

**TIME AND (IN)COMPLETION**  
**Images And Performances Of Time**  
**In Late Capitalism**

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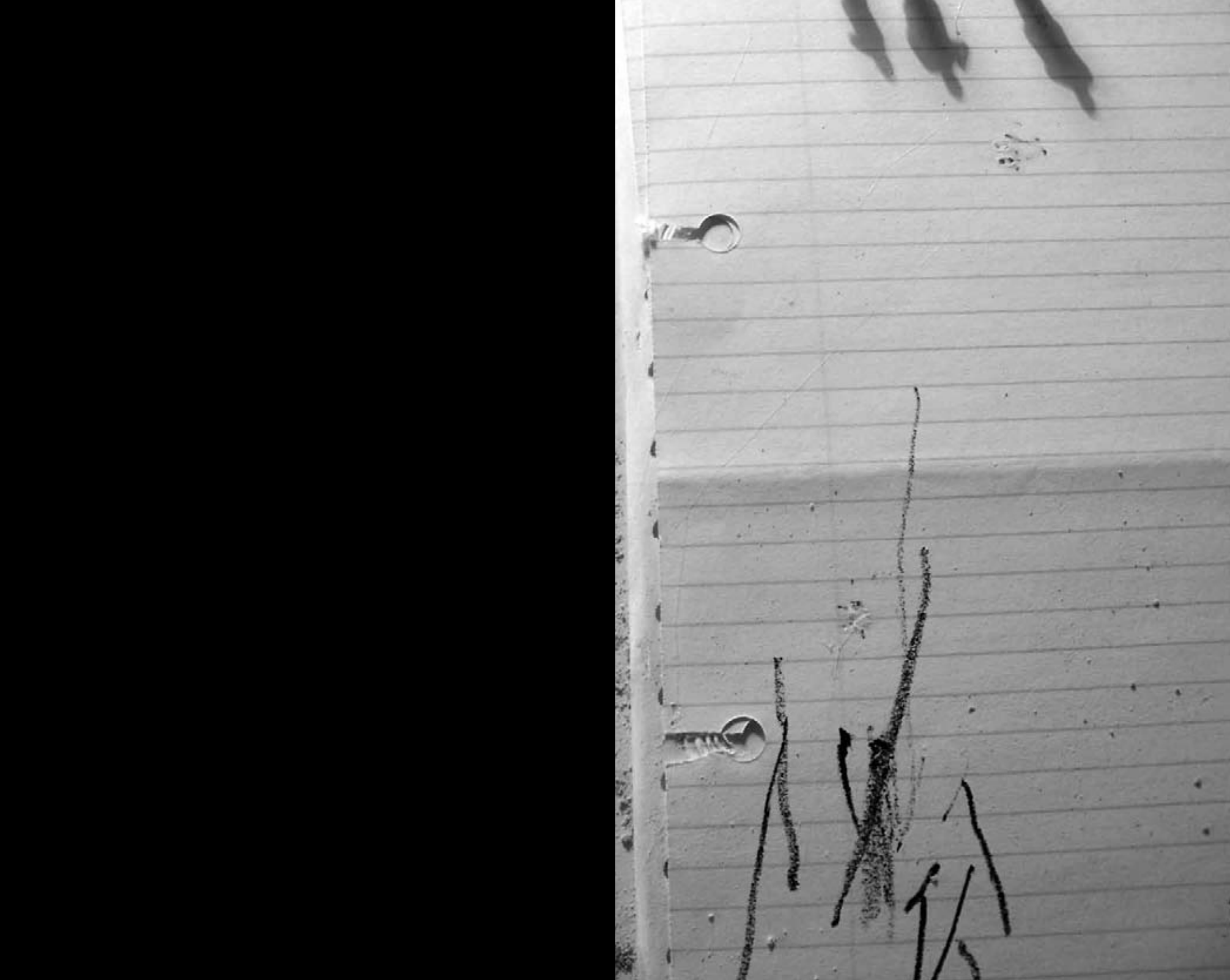
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## THE SILENT DISCOURSE OF THE INCOMPLETE WORK

*'I look back, and I am suddenly and irresistibly assailed by the question: are not these few pages, in their maladroit and groping way, simply that unfamiliar play El Nost Milan, performed on a June evening, pursuing in me its incomplete meaning, searching in me, despite myself, now that all the actors and sets have been cleared away, for the advent of its silent discourse?'*

Let's focus for awhile on the act of looking back, the same act that Althusser appoints to finish writing his afterthoughts on Giorgio Strehler's performance of 1962, whose conclusions in a way announce his radical conception of aleatory materialism.

Althusser looks back in time. The silent discourse of the incomplete work, as opposed to the open work, appears in time and not in space, appears in a form of recapitulation. Because, to quote Althusser, if the object of theatre is 'to set in motion the immobile, the eternal sphere of the illusory consciousness',<sup>2</sup> a mythical world, then a play is really the development, the production of a new consciousness in the spectator, incomplete, like any other consciousness, but moved by this incompleteness itself, this distance achieved, this inexhaustible work of criticism in action; the play is really the production of a new spectator,

<sup>1</sup> Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. London: Verso, 2005, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



an actor who starts where the performance ends, who only starts so as to complete it, but in life.<sup>3</sup>

The completion of the performance starts *post hoc*, as an afterthought, *Nachdenken*.

As a principle, I would emphasise here the permanent condition of incompleteness, incompleteness as a general principle of creation through interruption. That principle does not begin from that of necessity, the principle that the segments of a theatrical process stem from necessity; rather, they become necessary. Every encounter and thus also every set of relations in a process 'might not have taken place, although it did take place'.<sup>4</sup> All encounters are aleatory and their effects random; therefore, their determinations 'may not be assigned except by *working backwards*'.<sup>5</sup> Our domain of work is to detect 'affinities' that did/would enable a conjuncture to take hold, affinities made it necessary. And that is what theatre examines in its process: what kind of conditions and affinities of its actants enable a particular conjuncture to take hold on various levels of existence – among its actants, in the world of objects, in relation to fictions, before the spectators, in repertoire, in history?

The principle of incompleteness implicates not an endless processuality, neither a lack but interruption and in that regard I would invoke two metaphors that are crucial for BADco. when approaching the problem of conjuncture and operability. One of them is the exploded view and the other, the interstice.

The exploded view is a technical term for a way of showing the relations whereby the components of a conjuncture are put together, be it an object, mechanism, or machine. Such a display creates the illusion of a small, controlled explosion at the centre of the object, with its components frozen in midflight in their scattering in space, at an equal distance from one another. This is precisely the diagrammatic, refractive view that I am suggesting here: a view that synchronically shows the 'exploded view of diachronic processes'.<sup>6</sup> Such a view simultaneously suggests encounters and conjunctures, but also points to the interstice, the space of interruption between elements. That space of interruption between elements is what Goddard (and then also Deleuze) calls the 'interstice' in editing.

Sometimes, as in modern cinema, the cut has become the interstice, it is irrational and does not form part of either set, one of which has no more an end than the other has a beginning: false continuity is such an irrational cut. [. . . and this cut is] disjunctive.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Althusser, Louis, François Matheron, and Olivier Corpet, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–87*. London and New York: Verso, 2006, p. 193.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See Tomislav Medak. "Theatre and Totality" in this book, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. London: Athlone, 2000, p. 181.

That gap separates, but is also factual. By separating, it brings together and leaves room for thematising (and showing) what is otherwise invisible, abstract, and enters meaning vertically. Every set (conjuncture, assemblage) of a process, its every operating segment results from an interruption, not from a culmination. Sets are a sort of gestures, which may be separated and stand on their own. Nor is the première the moment when the process is at its maximum, after which it is all but repetition; rather, it is a moment of interruption, a point where another conjuncture of actants, abstractions, and real effects, more accurately, another series enters into a relationship with the performance, through a non-relationship with it. Unlike functional analyses that normatively begin by assuming that there are rules for organising conjunctures, our premise is that once a conjuncture is established, its elements play by the rules, stick to the laws, but laws are haunted by a 'radical instability'.<sup>8</sup> The perspective of our analysis comprises not the laws but the radical instability of the conjuncture. Art always produces consequences, but they are impossible to predict. However, we can always work on the affinities, which is a key epistemological issue in theatre.

Perhaps the most precise phrase for naming that type of work was given by Tomislav Medak in his proposal for a workshop that was meant to develop an analytical system for addressing the reflection of presentation poetics and circulation of the performing arts: **post-hoc dramaturgy**. Medak thus *ad-hoc* also named the poetic approaches that have, all these years, shaped the work of BADco.

Let me use the example of BADco. to present two projects, whose processes were either organised through individual operative derivations or retroactively established that perspective in relation to all of our work. I must say that both examples feature exploded macro-views of their respective processes; on the micro-level, I will address both sets further below.

The first example is Whatever Dance Toolbox (WDT), a software tool we developed over a number of years with our regular collaborator Daniel Turing. WDT was developed through several stages, which I will call here sets, because they were characterised by different relations of collaboration as well as different modes of relating to the context and external actors. We had our first encounter with software in *Deleted Messages*, where we used Daniel's already existing motion-tracking software: 'Warsaw Pact'. Then we invited Daniel to work on developing new software for manipulating images in time, as part of 'Dijeljeni prostor' (Shared Space), a ten-day public programme, but instead, Daniel there developed a presentation entitled 'What Does a Machine See?'. The idea that using software, one could learn 'what a machine sees' intrigued us as something unknown and following Daniel's suggestion, we continued our collaboration by way of mutual education – we got together on

<sup>8</sup> Althusser, Louis, François Matheron, and Olivier Corpet, *op. cit.* 2006, p. 195.

neutral terrain – at the PAF, in France. We had some unusual crossovers there – Daniel watched our rehearsals and suggested applications that might help us analyse and transform movements in performances (by manipulating the pace of image reproduction, jumps and pauses in time, image feedback, etc.); at the same time, Nikolina, Daniel, and I worked on trying other applications that were primarily educational for us – Daniel proposed graphic applications in the form of games – simple tasks that taught us about visual representations of what a machine ‘sees’. However, through such collaborations and communicating with other artists at the PAF, we realised that in fact, we had three important foci in that process.

The first of them was and still is related to applications we used for image processing in *Memories Are Made of This* (2006) and that development continued in some later performances as well, mostly along the director–software designer axis.

The other concerned the fact that in working with software there began to emerge a visible manifestation of what we called ‘alien logics’ in choreography – the expression of decision-making procedures and movement images characteristic of working with external influences, those of non-human logics (algorithms, manipulated images, etc.). Namely, a key issue in our choreographic work was how to make visible the process of compositional, improvisational, and dynamic decision-making in choreographic performance, that is, how to make visible in performance the procedurality of thought, instead of self-expression and the choreographic object. With time, specific poetic premises of our work in choreography crystallised with procedures that were becoming evident in performance, but not always or immediately comprehensible, that is, self-evident, whereas the complexity of performers’ assumptions often made it seem as though an alien, external logic were driving the performance. Our interest focused exactly on those external, ‘artificial’ logics, which are less than popular in dance, due to its idealisation of ‘naturalness’ and division between the internal and external work of expression, precisely because to us, they seem to be the key mode of correspondence between the performance, performer, and theatre with their environment, whether objective, contextual, conditional, or social.

In such a process of performance thinking, it was impossible to avoid a key aspect of the objectification of thought and procedurality in our environment – algorithmically based forms of mediation and reflexion. Therefore, our third focus was to develop software into a tool that might enable us to work in a studio, because it turned out that some applications could significantly help going over material in real time and reproducing it later, while others suggested the possibility of generating movement and working on improvisation.

Following that, we came up with a dozen or so applications, which we all then tried out in a series of workshops with other potential users – dancers, teachers, therapists, non-dancers, etc.

Upon gathering feedback, we assigned ourselves three aims:

- to develop a tool that we might find interesting to use in our choreographic work;
- to develop a tool that anyone might use, without imposing on them the specificities of our choreographic work;
- to develop a tool that might help us exemplify and relay our method of working with movement, improvisation, and issues regarding attention.

The result of that was our collaboration with other organisations working to develop technologies and methodologies, as part of a larger partnership project, within which the tool project was realised. The project development time span was around six years, which witnessed significant changes in the collaboration dynamic among all of us who worked on it. Our interest in new technologies changed significantly and crucially affected our thinking regarding a whole series of other problems occurring in the context of new technologies, such as the issue of open codes, copyright, collaboration platforms, etc. In a way, in encounters between technological sets and different aspects of our process (rehearsals, performances, workshops, etc.), WDT produced different kinds of knowledge that were then reinvested into processes, which resulted in a tool that we could reinvest in our own work in various ways but that is neutral enough so that others may use it in their works, too. Not all of these encounters were successful; some applications failed to develop, there was never enough time to develop therapeutic usage, etc. But on the whole, WDT links a whole array of different registers of our work and conditions in which it was developed, although itself, it does not express that totality.

In the second example, *Post-hoc Dramaturgy*,<sup>9</sup> we asked ourselves the following question: ‘How does a work – work?’. To begin, we made a chronological sketch of roughly three operating stages of the traditional mode of working on a theatre play. The first stage would be the so-called poetic or production dramaturgy stage, encompassing various operations of generating and accumulating so-called performance material. The second stage, which we called the dramaturgy of the final cut, is predicated on decision-making procedures regarding presentability, in which the functions of dramaturgy relate mostly to editing, so-called external-eye reflection, verifying the feasibility of the premises of the performance, etc. The third stage is when the artwork is presented for interpretative analysis, from its authorial intentions to the meanings it produces. Still, our interest lies neither in authorial intentions nor the production of meaning, but in the operative aspect of performance, in which key parameters are the identification of actors involved in the

<sup>9</sup> The reader *Whatever #3, Post-Hoc Dramaturgy* is resulting from *10 Days 1 Unity*, a ten-day laboratory that brought together primarily two groups of artists: artists gathered around the collective 6m11 and members of the performing collective BADco., who were joined by a smaller number of the Zagreb-based performers, choreographers, dramaturges, and theatre directors; [http://badco.hr/2012/06/04/whatever3\\_4/](http://badco.hr/2012/06/04/whatever3_4/).

operation (performers, spectators, presenters, the public, inhuman actors, etc.), mobilisation procedures (the atmosphere, intensities of performance, subjectivation of the spectators, exhaustion, boredom, media mediation, reading), performance format (a play, interventions, durational performance, series of performances) and translative units (situations, interventions into reality, micro-events).

Departing from those parameters, we specified several 'objects' or, as I've dubbed them here, sets that in different performances imply different procedures with their specific spatio-temporal operations. For example, one of those sets comprises technologies of seeing that in our work cropped up in different procedural modes: reflecting on the relations between traces produced by the performance, the spectator's ability to remember and necessity to forget; affective 'leakage' of humour or principles translated from popular culture (SF, horror, slapstick, *Schlager*...) into complex problems; friction in the perception of time and duration; divided experiences of watching (intimisation, divided attention, different perspectives...); the economy of attention; mobilising different capacities in the spectator (cognitive, physical / kinaesthetic, affective, desires); the asymmetry of insight; immersion, detachment, or laterality regarding the performance, etc. Another such set or rather conjuncture comprises operations in whose context the work is performed: contextual translations (cultural, worldview, professional...); inscriptions and interventions in different artistic contexts; memory, the remains of the performance in its cultural context; its echoes in different contexts (the public, the art field, political context, media, society...); its position *vis-à-vis* its *Zeitgeist*, etc. Such examples might include still other operations as well: feedback on various levels, changes of apparatus, the status and value of the work... Although it looks like an attempt at systematisation, *post-hoc* intends no systemic analysis. Rather, it is an attempt to use an exploded view of the work and its operation to generate new pragmata that would be above all geared toward poetics of knowledge as well as, by extension, toward responsible artistic practices that would be open, thus disassembled, to the vicissitudes of their conditions of production, which is an important political issue, if not also a fundamental political premise of all theatre. Still, it is evident that above all, such an approach would have to reject the traditional logic of the chronological division of the process, in favour of approaching it in terms of diagrams and recapitulations, opening the possibility that the processes last for as long as it takes to establish a new image of time, whereas presentation situations should be only interruptions in their duration, markers of time.

So, for an artistic act to take charge, to enter the sphere of politics and ethics as an object, as a fact, it must, *qua res*, become *res gesta*, as Agamben describes how a simple fact becomes an event.<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>10</sup> Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*. London: Verso, 1993, p. 140.

final-cut undertaking has to be understood literally as a cut, as an interruption in the way Benjamin understands the functionality of gesture. An interruption initiates a different sort of movement: that of the *afterthought*, the disjunctive movement of *Nachdenken*.<sup>11</sup>

In performance studies, a number of researchers have found at the core of performance its ephemerality, exclusive existence in the present, and becoming through vanishing.<sup>12</sup>

However, that view of vanishing performance still rests on the idea of theatre as a reflection, something that we may survey only reflectively, always in a present that is no longer there, therefore in the past. Instead, I would advocate a theatre of interruption, a theatre that would always begin by emptying itself, by creating a void, without asking about origins but pursuing encounters and surveying the symptoms, insisting on the trace, on a remnant that has taken hold whereas it could have disappeared just as well, a remainder that always preserves the possibility of theatre turning into another kind of machine. Such theatre is one of refraction, a materially factual theatre, where one watches the world not only from or as the theatre, but also through theatre. That is the theatre of radical deceleration, one where the calendar, clock, working hours, lifetime, duration, 'spatiotemporal compression',<sup>13</sup> 'timeless time'<sup>14</sup>, 'operating time', 'the time that remains',<sup>15</sup> etc. are articulations of operating states and expressions of interruptions in the dominant images of time.

<sup>11</sup> Weber, Samuel. "Between a Human Life and a Word: Walter Benjamin and the Citability of Gesture", in Geyer-Ryan, Helga (ed.), *Perception and Experience in Modernity*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the most important are Blau, Herbert. *Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982; Sayre, Henry M. *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-garde since 1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989; Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993; Muñoz, José Esteban. "Flaming Latinas: Ela Troyano's Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffin", in López, Ana M. and Chon A. Noriega (eds.), *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 129–142; Taylor, Diana. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997; Schneider, Rebecca. 'Archives: Performance Remains', *Performance Research*, 6 (2), 2001, pp. 100–108; Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004; Heathfield, Adrian, and Hugo Glendinning. *Live: Art and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 2004; Giannachi, Gabriella, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (eds.). *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford [England]: Blackwell, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Castells, Manuel. *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

22



A Speculative



What my cat did while I was downloading  
 or how thoroughly inwasted  
 the repeated difference may be

Glossary



23





## A Speculative

Restmoreorlessness (n.) **54** Batteriality (n.) **72** Pregnant Boredom  
 (n. no pl.) **102** Disco'n'tinuity (n.) **122** Waste // \*Time-wasting  
 (n) / Time-waster (n) **123** In0wasting (v.) **144** Presency (n.) **147**  
 Zenacceleration (n., no pl.) **168**

Introduction  
Glossary

Our accelerated temporality generates diverse and multiplying strategies of dealing with the demands of our hastened time. It seems necessary to enrich our vocabulary with terms that will allow for some differentiation and enable us to talk more precisely about specific forms of time and ways of coping with its eternal brevity, as well as the dissipation of time and its manifold qualities. The lexical in(ter)ventions that are introduced in this glossary comprise a number of terms, such as *in0wasting*, *zenacceleration*, and *pregnant boredom*, which are meant to allow for some specification in our daily talks and chats about the diverse intangible temporal states in which our daily moves are not just imbedded. Time is not an empty container but is rather produced and engendered by our movements and perceptions.

The method of this glossary is a reversed one: similarly to drawing a map of a territory that no one has ever seen, we sketch definitions in order to discover what qualitative differences these neologisms (with their descriptions) introduce. Lexica are not static representations of words but tools for negotiating and intervening in the social field. Terminology is approached here as a poetic and at the same time productive moment of thought, as well as a speculative endeavour of lexical fiction.

**written by:**

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Stephen Zepke

## SCHIZO-REVOLUTIONARY ART:

Deleuze, Guattari, And

## Communisation Theory

‘insurrection is an art.’ (Camatte, 2011: 38)

‘It is as a rupture with the reproduction of what we are that will necessarily form the horizon of our struggles.’ (Endnotes, 2011: 31)

What is the ‘art’ of insurrection? It encompasses a homemade atomic bomb and a delicate landscape painted with the soft, wet swish of Turner’s brush.<sup>1</sup> Which is to say it is not defined by the specifics of its material, technique, or meaning, but by the nature of the act. The ‘art’ of insurrection is a mode of acting, of being in the world, a revolutionary style of life. But what is this? We can always point to something and say: ‘It’s that’ – a bomb, a brush – but this says more about the ‘that’ than about the ‘it’. In fact, ‘it’s that’ perfectly captures the paradoxical ontology of the ‘art’ of insurrection; it is *at once* an actual moment in the world and the way in which this moment transforms itself into something that escapes the conditions that determine it. The ‘art’ of insurrection, then, is a transformative action whereby something overcomes its determining limits and becomes something else. This ‘art’ is that of schizoanalysis, an

<sup>1</sup> Both examples are taken from Deleuze and Guattari. See 1987: 345, and 1983: 132.

'art' at once political, philosophical, and aesthetic. An 'art' at once in and of the world, and in the process of leaving it.

But all of this remains typically vague, invoking a grand alliance between politics, philosophy, and art through broad gestures loosely amenable to a weapon, pen, or brush. A kind of metaphorical allegiance between practices, which barely goes beyond its evocation, its righteous self-evidence. This will never be good for anyone, because its fatuous enthusiasms are precisely what the 'art' of insurrection is not. Rather, insurrection is immediately singular and finite, something real, a thing – or better, a process. But this 'thing-process' attains a singular trajectory beyond any conditions that might determine it, making it undeterminable, immeasurable, infinitely open, aleatory, and self-organising. It exists in a world where, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, '*everything is possible...*' (1983: 328). In this sense, an insurrectionary thing-process (Guattari calls it a 'schizoanalytic entity' (2013: 53)<sup>2</sup>) can neither be described nor represented: 'The undecidable is the germ and locus par excellence of revolutionary decision' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 522). The art of insurrection can only be enacted, and in doing so it constructs/discovers, as Deleuze and Guattari say, 'an *unknown country*' (1983: 318), 'the new world [...] a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization' (1983: 322). This new world is that of 'the real in itself' (1983: 379), a reality that is always a 'work in progress' (1983: 318). This means that the specificity and particularity of this new world exist, but this being is becoming, it is always being constructed. The new world exists beneath, or beyond, our everyday actuality, not separate but repressed and exploited by our world, and occasionally bursting through in insurrectionary flashes. These flashes – or 'explosions' as Deleuze and Guattari like to call them – are the schizo-real, and it is the schizoanalyst who creates them: 'The schizoanalyst is a mechanic', Deleuze and Guattari say, 'and schizoanalysis is solely functional' (1983: 322).<sup>3</sup> Schizoanalysis is the 'art' of making something – a class, a concept, a painting – escape from its 'self'. And our selves first of all, we must escape our limits. 'What does schizoanalysis ask? Nothing more than a little bit of a *relation to the outside*, a little real reality' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 334).

The 'art' of schizoanalysis can be concretely understood in political terms through communism theory's view of revolution and, in aesthetic terms, through a sublime theory of art. In fact, we could

<sup>2</sup> At this, the first quotation from Guattari's book *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, mention must be made of Gary Genosko's groundbreaking work in introducing Guattari to the English-speaking world, and of Janell Watson's extraordinarily lucid account of Guattari's work in *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought: Writing Between Lacan and Deleuze*. The present account is greatly indebted to both of these thinkers.

<sup>3</sup> Schizoanalysis is in this sense 'completely oriented towards an *experimentation* in touch with the real. It will not "decipher" an already constituted, self-enclosed unconscious, *it will construct it*' (Guattari, 2011: 171–2).

understand these three terms as the ontological, political, and aesthetic poles of a diagram of insurrection, a diagram this essay will attempt to sketch. This diagram is not an abstract idea but a practice. It begins from a method of immanent critique that reveals a system's a priori conditions of possibility (our inheritance of Kant's 'genius', according to Deleuze (1983: 91)), and then invents techniques by which these conditions are overcome and so discovers their 'principle of internal genesis' (our inheritance from Nietzsche, according to Deleuze (1983: 91)). All three poles of our diagram proceed in this manner and together they constitute an outline of 'political art' in Deleuze and Guattari's sense, an art that is 'schizo-revolutionary'.

Why a schizoanalytic theory of political art? Even the most cursory reading of *Anti-Oedipus* must conclude that schizoanalysis is a critique of capitalism by and through art.<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari map how the mechanisms of representation and Oedipus capture desire and subject it to capitalist exploitation, whilst giving overwhelmingly artistic examples (that are also models) of insurrectionary desires that evade capture (Proust, Miller, Lawrence, Rimbaud, Ray, Kafka, Beckett, Butler, Nijinsky, Chaplin, Artaud, Lindner, Tintoretto, Lotto, Turner, Cage, Lautréamont, Céline, etc.). Indeed, as Guattari will later argue, schizoanalysis is an 'aesthetic paradigm' because the analyst works as an artist; 'This is art', he says, 'this unnameable point, this point of non-sense that the artist works. In the domain of schizoanalysis it is the same aesthetic paradigm: how can one work a point that is not discursive, a point of subjectification that will be melancholic, chaotic, psychotic?' (2011a: 47–8).<sup>5</sup> That schizoanalysis is an insurrectionary 'art' seems an explicit assumption of Deleuze and Guattari's work; what remains to be seen is how this art manifests itself in directly political and artistic terms.

