.

interest in physics, logic, and everything that I would willingly sell from myself and my loves). They rapidly coalesce with one another and bring about change over a long period of time.¹²

What type of change and why she would sell such go unsaid. Yet the implication is that these weaker forces “mutate” over time, whereas family, progeny, and property are all insular and slow to evolve. Thus, a curse and a blessing are glimpsed in what is a classic dialectical proposition—that is, “Revolution or Evolution?” Modern and contemporary art, versus science, proceeds in leaps and bounds, not so much by coalescing forces evolving over large stretches of time (so-called paradigm shifts), but by revolutionary campaigns to supersede all that has come before, with the art-historical and teleological viewpoint repeatedly being smashed by an irruptive, eschatological worldview that hardly has a point of purchase in the Real, but, on the contrary, proceeds from beyond the frame of the work as pure event (with Alain Badiou’s great insight somehow piggy-backing on even greater insights by Walter Benjamin). “Fidelity” remains the keyword, nonetheless, and often to lost causes. What is less obvious is that the stronger forces play a role of resistance (grounding, as it were, the revolutionary current, and perhaps safeguarding what of the past might be dragged kicking and screaming into the future). The double bind of Ilse’s perspective suggests Günter Grass’s prescience, by way of *Diary of a Snail* (1973)—that to proceed hastily incurs error, while to proceed through introspection pays dividends (and it is Albrecht Dürer’s *Melencolia I* that is the touchstone for Grass’s powerful meditation on time). *Festina lente* is the classic configuration of this paradox. Invoking *la longue durée* of structural anthropology (Fernand Braudel et al.), these insights are nonetheless utterly apropos of the present scandal of Capital (and, by inference, Art) versus Life.

Thus, the Russian Pavilion and the video, *Room No. 2*, by Irina Nakhova (videotaped by the German scholar, Sabine Hänsen, in late 1984). As part of “The Green Pavilion,” curated by Margarita Tupitsyn, and regarding the Collective Action Group operating in the last years of the Soviet Union up to and prior to *Perestroika*, the video concerns the construction of an interior that demolishes domesticity—one of many “strong forces” retarding revolution (as above). Nakhova’s project from 1984 proceeded by abstraction—black architectural forms on white, shrinking space and time. This

¹² Kluge, “Hermetic and Associative Forces,” 41.

experiment returns in her conversion of the Russian Pavilion to a type of camera obscura—more or less what she did in the apartment in 1984 now expanded to the entire two floors of the pavilion. The series of rooms is sequential, though one has to step outside to go upstairs (or, upstream)—perceptive accident or not. Tupitsyn reminds us of the Russian bias for justifying such things: In “each room of the installation on the main floor color asserts its optico-psychological function.” She is referring to the upper floor (the *piano nobile*). On the ground floor, beyond the entry and the video, is an installation that might have been created by Peter Greenaway. It is entitled *The Worm of History* (video editing by Ilya Korobkov, video projection by Grégoire Dupond).

The Worm of History, fashioned from archival photography with all imagery forced through an architectural template embedded in the video itself and projected onto all four walls and portions of the floor of the entryway, indulges black silhouettes or architectural frames-apertures to structure the momentous tableau of historical detritus, faces erased, myths demolished, and strong forces inferred where weak forces might intercede for a momentary splash of color, excitement, ruination, exploitation, exaltation, and approbation—or, so it seems. The architectural forms are drawn from “[Aleksei] Shchusev’s iconic monuments, such as the Lenin Mausoleum” (Press Release)—Shchusev also being, of course, the architect of the Russian Pavilion (built in 1914). Yet upstream, or upstairs, is the consummation of this conflagration. For downstairs, as part of *The Worm of History*, is a mesmeric square of illuminated “Nature” projected onto the floor (earthworms, water, foliage, etc.)—another homage to “domesticity” and redolent of Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Stalker* (1979). This pool where dreams might be realized is also to be viewed from the upper floor through a glass window of the exact same dimension. But this window is in an all-black room, with a shutter opening and closing overhead, the skylight functioning as an aperture for this room devoted to a conceptual re-interpretation of Kasimir Malevich’s seminal painting, *Black Square* (1915). Tupitsyn reminds us, via wall text: “Color is first of all ideology” (Sergei Eisenstein). She adds: “The 1970s and 1980s were the last era when a channeling of local contexts into an international language was effectively realized, just as in the period of the historical avant-garde.” Voila!

Nakhova, as survivor of this period (mirroring the emergence of neo-liberalism in the West, just prior to its circling the planet like a virus), is eminently placed to comment on the current state of affairs for Art. Her last room in the sequence is red-green (green-

red); two of the most “significant colors in the history of Russian art,” notes Tupitsyn (after black, of course). Revolutionary red collides with *Perestroika* green. The room is rendered in painterly mode, floor to ceiling, with Nakhova’s semi-abstract architectural silhouettes in green on a red field. They coalesce: strong forces meet weak forces. Domesticity (Architecture and Nature) optically merge—slow revolutionary forces are suggested, glimpsed. Paradox or paradigm, it hardly matters. The Russian relationship to the natural world (to things given) is one of the holiest of holies for Russian art. Abstraction only confers a higher nobility to such things (in the right hands), and most abstract Russian art circles back through a continuous wormhole in Big History to re-visit elemental and preternatural wonders that are eminently—and ultimately—a-historical.

The intervening room at the top of the stairs, before entering the Black Square, is metallic gray. An oversized helmeted head of a fighter pilot (roving eyes and perplexed brow produced by video projection from within) occupies this transitional space. Tupitsyn claims anxiety as the main point of this pivotal construction. Yet one steps into the Black Square, anyway (passing the window into the ground-floor, Greenaway-esque installation where water, earth, and foliage flicker amidst the 21-minute-long historical harangue). From there we pass into the red-green or green-red room (a conflation of Nakhova’s Green Pavilion and Ilya Kabakov’s Red Pavilion from the 45th Venice Biennale of 1993), the procession a de facto cul-de-sac that requires retracing your steps through the Black Square, past the nervous fighter pilot, down the stairs to the out-of-doors, vanishing into the Giardini or re-entering the Russian Pavilion to sit down again with Nakhova as she explains *Room No. 2*.

June 27, 2015

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Notes toward a Review That Should Never Be Written



"Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty," Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England, March 14–August 2, 2015.

I.

Two hours traversing the Alexander McQueen exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum is exhausting. Advance tickets have been sold out more or less since it opened, attesting to its universal appeal. A bleak, retrospective vision via the avant-garde fashion world for the post-humanist world we now inhabit, it is framed around the Romantic and post-Romantic themes of McQueen's dark imagination, a bleak vision that led to his suicide in 2010. There are beautifully elegiac moments in what is otherwise a mash-up of Romantic Gothic and post-humanist fantasies. Strip away all of the mediatic aspects of his semi-annual shows and you are left with clothes for the sadomasochistic demimonde of money and art. The nuances are, as always, in the intellectual-artistic pretensions for making chic what is generally reprehensible.

One must not approach this moralistically, of course. Fashion is like art or literature, and often it inhabits the darker regions of the collective imaginary. Decadence in art and life is often secretly highly moral and only feigns amorality or immorality. Pasolini was but one example, as was the entire ship of fools known as Dada another. Yet any review of "Savage Beauty" must inevitably end with the peculiar juxtaposition of exiting the bookstore-gift shop (always placed at the end of these exhibitions, not unlike duty-free shops at the airport are placed at the end of the arrivals concourse) to find Andrea della Robbia's *The Lamentation Over the Dead Christ* (1510–15), part of "Religious Sculpture in Europe

1300–1600,” staged to no acclaim in an adjacent gallery. How many times Truth must die is, indeed, the question of the Anthropocene. Post-humanism is no longer an ideology for dark futurists, but, instead, a reality that is upon us.