<sup>4</sup> This is even a criticism of the book that Deleuze and Guattari themselves anticipated: 'Those who have read this far will perhaps find many reasons for reproaching us: for believing too much in the pure potentialities of art; for denying or minimizing the role of classes and class struggle; for militating in favor of an irrationalism of desire; for identifying the revolutionary with the schizo' (1983: 378–9). Their response? To confirm the reasons for reproach and in particular: 'that art and science have a revolutionary potential [...]; art and science cause increasingly decoded and deterritorialized flows to circulate in the socius, flows that are perceptible to everyone, which force the social axiomatic to grow ever more complicated, to become more saturated, to the point where the scientist and the artist may be determined to rejoin an objective revolutionary situation [!]' (1983: 379).

<sup>5</sup> The comparison of schizoanalysis to artistic practices is a common trope in Guattari's work: 'By their very essence [schizo]analytic cartographies extend beyond the existential territories to which they are assigned. *As in painting or literature*, the concrete performance of these cartographies requires that they evolve and innovate, that they open up new futures, without their authors having prior recourse to assured theoretical principles or the authority of a group, a school, or an academy ... Work in progress!' (italics added, 2000: 40). Going further, Guattari says he wants to 'protect schizoanalysis from every temptation to give in to the ideal of scientificity' and 'seek instead to find a foundation for it that will make it similar to the aesthetic disciplines, by its mode of valorization, its type of truth and its logic' (2013: 32, see also 36). For a more detailed account of Guattari's use of art as a model for schizoanalysis, see Zepke, 2012 and 2011.



## Capitalism and Schizophrenia

The subtitle of both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* is 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia'. This subtitle does not offer us an opposition in the usual sense, because in fact, capitalism is a form of schizophrenia. What, then, is schizophrenia? Schizophrenia is a mental illness in which the mediating forms of representation that enable the subject to both distinguish themselves from, and place themselves within, the world have broken down (i.e., it is an absolute deterritorialisation), and life is experienced as an unmediated flow of sensation that exceeds and often terrorises 'normal' subjectivity. Schizophrenia is obviously a terrible tragedy and painful suffering for those who experience it, but nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari adopt it as both their model for reality and technique for achieving it; 'Schizoanalysis', Guattari writes, approaches all modalities of subjectivation in light of the world of the mode of being in the world of psychosis. Because nowhere more than here is the ordinary modelisation of everyday existence so denuded: [...] with psychosis the world of standardised Dasein loses its consistency. Alterity, as such, becomes the primary question.' (1995: 63)

Obviously then, schizoanalysis will develop techniques by which social and subjective 'normality' is overcome and a new way of being is invented.<sup>6</sup> But what are these norms? These norms are capitalism.

Let's take a closer look at *Anti-Oedipus* to get a better idea of the co-implication of schizophrenia and capitalism. 'At the heart of *Capital*' (1983: 225), Deleuze and Guattari write, referring both to the book and the economic system, a deterritorialised flow of labour meets a deterritorialised flow of capital capable of purchasing it. Each of these flows emerge from a decoding of the social structures that had previously contained them, and their conjunction (it is in fact a differential relation, or 'disjunctive synthesis') achieves a new regime of abstraction whereby commodities concretise an amount of abstract labour (measured by money as the 'general equivalent'). This conjunction therefore defines the immanent social field particular to capitalism, on one side, variable capital (labour power) and on the other, constant capital (the power of machines), with surplus value flowing from one side to the other and insuring that the productive machine keep expanding, as well as introducing one of the defining paradoxes of capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari call it an 'axiom' (1983: 511)), the declining rate of profit. In order to keep increasing productive efficiency, profit is invested into fixed capital (i.e., machines),

<sup>6</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue for a 'politics of psychiatry' (i.e., an antipsychiatry) where 'madness would no longer exist as madness [...] because it would receive the support of all the other flows, including science and art' (1983: 321). This would be the opposite of today's situation where madness is deprived of all support and must 'testify all alone for deterritorialisation as a universal process' (1983: 321). This means, in other words, that madness should no longer be considered the exception, *but the rule*...

but this means that the relative return on investment declines, even as the raw amount of return increases. As Marx explains in the third volume of *Capital*: 'The fall in the rate of profit thus expresses the falling ratio between surplus-value itself and the total capital advanced' (1991: 320). This tendency, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is the 'diagram' of capital:

The tendency's only limit is internal, and it is continually going beyond it, but by displacing the limit – that is, by reconstituting it, by rediscovering it as an internal limit to be surpassed again by means of a displacement; thus the continuity of the capitalist process engenders itself in this break of a break that is always displaced, in this unity of the schiz and the flow. (1983: 230)

The break of the break... the deterritorialising power of the schiz is reterritorialised in the constant development of the machinery of production, and the more rapidly this technological revolution moves, the more brutal its controls and repressions become. But, and this is the crucial onto-political point for Deleuze and Guattari: 'In the expanded immanence of the system, the limit tends to reconstitute in its displacement the thing it tended to diminish in its primitive emplacement' (1983: 231). This means capitalism is permanently in crises, needing the 'machinic surplus-value' it produces in order to maintain 'growth', but also having to control this force so as not to be destroyed by it. The only way to do this is to channel machinic surplus-value into greater exploitation of labour on one side, and increase automation on the other. As we know, in our contemporary cybernetic context, these two things are complementary and can never stop. Increased automation and exploitation ('machinic enslavement') do not fix the declining rate of profit in monetary terms, but introduce a new realm of decoding within the cybernetic body that succeeds in continually displacing the approaching limit.<sup>7</sup> This is the emergence of deterritorialisation as the necessary logic of the capitalist social system and the means whereby the entire social system is reterritorialised on this schizo force. This requires an 'extremely rigorous axiomatic that maintains the energy of the flows in a bound state on the body of capital as a socius that is deterritorialised' (1983: 246). As a result,

<sup>7</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari put it: 'schizophrenia is the *exterior* limit of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency, but capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibits this, or that it pulls back or displaces this limit, by substituting for it its own *immanent* relative limits, which it continually reproduces on a widened scale. It axiomatises with one hand and decodes with the other. Such is the way we must interpret the Marxist law of the counteracting tendency. But for capitalism it is a question of binding the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits' (1983: 246). 'Concerning capitalism, we maintain that it both does and does not have an exterior limit: it has an exterior limit that is schizophrenia, that is, the absolute decoding of flows, but it functions only by pushing back and exorcising this limit' (1983: 250).

the flows of code that are ‘liberated’ in science and technics by the capitalist régime engender a machinic surplus value that does not directly depend on science and technics themselves, but on capital surplus value that is added to human surplus value and that comes to correct the relative diminution of the latter, both of them constituting the whole of the surplus value of flux that characterizes the system. (1983: 234)

The rise of neo-liberalism has intensified capitalism’s foundational rhythm of schizophrenic deterritorialisations and their biopolitical reterritorialisation within increasingly cybernetic forms of subjectivity.<sup>8</sup> This, the ‘third age’ of ‘humans-machines systems’, or ‘machinic enslavement’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 505–6), has thrust the realm of affect (now produced as a commodity) and thought (immaterial labour) to the forefront of political struggles. Schizoanalysis attempts to liberate thought and sensation from their cybernetic enslavement, through a ‘machinics of existence whose object is not circumscribed within fixed extrinsic coordinates’, but is instead directly compossible with ‘Universes of alterity’ (Guattari, 1995: 64). This is not a rejection of cybernetic technology, but rather, the necessity of inventing machinic interfaces that will not sacrifice schizophrenia on the altars of capitalist subjectivity and representation (i.e., profit).<sup>9</sup> As a result, Guattari concludes:

<sup>8</sup> Matteo Pasquinelli has recently explored this ‘machinic surplus-value’ in terms of our contemporary technical infrastructure. Focussing on metadata and algorithms that optimise technology and biopolitically control populations, he shows how the embodiment of ‘machinic surplus value’ has involved the development of a cybernetic interface capable of directly exploiting the ‘general intellect’. In this way, the distinction between fixed and variable capital is becoming increasingly unclear, as human processes are incorporated into technological functions.

<sup>9</sup> Our ‘new “machinic addiction”’ is, Guattari writes, a ‘curious mixture of enrichment and impoverishment’ (2013: 1; see also 12, 40). In this sense, schizoanalysis works on the side of enrichment: ‘Is schizoanalysis a new cult of the machine? Perhaps, but surely not within the framework of capitalistic social relations! The monstrous development of machinisms of all types, in all domains, and what seems now to lead the human species to an unavoidable catastrophe, could also become the royal road to its liberation. In that case, is it still the old Marxist dream? Yes, up to a certain point. Because instead of taking history as being ballasted by productive and economic machines, I think that, on the contrary, these are the machines, all the machines, which function in the manner of real history insofar as they constantly remain open to singularity traits and creative initiatives’ (2011: 194). Presumably, the ‘old Marxist dream’ is to take over the means of production, but this is only Marxist ‘up to a certain point’ because production is no longer understood entirely in economic terms. As Maurizio Lazzarato has pointed out, *Anti-Oedipus* offers ‘a non-economist interpretation of the economy’. What this means, he goes on to explain, is ‘on the one hand, that economic production is inseparable from the production and control of subjectivity and its forms of existence, on the other, that money, before fulfilling the economic functions of measure, means of exchange, payment, and accumulation, manifests the power to command and distribute the places and tasks assigned to the governed’ (2012: 72; see also 42). This means ‘the paradigm of the social lies not in exchange (economic and/or symbolic) but in credit’ (2012: 11). Lazzarato focuses on the structure of debt, drawing heavily on Deleuze and Guattari’s use of Nietzsche in *Anti-Oedipus*, to show how it has produced ‘the indebted

Just as the schizo has broken moorings with subjective individuation, the analysis of the Unconscious should be recentred on the non-human processes of subjectivation that I call machinic, but which are more than human – superhuman in a Nietzschean sense. (1995: 71–2)

They are Nietzschean because the schizo has overcome the human, all too human, to enter the nonhuman flows of this expanded, ‘machinic’ life.<sup>10</sup> This is nothing less than the arrival of a sublime subjectivation, an inhuman (non)subject whose activity (both material and immaterial) exceeds both its economic determinations (‘labour’), subjectivations (‘entrepreneur’, ‘indebted’), and even corporeal limitations (the organism), making its condition of possibility alterity, or becoming. Such activity, according to Guattari, embodies a process of self-othering that is ‘the point of continual emergence of every form of creativity’ (2013: 5).<sup>11</sup> In schizoanalysis ‘heterogeneity ceases to be something simply registered: it becomes productive of Effects. [...] It doesn’t affirm its difference *against* the others but from its own interior, in an intensive mode of existential autonomization’ (2013: 88 and 165).

Guattari argues that machinic surplus-value is double-sided, both serving to further our enslavement, as well as providing a surplus to capital itself.<sup>12</sup> This is a surplus to the representational and subjectivising mechanisms of capital, a surplus of sensation (the surplus of the surplus, we might say) that defines the aesthetic paradigm and gives art its power. As he writes:

precisely because it intervenes on the most functional levels – sensorial, affective and practical – the capitalist machinic enslavement is liable to reverse its effects, and to lead to a new type of machinic surplus-value accurately described by Marx (expansion

man’ as the neo-liberal form of subjectivity. ‘Debt’, he writes, ‘means immediately making the economy subjective, since debt is an economic relation which, in order to exist, implies the molding and control of subjectivity such that “labor” becomes indistinguishable from “work on the self”’ (2012: 33). Lazzarato expertly unpacks this new subjectivation as the crucial mechanism of control that subsumes economics and individualised subjects within the realm of biopolitics, but consistent with his empirical and generally pessimistic outlook, he does not explore the political potentials of schizoanalysis at work within this paradigm. Unsurprisingly, there is nothing about art in his account, because he ignores the onto-aesthetic ‘will to power’ at the base of Nietzsche’s (and Deleuze and Guattari’s) account, with its strong emphasis on the power of art, in favour of a theory of action he draws from William James, centring on the concepts of ‘faith/confidence’, ‘hope’, and ‘trust’ (2012: 66–71).

<sup>10</sup> Guattari claims that ‘we no longer come to the politics of machinic choices from the point of view of assemblages of enunciation marked in one way or another by human components’ (2011: 154).

<sup>11</sup> It is this that makes ‘schizoanalytic subjectivity [...] lose its character as human territoriality and project it towards the most original and the most “futuristic” processes of singularization at the same time – becomings animal, vegetable, cosmos. Becomings immature, multivalent sex, becomings incorporeal...’ (Guattari, 2013: 20).

<sup>12</sup> Guattari develops a vocabulary for this ‘surplus’ that aims to subvert the language of capitalism. He writes, for example, about the necessity of ‘investing’ the ‘Capital of heterogeneity’ (2013: 84).

of alternatives for the human race, constant renewal of the horizon of desires and creativity). (1996: 220)

But given the immanence of machinic surplus value and machinic enslavement within cybernetic capitalism, the question remains: how can we escape? In *Anti-Oedipus* 'lines of flight' emerge out of the 'creative' sectors of capitalist production that are most strongly controlled – the areas of science and art.<sup>13</sup> It is here that the greatest threat to the system emerges, a threat that is not so much an acceleration, as a phase-change that escapes capital's exploitation of the 'surplus value' that art and science release. For all types of art the schizoanalytic question is the same: whether art remains on the level of its capitalist conditions of possibility – its market, its meaning, its expressive modalities, etc. – or whether it can move beyond these limits.

To present this, capital enforces a regime of 'anti-production' on the creativity of scientists and artists, 'as though they risked unleashing flows that would be dangerous for capitalist production and charged with a revolutionary potential, so long as these flows are not co-opted or absorbed by the laws of the market' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 245). Anti-production works through all the mechanisms that prevent or recoup creative excess, whether by refusing funding or support, or by rewards that integrate it into the flows of capital. In this sense, anti-production is not the opposite of production, but rather supports and develops it. As a result, the greater visibility, prosperity, and integration

<sup>13</sup> This is a quite different proposition to Deleuze and Guattari's rather controversial and more well-known statement: 'Which is the revolutionary path? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialisation? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to "accelerate the process", as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet' (1983: 239–40). Although my own affirmation of sublime art as a technique of 'communitisation' is entirely consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's claim that 'one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialisation: you haven't seen anything yet' (1983: 321), it nevertheless rejects their suggestion that this can be achieved through an acceleration of capitalism. As we shall see, refuting this argument is the entire point of drawing on communitisation theory. Nevertheless, because of the co-implication of digital technology and capital, 'accelerationism' has appealed to those who see technology as the road to liberation. Nick Land, for example, has offered the highly influential interpretation that 'market immanentization' means the obliteration of class opposition in the pure deterritorialising force of the 'free market'. According to Land, 'what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemies' resources. Digitocommodification is the index of a cyberpositively escalating techno-virus, of the planetary technocapital singularity: a self-organizing insidious traumatism, virtually guiding the entire biological desiring-complex towards post-carbon replicator usurpation' (1993: 479). While there is much to recommend in Land's work, imagining *Bladerunner's* replicants as cyberpunk insurgents of the future seems a little farfetched. In hindsight, the way cyberpunk imagined a 'liftoff' of cybernetic technology as liberated machinic desire seems naive, and its intoxicated celebration of a subversive cyber-future was often indistinguishable from a celebration of a liberated free market (a point made by Fredric Jameson in his great book on science-fiction (2005: 190)).

enjoyed by the arts today do not mean they have more creative freedom. Just the opposite. As I will argue, contemporary artistic practice marks a particular low-point in creativity and insurrectionary spirit, not least because 'resistance' is now aggressively marketed as one of art's selling points. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari acerbically argue, capital doubles the flows of cultural production with a 'flow of *stupidity* that effects an absorption and a realization, and that ensures the integration of groups and individuals into the system' (1983: 236).<sup>14</sup> This means that artistic production can be encouraged and increasingly exploited as long as it is always already subjected to capitalist axiomatics and so merely reflects the 'stupidity' of its 'workers'. What is needed, as Maurizio Lazzarato points out, is a struggle that denounces stupidity in this sense, and so divides people and refuses the governing consensus (2012: 157–8).<sup>15</sup> This is true in the art world, as it is everywhere else. The question, of course, is how are we to do it?

The practice of schizoanalysis begins with an immanent critique of existing conditions whereby something that escapes those conditions is produced. Deleuze and Guattari provide us with a clear picture of our conditions – capitalism – and their immanent mechanism of escape – schizophrenia. But what they also make clear is that what escapes this system is always a 'minority', not simply a numerical minority – although it often is – but an ontological 'minority' as well, a mode of being that does not obey the dominant conditions and is insurgent. The 'minority' therefore marks a continuation of class politics, but in a form that is defined ontologically and aesthetically, rather than economically or politically in their traditional senses.<sup>16</sup> 'Minor' politics is a particular action that escapes capital's axiomatics and then *might* proliferate into a larger movement. This is where it becomes possible to connect artistic practice to political action, because by creating experiences that escape our conditions of possibility, art is able to contribute directly to real political struggle. Such 'minor' deterritorialisations are what cannot be described; anomalies, mutations, monsters, madness, everything that is condemned, controlled, and marginalised within 'normal' life. As a result, Guattari deadpans: '*Important things never happen where we expect*' (2011: 196).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This anti-production of capitalism produces, Guattari writes, 'the neutralization and expulsion of processual singularities, the active ignorance of contingency and finitude and, consequently, an infantilization of its protagonists' (2013: 44).

<sup>15</sup> Guattari puts it a bit more technically: 'the schizoanalytic objective will consist in disengaging the nature of the crystallizations of power which function around a dominant transformational component' (2011: 178).

<sup>16</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari put it in *Anti-Oedipus*: 'The opposition is between the class and those who are outside the class. Between the servants of the machine, and those who sabotage it or its cogs and wheels. Between the social machine's regime and that of the desiring machines. Between the relative interior limits and the absolute exterior limit. If you will: between the capitalists and the schizos in their basic intimacy at the level of decoding, in their basic antagonism at the level of the axiomatic' (1983: 255).

<sup>17</sup> Guattari vacillates wildly, from an incredible optimism regarding minor politics (claiming

But this 'micro' dimension of politics is not detached from the 'whole', because it, as well as what it escapes, draw upon the same ontological process (schizophrenia). In other words, the 'minor' always emerges in the midst of capital, as that which exceeds capital from within. Thus, Guattari explains, 'there exists a sort of matter of unconscious deterritorialization, a matter of the possible, which constitutes the essence of politics, yet a transhuman, transsexual, transcosmic politics' (2011: 167). This is a '*politics of desire "before" objects and subjects have been specified*' (2011: 167), an 'ontological pragmatics' (2013: 35), or '*a diagrammatic politics*' that, Guattari thunders, 'can do nothing but challenge every status of hegemony for linguistics, psychoanalysis, social psychology, and the entirety of the human, social, juridical, economic sciences, etc.' (2011: 174).

### Communisation Theory

Good. We understand the ontological base of the insurrectionary 'art' of schizoanalysis, but have yet to elaborate it in a concrete political or artistic sense. This is where communisation theory comes in, which suggests a schizoanalytic understanding of the proletariat.<sup>18</sup> In contemporary capitalism, where the proletariat is entirely subsumed by capital, the only possible response is for the proletariat to schizoanalyse itself, to escape or even negate its own function as a necessary part of capitalist processes of valuation and exploitation. Conveniently, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that their figure of 'minority' and the process of 'minor' politics take this path: 'The power of minority, of particularity', they argue,

finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat. But as long as the working class defines itself by an acquired status, or even by a theoretically conquered State, it appears only as 'capital', a part of capital (variable capital), and does not leave the *plan(e) of capital*. [...] On the other hand, it is by leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave it, that a mass becomes increasingly revolutionary and destroys the dominant equilibrium of denumerable sets. (1987: 521~~00~~)<sup>19</sup>

at one point that Modigliani's portraits changed our scheme of faciality (2008: 260)), to a defeatist pessimism: 'it's not at all clear how one can claim to hold creative singularity and potential social mutations together' (1995: 130–2).

<sup>18</sup> In making a link between Deleuze and Guattari and communisation theory, I am following in the wake of Nicholas Thoburn's wonderful book *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics* (2003), which convincingly places Deleuze and Guattari's work within the broader ultra-left political tradition and in direct contact with communisation theory.

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari already said something very similar in *Anti-Oedipus*: 'It is a question of knowing how a revolutionary potential is realized, in its very relationship with the exploited masses or the "weakest links" of a given system. Do these masses or these links act in their own place, within the order of causes and aims that promote a new socius, or are they on the contrary the place and the agent of a sudden and unexpected irruption, an irruption of desire

This important passage clearly echoes a part of the ultra-left that has become known as communisation theory. It begins from the following idea, as Jacques Camatte, one of the founding fathers of this theory, put it: 'When the proletariat is broken, its immediate form of existence is the process of capital itself' (1995: 31). As a result, the only revolutionary action available to the working class is to become-minor and so overcome itself. Schizoanalysis will achieve this aim precisely to the extent that it is able to return us, as Deleuze and Guattari write, to 'the great nonappropriated, nonpossessed flow, *incommensurable with wages and profits*' (italics added, 1983: 372).

Communisation theory therefore shares with Deleuze and Guattari a theory of revolution as immanent critique. In the words of the Endnotes collective, communisation is 'a conception of communism as neither an ideal or a programme, but a movement immanent to the world of capital, that which abolishes capitalist social relations on the basis of premises currently in existence' (2008: 18). However, the status of this immanent movement is vigorously debated in communisation theory. On the one hand, there is an 'ontological' theory of communisation (for our purposes represented by Jacques Camatte and Gilles Dauvé) that is broadly compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's position, while on the other, there is a 'dialectical' position (most forcefully articulated by the group *Théorie Communiste*) for whom any ontology of revolution transcends current existence and therefore dilutes the immanent power of negation. *Théorie Communiste* criticise any attribution of an essential or ontological form to revolutionary struggle, whether understood as an invariant revolutionary potential (Dauvé and Deleuze and Guattari),<sup>20</sup> or as an essential human desire for community (or *Gemeinwesen* as Camatte understands this term drawn from Marx's early work). 'The proletariat', *Théorie Communiste* write,

does not have an a-classist or communitarian dimension: it has, in its contradiction with capital, the ability to abolish capital and class society and to produce community (the social immediacy of the individual). This is not a dimension that it carries within itself – neither as a nature that comes to it from its situation in the capitalist mode of production, nor as the finally discovered subject of the general tendency of history towards community. [...] Rather it is the actuality of its contradictory relation to capital in a historically specific mode of production. (2008: 80 and 83)

For *Théorie Communiste*, contradiction is dialectical negation and emerges from within the constitutive logic of capitalism itself. But in

that breaks with causes and aims and overturns the socius, revealing its other side?' (1983: 377).

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze has most clearly articulated this onto-political position in terms of 'vitalism': 'When power becomes bio-power resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram. Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism?' (1988: 92–3).

our current biopolitical situation – what they call the real domination of the proletariat by capital – this constitutive contradiction now lives within the body of the proletariat and revolution through self-negation – or Communisation – becomes possible: ‘We are in contradiction with capital on the basis of what we are, that is to say of what capital is, and not from what we could be, a potential which would somehow already exist as suffering’ (2008a: 198).<sup>21</sup> It is as if a certain ‘schizophrenia’ now defined the proletariat, whose contradiction to capital has emerged as the very logic of capital’s development. By negating itself, then (i.e., negating the negation), the proletariat can strike a revolutionary blow to capitalism and in this blow communism comes into existence. *Théorie Communiste* therefore advocate a more traditional Marxist position (they specifically reject the reliance on early Marx of their communisation opponents (2008a: 215)) based on Hegelian dialectics, but it is divested of any teleology, making communism the utterly specific moment of a revolutionary act. Thus communism becomes *communisation*, or, as *Théorie Communiste* put it: ‘It is this totality itself – this moving contradiction – which produces its own supersession in the revolutionary action of the proletariat against its own class-being, against capital’ (2008a: 215). While the rigorous immanence of revolution in *Théorie Communiste*’s position is appealing, it does restrict revolution to negating what is, rather than creating what is not. As a result, their rhetoric often takes the form of a kind of negative theology (‘communisation is not-that’) that leaves all ‘potential’ futures necessarily opaque.<sup>22</sup>

*Théorie Communiste*’s critical description of Dauvé’s position therefore applies to Deleuze and Guattari up to a point;

The history of class struggle is here always double: on the one hand the communist principle, the élan or revolutionary energy which animates

<sup>21</sup> While *Théorie Communiste* and Deleuze and Guattari share the idea that ‘local [proletarian or minor] struggles directly target national and international axioms, at the precise point of their insertion in the field of immanence’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 512), they differ over the term ‘potential’, which clearly remains too ontological for *Théorie Communiste*. Deleuze and Guattari’s ontological optimism is always accompanied by a political pessimism, meaning that although schizophrenia is inherent to capital, its revolutionary power remains merely a ‘potential’. As they rather plaintively ask: ‘how can we count on art and science except as potentialities, since their actuality is easily controlled by the formations of sovereignty?’ (1983: 376).

<sup>22</sup> Léon de Mattis, for example, writes: ‘We don’t know, we cannot know, and therefore we do not seek to concretely describe, what communism will be like. We only know how it will be in the negative, through the abolition of capitalist social forms. Communism is a world without money, without value, without the state, without social classes, without domination and without hierarchy – which requires the overcoming of the old forms of domination integrated in the very functioning of capitalism, such as patriarchy, and also the joint overcoming of both the male and female condition’ (2011: 27). As a result of this strictly negative approach, Alberto Toscano has pointedly accused communisation theory of being a revolution that is both ‘now and never’ and ‘renders certain contemporary debates on communism more formal than strategic’ (2011: 88). As he quite rightly suggests, ‘the salutary emphasis on communism as the real movement of the destruction of value as a social form risks trading off theoretical coherence and purity for practical irrelevance’ (2011: 92).

the proletariat, a transcendent history, and on the other, the limited manifestation of this energy, an anecdotal history. Between these two aspects there exists a hierarchy. Transcendent history is ‘real’ history, and real history with all its limits is only the accidental form of the former, so much so that the former is constantly the judgment of the latter. (2008: 87–8)

The point where the description is not accurate is also the point that perhaps divides Dauvé and Camatte and Deleuze and Guattari. For the latter, whether historical revolution or a minor schizoanalysis, ‘on this level, everything is good’ (Guattari, 2013: 3). Schizoanalysis certainly never ‘fails’ in the way that Dauvé describes the ‘death’ of insurrections, because it always goes as far as it can and when it recedes, another front, another struggle, another invention always fills the gap. This is the eternal ‘potential’ of a minor onto-politics, but its disadvantage – one felt especially strongly in relation to art – is that it struggles to connect to more widespread social movements. This is an important point, to which we will return, because in many ways it is a major motivation for contemporary artistic practices’ turn toward discursive-based practices and their seemingly ubiquitous desire to turn ‘art into life’.

Despite the similarities between Deleuze and Guattari and the ‘ontological’ stream of communisation theory, significant differences emerge in their conceptualisation of the ontological excess. As we have seen, in Deleuze and Guattari, schizo-revolutionary force is of necessity inhuman, inasmuch as the human, all too human is one of the most significant political conditions that schizoanalysis must overcome. In Camatte’s work especially, almost the opposite seems to be the case. Camatte proposes *Gemeinwesen* as a kind of species-being that defines the human against capitalism, drawing the term (as well as a sketch of communisation theory itself) from a passage in Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844*. But Camatte’s work proposes a series of radical breaks with normative conceptions of life that makes his affirmation of the ‘human’ strangely useful for a specifically political understanding of schizoanalysis.<sup>23</sup> Camatte is arguably most well-known for his rejection of organisations in all their forms, first of all the groupuscules of the left. Communisation theory really starts at home in this sense. Leftist organisations, Camatte argues, mimic the strategies of capitalist marketing. For Camatte, breaking with the representational organisation of political groups, no matter how radical, is the only possible way of ‘carrying the break with the political point of view to the depths of our individual consciousness. [...] All political representation is a screen and therefore an obstacle to a fusion of forces’ (1995: 20).

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps, as Deleuze says of his differences with the American art critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, it is simply ‘a quarrel over words, an ambiguity of words’ (2003: 107).

The revolutionary parties of the proletariat are therefore the clearest evidence, Camatte writes, that '[t]he counter-revolution triumphed in the guise of revolution' (2011: 45). The counter-revolution is nothing less than the capitalisation of human beings (Camatte calls this 'anthropomorphization' (1975: 6), or 'anthropomorphosis' (1975: 140)) that makes humans over in capital's image.<sup>24</sup> One of the most significant of these images is that of the proletarian and especially the proletarian revolutionary, who are living proof that 'capital reconstructs the human being as a function of its process' (Camatte, 1975: 6). It does this, Camatte claims, through cybernetic machines, which transform the mind 'into a computer which can be programmed by the laws of capital' (1975: 6). In this way, capital is able to make itself the logic of transformation and liberation that human beings desire; 'Since capital is indefinite it allows the human being to have access to a state beyond the finite in an infinite becoming or appropriation which is never realized, renewing at every instant the illusion of total blossoming' (Camatte, 1975: 11). In this sense, and here Camatte uses very similar terms to Deleuze and Guattari, 'the movement toward unlimited generalization of desire is isomorphic to the indefinite movement of capital' (1975: 16). As a result, capitalism no longer depends on the production process, and so on humans, but rather, humans have become 'produced' by capitalism through the mechanism of representation. 'We are only the activity of capital' (1995: 150), Camatte writes, 'the triumph of capital is the triumph of mediation and the loss of all immediateness for man, who cannot now experience what is immediate except through one of the mediations of capital' (1995: 193). Here, a new 'community of capital' emerges, along with an 'inhuman' humanity (2011: 12), whereby an 'autonomized form of capital is interposed between the knowing human subject and reality; this form has absorbed all representations and schemes of knowledge: science, art, ideology. Man is completely divested' (2011: 103).<sup>25</sup> As a result, the revolution seeks to abolish the distance between the individual and community *qua* species-being (*Gemeinwesen*) and to do so, it must overcome the representation the proletariat gives of itself.

Camatte is clearly following a similar trajectory to the one Deleuze and Guattari were taking at the same time (the texts I have quoted from were all published in 1973), arguing that 'the [revolutionary] development, the becoming, takes place starting from the particular and not from the general; one must therefore study the new determinations'

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari echo Camatte on this point when they write: 'capital acts as the point of subjection that constitutes all human beings as subjects; but some, the "capitalists", are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while the others, the "proletarians", are subject of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effected' (1987: 505).

<sup>25</sup> As Camatte puts it elsewhere: 'By simply having interiorized the social base on which it is built, capital has become autonomous, from which point it is then able to make its escape' (1995: 97). This 'escape' constitutes what Camatte calls *The Wandering of Humanity*.

(2011: 131). This not only means studying the specific conditions that must be overcome in order to take power, but perhaps more importantly, the understanding that revolution is not simply this takeover, but an ongoing process that 'concerns a total change in the mode of producing and living' (2011: 129). It is not, then, a question of raising consciousness (a ridiculous concept for Deleuze and Guattari as well), but of destroying repressive consciousness (2011: 34), destroying the way the proletariat embodies 'the community of capital' (1995: 183). Communisation is not, therefore, a new mode of production, or even the appropriation of the existing mode of production. For Camatte, like Deleuze and Guattari, revolutionaries 'will not gain mastery over production, but will create new relations among themselves which will determine an entirely different activity' (1975: 35–6). In this sense, Camatte, like Deleuze and Guattari, sees creativity as part of the revolution, because any revolution must 'unleash free creativity and unrestrained imagination in a movement of human becoming' (1995: 98). But it is precisely at this point that Deleuze and Guattari are able to go further, because they understand that creativity must become synonymous with revolution itself.

## (In)Completion

But what is the precise nature of this creativity? It is time, perhaps, to point to something and say, in the spirit of communisation theory, 'it's not that'. In a short essay on the Beaubourg museum of art in Paris written in 1977, Camatte provides an interesting critique of many aspects of contemporary artistic practices. He argues that contemporary art marks the realisation of the 'end of art' proclaimed by Dada (also known as 'anti-art' or 'art into life', an ideology that regained importance in the art world in the late 1960s and that Peter Bürger consequently and famously called the 'neo-avant-garde'), because under the real domination of capital, nothing, least of all subjective expression/representation, is separate from capital. In contemporary capitalism, art can truly be said to have moved into life because, Camatte says, prefiguring many recent debates surrounding art's complicity with 'cognitive capitalism', 'Capital's art is knowledge of capital. It's a way to achieve knowledge of the new world it has created, in which the sacred, nature, men and women exist only behind death masks' (1997: 54). More specifically, at the end of the 1960s, art turned away from its modernist concern with the formal composition of the artwork, in favour of the creative process itself. Contemporary art's interest in the 'inner' creative process of artistic subjectivity imagined it to be the means by which 'art' could directly confront and challenge bourgeois 'life'. But despite all the good intentions (and some not so good), unfortunately, this had the opposite effect to that intended,

making the creative process available to capital to subsume and exploit.<sup>26</sup> 'Everything must be understood through capital's image' Camatte writes, Such is the Beaubourg's function, a carcinoma, a neoplasm that must divert the aesthetic flux into domination of the future. It will create roles to that end. [...] The integration-realization of art by capital implies its integration of revolt. It will be absorbed. (Camatte, 1997: 55)

Echoing Deleuze and Guattari's account of deterritorialisation's vital function within capitalism, Camatte argues that revolt is no longer possible when capitalism presents such an openness of possibilities (Camatte calls it 'credit', which must be repaid in recognisable forms, hence the rise of advertising and mass-media in and as art) that 'revolt' simply expresses the continual process of capital's own development.

Camatte's critique of the Beaubourg prefigures Deleuze and Guattari's later rejection of conceptual art for its complicity with capitalism (1994: 198–9). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise how conceptual art hands over the decision regarding whether or not something is art to the 'opinion' of the American everyman and in this way subsumes aesthetic alterity in capitalist 'stupidity'. In this way, the modern-postmodern break introduces a new understanding of artistic practice as a creative conceptual operation that is independent of medium and therefore relates more closely to the growing importance of immaterial work within the wider field of social production.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's reference to Leo Steinberg's concept of the 'flat-bed plane' and its introduction in pop art of information-processing and mass-media techniques of composition is also important (1994: 198).<sup>28</sup> This would be the point where contemporary art's interest in negating its own history by adopting 'non-art' compositional practices effectively subsumed its 'process' to the emerging mode of production (and especially those involved with new media). The mistake of contemporary practice in

<sup>26</sup> The most influential account of this process has been Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, which famously argues that the 'aesthetic' revolution of 1968 and its demands for a less mediated and more creative life have been subsumed in the recent radical restructuring of capitalist management. This has led to a change in worker's subjectivation that draws heavily on 'artistic practice' as its model. Focussing specifically on the sphere of art, Alexander Alberro convincingly shows how, on the one hand, many of the most directly 'political' strategies of conceptual art were eagerly consumed or copied by the burgeoning class of marketing and advertising executives that formed the bulk of its collectors and on the other hand, how these artists and their dealers themselves borrowed extensively from the marketing strategies of their clients (Alberro, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Rosalind Krauss most famously explored this split in her seminal 1979 essay, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (Krauss, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze expands, explains, and makes powerful use of Steinberg's essay in his discussion of the new 'electronic image' emerging in cinema at the conclusion of *Cinema 2*. The general argument there is the same and can be summed up in biopolitical terms (i.e., in terms pertaining to the contemporary fact that 'the brain is the screen') by Deleuze's question: 'cerebral creation or deficiency of the cerebellum?' (1989: 266). We must, Deleuze tells us in *Cinema 2*, invent an 'art beyond knowledge, [and] a creation beyond information' (1989: 270).

this sense was to imagine its political efficacy to lie in overcoming its autonomy from 'life', whereas in fact, exactly the opposite, at least according to Deleuze and Guattari, was the case. As Guattari so passionately insists in *Chaosmosis*, art must operate in the world and in relation to social production, but only as a 'minority' sensation, one that emerges from an ontological autonomy and must always celebrate 'the universe of art as such, precisely because it is always in danger of collapsing' (1995: 130).

Camatte's critique of the Beaubourg nicely captures the way in which discursive and conceptual strategies serve to subordinate contemporary art to the conditions of possible experience imposed by capital, most importantly discursive functionality and the logical systems and processes of subjectivation that underpin it. But Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on art's production of sensation as a political practice takes us a step further and leads us to a schizoanalytic aesthetic practice that finds its model in Kant's concept of the sublime. In the sublime, human conditions of possibility are exceeded in a sensation of an infinite material force (the dynamic sublime). This entirely aesthetic experience (it evades the calculations of both the imagination and the understanding, as well as their supposed 'free play')<sup>29</sup> produces what Camatte calls a 'qualitative revolutionary leap' (1995: 119). In exceeding the conceptual and empirical conditions of our experience, sublime art *qua* schizoanalysis takes the sensation beyond its discursive and subjective rationality, to leap into the transcendental schiz, a leap that does not reveal any Ideas of reason (as it does in Kant), but rather a mad reason that is always in the process of constructing itself.<sup>30</sup> Camatte's version of communism theory also affirms this point:

Whatever is rational in relation to the established order can be absorbed and recuperated. If revolution operates on the same terrain as its adversary, it can always be halted. It cannot rise up; it is thwarted in its most passionate desire, which is to realize its own project and to accomplish it *on its own ground*. (1995: 120)

Here Camatte approaches the rather schizoanalytic concept of a sublime humanity, one whose capitalist subjectivities and forms of representation have turned mad and so truly creative. Here, he says, 'communism is not a mode of production, but a new mode of being' (1995: 124). This 'new mode of being', this 'art of insurrection', must also be understood as a sublime art.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the radicality of this rhetoric (which I in no way wish to disavow), the sublime sensation must find a way to

<sup>29</sup> Guattari will specifically say that schizoanalysis seeks to avoid the 'Kantian opposition of sensibility and understanding' (2013: 187). The sublime not only avoids it, it overcomes it.

<sup>30</sup> There is no space to elaborate this admittedly opaque claim here. I have done so in Zepke, 2011a, to which I refer the reader.

emerge from within present forms of artistic expression. Lazzarato puts it in an appropriately mundane way:

In the same way that capital must transform money (means of payment) into capital, the proletariat must transform the purchasing-power flow into a flow of autonomous and independent subjectivation, into a flow that interrupts the politics of capital, in other words, into a flow that is at once a refusal of and flight from the functions and subjections to which the proletariat is confined. (2012: 85)

This would be art, even though Lazzarato doesn't say it.<sup>31</sup>

In the context of contemporary artistic practices the problem would therefore be to schizoanalyse what Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt describe in their discussion of art's relation to communisation theory: 'Art [today] finds itself in a new relation with contemporary forms of value production' (2011: 131). As we have seen with Camatte, however, communisation theory struggles to come up with a positive account of contemporary artistic practice and unfortunately Iles and Vishmidt are no exception to this. They are certainly right when they claim: 'If art's emancipatory qualities are founded upon the tensions between self-directed activity and productive labor then attempts to close the distance between them are of paramount importance' (2011: 135). But they are completely wrong when they repeat the utterly familiar litany of political art movements, beginning with Constructivism, as if every political art form had to travel the self-sacrificing road to Calvary along which art moves into life. In fact, the schizoanalytic movement is in the opposite direction, where political art produces a sublime and so revolutionary sensation. This is the way Iles and Vishmidt's conclusion must be understood:

Not only do artworks pass through a moment which bypasses use value, and cannot be subsumed under exchange-value, they also connect with a form of activity which presages non-objective values between subjects, activity which dismantles 'the subject as congealed technology' [Adorno]. Viewed thus communization would be a generalization of art and individuality *different* to that which we live through today. (2011: 149)

That is all very good, but unfortunately, Iles and Vishmidt's conclusion stops at exactly the point it gets interesting, at the shocking idea that perhaps the endlessly repeated orthodoxy 'that the dissolution of the borders between art and productive labor (or art and politics) heralds emancipation' (Iles and Vishmidt, 2011: 150) *isn't right*. In fact, the so-called emancipation of art into life has turned out to be its enslavement.

This is, in a way, an extension of *Théorie Communiste's* insight that the dissolution of the workers' movement has already been achieved by capitalism's own restructuring of production and is now the beginning of a new cycle of struggles. Following this insight, what we now see in the realm of art is the end of the trajectory of art-into-life, or anti-art, which attempted to deny the sensation, or at least bring it out of the museum and into the realm of production (i.e., politics). As a result, it is now time once again to attack the distinction between art and life, but in the opposite direction, in the name of art. Wherever art is produced – art defined as new and excessive sensation – an immanent outside to biopolitical controls emerges and a new community announces itself – the people to come as Deleuze and Guattari call them – that is no longer organised around work or the commodity, nor the proletariat's role in producing and/or destroying them. The aim, then, would not be to make art relevant to the workers' struggle, but rather to grasp how art's irrelevance already anticipates its role in the communisation movement.

The most immediate problem in this schizoanalysis of contemporary artistic practices is how to attack the post-conceptual reliance on language. Deleuze and Guattari continually make the point that desire and sensation exceed their representation in discursive linguistic forms: 'The unconscious', Guattari writes, 'is constituted by machinic propositions that no semiological or logico-scientific propositions can ever grasp in an exhaustive fashion' (2011: 149). Such machinic propositions (or artworks) operate according to what Guattari calls the 'invisible powers' of 'matters of expression', propositions that 'are unable to be circumscribed in well delimited substances from the point of view of explicit and spatio-temporal coordinates' (2011: 150). These propositions are micropolitical, because in their mysterious materiality (from the point of view of discursivity and spatio-temporal coordinates) they remain connected (i.e., expressive) to the living whole, to 'Nature', the 'plane of consistency', etc. This type of expressive connection (Deleuze calls it 'analogical expression' in his book on Bacon) is unthinkable within reductionist (i.e., digital (Deleuze, 2003: 115)) discursive systems, whose logical operating systems tend, according to Guattari, to lose all expressive 'attachments to micro-social assemblages' (2011: 151). Clearly, this has significant repercussions for many aspects of contemporary practices, from those that seek to combine art and science and other 'cross-disciplinary' projects (in particular, the necessary 'coherence' of such projects to compete for funding), to the general reliance on discursive strategies within 'research-based practice'. Indeed, I would argue that all contemporary art composes itself according to its 'concept'. Such work would need to be interrogated according to Guattari's schizoanalytic affirmation: 'Rather than remaining prisoner to the redundancy of signifying tracings, we will endeavor to fabricate a new map of competence and new asignifying diagrammatic coordinates' (2011: 176).

<sup>31</sup> And his Marxist and activist commitments would no doubt prevent him from ever saying it. The closest Lazzarato has ever got to art has been Duchamp, the archetypal anti-artist (see Lazzarato 2010).



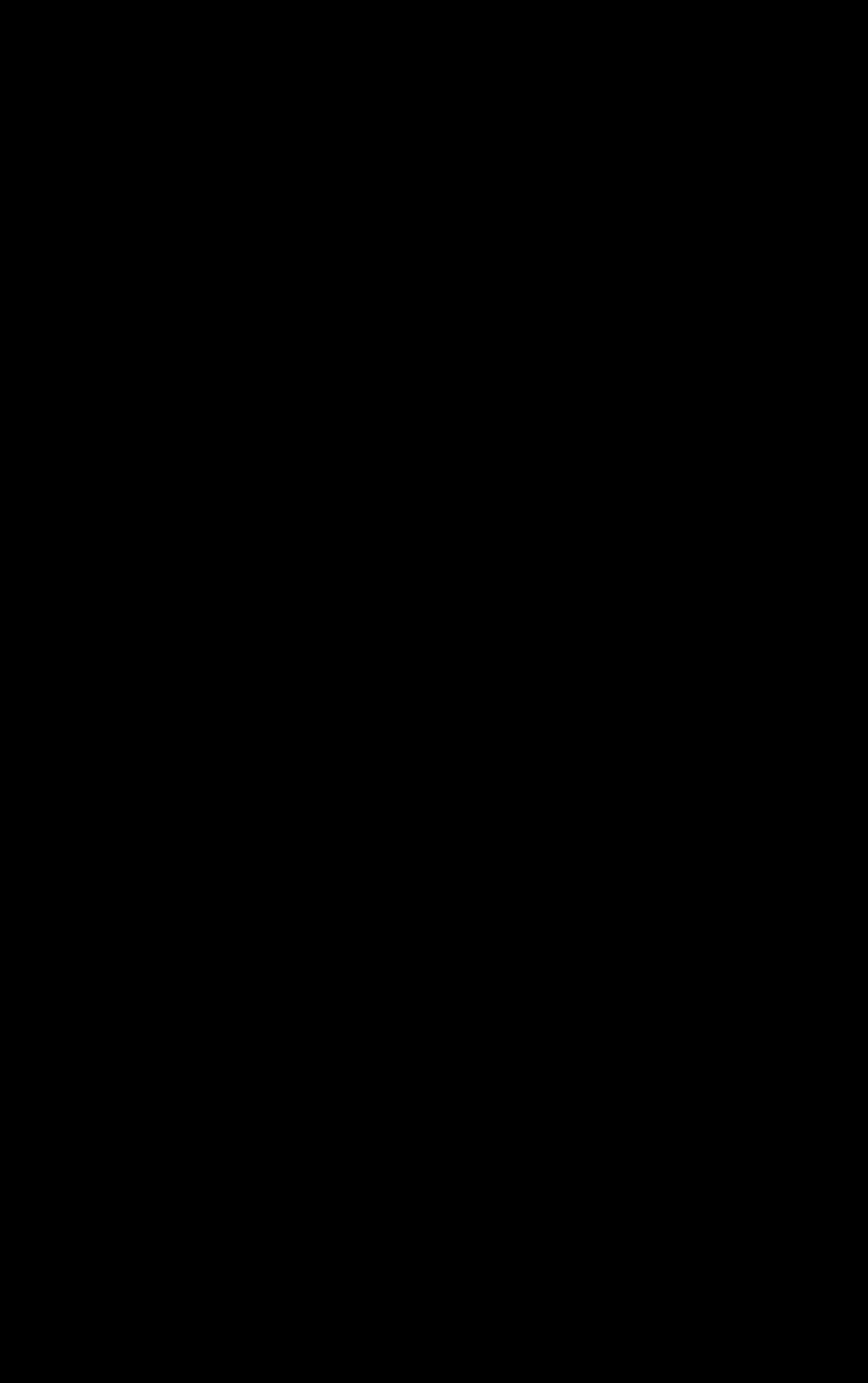
There is unfortunately no space here to explore all the possible schizo-aesthetic strategies suggested by Deleuze and Guattari, so we'll have to satisfy ourselves with an example that Guattari repeatedly affirmed (e.g., 1995: 90, 2008: 328) and that has been recently updated by Bifo in a book whose title states this approach very succinctly: *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*. Bifo has consistently mapped the 'automation' of our sensual and subjective lives through their subsumption within the information systems that increasingly consume our work and leisure time. His critique of 'digital accelerationism' shows how increasing amounts of information mean decreasing amounts of meaning, the former leading to increased profit, the latter to decreased emotional involvement and empathy for the other. By focussing on poetry, Bifo suggests a strategy that begins from within the standardised language and 'stupidity' (in Deleuze and Guattari's sense) of information embraced by contemporary artistic practices, but attempts to produce within them an insurrectionary excess, a sensation that escapes the circulation of discursive redundancies controlling our expression, imagination, and subjectivity. As he writes, 'poetry may start the process of reactivating the emotional body, and therefore of reactivating social solidarity, starting from the reactivation of the desiring force of enunciation' (2012: 20). In this way, 'poetry is the excess of sensuousness exploding into the circuitry of social communication' (2012: 21). In relation to contemporary artistic practices, this statement does not even need to be taken literally, because it is not actual poetry that is required but a return to 'poetics', an open form of composition by which we can escape ourselves according to a 'logic of sensation', one in which affects multiply and lead toward a singular infinity of virtual possibility. As Nietzsche famously advised, we must become poets of our lives and in this way turn life into art. This, as Bifo rightly argues, is the way in which poetics might reconnect (that is, re-sensitise, re-politicise) the social body and the general intellect. If the general intellect names the contemporary form of the alienated and enslaved proletariat, then 'poetry' could name the aesthetic practice of communisation theory, the way the brain-screen of contemporary digital culture could be re-sensitised, 'de-humanised', turned from work into art. This involves a different way of communicating and knowing, a 'knowing by affect' as Guattari called it (2013: 180), 'the triggering of a line of discursivity that is itself non-discursive, instituting itself prior to the opposition discursivity/non-discursivity' (2013: 177). In relation to contemporary artistic practices, Guattari offers a genealogy of the concept beginning from the readymade that suggests, as he says, 'a concept that creates sensations' (2011: 43; see also 1995: 95). The readymade (or artistic concept) does this, he argues (drawing on Bakhtin), by deterritorialising its object to the point where it appears to us as a pure and empty existential excess, a 'being there' that immediately spins off on multiply affective trajectories that are entirely singular because they depend on the viewing act itself.

This immediate interpretative proliferation is precisely the opening onto 'the aleatory at the heart of the enunciative' (2013: 180), and is achieved by the sensation operating in the realm of the poetic. In this way, an aesthetic of communisation is not a refusal of work, but rather, as Guattari puts it, 'a labor of heterogenesis' (2012: 185). A labour by which, Bifo sings, 'language can escape from the matrix and reinvent a social sphere of singular vibrations intermingling and projecting a new space for sharing, producing, and living' (2012: 148).

Art joins communisation theory by offering an aesthetic power of invention that is autonomous and immanent, and whose insurrectionary productions generate a future beyond the simple reduction of art to its supposed opposite, politics. In fact, the relation of art and communisation theory seems to me doubly productive. On one side, communisation theory provides a powerful political framework within which art's specific form of production finds its revolutionary potential. But on the other, art provides communisation theory with a process that is, on the one hand, more down to earth than are the comical scenarios of self-organising military victory, and on the other, more concrete than vaguely righteous refusals to describe a revolutionary future. Certainly, art's production of sublime sensations is a micro-political version of revolution, a profusion of militant productions whose singularity is uncontainable, but also potentially insignificant. These are, quite simply, the stakes of schizoanalysis.