One therefore must wonder if the ten main thematic rooms of the exhibition (curated by Claire Wilcox, with the assistance of Andrew Bolton and Creative Director Sam Bainsbury), plus entry vestibule and occasional short passages, are not a conscious or half-conscious homage to the Stations of the Cross (usually numbering 14). The dramatic and seemingly hubristic last words of McQueen, by way of the exhibition, also take on a suitably ominous tone when considered in the context of a human condition presented here as irrevocably damaged and broken: “There is no way back for me now. I’m going to take you on journeys you’ve never dreamed were possible.” The context of this statement is what transpires in Room 10, “Plato’s Atlantis,” featuring elements of McQueen’s Spring/Summer 2010 collection, inspired by Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* (1859) and “devolution”—Darwin reversed. This was also his last show before his death. The journeys he proposed are now, paradoxically, by way of Death and its various prospects.

A self-proclaimed “romantic schizophrenic,” McQueen’s vision for fashion coincides with his vision of the human condition. There is no distance between the two. A commendable position for an artist, the various Romantic modalities cited by the curators (post-Romanticism is only implied) tend to suggest an apparatus that is not quite present in the clothes but added through the high-mediatic elements of the presentations. This brings into question what McQueen was actually doing. Not couture as such, he was summoning ghosts of periods, times, and places to supplement couture. In the process, he was creating that demi-modish worldview that his moneyed clients might inhabit. Though never stated in the presentation, this role is shamanistic, while the traditional role of the shaman as facilitating passages through demonic realms is bracketed in the curatorial structures that conform to the spectacle of art as fashion and fashion as art.

The “beauty and savagery of the natural world,” as noted early on, and subsequent references to the Gothic (Edgar Allan Poe and the “shadowy fancies” of *The Fall of the House of Usher*), forms of primitivism (tackled in Room 4, which has been styled to resemble a skull- and bone-lined crypt), and exoticism (developed transversally in Room 8 with totemic references to Africa, China, Japan, India, and Turkey) are the themes that the curators choose, to build

to the final presentation of "Plato's Atlantis" (Room 10). These themes are embodied, or said to be embodied, in the artifacts that are the point of the exhibition—the clothes—through materiality (horse hair, beads, leather, wool, mud, pony skin, impala horns, wood, and snakeskin) and various simulated effects that define the "savagery" of McQueen's position in the fashion world. This position is as much at stake in this publicly and critically acclaimed retrospective exhibition as the artifacts—the obvious point that the culture industry loves a tragedy is one reason that the exhibition has been effectively sold out since its opening. The production of signature artifacts of fashion (e.g., Titanic Boots, Alien Boots, and Armadillo Boots, all from "Plato's Atlantis") combined with the provocative statement of Room 7 ("Cabinet of Curiosities"), that there is "a sadomasochistic aspect" to the accessory, has a bizarre and hallucinatory effect if considered in relation to what the fashion world has become, and the same fate that has befallen the art world—a hyper-commodified formulation and celebration of excess as success. One might say that this has always been the nature of the fashion world, yet the attention given to fashion as a transfer station between popular and high culture is entirely new insofar as branding and re-branding became the principal *modus vivendi* of both.

McQueen's soul might not have been truly aligned with this phenomenon, because his clothes rarely match the mediatic excesses of the presentations, and they certainly fail to rise to the exuberance of the curators' claims for them. The enormous expense of this exhibition alone brings into question what is at play in this blockbuster retrospective, and a test of what is actually present would be to place the clothes in a plain vitrine in a plain white gallery and drop the immersive aspects of contemporary curation momentarily, plus the rhetoric, to simply look at the artifacts. "Savage Beauty" could then be placed on par with "Defining Beauty" (currently at the British Museum and examining classical Greek standards of beauty). Properly non-forced sparks might fly for the art spectator, were he/she to linger awhile in the mental spaces of these exhibitions thinking through the implications of standards of beauty, then and now. To do so is not to diminish the power of presentation. The representational aspects of "Savage Beauty" do, however, amplify the excesses of McQueen's work into near oblivion and account for the need to book two months in advance, waiting until the appointed hour of the booking, and inching through McQueen's "Stations of the Cross" with several hundred other pilgrims.

II.