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**Restmoreorlessness (n.)**

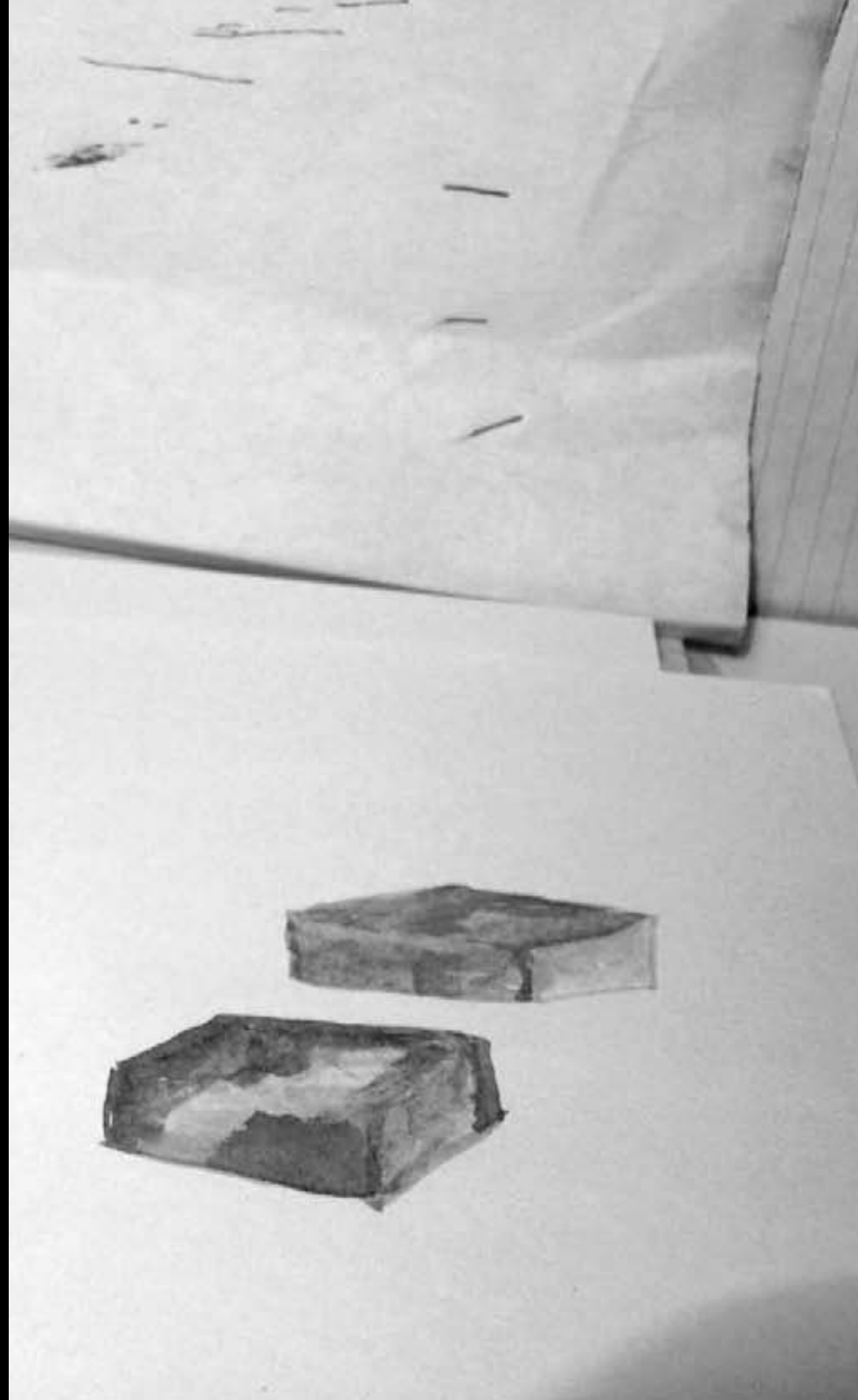
The word *restmoreorlessness* indicates the problems and insufficiency of the term *restlessness* in regard to contemporary modes of living and working. Although *restlessness* is a neutral term, we usually refer to it as pejorative and unwanted, as a state of unease and nervousness arising from an inability to stay still. It is associated with hyperactivity and also used in quotidian conversations to describe the state of a person recently diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), a syndrome characterised by difficulties in maintaining attention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. A restless person is kind of flattened, their attention is dispersed, their awareness low, and their senses dull.

But in a way, this state is not that different from what is supposed to be its exact opposite: mindfulness, high awareness, and sharpened senses. Both states result from an aroused nervous system, but differ in terms of the quality of the states and behaviours they produce. It is exactly this difference in quality that proves a certain disconnection between our (restless, mindful, or resting) state and the reality that surrounds us.

The term *restless(ness)* expresses the verbalised ideology that 'resting' brings relaxation and release. But in the context of the contemporary appropriation of all of our time – our 'working time' with its projective temporality, as well as our 'free time' and 'holidays' etc. – this is not always true. 'Resting' is not necessarily resting at all, or can be resting under pressure, which causes permanent *restlessness*. 'Resting'

becomes an impossible task when a desire for rest is transformed into an obligation to 'rest more!'. A 'rest' then turns into a stolen rest, controlled rest, demanded rest, prescribed rest, scripted rest, etc.

Now we are reaching a place where *restlessness* becomes a paradox in itself and this enables us to switch to the term *restmoreorlessness*. By not fitting into any of the categories mentioned above, *restmoreorlessness* leaves all the 'negative' and 'positive' connotations of 'rest' and 'restlessness' behind and emphasises the already mentioned disconnection of our (restless, mindful, or resting) state from our real condition. *Restmoreorlessness* is a state of 'being at a distance' – not due to a critical or cynical outlook on reality (we should understand this as a 'pseudo-distance'), but because of regarding a certain displacement as a potentiality, as a way of living in the complexity of the present, in and with the intensities of synchronous diversities. In order to experience *restmoreorlessness*, we must inhabit the present as foreigners who cannot take anything for granted. *Restmoreorlessness* is the moment when living with the awareness of a certain distance between myself and the space-time that I inhabit allows me to connect to it anew and fully inhabit the place of the present. This experience causes *restlessness* (we have to bear the chaotic dimension of re-relating to a manifold present) and rest (because the establishment of this relation induces a certain relaxation and is contrary to the imposed projective temporality that takes away our present) – 'less' and 'more' at the same time.



Benjamin Noys

## COMMUNISATION AND THE END(S) OF ART

There is no obvious reason why communisation theory – the theory of revolution as immediate communist measures, developed out of the French ultra-left of the 1970s – should necessarily have anything to do with the practice of art. There are contingent reasons for this encounter: the interest and involvement of artists in recent protests and movements, the reflections by artists on that experience, and the emergence of communisation theory (in various forms) at this moment of capitalist crisis. Here I want to explore the deeper links that might help to develop this convergence. Crucial to my discussion is the question of *impossibility*: for communisation theory, this is the suggestion that the limit of contemporary struggles lies in the fact they can no longer affirm the identity of the worker, whereas for artistic practice, this lies in the encounter of artists and art theorists with the limits and ends of art and the identity of the artist.

I want to explore this fairly abstract statement of a possible convergence through the fault line or fracture that runs through the problem of struggles at the present moment. First, I will sketch the way communisation theory, particularly the form of that theory articulated by *Théorie Communiste* (TC), poses the problem of our 'present moment'. This is the thesis of the crisis of the identity of the worker, or what they call the end of programmatism, as characterising contemporary struggles. This analysis can be linked to the problem of art practice through the reflections of Roland Simon, a leading theorist of TC, on the attempt by

the Situationist International to hold together the critique of the workers' movement and the critique of art. Then, I want to consider how we have inherited this tension in the current conjuncture and how we might think together communisation and the practice of art.

A few caveats and cautions are necessary from the beginning. First, speaking of a singular 'communisation theory' is intensely problematic. I will largely be referring to the analysis of TC and related groups, but at points I want to draw out other strands or approaches that have linked themselves to communisation. The risk here is homogenising a disparate and conflicted space. Much the same could also be said about my discussion of art and artistic practice. Here I will be concerned predominantly with attempts by artists to take on or develop a political practice of art and how that might be affected by communisation. Finally, I should make it clear from the beginning that I do not agree with every element of communisation theory. What interests me and what I want to develop is the way certain forms of communisation pose a rigorously *negative* conception of practice and struggle at present. Therefore, what follows is a preliminary attempt to trace the emergence and convergence of a common problematic.

What characterises many forms of contemporary communisation is a belief in the persistence of forms of class struggle, but also the decline or crisis of the 'traditional' forms these struggles took. This thesis is articulated by TC as the end of programmatism. In the words of TC, programmatism refers to:

a theory and practice of class struggle in which the proletariat finds, in its drive toward liberation, the fundamental elements of a future social organisation which become the *programme to be realised*. This revolution is thus the affirmation of the proletariat, whether as a dictatorship of the proletariat, workers' councils, the liberation of work, a period of transition, the withering of the state, generalised self-management, or a 'society of associated producers'. ('Much Ado', 155)

Programmatism, as a particular form of practice, assumes that class struggle depends on the assertion of the autonomy of the proletariat. TC argue that this assertion of autonomy, ironically, links the proletariat to capital and leaves it within the form of capitalist reproduction as the necessary support of capital.

In the historical account of TC, the decomposition of programmatism takes place as this relational link between capital and labour comes apart under the twin shearing pressures of class struggle and capitalism's recomposition. Beginning in the 1970s, a new phase of real subsumption

takes place as capitalism penetrates further into all areas of life and, at the same time, workers struggle against the imposition of work. The result is that the identity of the worker can no longer form an internal antagonistic pole – both included and somehow autonomous from capital. The decomposition of programmatism can be read in the collapse of so-called worker's states, the decline of unions, and the crisis of various social democratic forms of welfarism.

The conclusion drawn by TC is that today, struggles have to take place at the limit of any reproduction of the worker. In the case of workers' struggles, this 'rift' (*l'écart*) is indicated in suicidal struggles, which register the limit that class identity forms. The result is the burning down of factories, attempts to claim as high a redundancy payment as possible, and other 'exits' from work ('The Present Moment', 119). Crashing against the limit that capitalism itself can no longer sustain, which is the worker's identity, this means that the tragedy and possibility of struggle today lies in a rift from this identity and the confrontation with class as an exteriority. In this moment there can be a fleeting 'de-essentialisation' of labour, and it is this moment that is negatively prefigurative of a communising process ('The Present Moment', 120). That is, the revolution emerges on the horizon as an immediate process of communising measures due to the impossibility of any sustained alternative or autonomous form of identity that could be posed against capitalism.

If we take the parallel Alain Badiou draws between the political avant-garde of the Leninist Party and the artistic avant-garde of the 1920s in *The Century* (2007), we could suggest that *both* forms have been hollowed-out. If the political avant-garde of programmatism is exhausted then, we could add, so is the programme of the avant-garde: small groups, privileged artists, the manifesto, etc. If we can no longer affirm the critical autonomy of the worker, then so we can no longer affirm the critical autonomy of the avant-garde either. In *Logics of Worlds* (2006), Badiou argues that our present situation is characterised by a 'democratic materialism' that reduces life to the atomised state of 'bodies and languages' (*Logics*, 1). I would combine this diagnosis with the argument of *The Century* to suggest that the 'passion for the real' of the short 20<sup>th</sup> century, concentrated in the party and programme, has now fragmented to splinters of the Real, localised in individual bodies. In fact, Badiou's exemplar for this situation is postmodern art and its theorisation by Antonio Negri, which revels in its tracking of the 'manifestness of bodies', which leaves us with a 'materialism of life' (*Logics*, 2). The 'present moment' would then be one of an experience of fragmentation in both art and politics, and the question or problem one of the nature of recomposition or forms of struggle. In Badiou's case, he argues that we need to reinvent the earlier moment through extracting its 'subtractive moment' – exemplified by Malevich's *White on White* (1919)

– to guide a subtractive practice of art and politics that can disrupt the supersaturated regime of democratic materialism (*The Century*, 56).

Of course, declarations of the death of the avant-garde and calls for a reinvention of the avant-garde are commonplace to the point of banality; even the proposals of 'relational' or 'post-production' art by Nicolas Bourriaud borrow this trope. The difficulty lies in what kinds of possibilities and functions of art and artistic practice might operate in the wake of the end of the programme of the avant-garde. Badiou does not endorse a radically new situation, but rather explores a qualified fidelity, which tries to redraw possibilities and lessons from the tensions of the original avant-garde and communist projects. To anticipate, communisation theory will pose a less 'programmatic' solution to this problem, preferring, in the case of TC, a more rigorously negative and non-prefigurative politics that explores the tensions and contradictions of the present moment, rather than offering a subtractive exit.

### Exploding Programmatism

To consider the implications of communisation theory for artistic practice, I now want to turn to the critique offered by Roland Simon, a leading theorist of TC, of the ultra-left practice of the Situationist International. From the beginning, the SI, which lasted from 1957 to 1962, tried to hold together the critical practice of art and that of politics. In their practice of revolutionary urbanism, *détournement* (the reuse of existing images turned to radical ends), and film, the SI attempted the realisation and suppression of art in revolutionary practice. This involved an acute awareness on the part of the SI of the tensions of this position. In his last film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978), Guy Debord, *de facto* 'leader' of the SI, reflected on the 'adventure' of the SI. In his commentary, Debord states: 'Avant-gardes have only one time; and the best thing that can happen to them is to have enlivened their time without *outliving* it' (182). Despite this awareness, according to Simon, Debord and the Situationists remain in an uncomfortable tension. On the one hand, they are able to trace out the end of art and work, and the impossibility of proceeding in terms set even by an ultra-left programme (primarily the form of workers' councils). In this sense, they come close to the realisation of the end of programmatism and the theorisation of communisation. On the other hand, they have nothing to replace this programme with, and so fall back on nostalgia or practices that invoke the old models that they have rejected. In Roland Simon's formulation, 'I think the SI led programmatism to its point of explosion' ('Interview').

While the SI aimed at a dialectical supersession of art through its suppression and realisation in revolutionary practice, they tended

to remain split between the aesthetic and the political. In the first aesthetic moment, the 'constructed situations' of the early SI presage revolution in the forms of enclaves or moments *within* the reign of the spectacle. They are affirmative counter-possibilities, and this belief in a counter-art remains close to the belief in an affirmative proletarian identity found in council communism by the SI. The aesthetic SI continues to make art as they continue to make revolution. In 1962, at the prompting of Guy Debord, most artists and elements of the artistic avant-garde were expelled from the SI. This might seem to indicate the termination of the attempt to integrate art and politics and so the 'politicization' of the SI. The aesthetic, as we shall see, continues to find a role in the later SI, often in the form of nostalgia for past adventures and possibilities.

For Roland Simon, it is the penetration of real subsumption – the dominance of capitalism that reworks the production process to capitalist ends – that signalled the end of the prefigurative and artistic possibilities embodied in the first phase of the SI. The end of this possibility, along with the end of an alternative 'working class' identity, means that no such 'moments' or artworks can be realised under the dominance of capital. In contrast, following through on the rigorous negativity of revolution, Simon argues that the suppression of art and the 'politicisation' of the SI indicates a recognition that 'art' can only take place within the revolutionary process – within communisation. Therefore, 'constructed situations' might better describe the process of revolution – *qua* communisation – than the pre-revolutionary and prefigurative process of 'triggering' revolution.

In the case of the SI, this rigorously negative formulation keeps relapsing into ambiguous gestures. The so-called 'pessimism' of the later Debord can be seen as a sign of the difficulty in holding on to this rigorous negative gesture and overcoming the desire for a 'positive' form of art now. This can be seen in his tendency to project back a nostalgic perception of the possibilities of the past that have become 'lost' in the present; whether a lost Paris, lost comrades, or the decline of the quality of alcohol, moments of the aesthetic recede into the past. Debord and the SI indicate the tension or contradiction of the 'explosion' of programmatism: between the hollowing out of the programme and the difficulty of a recomposition that can grasp the negativity of an artistic and political activity not beholden to a positive identity. In many ways, I would argue, we have inherited this tension or contradiction. The contemporary theorisations of communisation explore, rather than resolve, the contradiction of an 'empty' identity of the proletariat and the artist. In doing so, they try to respond to the negativity that is inherent in both identities.



## Burning Down the Gallery

The communising position implies that with the evacuation of proletarian identity *and* the avant-garde, and the evacuation of the potential fusion of both in some passion for the real, we must abandon all aestheticising models and prefigurations of revolution. In these terms, the positive vision of the first phase of the SI as regards aesthetics is not merely outdated but, strictly speaking, *impossible*. It also means that the remnants of aesthetics in the later phase of the SI need to be subject to critique to pose the contradiction of the end of programmatism in all its consequences. This bears some resemblance to the thesis of the 'death of the avant-gardes', but it does not imply a welcoming of this death as the opportunity for some new positive modes of practice or reinvention – from the relational to the reconfigurative, we might say. Instead, the TC critique implies, I think, the futility and necessary nullity of any affirmative revolutionary art. All that we can have is the rift that exists at the limit.

If I risk transferring these terms to art, we could say the identity of the avant-garde is the limit the artist confronts. Today, to continue to be an artist is the problem, an unsustainable identity. The rift would lie here with the 'de-essentialisation' of art, which would now be posed as a limit we can no longer practise. In this situation, the contradiction lies in what we might practise in the absence of the legitimisation of the identity of the artist.

To take one, controversial, example we could say that this situation is already implicit in the practice of Andy Warhol. On the one hand, his work belongs to the moment of programmatism, with the discourse of the 'Factory' and the proliferating model of industrial and media proliferation and production. This renewed and estranged discourse of alienated labour is doubled by the nihilism that inhabits the practice of art as impossible. In his essay 'Theatrum Philosophicum', from 1970, Foucault registers this equivocally subversive function:

This is the greatness of Warhol with his canned foods, senseless accidents, and his series of advertising smiles: the oral and nutritional equivalence of those half-open lips, teeth, tomato sauce, that hygiene based on detergents; the equivalence of death in the cavity of an eviscerated car, at the top of a telephone pole and at the end of a wire, and between the glistening, steel blue arms of the electric chair. 'It's the same either way', stupidity says, while sinking into itself and infinitely extending its nature with the things it says of itself; 'Here or there, it's always the same thing; what difference if the colors vary, if they're darker or lighter. It's all so senseless-life, women, death! How stupid this stupidity!' But, in concentrating on this boundless monotony, we find the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself – with nothing at its center, at its highest point, or beyond it – a flickering of light that travels even faster than the eyes and successively lights up the moving labels and the

captive snapshots that refer to each other to eternity, without ever saying anything: suddenly, arising from the background of the old inertia of equivalences, the zebra stripe of the event tears through the darkness, and the eternal phantasm informs that soup can, that singular and depthless face. (189)

Warhol's stupidity stages a mute multiplicity unfolding within and against its mimicry of the commodity form. There is a sense of the 'inertia of equivalences' that threatens to disarticulate the commodity and the form of art.

Although Warhol was a relentlessly affirmative artist, we can follow Foucault in tracing the negative prefiguration of a limit in this monotony. All that remains is the contradiction of eternal production that itself becomes a kind of event in its registration of contradiction. The obvious tension of Warhol's success as an artist, his embrace of both business and celebrity, suggests how a negative possibility can fold within the continuity of value production. Much the same could be remarked about an artist such as Jeff Koons. The deliberate choice to function as something like a symptom of the art market, all the while benefitting from that market, suggests that the nihilism of this kind of position inhabits contradiction to the benefit of the artist *qua* nullity. The challenge of someone like Koons to communisation, or discourses of the end or hollowing out of art, would be the dialectical inversion he performed to recreate himself as an artist.

There is also the problem of temporal displacement and time lag, which we already saw with the SI. Why should the most resonant artistic experiments in regard to communisation (The Artists Placement Group, Duchamp, Warhol, Santiago Sierra, etc.) come at the 'wrong time', i.e. within programmatism? We could hazard an interpretation from within the communising problematic. While these ruptures with the regime of art and the artistic are *chosen* gestures, the end of programmatism might be said to make them *necessary*. If the end of art was an act, such as Duchamp's quitting art in favour of chess (equivocal as that was); now, the artist faces the necessity of such gestures as they cannot self-reproduce as an artist.

However, that does not explain why all or most art of the present moment doesn't seem to take this 'negative' form. In fact, as we will see, the present moment seems more dominated by the desire to turn the negative into new forms of positivity – most notably new objects and new materialities. Therefore, the problem of periodisation, as acute as it already is for the characterisation of the present in terms of real subsumption, is also acute for artistic practice as well. Lags, prefigurations, regressions, the unfolding narrative is hardly stable.

However, the emptying out of art, in its truly negative form, is registered by another strand of contemporary communisation, which

is pursued by the post-Tiqqun milieu. In 'A Fine Hell' (2013), 'Build the Party' argue that '[a]esthetics, therefore, is imperial neutralisation, whenever *direct* recourse to the police is not possible'. They unequivocally condemn aesthetics as originating as a counter-revolutionary strategy in Schiller and have no time for any 'artistic communism' out of early Marx or the 'Oldest Programme of German Idealism'. Instead, aesthetics is synonymous with the aesthetic regime of Empire, with the aesthetic performing an 'infernal synthesis' on any antagonism. In common with their Agambenian roots, they regard aesthetics as a house to be burnt down (*Man without Content*, 115); or, in the case of Claire Fontaine, an art gallery to be burnt down.

The alternative to the aesthetic is 'the *materialist obviousness* of forms-of-life'. The only art is the art of inhabiting our determinations rather than trying to escape them. In this traversal, we must practise 'an apprenticeship in the *art* of tying and unbinding'. Art is impossible. Installation art can only make 'little portable hell[s]'. Instead, we have an (anti-)political practice that views art as technique to form and finds the dispersion or chaos of forms-of-life. This is a collective elaboration, a sharing or force they call 'communism'. Here art seems to coincide with political practice as an unworking of various imperial identities, including that of the artist.

Of course, these are, more or less, rigorously negative programmes. The difficulty, which seems to me to afflict communisation generally, is the uncomfortable tracing of limits and rifts. These rifts are at once prefigurative, but also not. In the case of TC, the only prefiguration is negative. The crashing into the limit of class identity is all there is and so the artist could only crash into the identity of 'artist' as well. For Tiqqun, and others, there is something of a traversal within these determinations that promises a reformulation of forms-of-life. This vitalist interpretation suggests an excess encrypted within and against.

### Expressive Negations

What does this clarify about our situation? To return to the story of the SI, one of the ironies is that this story is often told today as an *aesthetic* story. Communisation suggests the necessary termination of this story, so why should it persist? Why, to use a phrase of Johanna Isaacson, do we think the legacy of the SI has been thought in terms of 'lineages of expressive negation'? That is to say, the SI has tended to be mined for aesthetic gestures of negation that would somehow express, here and now, precisely a sense of revolutionary possibility. An exhaustive account would be beyond the limits of time and patience. What I would suggest is that these 'lineages of expressive negation' have dominated much of the SI's reception: from Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* (1989),

with its lineage of negation from the SI to punk, to McKenzie Wark's *The Beach Beneath the Street* (2011), with its recovery of the 'artistic SI', the tendency has gone precisely in the opposite direction from that indicated by communisation.

The difficulty then remains: how do we account for the 'error' of these readings? If Debord and the SI couldn't hold on to a negative reading and thus had to persist in nostalgia, we might say the limit of reading today turns the SI itself into an object of nostalgia. Marx's 'poetry of the future' seems as distant as ever. We could argue that this is one sign of the current limit of class identity and the blockage that forces us back into nostalgia for 'expressive negation' at a moment that is, to say the least, uncondusive to such forms. The additional irony is that such 'negations' are often justified and retained precisely because of their *positive* forms. It is the fact that they seem like existent possibilities, rather than the austere path of the resolutely negative, that lends them a certain heft in the 'weightless' experience of capitalism. I would suggest that it is precisely the paradoxical 'positivity' of these 'expressive negations' that at present exerts attraction and fascination.

In fact, we could suggest that these expressive negations become attractive, as 'positive' alternatives, in the moment of the dominance of affirmative art. The consistent emphasis of present practice on materialities, networks, and relational density seems, to me, stifling. This intrusive atmosphere of 'warm abstractions', to borrow Alberto Toscano's phrase, seems to demand rupture and violence. The difficulty is that this is sought through nostalgia for the past and reactivations of past negations don't seem to construct real alternatives but are relocated within this affirmative moment. The vitalist turn, in certain forms of communisation, aims to outbid this positive moment by a greater degree of positivity. The detachment of the worker and artist from value production, due to their abandonment by capital, is recoded as a force or excessive power that can posit itself as an alternative. The risk here, which is why I have some sympathy for TC's more negative critique, is of the aesthetic performing a *consolatory* function.

### Making it with Communisation

Can we then make anything out of communisation? In a response to a questionnaire on Occupy sent by the journal *October*, Jaleh Mansoor, Daniel Marcus, and Daniel Spaulding argue that '[a]rt's usefulness in these times is a matter less of its prefiguring a coming order, or even negating the present one, than of its openness to the materiality of our social existence and the means of proving it (48)'. This is a useful attempt to flesh out what art might do within the context of communisation, and one that suggests the *absence* of affirmative practice. Instead of an affirmative alternative

or an empty negation, the practice of art offers access to the matter of 'materials' we have to work with (and against), rather than some kind of guaranteed practice.

They go on to unpack that statement by arguing that art registers the falsity of the capitalist universe and insist that bodies and things cannot be captured: 'At best, art beckons from *beneath* the present state of things, showing us – sometimes brilliantly, sometimes naively – the world composed of objects and bodies alone' (50). My difficulty with this formulation is the modelling of capitalism as capture and the evasion of capital as totality. This 'beneath' the state of things, their metaphor, seems in danger of returning to the problematic metaphor of 'beneath the cobblestones, the beach'. There is a tension of lurking vitalism, I find, which seems to fall away from the probing of art and labour, including the failure of labour. Perhaps this vitalism emerges from the very rigour of the negative, as its flipside and 'affirmative' moment. This returns us to the tensions and problems of the SI and suggests that the 'end of programmatism', or the cusp of that 'end', remains less clear cut than we might imagine.

In fact, what is registered is a tension in the contradictory position of art and labour at present. On the one hand, we can have a rigorously negative modelling in which we can explore the material of art as the site of a contradiction that lacks resolution within the horizon of the present moment. In this case, the fracture or tension of artistic identity opens a kind of neutrality of material that is unhinged from articulation as art, or puts its articulation as art under pressure. We could call this the communisation of contradiction. On the other hand, what I have called the 'vitalist' moment of communisation registers this unhinging as not merely the site of contradiction, but also separation and departure. In this case, the fracturing of artistic identity, and the identity of labour, renders the possibility of an emergent force of 'life' that has experienced its detachment from capitalism. This is vitalist communisation.

The discussion by Jaleh Mansoor, Daniel Marcus, and Daniel Spaulding, registers these two possibilities. In terms of making a choice, if that is an appropriate word, I have already indicated my distrust of the vitalist option and preference for the negative formulation. However, it is also important to recognise the tensions of those negative moments, which seem to leave us in the unsatisfactory position of merely exploring negative prefigurations: limits, ruptures, suicidal activities, identifications with capital, and aesthetic regressions. Of course, working with negativity is one of the definitional traits of the avant-garde, so this activity is not so unfamiliar. The difficulty remains that such negative formulations, what I've called the communisation of contradiction, might generate the 'positive' or vitalist forms as a necessary supplement. I think that is the problem that communisation theory confronts, but which it also poses to us today.

I don't pretend to have a solution to this difficulty. I want to note the problem of lags and delays in the formulation of the demise of programmatism, which may be more drawn out than certain formulations of communisation suggest. These forms haven't simply disappeared, but as more satisfactory discussions of communisation suggest, they have to be explored to their limits – precisely to the point of 'explosion' that the SI prefigured and inhabited. What I consider the essential element of communisation, to use an ironically Wittgensteinian term, is that it can be useful as a kind of therapy for our prefigurative and ruptural desires. Therapy is, or should be, painful; in Freud's famous formulation, we hope to pass from hysterical misery to everyday unhappiness. In the context of communisation, we could rework this to suggest moving from an oscillation of hysterical misery and elation to everyday misery. That is to say, to begin from where we are.

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**Batteriality (n.)**

1

A battery is a device that produces electricity through a chemical reaction. It is a closed system that needs an external load in order to produce electricity. When the external load is removed, the reaction stops. Since there is only a limited amount of power in any battery, its life is likewise limited. We need to distinguish between two types of batteries: a primary battery has a single-cycle life, which means that it can convert its chemicals into electricity only once; after that, it is usually discarded. A secondary battery contains electrodes that can be reconstituted by running electricity back through it, which means it can be reused (if recharged) many times.

The meaning of batteriality refers to the primary type. Thus it becomes clear that batteriality signifies a determined duration of time. The specific quality of a movement in batteriality is that it remains unaltered from the beginning until its completion, which is already implied in the projection of the future. For this very reason, batteriality goes hand in hand with a specific mode of dramaturgy that is characterised by a linear structure and monotonous rhythm that remains constant from the very beginning until the very end. In batteriality, a performance is completed with a sharp cut, as if it ended out of the blue. The bodies onstage move continuously, without any digression or regression that could be perceived in performances dealing with exhaustion.

There are no peaks or grand finales; the organisation of movements is a product of pure rationalisation, which might be illustrated with

## A Speculative

## Glossary

2

In a much more ambiguous way, batteriality also appears in the relation of two bodies, when one of them functions as an external load to the other. In a way, this kind of phenomenon can be observed in *The Quiet Dance*, a 2005 performance by Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion. Here, the notion of batteriality applies only partially and to a certain degree. If we look at isolated fragments or phrases from that performance, we see that *The Quiet Dance* plays with interaction between two bodies and, moreover, with reciprocation between voice and movement. The sounds produced by the voice of one performer simultaneously condition the body of the other performer to move. Every vocalised 'Aaaaah' and 'Ooooh' etc. somehow steers the body of the other performer, which stops exactly the moment the sound disappears, vocal expression thereby defining the timeframe for the deployment of any given movement phrase. Nevertheless, watching multiple performances by Burrows and Fargion quickly reveals that in their totality, they are in opposition to batteriality, insofar as they do not strive for sameness in every repetition, but, rather, for the opposite. The sounds and movements produced by the performers overlap with one another, run with, through,

reference to Frederick W. Taylor's study of time and motion and his 'scientific management theory', which led to the design of production machinery based on the movements of the working body. Batteriality is akin to the dreams and fantasies of the ideal ('post-human') body of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (especially in the USSR); this ideal body was applied in its most radical manner in biomechanics and mass choreographies that were bound up with the notion of the rigid body of communism and imposed repeating identical movements as the norm.

At that time, the ideas of efficiency and productivity, coupled with intensifying scientific examination, have turned out to be not only a utopian (or, rather, dystopian) vision of a projected future, but have also come to co-constitute the nightmare of our increasingly rigid and regulated everyday lives. The value of the body was appreciated not only for the preciseness of its gestures, but more often for the projection of its long-lasting capability to sustain movement, as is so marvellously illustrated in Duracell commercials.<sup>1</sup> Those commercials indicate another important aspect that the concept of batteriality reveals. In order to emphasise the notion of batteriality and render visible what remains inconspicuous and hidden by individualism, the isolated object or body must be replaced by a mass of bodies (see the development of mass choreographies, for example those of the Tiller Girls).<sup>2</sup>

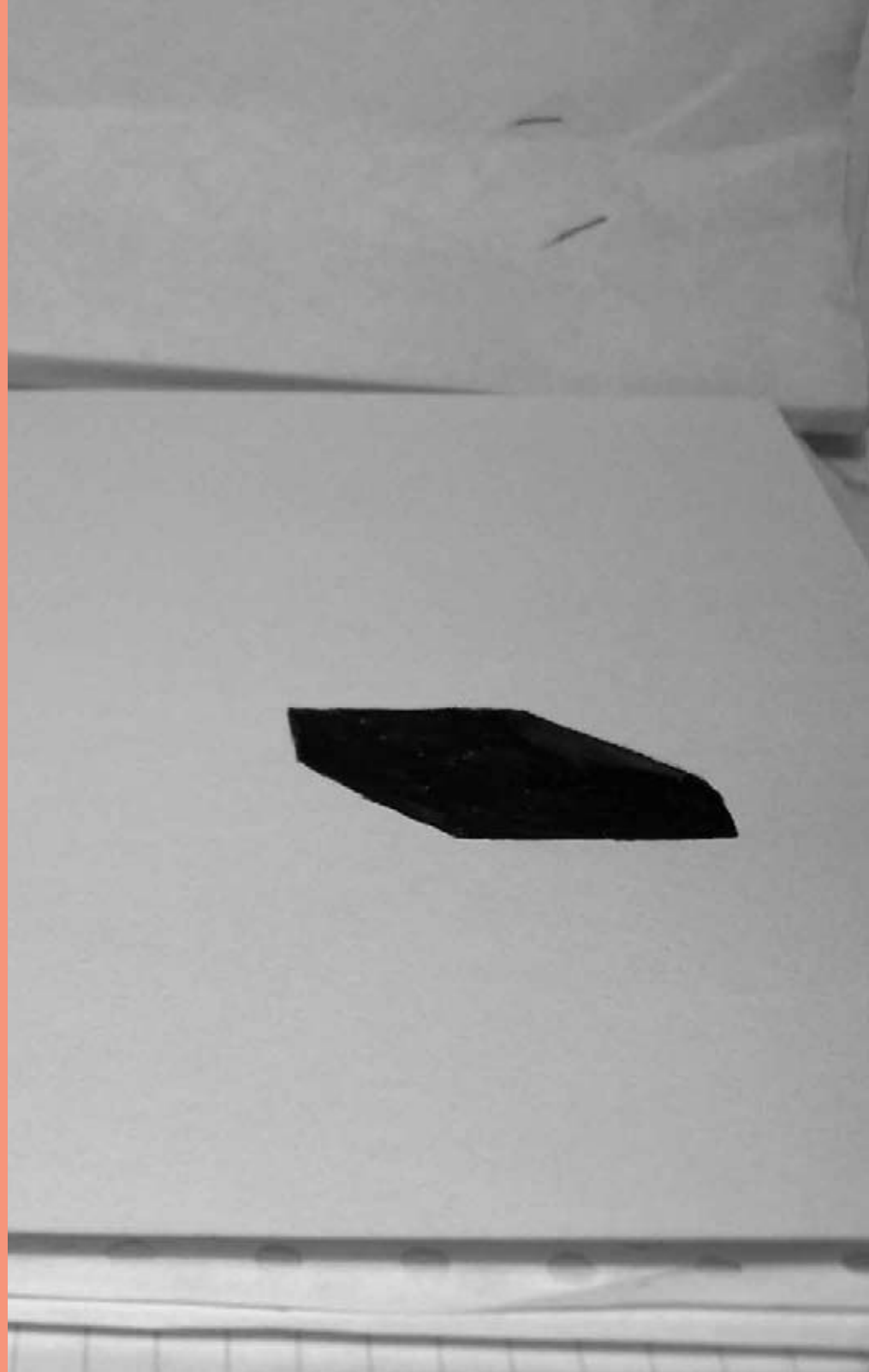
<sup>1</sup> See: *Duracell Hase* on YouTube, published on 8 October 2014 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGR0BriodkM>).

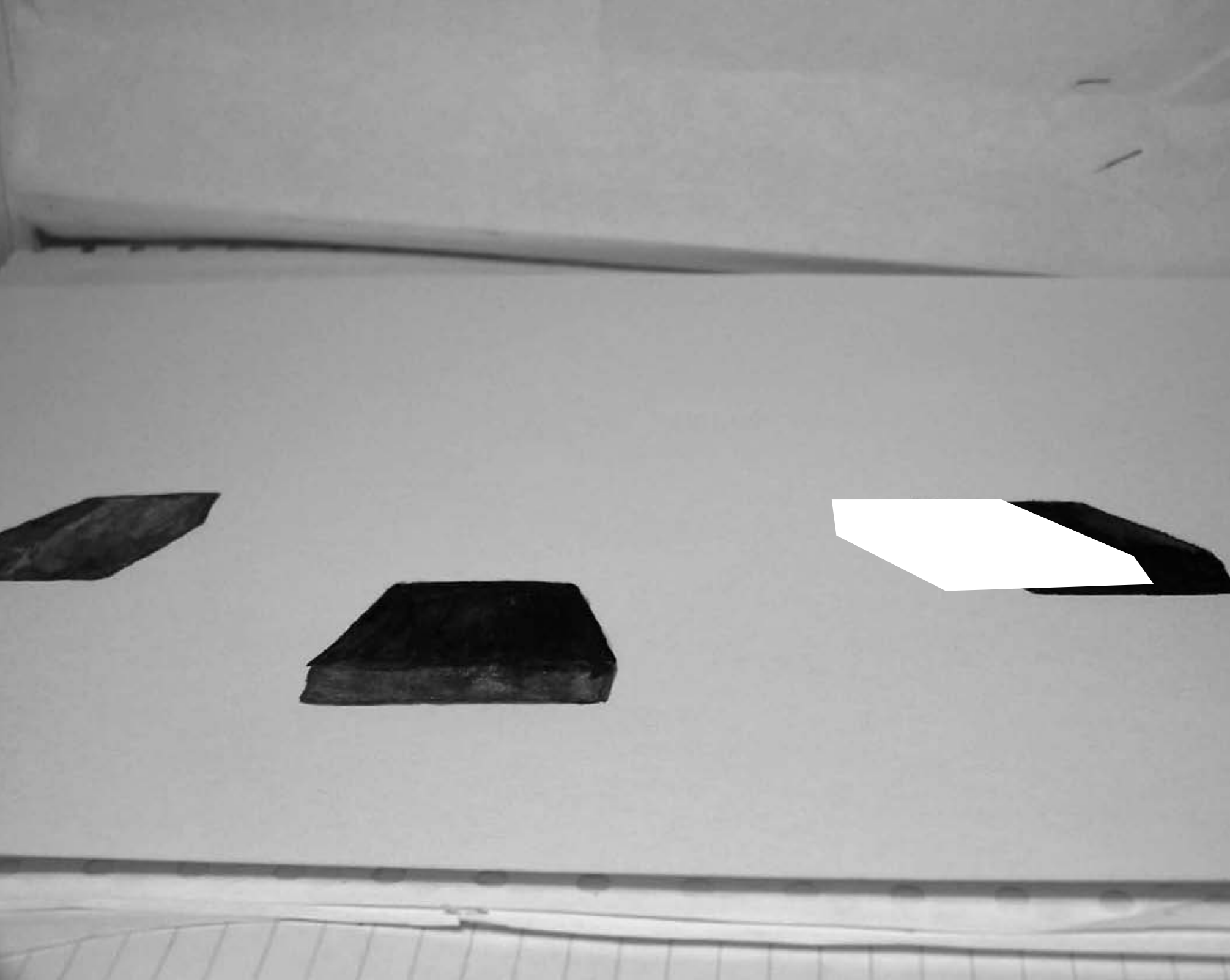
<sup>2</sup> See: *Tiller Girls London* on YouTube, published on 19 January 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XQ170Z4mwU>).

and after each other, side by side, amplify or counterpoint one another, add one layer on top of another, run over and under each other. The performers loop and alternate sequences in order to let complex patterns and interrelations evolve – between the two bodies, between sound and movement, repetition and change.

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A Speculative













Marie-Luise Angerer

## TOO MUCH TIME: On the Productive Difference of the Interval

'Stasis as movement'

and 'movement at a standstill' are two moments where the discussion of the interval and affect inserts itself as the missing half-second. From tiny bodily movements, to media recordings of these movements, to affective visual perception, this discussion touches on both photography and film. While photography frames these various movements and holds them still, film sets them in motion as movement. But as soon as the viewer enters the equation, these attributions become unreliable, requiring stasis and sequences of motion to be renegotiated, since the process of perception itself is subject to an 'interval-affect-time rhythm'.

Interval and affect are linked via time. According to some authors, nothing happens during that time; according to others, too much happens. René Descartes was the first to mention bodily movements beyond the control of the mind. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz defines these '*petites perceptions*' as something that doesn't cross the threshold of *conscious* perception. In these small movements of the body and conscious and unconscious perception of such movements, affect is inscribed as both a link and a break, rendering images productive – as stasis, both moved and moving – for the duration of an interval – as the time of not-yet-movement. In what follows, I want to discuss this time of not-yet-movement using two examples (photography and film), analysing the affective charge of the image on the one hand but also, on the other, highlighting the media linking

of images – the transition from the photographic to the film image and vice versa.

Rolf Walz's *Desert Of Perception*<sup>1</sup> [Fig. 1] features two human figures stepping out of the frame on opposite sides of the picture. But these truly peripheral figures, a man in blue and a woman in red shorts, do not register at first sight. For a moment, the picture looks set to fall apart, the sand dunes threatening to shift, the torrid desert heat threatening to slip away. In the photograph, as a framed static image, what we see above all is movement at a standstill: from the heat of the desert, to the scanty vegetation and the reptiles, to the light and its shadows. This standstill comes across on an abstract level – among others – because this (desolate) picture (of the desert) claims to offer a view of everything. The photographic gaze ruthlessly records and fixes the countless tiny movements taking place below the limits of perception. The title, 'Desert of Perception', programmatically points to the theme of conscious and unconscious perception of the smallest of movements.

In the film still from *Strange Days*<sup>2</sup> [Fig. 2], a woman, also wearing red shorts, is seen running along a beach in Los Angeles while the man she meets – also running – is actually, 'in reality', sitting in a wheelchair and not only sees himself as running along the beach but above all 'has the corresponding sensation of movement'. Thanks to Squid technology, the man in the wheelchair sees himself and feels as though running along the beach, with the young woman smiling and waving to him as she runs past. In *Strange Days*, the Squids are not just extensions of the sensory apparatus (as described by McLuhan)<sup>3</sup> but also intensifications of and even substitutes for this apparatus (instead of the one's own sensory input, those of others are 'implanted') – Squids record audiovisual data and convert it into proprioceptive data for the user: one's own sensations (and the associated visual material) are replaced by someone else's. (The fact that the women in both pictures are wearing red shorts can be taken as a significant coincidence, to which I will be returning at the end of this paper.)



<sup>1</sup> Rolf Walz, 'Desert of Perception (For Your Eyes Only)', part of the *Mindscapes* series (2003/2010), UV-Digitaldruck, Multiplex.

<sup>2</sup> *Strange Days* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

## Concerning Small, Involuntary Movements

'No longer "small" but not yet "large"'

Unlike Descartes, Leibniz disagreed that the mind was always active, insisting instead that there were moments and stretches of time when consciousness did register ('perception'), but without conscious perception ('apperception') of such minute movements. According to Leibniz, consciousness as understood by Descartes and his followers always necessarily misses something, as there is always something happening, but not everything passes the threshold of conscious perception. Spinoza likewise viewed matter, movement, and the mind (in the sense of immaterial being) on a sliding scale, deriving the various degrees and densities of materiality as functions of movement *versus* intensity. In his reading of Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze explains this by pointing out that everything defines itself by its length and breadth, by its longitude and latitude. The length of a body here refers to the ratios of rapidity and slowness, rest and motion between its particles, and its width comprises the sum of its affects, all of its intensive states.<sup>5</sup>

Leibniz posited the monad as the smallest particle that represents a microcosm of the universe. This representation takes place via perception. Since every monad supposedly expresses the totality of the universe, it follows that they can only ever be excerpts or gradations. This means that not everything is expressed in the same way, but on a scale of conscious to unconscious, from large to small perceptions. An oft-cited example of this is Leibniz's description of the sound of the sea, which he says we only hear because we hear each single wave, which we hear in turn only because we hear every single drop of water. But it is clear, Leibniz explains, that no ear can actually hear all of that:

The impressions (effects) made on our ears by the individual waves, but which we are unable to distinguish between (discern) (because they are such changes in the external world as are **not** accompanied by changes in our bodily organs), are a typical example of *petites perceptions*. All significant changes within our bodies are soon noticed, thus leading to contents of consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

Leibniz distinguishes between three kinds of perceptions. First, those that cause no changes to the organs, although it should be emphasised here, as Richard Herberth does, that they produce no 'noticeable change',<sup>7</sup> but certainly do produce some changes, just not ones that are

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 209.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza* (Berlin: Merve, 1988), p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Herberth, *Die Lehre vom Unbewussten im System von Leibniz* (1905; Hildesheim and New York: G. Olms, 1980), p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

noticed. Second, perceptions that occur in too large numbers and thus consciousness is unable to register them as separate. And third, those where weaker perceptions are obscured by more powerful ones.<sup>8</sup>

Whereas Leibniz still viewed his monads as being driven by a creator God, Spinoza's 'impersonal uniform substance' is characterised by infinite modes that can be understood as affections. Both Spinoza and Leibniz refer to affection using terms such as force, perspective, imagination, and time, so as to define this substance as oneness and multiplicity at once.<sup>9</sup>

Around the same time in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of reflexes, in reference to involuntary bodily movements, began to spread in the field of medicine and physiology. In this field too, then, we see an interest in such movements that occur without reference to the mind, without conscious control or intention. Descartes is generally associated with the theory of reflexes as he defined bodily movements that are not controlled by the mind and that do not touch it either. But around the middle of the last century, in his analysis of the 'emergence of the concept of reflexes', Georges Canguilhem showed how a concept – in this case that of reflexes – may already exist, even in terminology, but only later, through the interaction of various forces, come to denote a generally accepted fact. According to Canguilhem, one can see that Descartes was not actually speaking about the reflexes, but had to choose in his discussion between the heart and the brain, basing his assumptions on a single movement from the inside (centre = gland) to the nerves on the other end, but not assuming a movement in the reverse direction, although other medical theorists before him had done so. Before Descartes's time (referring back to Galen and Jean François Fernel), a distinction was made between three spirits, the so-called 'vital functions':<sup>10</sup> the 'natural spirit' (located in the liver and acting via the veins), the 'vital spirit' (located in the heart and acting via the arteries), and the 'animal spirit located in the brain and acting via the nerves'.<sup>11</sup> Descartes sought to trace all muscle movements back to one mechanism in order to free it from any mental control. In Canguilhem's view, his theory of involuntary movement anticipated the notion of reflexes without establishing an actual reflexology. And this is because Descartes, unlike William Harvey or Thomas Willis, did not view the heart as a muscle, instead attributing the circulation of blood to its special warmth. As a result, Descartes remained attached to mechanics, which placed animals and machines (automata) alongside humans in order to illustrate the artificial and thus natural quality of human muscle movement.<sup>12</sup> But as Canguilhem argues, precisely this parallel opens an

'incomprehensible break' (between animals and humans, as only the latter are endowed with souls), which, as an 'unfathomable secret',<sup>13</sup> in turn refers humankind back to God.

With the hypothesis of an animal soul, Thomas Willis took another step in the direction of reflexes, taking his cue from Descartes and bringing chemistry into play against mechanics. In Willis's theory of the reflexes, the life force is associated with the force of light and, in contrast to Galen, Willis assumed 'the encephalic origin of all movement, without exception'.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, Willis argued that spontaneous or voluntary movements are controlled by the cerebral mind (cerebrum) and natural or involuntary movements by the cerebellar mind (cerebellum) – two minds, then: one spiritual, sentient, and rational, the other physical, sentient, and lively. According to Willis, this duality of the mind applies to all humans and higher beasts.

Against the zeitgeist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henri Bergson picked up this notion, writing that 'there is no perception that is not prolonged into movement'.<sup>15</sup> Canguilhem likewise mentions this link to Bergson and remarks that he even picked up the connection between the energy of movement and that of light, a link first made by Willis, associating the latent energy of the animal spirit with cosmic light.<sup>16</sup> And later still, parallel to the cybernetic continuation of the Cartesian mechanistic view, Maurice Merleau-Ponty not only declared the primacy of movement, but also equated it with meaning, naming it as that through which being reveals itself.<sup>17</sup> But this equation of movement and meaning, as Stefan Kristensen points out, means 'that [there is] no ontological difference between motor function and affectivity, between the physiological and the psychological, but only gradual differences, varying modalities of meaning'.<sup>18</sup>

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century on, small movements and reflexes began to be measured, produced under experimental conditions in laboratories, captured, and recorded using early forms of photography. And then, with the advent of film around the turn of the century, it became possible not only to intervene in the recording of movement (as life), but also to bring it to life as something existing in time, as a temporal sequence of images.<sup>19</sup> These technical-media techniques (of recording and playback) convey the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Michaela Ott, *Affizierung. Zu einer ästhetisch-epistemischen Figur* (Munich: Edition Text und Kritik, 2010), pp. 105–142.

<sup>10</sup> Georges Canguilhem, *Die Herausbildung des Reflexbegriffs im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, trans. Henning Schmidgen (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 37–47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>14</sup> Canguilhem, *Die Herausbildung des Reflexbegriffs*, p. 91.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Bergson, *Materie und Gedächtnis: Eine Abhandlung über die Beziehung zwischen Körper und Geist* (1896; Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), pp. 84ff.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Canguilhem, *Die Herausbildung des Reflexbegriffs*, p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Stefan Kristensen, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty I – Körperschema und leibliche Subjektivität', in *Leiblichkeit: Geschichte und Aktualität eines Konzepts*, eds. Emmanuel Alloa, Thomas Bedorf, Christian Grüny, and Tobias N. Klass (Tübingen: UTB, 2012), p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Christopher Kelty and Hannah Landecker, 'Das Schauspiel der Zelle. Unsterblichkeit, Apoptose', in *Future\_Bodies. Zur Visualisierung von Körpern in Science and Fiction*, eds. Marie-Luise Angerer, Kathrin Peters, and Zoë Sofoulis (Vienna and New York: Springer, 2002), pp. 21–47.

movement of the living as something living, presenting it as permanent delay, as something always-already deferred, although visually transparent. This is a procedure that can be mapped onto an existential life praxis that installs the delay in time (of life) as the space of the now. Photography and film each deal in their own specific ways with this 'now'. While the former dispenses with the before and after, thus presenting itself as an excerpt (as in our first example), film (in the second example) presents the moment of the here and now as a sequence of intervals, gaps, zones of affect: movement at a standstill – stasis as movement.

### The History of the Affective Interval

In the mid-1970s, students of media and communication studies in the German-speaking world heard from Hertha Sturm and her team that they had discovered the 'missing half-second'. Above all, Sturm wanted the results of her research to reach those responsible for making television, so that they could draw the necessary conclusions. In her view, television needed to broadcast slower image sequences, audio and video needed to be more congruent; text or spoken language should follow the images or vice versa, rather than supplying additional information. For, as the researchers found, their test subjects (mainly children) were unable 'properly' to process the excessive amounts of information and their reactions were quite simply too slow for the abundance of images they had to face. As a result, children reacted 'happily' to sad image sequences and 'unhappily' to cheerful ones. The test subjects' mood was gauged by measuring their pulse, heartbeat, and transpiration, producing a curve of physical arousal indicating their mood – or rather allowing it to be deduced – with low frequencies pointing to a basically depressive mood and high frequencies pointing to high spirits. Surprisingly, these findings correspond quite clearly with the cybernetic theory of affect developed by Silvan Tomkins, who likewise, as described above, equated lower-level activity with sadness and higher-level activity with happiness. According to Sturm and her team, the anomalies they found in some of their test subjects resulted from the 'missing half-second' – the amount of time that occurs between a perception (signal, stimulus) and the reaction, without much clarity as to what happens during this 'lost time'.