What is to be admired in McQueen's dark visions for fashion is the "unfettered emotionalism," yet as passage to something else versus a permanent psychic state. The curators' repeated claims for Romanticism begin to falter when, for example, the same is mentally paired with his "deep and melancholic" side (a statement buried in, or obliquely referenced in, his own appreciation for Poe). Room 3 ("Romantic Gothic") is perhaps one of the most beautiful passages in the exhibition, both for its artifacts, its sonic landscape (Teodor Currentzis's "Prelude for the Witches" from Henry Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*; Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind's "Main Title" from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*; and John Gosling and J.P. Whelan's "Gothic Composition"), and its carefully simulated House of Usher interior (gigantic gilded-frame vitrine, black Venetian-style mirrors, and black floor). This room is followed by a bone-lined, short passageway to Room 4, the latter comprised of eight bays or niches displaying clothing that embodies "Romantic Primitivism," but a room that is as sardonic and whimsical as a tableau one might find at Madame Tussauds.

This dark vision becomes claustrophobic and unnerving by way of repetition—a repetition that signals classic compulsion. The curatorial analytic nonetheless privileges this excessive figuration of the darker aspects of the human psyche as if it were a "fashion statement." It obviously is not. The fashion statement is the privileging of the compulsion; the glorification of something that is also a deeply unconscious force in the cultural field McQueen is addressing. Many of these cultural references are the fetishes of Empire, something one cannot escape in Great Britain, and something only marginally offset by his homage to his native Scotland (in "Widows of Culloden," Autumn/Winter 2006) or the mawkish pastiche to his adopted British sensibility ("The Girl Who Lived in the Tree," Autumn/Winter 2008). His statement that what the British did to Scotland was "nothing short of genocide" (regarding the final Jacobite uprising in 1745) suggests that he was not beyond accommodating England and London out of necessity, and that this deeply divisive complex within his own worldview led to many of the culturally determined forms of sadomasochism his shows incorporated. As for the post-humanism, it was quite a different fashion statement up until at least the late 2000s, and his own role in embracing techno-determinism seems nothing short of appropriation for polemical reasons. The polemics, always underwriting (but often overwhelming) the technical and aesthetic

aspirations of the collections, end up being, in light of the Victoria and Albert's retrospective, the pseudo-avantgarde application of high theory to high craft. While the craftsmanship of McQueen's collections often gets serviceable lip service in the press and in the commentaries (paid or otherwise) on his work, "Savage Beauty" remains an honest assessment of his craft and its place in the culture industry. Yet this assessment is only possible by erasing the attendant spectacle. When the stagecraft disappears, he emerges as a competent tailor of whimsical or theatrical couture. With the stagecraft and the neuroses, he is the shaman noted above. In this manner, McQueen does not belong to the fashion world.

In a sense, McQueen's "modernity" is soaked in the same pathologies addressed by Samuel Beckett when discussing Racine's theater: "All his characters evolve beneath the conscious in the shadow of the *infraconscient*." As Sophie Hunter explains, in reference to her own purposes in melding "theater, visual art and contemporary music" for the Samuel Beckett festival in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, *infraconscient* refers to all that is "imperceptible by consciousness," yet felt within.¹ Notably, Hunter is referring to her reasons for staging Benjamin Britten's *Phaedra* (cantata for solo voice and chamber orchestra, written in the summer of 1975) at a ruined castle in Enniskillen for the 2015 Beckett festival. Her reasons are both circular and complex, as they reference Racine, Beckett, and Britten, while they ultimately revolve around questions of unconscious forces, or what Beckett saw as an obsession in modern theater.