However, when Sturm's studies of the stressed television viewer<sup>20</sup> were published (posthumously), they received little attention. Such an empirical approach to viewer research was scornfully dismissed (in the German-speaking world) in favour of an ideology-critique,

<sup>20</sup> See Hertha Sturm, 'Wahrnehmung und Fernsehen: die fehlende Halbsekunde', *Media Perspektiven*, Vol. 1 (1984), pp. 58–65 and *Der gestreßte Zuschauer* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 2000).

psychoanalytical theory of visual pleasure.<sup>21</sup> With hindsight, one might say that Hertha Sturm untimely (too early?) and not using the right means tried to prove that media such as television had an emotional impact and that this was crucial to one's perception of their verbal and visual content. What makes this emotional impact so strong, Sturm argued, is that half-second between the stimulus and the response that makes the (viewer's) response seem somehow 'out of sync'.

Twenty years later, however, this out-of-sync affect made a comeback in Brian Massumi's cultural theory of affect, contributing to a veritable *affective turn* in cultural studies and media theory. 'The skin is faster than the word',<sup>22</sup> Massumi wrote in the mid-1990s, paraphrasing his own definition of affect as an intensity belonging to a 'different order': 'Intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things'.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from the definition of affect proposed by Gilles Deleuze, which is based essentially on Spinoza and his life force (*conatus*) and which in turn forms the basis for Massumi's work, something else was also at stake here – Massumi actually referred to Hertha Sturm's 'missing half-second'. For him, however, it became the terrain of affect. According to Massumi, affect is a virtuality which (as a dimension of the potential) facilitates actuality: '(P)astnesses opening onto a future, but with no present to speak of. For the present is lost with the missing half-second, passing too quickly to be perceived, too quickly, actually, to have happened.'<sup>24</sup> Unlike Hertha Sturm, Massumi understands the missing half-second not as empty time, but as a space of time in which too much happens to be perceived.

In the mid-1980s, Deleuze's two books on cinema, *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*, initiated a major shift in film theory, whose impact has extended far beyond the discipline. In Deleuze's theory, perception is the amodal, asubjective part, while memory is a movement that (following Kant) affects itself, performing a kind of self-touching. Image and movement coincide and cannot really be separated. Apart from Spinoza, what Deleuze was rediscovering for film and media theory here was above all Henri Bergson's theory of image and perception, a theory that has attained new importance, as already mentioned, in the context of recent developments in media technology.

With Bergson, we have arrived at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the latter half of which was positively obsessed with missing time. In *A Tenth of a Second*,<sup>25</sup> Jimena Canales reconstructs the history of the search for and

<sup>21</sup> See Marie-Luise Angerer, *Body Options: Körper.Bilder.Medien.Spuren* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 1999), pp. 74–99.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 219.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 218ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>25</sup> Jimena Canales, *A Tenth of a Second: A History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

research into this missing space of time, documenting a huge interest within the disciplines of experimental psychology, astronomy, physics, and metrology. Sigmund Freud was likewise fascinated by it, as was Wilhelm Wundt at his Institute of Psychology in Leipzig. Others, like Francis Galton, saw the study of the missing split-second as a continuation of craniometry on a different level: those who react slowly have a sensitive personality, those who react quickly are aggressive, more intelligent. Gradually, this interest in measuring individual reaction times, 'personal equating' or 'personal error', also began to appear in art, with noteworthy early examples including Marey's chronophotography and Muybridge's proto-cinematography. As Canales writes:

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a burst of new research in these topics. [...] Many scientists in France and elsewhere publicised numbers for the speed of nerve transmissions not only in animals, but also in humans. [...] Various instruments came into use: Pouillet's chronoscope; Helmholtz's rotating drums; Arago's chronometers [...]; Donder's noematachometer [...], Marey's drums; [...] In the span of a few years, reaction time experiments shifted from being largely criticized by the scientific community to becoming foundational for a new discipline.<sup>26</sup>

All of this began with Hermann von Helmholtz, who wrote in 1850: 'I have found that a measurable amount of time passes as the stimulus exerted by a momentary electrical current on the lumbar plexus of a frog is propagated to the place where the femoral nerve enters the calf muscle'.<sup>27</sup> Helmholtz was a student of Johannes Müller who had formulated in 1826 the law of specific sensory energy, which states that each sensory organ always reacts to stimuli in its own way, whatever their nature. The eye, for example, reacts to mechanical pressure with a sensation of light. From this, Müller concluded that objective reality cannot be recognised and that perception is something highly subjective, based as it is on and in the body. In his *Techniques of the Observer*,<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Crary accords a prominent place to Müller because he defined the eye and sight as being dependent on physical stimuli, thus, as Crary emphasises, overturning the hegemony of a neutral visual apparatus.

But what Helmholtz had discovered with his measurements was not only the disappearance of time, but also and above all the delay of energy – the energy in a muscle is not exerted completely at the moment of the stimulus, 'but to a large extent only after that stimulus

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Henning Schmidgen, *Die Helmholtz-Kurven: Auf der Spur der verlorenen Zeit* (Berlin: Merve, 2009), p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1992).

has already ceased'.<sup>29</sup> Between stimulation and contraction, then, time (and energy) passes – not much, but enough to be clearly identifiable. The immediacy on which previous assumptions had been based turned out to be 'an interval, a period, a space of time both circumscribed and empty – an interim, *du temps perdu*'.<sup>30</sup>

Now, the author of *À la recherche du temps perdu*,<sup>31</sup> Marcel Proust, had family ties with Henri Bergson, who was married to a cousin of Proust's. Distrustful of language, Bergson is said to have accepted only Proust as a writer, whose search for time went hand in hand with a search for ways to express it in words. At the height of his career, Bergson fought an indecisive battle with Einstein on the question of time. The philosopher of the 'élan vital' never abandoned his position that time is subjective, whereas Einstein famously defined time as independent of individual perception.

Henri Bergson understood the world as an image in which we move, ourselves a special kind of image. 'There is', as already quoted earlier, 'no perception which is not prolonged into movement.' But precisely this moment of not-yet-movement – the interval placed by Bergson between one movement and another – is described by Gilles Deleuze as the moment of affect, and then interpreted by Massumi as the missing half-second.

Up to the present, technical and living processes developed separately. Until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, life and technology trod their separate paths and were also kept separate in the field of theory. But media analyses such as Donna Haraway's from the early 1980s, elaborated since then by N. Katherine Hayles, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, and others, agree that media can no longer be defined as prostheses that amplify the senses, but that instead, they have attained a new immersive dimension, replacing our senses, making them more intense and subjective, more intimate and technical; that, moreover, perception, memory, and affect have become a matter of technical modalities. With the cyborg, Haraway introduced a notion intended to render life's reliance on technology conceivable and theoretically graspable. Compared with the period of the 'Cyborg Manifesto' in the mid-1980s, the ubiquity of technology has become many times greater: as Galloway and Thacker write, the net has become something elementary – an invisible, all-encompassing precondition for societal, social, and mental processes.

Today, neo-cybernetic approaches revolve around a question that Georges Canguilhem addressed already in his 'Machine and Organism',

<sup>29</sup> Schmidgen, *Die Helmholtz-Kurven*, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time* (also translated as *Remembrance of Things Past*), seven volumes, originally published 1913–1927, published in English 1922–1931.

an essay where he advocated an understanding of technology as a universal biological phenomenon. In 1946–47, when Canguilhem was giving his lecture, he would conclude by saying that for some years now, tests had been underway – at MIT under the name *bionics* – to research biological models and structures that could be used as models in technology. ‘Bionics is the extremely subtle art of information’, writes Canguilhem, ‘that has taken a leaf from natural life.’<sup>32</sup> Today, media are put on a level with insects, rays, instincts, stimuli, and reflexes,<sup>33</sup> theories of imitation from the animal kingdom are applied to our understanding of political and social crowd and swarm formations by humans. Not that comparisons between the animal and human kingdoms are anything particularly novel; what is new is the fact that today they are meant seriously, the anthropological supremacy of the human can no longer uphold itself in the current technical-organic overall structure.

When Canguilhem articulated his appeal immediately after World War II, warning against the reductionism of a rapidly expanding hegemony of cybernetics à la Norbert Wiener, it fell on deaf ears, not unlike Hertha Sturm’s ‘missing half-second’. Technology and biology, or technology as biology, was not a possible equation, for many reasons. Today, by contrast, one may observe a new liaison resulting from linking approaches from biology and information technology, a link established via time, life as time, and an original deferral. In this context, affect can be viewed as an interval that mediates between life and technology, or that facilitates life as technology.

These themes refer to the process philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead, which has acquired a topical significance, especially for Massumi and other media theorists, as a way of theoretically tackling sensations and perceptions without consciousness or subject. Whitehead defines physical perception as always emotional, calling it a ‘blind emotion’ that is ‘received as felt elsewhere in another occasion’.<sup>34</sup> This involves not an accumulation of data but always a data relationship. The perceiving subject does not pre-exist the perceived world, but emerges through and in the process of perception: ‘feeling is subjectively rooted in the immediacy of the present occasion, it is what the present situation feels for itself, as derived from the past and as merging into the future’.<sup>35</sup>

The degree to which the philosophy of Whitehead and Deleuze has influenced current discussions of the body, movement, and affect is

<sup>32</sup> Georges Canguilhem, ‘Machine and Organism’, trans. Mark Cohen & Randall Cherry, in *Incorporations*, eds. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone Books, 1992), pp. 45–69.

<sup>33</sup> See Jussi Parikka, *Insect Media: An Archaeology of Animals and Technology* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (Cambridge, MA: The Free Press, 1978), p. 162.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

reflected in Erin Manning’s book *Relationescapes*. Manning, who works at the SenseLab in Montreal and co-edits a book series titled *Technologies of Lived Abstractions*,<sup>36</sup> equates seeing with feeling, the latter understood as movement-with:

Affect passes directly through the body, coupling with the nervous system, making the interval felt. This feltness is often experienced as a becoming-with. This becoming-with is transformative. It is a force out of which a microperceptual body begins to emerge. This microperceptual body is the body of relation. While affect can never be separated from a body, it never takes hold on an *individual* body. Affect passes through, leaving intensive traces on a *collective* body-becoming. This body-becoming is not necessarily a human body. It is a conglomeration of forces that express a movement-with through which a relational individuation begins to make itself felt.<sup>37</sup>

This passage describes the entire process from perception via affect to the moving and moved body; also, it makes it clear that it is not about individual bodies, but bodies with other bodies, and that these must not necessarily be human bodies, or at least not exclusively human.

If we now return to our point of departure, where Stiegler describes current technological developments, viewing the ubiquitous media technology situation purely in terms of its industrial exploitation, then at the end of this paper we have arrived at a similar constellation, except that the developments have been given a positive spin. Whereas Stiegler views the body and the mind as being held in the vicelike grip of a pervasive technology, at the mercy of a negative modulation via affect culminating in a mass conformity of individuals, Manning, with reference to Deleuze and Whitehead, celebrates a body in movement and perpetual mutation whose reactions are controlled via intervals.<sup>38</sup> Here, too, the missing half-second makes an appearance. According to Whitehead, subjectivity takes place in this zone of lost time; life ‘lurks in the interstices of every living cell, and in the interstices of the brain’.<sup>39</sup>

Bergson likewise described the brain as the place where the interval resides. In contrast to the scientific wisdom of his time, he declared the brain a *tabula rasa*, a ‘centre’ or ‘zone’ of ‘indetermination’.<sup>40</sup> The brain is defined as a gap in time, as an ‘interval of varying length between stimulus and reaction’.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Together with Brian Massumi.

<sup>37</sup> Erin Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2009), p. 95.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 105ff.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Henning Schmidgen, ‘Leerstellen des Denkens. Die Entdeckung der physiologischen Zeit’, in *Parasiten und Sirenen: Zwischenräume als Orte der materiellen Wissensproduktion*, eds. Bernhard J. Dotzler and Henning Schmidgen (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.



A similar moment can be identified in the cybernetic debate of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, where the concept of reflexes was inserted as a vitalistic element of time into the gap between the signal and movement of the machine/automaton. Norbert Wiener borrowed Bergson's concept of 'duration' and applied it to both living humans and machines: 'Thus the modern automaton exists in the same kind of Bergsonian time as the living organism, and hence there is no reason in Bergson's considerations why the essential mode of functioning of the living organism should not be the same as that of the automaton of this type'.<sup>42</sup> In 1951, Max Bense elaborated on this, claiming the time interval as the basis of the commensurability of machine and man in general terms. Except that, unlike humans, computer machines are capable of using (and exploiting) even the smallest of intervals. The interval in the human organism – empty, according to Hertha Sturm, or too full, according to Brian Massumi – is filled by cybernetic computing machines with a speed of task fulfilment that surpasses human comprehension: 'Cybernetic machines exhaust the smallest interval. An addition takes place in five millionths of a second; in five minutes, it can perform ten million additions or subtractions of ten-figure numbers'.<sup>43</sup> However, Bense explicitly associates this mechanistic-sounding operational capacity with Bergson's 'duration' and sets it apart from steady, Newtonian time. And finally, as Stefan Rieger explains in his cybernetic anthropology, Bense aligned Heidegger's fundamental ontology with Norbert Wiener's cybernetics.<sup>44</sup>

### Perceiving as Moving/Perceiving in Motion/Moving Perception

Besides taking his cue from Bergson's 'duration', however, Norbert Wiener was also familiar with reflex theory, especially as formulated by Pavlov. In his cybernetics, he even went so far as to attribute 'conditioned reflexes'<sup>45</sup> to computing machines. In his view, technological and biological machines were capable of 'rudimentary learning'.<sup>46</sup> The fascination with these machines capable of learning and possessing conditioned reflexes extended far beyond the technical world; Jacques Lacan referred to it in his seminar on the ego in Freud's theory to show just how far man and machine had travelled down a common path,

<sup>42</sup> Norbert Wiener, *Kybernetik. Regelung und Nachrichtenübertragung in Lebewesen und Maschine*, (Reinbek b. Hamburg: Rowohlt TB-V, 1968), pp. 68ff.

<sup>43</sup> Max Bense, 'Kybernetik oder die Metatechnik einer Maschine', in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Vol. 2: Philosophie der Mathematik, Naturwissenschaft und Technik (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1998), p. 440.

<sup>44</sup> Stefan Rieger, *Kybernetische Anthropologie. Eine Geschichte der Virtualität* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 146.

<sup>45</sup> Henning Schmidgen, 'Fehlformen des Wissens, Vorwort zu Canguilhem, Zur Herausbildung des Reflexbegriffs', p. XXXII.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

diverging only at the last moment, at the point where the machine was supposed to add or subtract 'itself as an element in a calculation'.<sup>47</sup> Up to that point, however – in the grip of the mirror stage – the ego occupied the position of the lame man frequently seen in 15<sup>th</sup>-century art as the counterpart to the blind man.

'The subjective half of the pre-mirror experience', Lacan writes, 'is the paralytic who cannot move about by himself except in an uncoordinated and clumsy way. What masters him is the image of the ego, which is blind, and which carries him. [...] And the paralytic, whose perspective this is, can only identify with his unity in a fascinated fashion, in the fundamental immobility whereby he finishes up corresponding to the gaze he is under, the blind gaze'.<sup>48</sup>

What, then, is the relationship between this 'blind gaze' and the 'blind feeling' that Whitehead mentioned and that I have linked with affect? Very early on in his work on affect, Massumi found an example that illustrates this especially well, concerning Ronald Reagan and his experience as an actor. This experience made such a deep impression on Reagan that he chose a line from one of his own films as the title for his autobiography. In *Kings Row* (dir. Sam Wood, 1942), Reagan plays a tragic figure who wakes up after a car crash and stammers: 'Where's the rest of me?'. Regaining his consciousness, he finds that both of his legs are missing, amputated as a revenge for his love affair with the surgeon's daughter. So much for the plot. For his purposes, Massumi highlights another aspect, focussing not on the vengeful amputation but on the tipping point as the central moment when Reagan, the actor, stammers his line and this sentence suddenly – for a fraction of a second – becomes real. His legs are no longer there, half of his body is missing: 'Where's the rest of me?'. What Reagan describes here is a moment that cannot be grasped, but which, as Massumi explains, marks a space where the subject's inability to see himself in motion 'shows' itself: 'He is in the space of duration of an ungraspable event'.<sup>49</sup> Summing up his approach with 'the skin is faster than the word', in the mid-1990s Massumi began to develop a cultural theory of affect, introducing it as an intensity that belongs to a 'different order': 'Intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things'.<sup>50</sup>

Coincidentally or not, the subject here is the amputation of both legs, described by Reagan as a real sensation, which one can easily link to the example from *Strange Days*. While Reagan has a momentary experience of having lost both of his legs, the man in *Strange Days* experiences

<sup>47</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Das Ich in der Theorie Freuds und in der Technik der Psychoanalyse', in *Das Seminar Buch II* (Weinheim and Berlin: Quadriga, 1991), p. 70.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>49</sup> Brian Massumi, 'The Bleed: Where the Body Meets Image', in *Rethinking Borders*, ed. John C. Welchman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', pp. 218ff.

himself for the duration of the film (via the Squid) as having both legs and running along a beach. Whereas for Massumi, the Reagan example confirms lacking graspable presence as a characteristic property of affect, in *Strange Days* this is inscribed onto the body as the experiential zone of the viewer, 'at the surface of the body' – the moving images transfer a movement in action into an affective moment whose characteristic property is being not-yet-movement.

With its Squid technology, *Strange Days* anticipated a debate that was to begin at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and focus on the status of the image in general. In *The Language of New Media*,<sup>51</sup> Lev Manovich put forward his theory that digital images always appear on the surface as framed pictures, while below the surface they have long since lost their frames and referential character. '[T]he image, in its traditional sense, no longer exists! And it is only by habit that we still refer to what we see on the real-time screen as "images".'<sup>52</sup> A few years later, in his *New Philosophy for New Media*,<sup>53</sup> Mark Hansen picked up this change in the nature of images, positing it as a fundamental shift with serious consequences for the viewer. Hansen's approach took the body of the viewer as the new (old) focus: 'In a very material sense the body is the "coprocessor" of digital information'.<sup>54</sup> Hansen explains this central task in terms of Bergson's definition of the world as an image and the body in it as a special image. According to Bergson, the body's task within the flow of perception is to filter, select, contrast and thus reduce this flow. For, as Bergson points out, the body is not a 'mathematical point in space' and adds that its 'virtual actions are complicated by and impregnated with actual actions', which leads to his unambiguous conclusion: 'no perception without affection'.<sup>55</sup>

So when the body of the man in the wheelchair slips into the image of a man running along a beach past a smiling, waving woman – or when his body affectively frames this image – this matches Bergson's description. But what about the other picture, the photograph of the desert? At first, we, as viewers, occupy a comparable position, but here affect is at work in the image and rather than touching us through a technical procedure, we are captured – in the moment of the not-yet. In the moment of noticing the two bodies rushing out of the frame, a (bodily) knowledge of the desert has already set in, a shimmering heat that makes us feel the endless grey-brown of the sand, the slowness of movements and their shadows, the soundless sounds, the gaze getting lost in the boundless horizon. These tiny figures, as two coloured spots (the woman's red shorts) in the desert shade do not take me as a viewer to the desert (as a picture) – they catapult me out of it. For what did Lacan experience

in his famous example of the 'sardine tin'? That he is not seen by its glittering in the sun: the tin, said the boy, the tin doesn't see you. The consequence drawn by Lacan from this not-being-in-the-picture was that human existence can only ever be experienced as one spot in the great picture of life.<sup>56</sup> And this implies something that Merleau-Ponty calls the 'untouchable':<sup>57</sup> a felt moment that has lost what guarantees the unity of this feeling – an ego. Or, in Pierre Janet's description from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, quoting Alexandre Herzen on the heart and cerebral activity: it is psychic nothingness, the total absence of consciousness; then one begins to have a vague, unlimited, infinite feeling, a feeling of existence in general, without any delimitation of one's own individuality, without the slightest trace of any distinction between the I and the not-I'.<sup>58</sup> This means that in affect, the interval is radically delayed, a gap opens up, whose emptiness or over-fullness touches me where I am not.

<sup>51</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>53</sup> Mark B. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

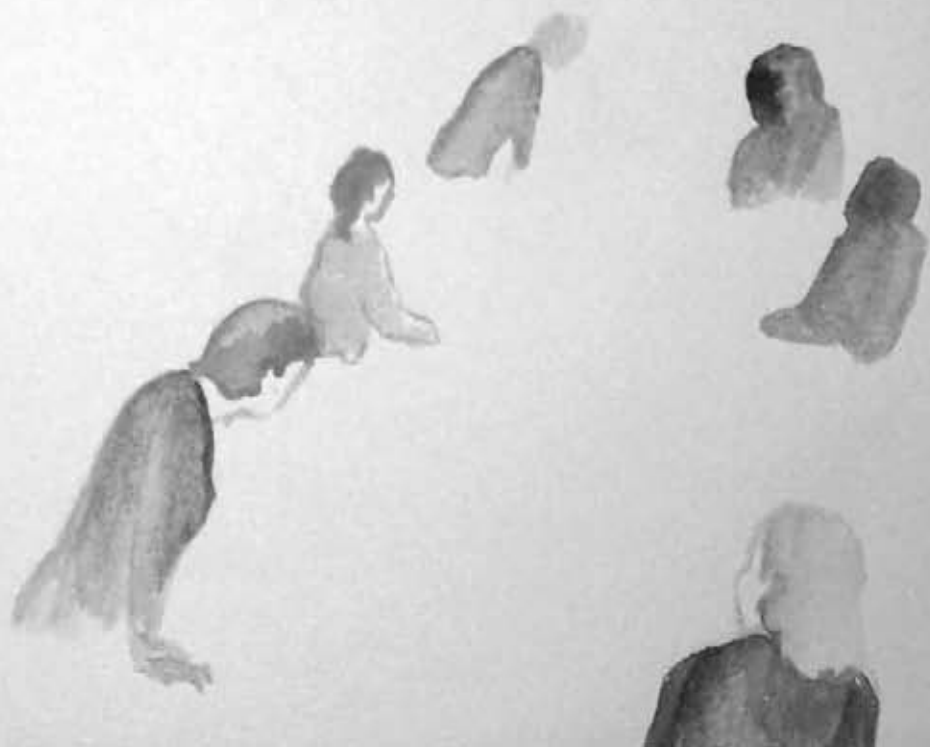
<sup>54</sup> Tim Lenoir, 'Foreword', in Mark B. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, p. xxvi.

<sup>55</sup> Bergson, *Materie und Gedächtnis*, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jacques Lacan, 'Linie und Licht' (Ch. VIII), in *Das Seminar, Buch 11, Die vier Grundbegriffe der Psychoanalyse. Das Seminar v. Jacques Lacan, Buch XI* (Berlin: Quadriga, 1987), pp. 97–111.

<sup>57</sup> Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch*, p. 295.

<sup>58</sup> Pierre Janet, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 281.



**Pregnant Boredom (n. no pl.)**

Life in the capitalist world is usually lived as a 'continuous flight from boredom' (cf. Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Boredom*), hence we cannot imagine a dissident potentiality of the state of boredom and what it might bear. And we must indeed ask ourselves if 'he who entrenches himself against boredom also entrenches himself against himself', as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote. Taste captivates us, whereas boredom detaches us. Taste absorbs us, makes us obsessed, subjugates us; boredom relieves us of outer pressure, sensual stimuli, and every artificial and not enduring intensity. This distinction, which was pointed out by François Jullien in *Éloge de la fadeur: à partir de la pensée et de l'esthétique de la Chine*, is crucial for understanding the notion of *pregnant boredom*.

*Pregnant boredom* should not be compared to a temporary withdrawal for the sake of accumulating energy in order to enhance one's productivity thereafter; it is likewise not an approach to our accelerated modes of life and work that would aim to follow permanent flows in a Zen-like state characterised by indifference toward them (see *zenacceleration*). Pregnant boredom is neither a project nor does it project. (Bojana Kunst: 'Project always denominates not only a specific term, but also a temporal attitude or a temporal mode in which completion is already implied in the projection of the future. [...] a **project** must from the start project its own consummation, it has to anticipate and evaluate its completion from the beginning and work towards its own closure.') The present experienced in a state of pregnant boredom is neither eternal, nor linear,

nor progressing. It is not even chronological, but, rather, composed of different layers of time that do not dynamise each other; a present that is not as smooth and entertaining as the future invoked by capitalism ought to be. Pregnancy is distinguished by a determined duration of time that one can neither skip nor accelerate. Real boredom is a temporary state of being trapped in the timeframe of 'doing nothing' or 'nothing happening'. It is pregnant with an as yet indefinable creature, if one endures and cultivates it as a precious state of non-productivity. It is unconcerned with the obligatory rhythms embodied in collective actions and therefore a dissident state regarding the controls of power inherent in these rhythms. (See Michel Foucault: 'The obligatory rhythms embodied in collective and individual actions, all show how "time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power"'.) Pregnant boredom is a time when nothing crystallises (as yet) and the lack of sensual impressions and communicational activity opens a temporal space of non-excitement (following an interruption of what Peter Sloterdijk calls 'self-mobilisation', so characteristic of kinetic modernity). This timeframe carries the unborn if it plunges into un-decidability without fear or concern about future achievements. Pregnant boredom is not a bourgeois privilege. Whilst being traversed by the past and the future, it does not try to tame the future or the past; hence it is radically present – without being in a bond of love or agony with the here and now. It is in this indifference, a devotion to duration without creation, that life is evolving – beyond our creative fantasies; it is in this indifference that we manage to detect the calls that emanate from our environment, rather than imposing our desires upon it.