Following the pathologies of Rooms 4 and 5 ("Romantic Primitivism" and "Romantic Nationalism") comes a peculiar form of catharsis—an almost unbearable lightness and whimsy followed by cosmic cataclysm. Room 6 ("Cabinet of Curiosities"), with its floor-to-ceiling niches punctuated by videos of catwalk shows, with the ambient sound of the gallery consisting of the mixing of the various techno-scores associated with these events, resembles an outsized boutique one might encounter in a dream of London's Mayfair district. Its relationship to Room 7 ("Pepper's Ghost," from "Widows of Colloden," Autumn/Winter 2006) is utterly uncanny, the latter featuring a haunting, elegiac score (John T. Williams's "Theme from *Schindler's List*") played against a video projected

¹ Sophie Hunter, "Why is Sophie Hunter taking Britten's *Phaedra* to a Beckett Festival?" *The Guardian*, July 25, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jul/25/happy-days-samuel-beckett-festival-enniskillen-benjamin-britten-phaedra>.

onto a glass pyramid (reflective prism), with a pirouetting and fairy-sized “holographic” Kate Moss appearing out of a puff of smoke and then slowly vaporizing, subsumed by swirling stars that then collide in a cataclysmic explosion, only to appear again, in this iteration at least (the effect of the looped projection), end inferring beginning and vice versa. The elegiac score ends when the cosmic dance of death begins, and the final visual explosion is accompanied by a percussive sonic explosion. This cataclysmic catharsis is, in fact, simultaneously seen, heard, and felt. It is a work of art, not a work of fashion. While the technical aspects belong to Baillie Walsh and Dick Straker (of Mesmer), the vision is McQueen’s. Straker is also the technical wizard for “Cabinet of Curiosities,” linking these two rooms in terms of virtuoso theatricality. Although the origin of “Pepper’s Ghost” is the Autumn/Winter 2006 show, “Widows of Colloden,” its presence in “Savage Beauty” is transformed into stand-alone work of art. The technical wizardry, dating back to the Renaissance and fashionable in Victorian times, is not the point. It is the combination of effects in these two rooms that takes the breath away. One suggests grandiosity and the other frailty and diminution. The poetics exceed fashion and lead outward toward an unknown territory that is part installation art and part unnameable conflation of antiquarianism and ultra-contemporaneity (the two meeting in the world of fashion but suggesting the unnamed, extensive field that produces fashion as art work).

If “the beauty and savagery of the natural world” is the complex that sustains the title of the exhibition, “Savage Beauty,” and the Romantic Gothic imagination is the subtending chord for the work (plus the emphasis for this presentation by the Victoria and Albert), the post-humanism of the last collection, “Plato’s Atlantis,” is an inestimable send-up to the logical outcome of the tragic humanism underwriting the Romantic Gothic sensibility and its focus on unconscious forms of repetition and compulsion—with personal or national forms bearing equal responsibility for the slide toward disintegration. The film, which formed the backdrop for the catwalk show for “Plato’s Atlantis” (shown in “Savage Beauty” in the last room, with seven silver mannequins wearing some of McQueen’s more resolved couture, and featuring Raquel Zimmerman “appearing to mutate into a semi-aquatic creature”), is not so much an epic gesture toward the Sublime of High Romanticism as a post-Romantic plunge into a demonic, alien state of being. The video, made with Nick Knight and Ruth Hogben (photography by Daniel Landin, music by John Gosling, Raymond Watts,

and Michael Watts), features a woman copulating with snakes, an interlude of dancing computerized snake mandalas, and—finally, though it is looped—the same woman floating in water and undergoing her apparent mutation to sea creature, nymph, and siren. The post-humanism of this vision allegedly fusing “technology, craft, and showmanship” is represented in, or compressed into, wood and python-skin boots, silk jacquard woven dress with snake pattern, snakeskin and metal belt, silk chiffon dress with digitally printed moth camouflage pattern, etc., all worn by sleekly silvered, fox-like-headed mannequins. The white tiled room in which this last collection is shown at the Victoria and Albert seems to be based on a Stanley Kubrick film—antiseptic and clinical, at once. It is cool, smooth, and faux-cerebral compared with the Romantic chambers of horror and pleasure preceding this closing mash-up of techno-hubristic stylishness. As the pseudo-avantgarde typically indulges in hyperbole and irony, it is all but impossible to sort out the artistic justifications for this mash-up other than to conclude the justification is mere spectacle.