Karin Harrasser

**'THERE EVERYBODY WHO STUTTERS  
MUST ALSO LIMP': Disrupting Time,  
Exhausting Bodies, Constructing  
Worlds**

This text will be a detour, a complication. I will not directly address the possibility of translating Gilles Deleuze's concept of disrupted time to the stage. Instead, I will sound out the specificity of his concept of time that he derived from cinema and see how it translates to other art forms and media constellations. What is the idea of time that is unfolded in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989) and how may it assist aesthetic considerations beyond cinema? How does the time of the time-image relate to Deleuze's idea of 'minor literature'? And, importantly: how can we still work with an aesthetic of disruption in times of constant disruption?

The idea of time in *The Time-Image* is highly counterintuitive. Everything that we usually consider important in everyday life, as well as in philosophies of time is *not* what interests Deleuze. What he seeks to develop is neither related to physical-mechanical time (clocks, bodily movements, split into sequences, as in a factory or in film), nor is it simple subjective time; the kind of time-experience we articulate when we say that time spent in pain lasts forever, whereas enjoyable moments are gone by immediately. His idea of time is much more basic and also quite violent. He is interested in a fissured and jagged landscape

of time, time that bears the incubus of history but is not consumed by history. Deleuze draws his idea of time from the Bergsonian theory of memory that presents the time of consciousness as an ongoing riddle, as an ever-changing dynamic funnel. The notion that interests me here is how Deleuze conceptualises the relation of actuality and virtuality as a time-relation, actuality being the dark zone between the past and the future, a zone we can never know or sense, but that is pregnant with what happened before and with what may yet happen. This zone – actuality – is not a peaceful zone that we might cultivate as we like, but quite an uncontrollable surface that allows only for semi-sovereign action. Deleuze once put it like this: he is interested in Cronos and not in Chronos (Deleuze 1989, 81); Cronos, being the violent Greek god of time and creation, the nexus of everything there is; Chronos being the linear succession of time, the orderly continuation of the past, the present, and the future. One could say that *The Time-Image* in its entirety is about the beauty and force of moments of actualisation, meaning both the actualisation of what the past pushes into being and the birthplace of things to come. Whereas *The Time-Image* encircles the moments when time as Cronos is brought to the visual sense ('pure time-images' or 'chronosigns', as he calls them), there are other texts by Deleuze that search for this very moment in literature. In literature, the time-image is related to the concept of literature as stutter.

### Everyone Who Stutters Must Also Limp

The quotation in my title ('There everyone who stutters must also limp') is from a piece by Heiner Goebbels, namely, from the finishing sequence of *Eraritjaritjaka* (2004). *Eraritjaritjaka* is an Aranda word from Central Australia that means the desire for something lost. This would mean that a rather nostalgic dimension of time is implied. But – as Heiner Goebbels explains – the word was not chosen because of its original meaning in the first place, but because of its stuttering quality, its strange looks, the impossibility to pronounce it properly.

The sentence forms one line in a longer sequence that Goebbels took from Elias Canetti's collection of poems and aphorisms *The Secret Heart of the Clocks* (here quoted from Goebbels's script, 2004):

There each sentence connects with another. Between them lie a hundred years.  
 There the people never go anywhere alone, only in groups of four to eight, their hair inextricably intertwined.  
 There the dead live on in clouds and, as rain, they inseminate women.  
 There the gods remain small while people grow. When they have grown so tall that they no longer see the gods, they have to strangle each other.

There they speak a mangled language in the marketplace and are paralyzed at home.  
 There everyone is ruled by an innate worm and takes care of him and is obedient.  
 There they act only in groups of one hundred; the individual, who has never heard himself named, knows nothing about himself and oozes away.  
 There they whisper to one another and punish a loud word with exile.  
 There the living fast and feed the dead.  
 There the people are most alive while dying.  
 There the people walk about in rows; it's considered indecent to show oneself alone.  
 There everyone who stutters must also limp.  
 There the dogs couple differently, while running.  
 There the house numbers are changed every day so that no one can find his way home.  
 There it's considered impudent to say the same thing.  
 There one has someone else for pain, one's own doesn't count.  
 There people read the newspapers twice a year, then they throw up and recuperate.  
 There countries have no capitals. The people all settle at the borders. The country itself remains empty. The whole border is the capital.  
 There it is the dead who dream dreams and resound as an echo.  
 There people greet each other with a scream of despair and part from each other in jubilation.  
 There the houses are empty and cleaned every hour: for future generations.  
 There someone who has been insulted closes his eyes forever, and opens them in secret when he is alone.  
 There people recognize their forebears but are blind to their contemporaries.  
 There people say 'You are' and mean 'I might be'.  
 There people bite quickly and furtively, and then say: 'It's not me'.

The 'there' implies a somewhere, some utopian space, in this case, the stage. It characterises the stage not as a site of representation (a space where bodies configure an image), but as a site of world-making. This stage is a fictional space for enlarging the reality, a place where contra-factual entities are invented. But based on the contract of fiction, the 'there' also implies that 'in reality', those who stutter are not obliged to limp. The stage is an anti-reality, which makes it clearly modern, a space that is in contrast with the forces of the real. Also, rendering an impediment (stutter) a source of invention may be considered a typical modern aesthetic strategy. And as a theatrical gesture, a speaking impairment is paralleled with a bodily gesture: stuttering is limping in



speech, whereas limping is stuttering in movement, a translation from language to the body and vice versa. Both stuttering and limping are disruptions of automatisms. Whereas the anti-world of the stage is opposed to the 'real reality', stuttering and limping occur as disruptions immanent to the system. And already we can note problems with staging brokenness/disability: by being staged, an immanent disruption becomes hope for transcendence, a utopian locus of a 'different' language and body.

Still, 'stutter' is an interesting tool for investigating aesthetic forms, especially regarding time-issues. There are not many non-clinical books on stuttering. One of the few is Marc Shell's *Stutter* from 2006. He was a stutterer in his childhood and is now a professor of comparative literature. His considerations below are illuminating with regard to artistic practices of disruption.

One: in clinical approaches, some therapists hold that stuttering is induced by the patient's excessive awareness of language. When a child's parents attach great value to speaking properly and therefore often correct the child, the child is more likely to develop a stutter. Shell interprets stuttering as a kind of resistance to parental authority. In the first instance, stuttering is not a physiological disability but implies a high awareness of the power relations in language.

Two: Shell points to the fact that stuttering is very often related to difficulties in walking. Shell himself suffered from polio and for a long time could only walk with crutches and braces. There has to exist an intimate relationship between speaking and walking, stutter and paralysis.

Three: Even more interesting are methods that stutterers use to mask their 'disability'. Shell points to a whole set of substitution practices:

a) *translational synonyms*: stutterers often use a vast vocabulary from other languages to avoid stuttering. For example, a stutterer may speak fluently in French but stutter in English. This is why they use foreign vocabularies in order to continue speaking. Often they 'speak in tongues', or invent some kind of glossolalia to keep speaking. This is quite similar to the 'inadequate' but artistic use of language we find in poetry.

b) *Intra-linguistic substitutions*: stutterers also have a vast vocabulary in their mother tongue that enables them to go on speaking when they can't find the required word. Of course, this is a great predisposition for poetic writing. It is perfect training for inventing metaphors, where one word stands for another and thereby shifts its meaning. Both methods – translational synonyms and intra-linguistic substitutions – point to very basic aesthetic operations: shifting, transfiguration, and improper substitution as the locus for invention.

c) Stutterers sometimes invent a *personal substitute*. They take on a role, that is, they speak as if they were somebody else and that helps them to speak fluently. This points to the structural violence that connects identity and speech, to the programmes in language that make the 'self' follow a social programme. Therefore, one may consider

stuttering a potential subversion of the very programmes that make individuals. Stuttering holds the promise that you can be many.

## Tarrying and Minor Literature

Following Shell's observations, I will try to link stuttering to the Cronos of the 'time-image'. Already in Shell, stuttering becomes a locus of invention. Stuttering and stumbling, as events in time, naturally bear a moment of actualisation where no decision has yet been made. When movement is interrupted, the very moment when everything is still possible becomes visible. The moment of stutter therefore enables a ramifying procedure; it opens up a labyrinth of possible actions.

In his book *On Tarrying* (2011), Joseph Vogl quotes a conversation between Samuel Beckett and his biographer James Knowlson, which addresses this moment of procrastination, of not-having-yet-decided or taken an action:

But there is always an 'in-between'. 'I will get up now.' One doesn't do it. 'I will get up now.' And then one does it, as if by magic. As if by magic: that means all that we fail to understand. I tell him (Beckett) of telling someone who is obviously in a state of catatonic immobility: 'Try harder'. Ridiculous. 'Try harder.' Still nothing. One talks to him, warns him, or even shakes him. No reaction. And then, when he begins to speak perfectly clear, as if he had never been immobilized, one will never find out what made him break out of the circle in which he was turning. Just a while ago he was caught in it, and then he isn't anymore. Beckett commented on my description: 'That is as if an animal were sitting in one's head, for which one tries to find a voice; and one tries to lend it one's own voice'. (Vogl 2011, 14).

The moment of 'not being able to move' is at the same time utopian and immensely distressful for the individual: 'conducting a live' is usually understood as a chain of decisions and activities. If one doesn't take decisions and acts, one easily enters the realm of an unsocial, non-intelligible mode of being. The idea that I want to follow from here is that literature lends a voice to that trembling and hesitating animal we call the mind but never fully understand. The labyrinth of the will, the riddle of intentional action, the historical conditionality of every enunciation is at stake when language itself starts stuttering.

Quite often, this stuttering of language is paralleled with bodily movement, as in Thomas Bernhard's novella 'Walking' (1981). It is a novella about madness and three men taking walks in Vienna. The first sentence of the novella goes as follows:

There is a constant tug-of-war going on between all the possibilities of human thought and all the possibilities of a human mind's

sensitivity, and between all the possibilities of the human character. (Bernhard 1998)

Therefore, modern literature can be conceived as a specific method that researches the riddle of the will, a research into what thinking as well as imagining ultimately mean, a method to sound out the labyrinth of human agency. And, not least: a research into poetic language as an enunciation of the riddled character of agency.

In Marc Shell's account of stuttering we already encountered the close relation between stuttering and inadequate translation. Gilles Deleuze fully developed the idea that literary or poetic language is both a method to make language stutter and to implement a foreign language within a major language. From the phenomenon of stuttering he arrives at the concept of 'minor literature'. In his famous little text 'He Stuttered' (1998), he argues that the writer should always be a stutterer in the language that s/he makes itself stutter. S/he thereby not only produces an affective and intense language, but also shows the limits of meaningful expression in language, the threshold of the rationality of language. Deleuze views literature as a sensually reflexive way of moving within language: the writer makes the reader experience the structure of language instead of using language as a means of communication. The writer uses language as a medium that affects and transforms the sensory apparatus.

Deleuze starts his argument with the very relation of figures/motives and the structure of texts. If a writer makes his figures stutter or stammer, this has to correspond to the inner milieu of the text (e.g. an intensity of sounds, a disrupted sense of place). The second step is to recognise stuttering as a diagnostic instrument for the violent disruptions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He quotes Osip Mandelstam *Le Bruit de temps (The Noise of Time, 1925)*:

What was it my family wished to say? I do not know. It had been stuttering since birth, and yet it had something to say. This congenital stuttering weighs heavily on me and many of my contemporaries. We were not taught to speak but to stammer – and only by listening to the swelling noise of the century and being bleached by the foam on the crest of its wave did we acquire a language. (Deleuze 1998, 108)

In order to make stuttering a basic operation of poetic language, Deleuze develops a non-instrumental, non-communicational concept of language. For Deleuze, language is not a rational system close to equilibrium, made for communication, but something that is fundamentally out of joint. Language is a system that has been coded and decoded many times. It is *espace strié* – an entity striated, ruffled, bifurcated by its historical becoming. Language is some vibrating matter, divided into zones of meaning and affection. One should therefore conceive of language 'as if each of its terms in turn passes

through a zone of continuous variation', then 'language itself will begin to vibrate and stutter' (*ibid.*) Poetic language is then the medium for rendering perceptible the ruffled and bifurcated character of language, it is 'language –that– trembles from head to toe' (*ibid.*, 109). Language becomes a rather uncontrollable marionette, assembled from standardised parts. Deleuze's concept of language is close to music. Both language and music work by combining and recombining and crafting resonances. Like in the art of the fugue, repetitions and variations make up the text, versions and inversions test the system of musical/textual possibilities. Language is therefore defined as a system 'far from equilibrium' (*ibid.*, 110). This, he says, is a parallel between literature and modern physics: innovation always takes place in the remote regions of physics, where and when the system is close to collapsing, when unknown entities, singular events that don't fit into the established system of knowledge, appear.

Related to this concept of language is Deleuze's concept of 'minor literature'. Every great writer, he says, writes in a foreign language within a major language: Beckett, the Irishman writing in English and French; Kafka, the Czech Jew writing in German, etc. His idea of minor literature is not about some efficient multilingualism but a 'minor use', minoritising a major language. Literature is not about mixing two stable systems, but about destabilising one by introducing another, by using neologisms (Jarry), Arabic rhythms in English (Lawrence), iterant testing of syntactics in a single sentence (Beckett). His idea is that literature, by not adhering to the rules of the language, explores its limits, its power effects. Literature 'minoritises' language by testing or exhausting its possibilities: every writer is somehow a writer in a foreign language. Style therefore is 'the foreign language within language' (*ibid.*, 113) that explores and explodes language from within.

Another strategy would be the 'sounding out' of every possible combination, working with sound and structure instead of meaning. Deleuze quotes Gherasim Luca's poem 'Je t'aime passionnément' ('I love you passionately'):

Passionné nez passionnem  
je  
je t'ai je t'aime je  
je je jet je t'ai jetez  
je t'aime passionnem  
t'aime. (*ibid.*, 110)

And, of course, Samuel Beckett's texts are dedicated throughout to his search for the limits of language as related to moving-non-moving bodies. In *Worstward Ho* (1983) we encounter two figures moving forward hand in hand, but as they move, they don't. Rather than moving anywhere, they are gravitating between states of being.

On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.  
Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for missaid.  
Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place.  
Where none. For the body. To be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No  
out. No back. Only in. Stay in. On in. Still.  
All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try  
again. Fail again. Fail better.

Of course, the title *Worstward Ho* is a parody of 'Westward ho!', the  
triumphal slogan from the conquest of the West. In Beckett's piece, there  
is no such thing as progress: the two figures move, but they don't move.  
And although highly turbulent, language does not move forward either.  
Instead, the possibilities of language are being exhausted in the smallest  
possible steps. And then there are the two figures: an old man and a child.  
Hand in hand with equal plod they go. In the free hands – no. Free  
empty hands. Backs turned both bowed with equal plod they go. The  
child hand raised to reach the holding hand. Hold the old holding  
hand. Hold and be held. Plod on and never recede. Slowly with never a  
pause plod on and never recede. Backs turned. Both bowed. Joined by  
held joining hands. Plod on as one. One shade. Another shade.

Beckett once wrote that he modelled his figures after a psychiatric  
case he had heard C. G. Jung discuss in the 1920s (Beckett 2006, 196): a  
girl who had the feeling that she had never been born. The status of never  
having been born lies right between the old man and the child. So, the text  
is not about growing old and dying (without having achieved anything),  
but the moment when nothing has been decided yet, when all possibilities  
are still open. Therefore, exhausting language may be considered a  
method of producing Cronos: the very moment when things become  
possible out of fullness.

If we look at the beginning of *Worstward Ho*, we can move toward  
issues of stage. The beginning of the text ('On. –...– Move in. Out of. Back  
into.') may be read as instructions about how to build, fill, and leave a  
stage. And, indeed, Beckett's final pieces are all about setting up stages,  
lighting, basic movements onstage. *What Where* (1983) is simply about  
switching stage lights on and off. *Nacht und Träume* (a TV-play from 1983)  
slowly lights up a single scene. *Quadrat* (also for TV, 1981) shows nothing  
but geometric movements in a square and four figures trying to avoid a  
whole in the floor.

So let's move from literature/language to the stage, if only for a  
moment: what does it mean to translate the stuttering/limping/stumbling  
principle into space, movement, and regimes of seeing? Of course, it is  
not sufficient to choreograph stumbling movements. They need to be  
related – one might say with Deleuze – to the structure of the stage, to  
the space of action, and to the spectator. Stuttering and stumbling need

to reorganise the 'milieu' of the stage in order to generate Deleuze's  
desired effect: to make the whole system of perception and articulation  
shake. Stumbling movements and stuttering language as such are unable  
to bring the system to a point where all possibilities are equally present  
and time becomes a nexus of creation, but they can start a process of  
loosening the ties of established meanings in order to shake perceptual  
and linguistic frameworks.

## Conclusions

The disruption of a flow of action and of automatisms in movements/  
perception/language can have consequences in different directions:

One: the stutterer/stumbler is a figure who makes systems collapse,  
a clown-figure that imitates the master's behaviour and thereby makes  
authority tumble. This would be the *critical* function of the stutterer/  
stumbler: stuttering disrupts automatisms, established ways of doing  
things, bodily regimes, linguistic regimes.

Two: as soon as stuttering/stumbling affects the 'milieu' of its  
appearance (the language itself, performance itself), it becomes the  
locus of more than a critique of what is given. It reorganises the given,  
it becomes a productive force, a point of the emergence of unrealised  
possibilities that are immanent to the given.

Three: stuttering and stumbling provoke what we might call 'the  
artistry to find ways out': gestures of stuttering/stammering/limping/  
stumbling are not so much about solving a problem, but cultivating the  
fact that there are problems that can't be solved. But we should not forget  
that stuttering in times of persistent crisis is also a means of saving the  
system, of making it more secure: the soldier is asked to rest his finger off  
the trigger in order to avoid unwanted shooting, stock market computers  
that are switched off, etc.

Four: I find that in an epoch of acceleration, of the capitalisation of  
ever-smaller time-units, stuttering and stumbling can still be valuable as  
critical tools. Then, the interesting question is: what kind of time-image  
can we produce onstage/in literature in order to slow down the machine of  
production? Not only: what are these figures going to look like?, but also:  
how are these images going to be made? Under what circumstances, with  
what tools, under what labour conditions, etc.?

However, one question remains open: Gilles Deleuze's aesthetic  
propositions follow two major trajectories. One: the destabilising effect  
of disruptions to overcome rigid systems from within. Two: to identify the  
locus of becoming, the locus of full possibilities, Cronos. For a moment,  
let us try to read Deleuze with Deleuze against Deleuze. Both in *Anti-  
Oedipus* (written with Félix Guattari in 1972) and in his little text on the

societies of control, one of the main concerns is the fact that power is no longer exercised from above in a disciplining way but from within. That also means that 'the system' (of language, of the stage) is not fixed as a *dispositif* but is in constant flux. It is constantly being reorganised, with or without art, which we might consider a very specific self-reflexive practice of reorganisation. Secondly, modern, capitalist societies need to define the individual as a site of constant invention and transformation, in order to capitalise on it. Similarly to the first observation: the problem of the execution of power is not that the individual is fixed in his condition but that he is expected to realise all of his possibilities in his lifetime. So we may ask: can an aesthetic of disruption and exhaustion be a counterforce to this, or would it rather be an aesthetic of stabilisation? What could such an aesthetic look and feel like? And how do we prevent it from being reactionary? I would therefore like to propose a figure that combines both turbulence and stability. When Donna Haraway is asked about her approach to politics in her scholarly work, she says: to stay where the trouble is. It is the trouble, the unresolved troublesome-ness, the disquieting character of the world as it is that should force us to rest someplace. For a while. For the trouble will stay with us anyway.

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**Disco'n'tinuity (n.)****1**

The conditions of precarious labour in late capitalism: a bit of frenetic movement on the dance floor and a lot of interruption.

**2**

The conditions of labour remuneration in late capitalism: a bit of crazy enjoyment on the dance floor and a lot of interruption.

**3**

The conditions of life in late capitalism: a lot of interruption.

**4**

The conditions of life of late capitalism: interruption!

**Waste // \*Time-wasting (n) / Time-waster (n)**

'Time is money, invest it' is one of the most common phrases that underscores the behavioural patterns of a diligent man – at least subconsciously, but more often with tyrannical persistence. To scrutinise this phrase, we first have to define the terms *waste* and *invest*, and then obscure the distinction between the two, so that we may shift the perspective and find a benefit in things that seem to be lacking it. Folding these notions in various ways will enable us to clarify the term *in0waste*. To do that, we must take our cue from Georges Bataille, who argued in his essay 'The Notion of Expenditure' that no one could possibly define what is useful to man.

Waste (n./v.) is an act or instance of using or expending something carelessly, extravagantly, or to no purpose. (Oxford Dictionary)

To invest (v.) is 1. to put (money) to use, by purchase or expenditure, in something offering potential profitable returns, as interest, income, or appreciation in value, 2. to use smth. (money), as in accumulating something; for instance to invest large sums in books, 3. to use, give, or devote (time, talent, etc.), as for a purpose or to achieve something (Dictionary.com)

The term *time-waster* (pejorative) describes someone who causes another (and/or oneself) to spend considerable time doing something that is unnecessary or produces no benefit or at least not anything that might engender immediate effects. In the context of capitalist production, benefits, profits, and immediate effects are usually highly valued and upheld in opposition to the notion of laziness that is reserved for a small number of privileged capitalists. A vivid critique of this pattern of thinking can be found in an essay by Kazimir Malevich, where he argues that laziness is the real truth of mankind. What still remains to be untangled at this point is the distinction between laziness and time-wasting. Laziness (as described by Mladen Stilinović) 'is the absence of movement and thought, dumb time – total amnesia. It is also indifference, staring at nothing, non-activity, impotence. It is sheer stupidity, a time of pain, futile concentration'. By contrast, time-wasting is not about total amnesia; rather, as already argued above, it is about doing things that are not recognised as 'fruitful', since they yield no benefit at all.

Therefore, time-wasting is a political act by virtue of its counter-productivity, which might as well be called creativity.









Sean Cubitt

### VISIBLE TIME

Time is the medium of change. For that reason, it is necessary to control it. Calendars are more ancient than Stonehenge or the Pyramids. They shape time, sculpt time, order time, and seek control over the monstrous ocean of change that threatens to engulf each human life and all human societies. Humans are the historical animals: time is more for us than the cycle of the seasons. We seek greater orders across ancestral centuries. We recall a golden age and look forward to another. There was an Old Testament and a New, and there will be a Second Coming. We seek such order because we are driven to it. Freud almost knew this when he described *Thanatos*, the death instinct, the drive to decay and entropy. That is one extreme of the drive to order. The other is totalitarianism. We tidy the corners of the world where we live to keep the monstrous tides of pollution at bay, sometimes sweeping up dust, sometimes driving out strangers. The struggle, as Mary Douglas names it, between Purity and Danger, structures lives and makes art an essential process of walking the boundaries between them, drawing in life from the chaotic margins to replenish what would otherwise become the sterile taxonomies of organisation. Universal history, whether told as cycles, progress, or decline, are total acts of order that also act on the everyday. We need the contingency of particular events to open the closed gates of the future.

We need to understand contemporary visual media in terms of these primal struggles, precisely because we are the historical animals who are forced to live with change. As soon as images began to move, the struggle to contain and order them likewise began. Made from light and time, the

moving image media work constantly at the threshold of excess: the excess of light, the excess of time. More than any previous technology, more even than the clocks whose architecture has been assimilated into them, visual media teach us to structure time from the subliminal fraction of a second to the cosmic scales of the Hubble Space Telescope.

The older temporal arts also work in time. Narrative and dance and music inhabit and emulate time. Moving images do something more, and more specific. They carve time into segments in order reconstruct it. In its first instances, which returned in the 1990s as a technique for stilling motion as sculptural form (*The Matrix*), chronophotography was an analytic tool for separating instants from continuity and typically reproduced itself not as motion but stasis: as sculpture, a first instance of that negation of time that has become so central to the media of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### A Brief Chronology to Set the Scene

Scenario 1: Plate photography uses sheets of glass coated in suspensions of light-sensitive molecules of silver halides that react to light by darkening. The rapidly expanding illustrated magazines of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century needed a printing mechanism. This came in the form of half-tone, which reformulated the random spatter of molecules as a formal grid of dots. To get photographs from news sites to printers required telegraphy. Wire photography instigated the synchronised scanning of images, using the optoelectronic properties of selenium. The scanning procedure was adopted for the cathode ray tube. Sony's Trinitron combined shadow masks and wire grilles to improve apparent resolution. Liquid crystal displays and other display mechanisms continued the trend, combining scanning with Cartesian grids of pixels and sub-pixels now not only native to displays and image-capture devices like CCD and CMOS chips but to the motherboards of all computers with visual in-out ports. These grids are controlled through clock functions that govern latency, refresh rates, and the ordered instruction sets that place data at specific points of screens and printers.