If McQueen proceeded by sampling and by contemporary mash-up, the sensibilities are what matter. The clothes, after all is said and done rhetorically, critically, and curatorially, rarely match the claims made. This leads to the conclusion that the McQueen phenomenon, beyond all references to the early training in Savile Row tailoring, and beyond the subsequent assimilation into the artistic and elite demimonde of London, is manufactured, and that the Victoria and Albert is now engaged in canonizing the work (as was the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where the show originated). The assimilation of the tragedy is nearly complete. With it comes the sanitizing of the life of the neurotic, the reification of its justification, and the money to be made after the fact. While the late post-humanist vision may have been nominally contained by McQueen’s otherwise modest and modish audience while he was alive, the danger today is that the promotion of the tragedy of broken Romanticism and its fallout will be perceived as worthy of emulation, whereas cautionary tales are usually means for disclosing all that we might prefer to leave behind—personally and collectively.

Della Robbia’s *Lamentation* is the perfect bookend to the opening and intermediate demonic passages of McQueen’s work shown in “Savage Beauty,” and to his ultimate personal sacrifice—victim or martyr. The post-humanistic vision was cut short, though as he confesses, “I’m going to take you on journeys you’ve never dreamed were possible.” To follow him then and now is to endure

the Harrowing of Hell.

Let the fashion world canonize their saint. For all who look beneath the faux glamour of the spectacle, there are only rooms full of bones. As William Blake once wrote: "The Gardens of Adonis are full of graves."

"Savage Beauty" is a stupendous, expensive, cautionary tale. Unfortunately, the tale ends tragically. McQueen did not live to see the post-humanist future. Only five years after his death, it is fully upon us. The post-Romantic wreckage of the world is what is configured in his best work. As he lived and embodied this always impending shipwreck, he is indeed a saint, as Antonin Artaud was a saint—that is, a failed saint. A paradox.

July 28, 2015

The Disembodied Gaze



"Thomas Ruff: *Nature morte*," Gagosian Gallery, 17–19 Davies St., London, England, August 6–September 26, 2015.

Within the intimate chromogenic prints of Thomas Ruff's new photographic series, entitled "*Nature morte*," at Gagosian Gallery's modest "storefront" space on Davies Street in generally immodest Mayfair (home to hedge funds, luxury hotels, and high-end boutiques), something immense is inferred, even if the diminutive size of the prints (29 x 22 cm.) belies this otherwise not-so-subtle instantiation of meta-photography (photography about photography), connecting with what Réda Bensmaïa has noted elsewhere as the elemental discord between the photogram and the pictogram. Both terms are nominally archaic expressions of mimetic agency in image-making, yet the latter is the outer expression of a vast terrain beyond the mere image, whereas the former (not reducible to the camera-less images produced by Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy, and, more recently, Ruff) is the imprint of something more or less of this world, however constructed, re-constructed, or presented. This originary mimetic purpose is, in turn, often troubled to produce questionable inquisitions regarding the truth-telling capacity of photography.

Ruff upends constructive or purposive principles in his own recent photographs (the camera-less "Photograms" series and the negative-less "Negatives" series) by carrying out their metamorphosis through manipulations that are essentially non-photographic (via digital gerrymandering that attempts to experiment with earlier forms without simply repeating the methodologies involved or indulging the intentions of their origin). The so-called given that inhabits mimesis is, therefore, abandoned and the given of photography (its apparatus in service to apparitional effects and affects) is privileged.

Such is the *séance* of Art. The fact that all 14 of the images in “*Nature morte*” are effectively classic still-life photographs is both important and negligible, at once. With these images of negatives, digitally produced from found positive images, or analogue positives converted to negative-less negatives and then presented as analogue positives, Ruff is in somewhat uncharted late-postmodernist territory. It is a nonetheless intoxicating *terroir* that invokes the meta-representational values present in Early Modernity (for example, in the paintings of Velázquez), or the values doubly troubled in Late Modernity (for example, in the paintings of Gerhard Richter). Ruff produces a *terroir* that invokes, regardless of time-sense, a somewhat morbid multiplicity of disembodied gazes at cross purposes in terms of intelligibility—cross gazes that are all but impossible to sort out. The head hurts just to think about it, and it is all done via the mediation of the computer. Ruff uses the positives (found prints) to produce new positives (manufactured prints) that are images of non-existent negatives. In essence, a found historic image (a positive) is scanned and converted to a digital negative. It is then printed, which yields a positive image of the spectral, missing negative, which in the age of digital photography, no one remembers, anyway. Because the found prints are sepia-toned albumen prints of a “semi-archaic” quality, the whole operation suggests a faux-historical or faux-archaeological project on the part of Ruff.¹ The plant forms of this series resemble holograms and pictograms, some in bold relief, some appearing to hover in an intervening state given to photographic properties that do not belong to Art

¹ See the exhibition catalogue, *Thomas Ruff: Nature Morte*, ed. Hannah Freedberg (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2015). In the Press Release for the exhibition, Ruff states: “Due to digital photography, the negative, which I have used nearly every day for more than twenty-five years, has almost disappeared. If I ask my daughters what a negative is, they look at me wide-eyed, for they’ve never seen or used one. The negative was actually never considered for itself, it was always only a means to an end. It was the ‘master’ from which the photographic print was made, and I think it is worth looking at these ‘masters’”: “Thomas Ruff: *Nature morte*,” Press Release, *Gagosian Gallery*, September 25, 2015, <http://www.gagosian.com/exhibitions/thomas-ruff--august-06--2015>. Of course Ruff is doing much more than reviving interest in the lost negative. A consummate appropriation artist, not unlike Richard Prince or Andy Warhol, his project is nonetheless a meta-photographic version of “tarrying with the negative”—or, in post-structuralist terms, playing with absence to question presence (and vice versa). Notably, the exhibition makes no attempt to identify the photographic materials appropriated.

but have come to reside in art photography and cinema. The most prominent affect is a shadowy, distended *mise-en-abyme* (a vortex of conflicting conceptual-formalist operations) that inhabits all primitive photographic and cinematic ventures, a disintegrating accord with vision that has often been adopted for polemical reasons in contemporary arts. Bensmaïa's psychoanalytical exposé of the photogram vis-à-vis the pictogram (or pictograph) was, after all, developed in relation to what Chris Marker permitted in his published *découpage integral* for *La jetée*, a film famously composed of still images (with the exception of one very brief sequence).² Marker's own play with cinema via the still image, and his subsequent multimedia work forcing analogue photography through digital distortion, arguably to extract extreme elements of photographic agency that belong to media per se and its historical transformations, are examples of legendary distancing aspects central to late-modern art photography as it encounters its own limits (its hyper-technical development plus primitive origins), and such is the uncanny result of an inordinately modest rapport with the apparatus of the camera as medium for apparitional affects that are not simply aesthetic but either blithely or interrogatively *anti-aesthetic*.

Yet referencing early photography is not Ruff's true brief in either "Photograms" or "Negatives." Instead, referencing how the given of the world inhabits the interior dimension of art works seems the intentional or accidental sense for what is encountered as "immense" in "*Nature morte*." (One must more or less dismiss the attempts to situate this work in "relational aesthetics" by both Ruff and his commentators for the simple reason that relational aesthetics is a mostly self-conscious attempt to add social and ethical *gravitas* to art works that are primarily, and irreducibly, aesthetic things.) Mimicking the scale of the print that is possible from glass plates (the 29 x 22 cm. dimension of the framed prints) is not simply affectation; it is also a classic formulation of self-imposed "dogma" in service to elucidating inherent agency in an operatic and often-spectacular art form. If these are photograms that often suggest pictograms, Ruff has pushed photogra-

² It is rumored that Marker may have lied, and the entirety of *La jetée* was shot with a motion-picture camera and reduced to stills *after the fact*. This rumor is based on the existence of multiple versions of *La jetée*, strategically deposited in, or leaked to, film archives by Marker, with additional passages that indulge the moving image versus the privileging of the black-and-white still image the film is renowned for.

phy back to a threshold that suggests a re-vivification of archaic agency buried within photography (a “traditional” bias), and the subtleties of the prints (editioned “8 + 2,” eight numbered prints, and two exhibition prints) can only be measured against what the chromogenic print has previously afforded—that is, spectacular large-format and super-saturated constructed images now considered curiously historical or dated, given that technical proficiency has advanced to the state where almost anyone can produce such images and pass them off as limited-edition, unique works.

The anti-realism of the two new series by Ruff is indicative of a current penchant for old-world transcendentalists that have long been displaced by the operatic splendor of spectacle or downgraded to this-worldly epiphenomenon. Both Ruff’s and Gagosian’s role in the unholy alliance between “Church and State” (Art and Capital) calls into question whether what is to be seen in “*Nature morte*” is not reducible to an example of the chronic epicycles of Art’s discontent with novelty—the perpetual recycling of artistic and mimetic maneuvers given to the production of sensation and transitory affect, while pretending otherwise. Yet if the anti-aesthetic is a middle ground, versus a type of iconoclasm, Ruff is in search of an elemental something that the photogram shares with the pictogram.

“What positive vision can be constructed in this emptiness?” This question, posed in the “Introduction” by translator David Luke to Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice and Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 1998), concerns nihilism—Nietzschean nihilism—or that moment that always arrives when “objective scientific truth” appears to be the last idol left standing, “a last secular ‘absolute’ value in which ‘the Absolute’” might take refuge.³ Photography has fallen, by degrees, from grace with Truth. In the Nietzschean sense, it is a confabulation that mimics Truth via half truths while relying on questionable forms of objectivity—the purported realism embedded in the camera as artificial eye. Despite the contortions of photography over almost two centuries, its truthfulness has rarely, if ever, been secured in art photography. Indeed, art photography has repeatedly attempted to appear objective, even as its technical proficiencies have grown increasingly complex. What became truthful in photography was most often its technical servitude to other, parallel causes (political, aesthetic, or what have you). Ruff transposes these technical proficiencies of pho-

³ David Luke, “Introduction,” in Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice and Other Stories*, trans. David Luke (London: Vintage, 1998), xiii.

tographic media forward and backward while holding the image itself in the intermediate ground of imprint from without (outside of Art per se) and as surface for an entelechy that totally undermines photography as mimetic exercise (as pseudo-objective presentation) or subsumes any particulars in what is claimed for engaging “meta-photography.” The “positive vision” for Nietzsche, after high nihilism, was life itself as “quasi-religious absolute value.” In the process, Truth was relativized (belatedly becoming the subsequent keystone for post-modernist art). What appears in Ruff’s “*Nature morte*” is the long-standing relationship of the photographic image to Death, and its tutelary transposition to icon (inferring all of the mysteries of iconicity at the expense of iconography)—a very different order of representation that has much in common with the pictogram, yet with the exception that the icon connotes the face of an irreality that inhabits Art from an interiority that does not belong to Art, but which, paradoxically, certain forms of Art may access.

What is on display in “*Nature morte*” (French for Dead Nature, referring to traditional still-life painting and photography) is intentionality, not artistic intentions, per se, but intentionality as it inhabits meta-photography, which of late has become a last refuge for making statements about Art in service to anything other than itself. Ruff’s images are fairly innocent in this regard. This innocence suggests that the theory is superadded and not integral. The larger issues of mimetic agency inferred above, present nonetheless by simply looking at the works, generally are not to be found in the images whatsoever, but in thinking about or conversing with them, and the modesty of the presentation is not, as a result, misleading. In essence, the technical reversals Ruff indulges in “Negatives” all fall away, and are ultimately subtractive when viewed from the point of view of the eventual prints in the series). And what is left for art photography is a semi-conscious meditation on photographic liminality (the meeting place of the photogram, the pictogram, the negative, and the photo-icon). The immensity noted above is to be found in what Ruff accesses by mining photographic agency to produce these images. On the face of it, the series is retro-neo-avantgarde posturing. Behind the posturing is the perpetual crisis of image-making re-configured as mute, faux-primitive icons awaiting an interlocutor amidst the late-summer splendor of London’s Mayfair, or any other venue where the present-day privilege of contemplation holds sway.

September 1, 2015

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