Scenario 2: Glass reappears in lens technologies. It was apparent from the earliest days that simple bi-convex lenses introduced distortions into the image that required correction. Compound lenses helped but lost light, requiring new forms of glass and glass coatings, as well as new materials to line the camera body to cut down internal reflections. For cameras and projectors, the apogee of control came in Speer's architecture for the Nuremberg Rallies. The advances made by Zeiss-Ikon in lens design were taken over by Corning Glass in the development of laser and later fibre-optic technologies, with their confocal structuring of the glass to encourage the most efficient use of light over long distances.

There is no such thing as a digital lens, but the lens, as a system for controlling optics, is at the heart of the digital infrastructure.

Other scenarios concerning, among other things, colour management and the shaping of volume and space have similar stories. We move steadily toward a system of unit counting (as in hexadecimal colour) and probabilistic averaging (as in the use of vector prediction in video codecs) toward an ossification of the dominant media – the media of domination – of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the spreadsheet, the database, and the geographical information system.

My thesis is that, just as the ledgers and log-books of the Middle Ages evolved into double-entry book-keeping, filing cabinets and cartographic longitude and latitude, our visual media, especially in the popular and instrumental form of prints, migrated toward diagrammatic and ultimately grid-like structures: the grids that dominate modern architecture and urbanism, just as they dominate the managerial and governmental processes of the neo-liberal database economy. The common feature of these cellular maps is that they convert time into space.

Negri traces the origins of this spatialisation to the early modern political philosophers who stood at 'the horizon of a totality without end. It is on this totality [...] that modern thought is constituted'.<sup>1</sup> Between Machiavelli's *Il Principe* of 1513 and Hobbes's *Leviathan* of 1651 (in company with Harrington's *Oceana* of 1656), Mercator's projection provided, literally, the map of dominion, the establishment and maintenance of sovereignty through the disciplining of space and its assimilation of time. Even as bureaucracies and disciplinary forms of governmentality grew, the invisible omnipresence, the totality of authority became entrenched and immediate. Authority ruled in the same way as lines ruled across the globe: instantaneous, universal, even when an actual order might take months to reach an imperial outpost. As Agamben argues, the model was the sovereignty of providence, even though ministering angels enacting God's will had to intervene in time and in history. Digital grids, from databases to displays, diagram the totality of contemporary power as the assertion of atemporal rule over the temporalities of the swarming multitude (the invisible hand of the market; the probabilistic simulation of altering variables) and the management of invention, progress, and hope.

## II

Visual culture is neither merely a clue to underlying ideologies, nor an epiphenomenon of power, but the material form in which power is exercised and disputed. We work, of course, in what is depicted: it matters

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 110.

whether we show the plutocrats of the G8 or the immiserated poor and whether we look at the streets from the perspective of the people or the police. But we also work inside the structured times of chips and screens, spreadsheets and simulations. The goal of these mediations is to present – to make present – the world and every part of it as totality: to snatch from change itself the idea of beginning, middle, and end, the static diagram of completed (and therefore completable) actions. It is, to borrow Badiou's terminology, to suppress the emergence of events, where by event we mean actions that open uncontrollable possibilities beyond the managerial aesthetic of the total image.

The moving image has always teetered on the brink of its own dissolution. The unit of the film strip is not one frame but three: the one just gone, this one, and the one about to come. The field of view is always only temporary, no matter how whole it appears. This ephemerality is even more recognisable in the scanned frame, where the single frame is never complete. The interlaced scan replaces the first scan before it can fade entirely from the phosphors and the eye, and in progressive scanning the refresh rate, accelerated to Herzian cycles, while it moves toward restoring the integrity ruptured in field-and-frame scanning, must always race to catch up with the effects of speed in motion blur and parallax effects. The further we move into stereoscopy, the harder the challenge of producing wholeness (the reason for 48fps scanning in *The Hobbit*.)<sup>2</sup> In film, the succession of frames opens the possibility of montage, which is not only the synthetic montage of Eisenstein's Stalinist period, but the disruptive action of negation that he tried and failed to assimilate into *Vertical Montage*.<sup>3</sup> In video, the scan predicts the failure of images to comprise an imaginary whole (the humanistic 'reality' of realist aesthetics) or to construct a truly habitable diegesis ('reality begins at 80 million polygons per second'). We watch video not in spite but because of the glitches.

Scanning produces an unstable present that depends on simultaneous bodily memory (afterimage) and forgetting (erasure of the previous image to make room for the next). It presents as present (and does so even when we know we are seeing a re-present-ation) a totality, the completion of an occurrence, which it presents as present and complete in the interests of reminding us (as though we might forget) that the world simply *is*, whole and entire. The stronger the faith in wholeness, the deeper our submission to totality.

What matters about an image is not its unity, despite Coleridge's monumental statement of aesthetic object as that 'which contains in itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise'. In the case of the moving

image, what is important is how the image, at any point and over any duration, is otherwise, and not 'so'. Any image is an image *of*, and to that extent always refers to something outside itself. Any image is therefore incomplete. But the ontological incompleteness of the *moving* image lies in the oxymoron of image and movement. Before photography, drawing was an act of memory, tracing the vanishing present to carry forward in the past. Since the advent of electronics, drawing has become a precise action tracing how we forget. In David Connearn's recent *TV Drawings*, unlike his earlier works, each new line drawn to follow the precise contour of the previous line is a meditation on aberration, on the erasure of the line before, its fleeting movement into an irrecoverable past where it melds with the field of its own incompleteness. In Connearn's drawings, it should be added, the condition of incompleteness gestures – as his drawings are always gestural – toward a state of the drawing which would be other than this unique drawing, even if the same parameters were applied to the scale, pen width, ink, the space between the lines, and the speed and direction of drawing. An occupation of time that presents itself as a field of vision that disaggregates into a memory of a process of making that is also an unmaking.

The non-identical principle of fields and scans expands into the construction of space. In Peter Campus's recent landscape works made around his home on Long Island, the proto-static image and its small movements – we might say, the gestures of a non-human agency at work in the collaborative making of these long takes – is composited (though Campus is reluctant to reveal the details of his post-production) in layers. Compositing lies next door to composition: space is created by placing indefinitely thin components of the image over one another. Campus's compositing is closer to the washes of thinned pigment laid over one another in building a watercolour or a chromolithographic print, the translucence of each layer adding internal reflections between layers to produce the effect of something approaching X-ray vision. At first almost imperceptible, the gentle stirring of the boat at its moorings in *providence*, like the breathing of this human environment at the edge of the non-human, composes depth as the infiltration of one layer into another.

Landscape demands a certain kind of distracted concentration: an ability to let the whole of the field of vision speak, across the whole surface and from the closest to the farthest of elements, whilst forming them, as any art necessarily must do. As practised in the special effects industry, the goal of layering is to erase the marks of making in order to produce a convincing illusion of the diegetic world. Campus works in the opposite direction: he marks the work of making (for example in his treatment of edges) in order to make us see, not just the illusion in the making, but the illusory nature of the landscape itself, or more particularly of the act of perceiving it, the act that turns world into landscape, illusion into diegesis. Since Marey and Muybridge, the

<sup>2</sup> See Jody Duncan, 'The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey There and Back Again', *Cinefex*, No. 132 (2013), pp. 84–132.

<sup>3</sup> Sergei M. Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage' [1940], in *Selected Works. Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, ed. Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor, trans. Michael Glenny (London: BFI, 1996), pp. 327–398.

ontological and phenomenological presumption of photography has been that what is 'shot' or 'captured' is a slice of time, complete, evidentiary. This is no longer the case in *providence* where the instability of the image in depth unpacks the in-folded secret of the apparently seamless surface, the apparent serenity composed – etymologically 'sharing a place with' – of elements in dialogue, between both areas of the screen and layers of the image. If in this we may feel we glimpse some intimation of infinity, the infinity we are scenting is distinct from totality in its multiplicity.

The multitudinous intrudes in image-gathering in what engineers call the 'dark current'. At very low light levels, or in darkness, imaging chips will appear to capture pinpricks of light. These events are not caused by photons but by heat (even in super-cooled chips used for scientific purposes) and by quantum-level electro-magnetic effects originating in the chip itself. It is not only Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle that makes dark current effects mysterious. In Susan Collins's landscape works (*Fenlandia*, *Glenlandia*, and especially *Seascape*), the image is built pixel by pixel. In the earlier pieces timed to complete a full screen in 24 hours, in *Seascape* in the period between tides, the adapted CMOS high-resolution security cameras attend to the passage of light through the lens one pixel at a time. But at dawn, twilight, and at night, when the light levels dip close to or beneath the dark current level, artefacts appear that might be either fleeting phenomena – a passing plane, a bird, a sudden shower – or a spontaneous burst of energy from within the camera. There is no possibility of disambiguation here: there are no records to consult on the random flash of sunlight on a seagull's wing, or the quantum events on a computer chip. There is only the evidence of our own eyes, as the scans parse the scene in their slow parody of clock time, their revelation that every pixel of the scene is a unique moment in time, unrepeatable, and irreducible to any norm or average, even those applied by the codecs handling the signal from chip to built-in amplifiers via cables, motherboards, and software to display. Any moment in history might be the narrow gate through which the Messiah may arrive, wrote Walter Benjamin: each nanosecond is the portal through which the unannounced future steps into existence. Any point in the visual world might be that entrance. Collins's attentive cameras watch as each of those indefatigable futures pops into existence and then disappears.

Though the duration of each opening of the shutter is so vanishingly brief and the light-sensitive pixels of the chip so vanishingly small, photons are still quicker and smaller. They rain in in their millions, building toward the threshold that triggers the sensitivity of the chip, and in all their variety and from all directions, features that the chip can only recognise, if at all, by organising the light according to rules of statistical averages. The colour response is not triggered by the wavelength of any one photon but by the aggregate of all of them, conjugated through a system of colour management (hexadecimal, 8-bit, 32-bit) that brings

that multiplicity under the rule of whole numbers. There are no digital fractions, no infinitesimals. Each pixel is held to record one narrow angle of vision on the world, just as is each molecule on a photographic film. It is presumed to be the evidence that light came, just then and just there. Yet at the point where developing amplifies the photographic signal, digital imaging rounds its electronic response to binary, eliminating all ambiguities, establishing the wholeness of that fragment of reality in its unit-counting arithmetic. The tiny discarded results, too little or fractionally too great to sum to one or zero, are the hallmarks of the unique moment and it is that uniqueness, that bubbling cauldron of unprecedented and unrepeatable electromagnetic events that Collins captures in her landscapes. As a result we no longer watch these slow-building images for evidence of the wholeness of the terrains they observe, but instead to witness the constant, a-rational, chaotic noise of light at its inhuman business in the world, and at the capacity of imaging technologies to generate their own light, like our own eyes in a pitch-dark room.

And like our eyes, with their tendency to construct from afterimages an alternative ballet of movement embroidered over the actual, David Rokeby's *Plot Against Time 4 (Atlantic Baroque)* unveils the vectors mapped by gannets over a stretch of the Newfoundland seaboard, voyaging on (and thereby visualising invisible) thermals, diving for invisible fish, constructing a sky as richly abstract as Paul Nash's accounts of the skies over Kent during the Battle of Britain. The consequence of another time of perception, another duration, is as profound as seeing into wavebands other than visible light. In the *Plot against Time* series, Rokeby uses a series of filters to separate moving from still elements of the frame – a device typical of most codecs – not to maximise efficiency, as they do, but to single out the turbulence of duration. When we – and our codecs – abstract moving elements, it is to identify them as objects. Rokeby identifies them as durations, evolutions, interweavings, ecologies. His world is not made up of discrete and (in principle) countable objects that, since they can be counted, can be accounted, rendered exchangeable, and prepared for circulation as data commodities in the information economy. Nor is there evidence that he construes these trajectories as components of a system, parallel to the decentred network of the market economy. Rather, these are once more unique and effervescent multiplicities whose evolutions we witness as marvels.

The landscape, especially at those liminal moments we meet at the edge of the sea or sky, is, or should be, a mystery to us. It appears as such from that close relative of the moving image, the railway train, from Hale's Tours to Robert Cahen's *Juste le temps*, where the landscape morphs into signal, unpacking the visionary intoxication of travel, its simultaneous alienation from, and new vistas for identification with, the world exteriorised by mechanised transport. We can see the same

phenomenon open up in a work almost twenty years younger, Rosa Menkman's *The Collapse of PAL*, her elegy for the end of the transmission standard that dominated European broadcasting in its first generation. Carefully disassembling and rebuilding her old video camera, Menkman, author of the *Glitch Studies Manifesto*, trains her lens on a passing landscape and the flare of sunstrike that places her lens 'there', in the same present as the world she images, even as that image declines to be captured in a technology that declines to capture it. This one-off technical adjustment to the imaging device *wants* only to transform light, to assess and assemble it according to a logic that is proper neither to the human operator nor to the landscape pictured; and which is not in any easily available sense *proper* at all.

There is a subtle difference between the Cahen and Menkman works, a little more than that Cahen liberates the image from intentionality in post-production and Menkman at the moment of the shoot. Cahen's tape contains at least the residue of a narrative: there is an encounter, a series of oneiric evocations of sexual transaction, a sense therefore, common across his work, of a humanity enlarged to become both a medium for landscape and which landscapes in turn project, extroject, painting the world in the colours of an emotional tenor. Menkman is cooler, even where she evokes the dark figure of Benjamin's Angel of History, and perhaps especially there, or in the shadow of that angel's wings, blown backwards out of paradise. The storm of progress has cast her imaging tools onto the vast mound of debris piling up at the angel's feet that he is incapable of going back to mend; and Menkman's intervention with the screwdriver and soldering iron is an ineluctably diminished reprise of an already historical and decaying machine. The order of scanning has broken up: the clock-function is failing and the remnant of the burnt-in-time code is insufficient to lock the frames or fields in place, allowing them to scatter across the picture plane and into neighbouring frames, just as travelling glitches, spooling horizontally across the image in increasing density as the work progresses, evoke further times and travels, of the tape itself as a material entity, of the hard-drives it has been mastered to, and the compressions and decompressions that bring it via Vimeo to this projection in this hall today.

'Ineluctable modality of the visible', muses Stephen Dedalus at the beginning of the Proteus chapter in *Ulysses*. He is drawing on Aristotle's observation that alone among the senses, the eye never touches its object (even the ear touches the moving air). Contactless, our eyes perceive not things but the emanations of things and must construct out of them a visible world. If this is true of the landscape works addressed so far, it is even more so in the construction of urban landscape. In Daniel Crooks's time-slice works, grouped scanlines from one frame are migrated to the next, so that each image is compiled from a range of moments in time. In *Pan No.6 (of steps and clocks)*, the technique is combined with vertical

slices, motion-controlled pan, and the associated parallax effect to make the foreground figures and the traffic in the mid-ground move in different temporal worlds. Like Menkman and Cahen, Crooks opens the visionary palette of time; like Rokeby, he conjures into existence an unexpected co-temporality of inhabited space; and like Campus, directs us to engage our temporal habits with the construction of space through layering. This is not to say that this is a summa of all that we have looked at; only that the time-slice works work because they work in and with the formal temporality built into the black-boxes of video technology, boxes that we need to penetrate if we are ever to understand how exactly the prison bars keep us locked in.

### III

It is a legitimate question to ask whether political aesthetics can ever make a change in the world. It is easier to assert that without political aesthetics, the world might well be worse than it already is. Modesty is becoming. In the age of precarious labour, one might be forgiven for thinking that the old grids of Fordist manufacturing might be thoroughly *dépassés* and that the kind of fluidity I have pointed toward in these artists is already assumed in the new managerialism. Already in 1993, the Critical Art Ensemble had made it clear that strategies of nomadism and rhizomes had already become doctrine in corporate management. The task of critical thought is to be critical: to create problems, not to offer solutions. It is sorely possible that each of the artworks I have discussed is of purely historical interest. Digital media arts move fast: we can all think of dozens of vanguards and manifestoes superseded in the last twenty years. Art and, for that matter, concepts move, we could say, at the speed of the planned obsolescence characteristic of corporate product cycles, defeating Stiegler's attempt to distinguish invention from innovation.

John Cage was reportedly unimpressed with Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film*, a projection of white leader, on its first outing; but when it returned from a North American tour scratched, dusty, and marked, he told Paik it was 'much improved'. *Ars brevis, vita breviora*. The most recent arts fade the fastest: bit rot and obsolescence are whittling away at the heritage of electronic media arts. This, too, is part of the temporality we need to understand: there is no permanence. The artists we have encountered here are, among their many interests, analysts of what it means to make and embrace the phrase 'time-based art'.

Some of these works are loops, some halt, and some have endings. They are, or they indicate the possibility of the existence of events: they disturb the order of time. Christian Marclay's *The Clock* oscillates between the industrial time of cinema as chronometer and the Herzian rates of

electronics. In the long 'today' that's been going on at least since Virilio wrote about Cold War early warning systems, our clocks run at the rates of crystalline vibrations, far faster than human perception or muscular response. Time organised below the threshold of perception structures in a way that E. P. Thompson's account of the clock as the foundation of factory discipline could not: at the level of nerves and neurons rather than simply that of the sensory-motor system. Velocity is only one side: the granular attention to ordering the very pixels of visual code – equivalent to organising the molecules on a filmstrip or a cathode ray tube – moves toward nano-scales whose temporality must seem all-encompassing to its beneficiaries.

But as the artworks we have seen expose, there is leakage at this level of tiny fragments of time, a leakage of those even smaller fragments. These cannot be caught by sampling at ever more extreme rates. What is lost in any sampling regime, anything working on the fragment as such, is the puzzle of continuity first posed in Zeno's paradox 2,500 years ago. To measure out life in units is to fail to understand the disintegration of integers. That lack of self-identity that troubles the totalising self-presentation of the image as presence is the same dialectical negation that pulls apart the stability of the pixel. At the same time, the remnant of each division of time into units is a mark not of a near-enough approximation but of the failure of division to grasp the unstill gesture of motion as a trajectory, not a plot of points. Time is a vector, or more properly a scalar product of the multiplication of many vectors: in each case, a motion with direction and therefore marked by and as change. Yet everywhere in our media, from spreadsheets to vector-prediction, we see time reduced to an empty calendar, an endless replication of cells, an infinite map of total domination.

This ontological time is flow. But neither we nor our technologies inhabit ontology: we live in history, and time has its history marked out by the technical struggle to control and manage it. We know too phenomenologically as well as culturally that time present splinters in our hands into elements of distant and recent pasts, proximate and distant futures. We can neither leave time nor surrender to it, because we would be surrendering to an always managed mode of time. The moving image arts are not bulldozers smashing open the old Bastille; more like blades smuggled in to loosen a brick or carve graffiti on the wall. But these acts are also acts of hope. We do not live in a tragic time but in the vast expanse of total time, a calendar that marks out ahead of us the frame of each and every hour, into which our separate and discrete behaviours are to fit. The purpose of hope is not to write a five-year plan: it is to prise open those tiny gaps in the nets that hold us, to let in a little light, to make it possible for events to occur that earn the name 'event' by eluding the temporal grid where mere occurrences occur. The time of the glitch, the time of the dead pixel, the time of laborious attention

to the world and its pictured ordering: these are the particularities, the unique instances of suffering and joy that refuse universal history and its diary. They are instruments of hope and, I hope, pledges of the beauty that escapes.





**In0wasting (v.)****1**

When you invest all of your energy and hard labour into the next new project with absolutely 0 effect.

**2**

The devising of new ways of wasting so that new things to waste may be produced in order for new ways of wasting to be invented in order that new things to be wasted may be produced in order for new ways of wasting to be invented... – close to what old-school critical theorists might term the basis of a 'consumer society'.

**3**

A new recycling method devised through recent scientific research: when a thing is used, it generates waste that has 0.000005 added value compared to the 'original' thing; such a thing can then undergo the procedure of consumption and valorise itself by 0.000005 again; and then again; and then again...

**4**

The basis of a new utopian society that, in theory, by strictly applying the procedure described in (3), gets richer and richer merely through consumption, always producing a new 0.

**5:** In-waste as wasting time:

**5.1:** Investing waste (for example: doing something with low energy and commitment; engaging in complex work with inappropriate knowledge; recycling things that are useless or not practicable in regard

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to your purpose; investing one euro when it is evident that this value will not yield any interest).

**5.2:** Investing *in* waste (for example: investing energy into a work that is doomed to fail or cannot produce any results; pouring water from one can into another and back, again and again with no reason; throwing money into a trash can; investing money in shares that cannot yield any profit).

In-waste as wasting time is an impossible mission contingent on unintentional and unpredictable experiences and alien to teleological thought. But in the course of this irrational investment whereby a certain value is wasted or misspent, something else might arise. The lack of success or speculation carries an unexpected offering in this case. Executing a task with low energy and commitment or inappropriate knowledge can engender new and useful solutions, knowledge, and insights into something that may or may not be connected to the task. The same goes for working on something that is doomed to fail. A financial non-profit investment can lead to unpredictable gains or create possibilities for making gains. (For example: someone sees our money 'falling' into the rubbish bin, retrieves it and brings it back to us, which brings about a nice conversation and the beginning of a long-lasting friendship.) According to the New Age spiritual principle of the universal circulation of money and goods, expending money means creating space for new earnings, so throwing money away may actually bring about a good future in financial terms. It is in this sense that wasting can be regarded as a locus for innovation and invention.

The importance of the 0 (zero) as the key symbol in the term should not be underestimated, because it holds the key to a correct understanding of the term *in0wasting*. The 0 (zero) is there to point out that *in0wasting* emphasises the component of value and simultaneously indicates the problem of defining value (for example: '0' could also mean 'zero value' in the event that the person either 1) investing waste or 2) investing *in* waste believes that the investment was really all in vain).

Similarly to the letter 0, the number 0 in *in0wasting* bears the graphic shape of a circle that signals the possibility for things and elements to slip through or vanish – being invested or taken out of investment. The 0 is a kind of doorway or passage – open on both sides. The narrower shape of the number 0 (zero) compared to that of the letter 0 hints at the fact that this passage is narrower, hard to grasp and not obvious, hence the value of *in0wasting* and more generally of all activities on the threshold of wasting, investing, and innovating remains contradictory, precarious, and uncertain.

**6**

According to this usage of the term, *in0wasting* means wasting time in a specific context and being ready to invest money in order to be able to

do so. It is an investment in time passing by or ticking away. Currently the most familiar example of this trend or innovation is a Russian chain of pay-per-minute cafés called 'Ziferblat' (deriving from the German and Russian word *Zifferblatt*, which means clock face). Recently, this chain has opened its first branch in London, and is steadily gaining in popularity. In Ziferblat people pay for the time that they spend there instead of for the drinks and food that they consume. Everything is for free but the time you are in the café. Upon entrance, the guests pick an alarm clock and note their time of arrival. When they exit, they pay for the time they spent at Ziferblat, at the rate of three pence (3p; £0.03 or €0.04 or \$0.05) per minute. During their stay they can use the kitchen to prepare their own food or the snacks they brought, they may take drinks or fruit, play the piano, or use the wireless. This January, Vicky Baker asked in *The Guardian*: 'Does £1.80 an hour sound like good value?'<sup>1</sup>

As some Ziferblat regulars point out, the café's *ad hoc* emerging social mini-universe is very stimulating and they don't see the three pence per minute as a waste at all, but rather as zero-waste that one is eager to pay for a brief amount of time shared in the company of strangers. At the moment, there is a viral discussion raging about the advantages and disadvantages of having time-theatres and time-concerts, events that would charge for the duration of one's stay rather than for the performance presented, which would be a good opportunity for beginning and end freaks, but could also herald an apotheosis of the peepshow principle.

## 7

In0wasting, as in explaining the word *in0wasting* or making a dictionary like this one.

<sup>1</sup> Vicky Baker: 'London's first pay-per-minute cafe: will the idea catch on?', *theguardian.com*, 8 January 2014 (<http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2014/jan/08/pay-per-minute-cafe-ziferblat-london-russia>).

## Presency (n.)

The etymological roots of the term *presency* are the words *presence* and *latency*. In a network, latency, a synonym for *delay*, conveys how long it takes for a packet of data to get from one designated point to another. A so-called *low latency* network connection is one that generally experiences small delay times, while a *high latency* connection generally suffers from long delays. Presency is the belatedness with which an image or a series of images arrive at another person's computer screen in the course of a live transmission. It is a real-time image or presence arriving with a certain delay. The possibility of being present at different times and places simultaneously is a phenomenon that emerged with advanced recording, transmission, and digital communication technologies, such as Skype. While your webcam is recording your image during a Skype conversation, you may see yourself in real time on your screen, whereas your friend in England, for instance, might see the same images with a slight delay of, say, three seconds; or, if you happen to be talking to someone in Chicago, they might see the same images with a 30-second delay. *Presency* is therefore a split presence, a 'live' presence that is visible in different places at different times. A common consequence of *presency* is the disconnection between image and sound that one may experience in a Skype conversation when the image freezes or is delayed but the sound, that is, the voice of the other party goes on. In such cases, the movements of the lips shown in the live video feed no longer correspond to the spoken words or sounds: audible and visible information thus decomposes.



Tomislav Medak  
**THEATRE AND TOTALITY**  
 (In)Completion  
 A Great Learning...

I will begin this polemic against a generalist notion of political theatre and a certain understanding of political art by reminding us that when debating political art, it is not easy to bypass the benchmark regarding the political commitment of artists that Walter Benjamin set in his talk 'The Author as a Producer',<sup>1</sup> delivered in 1934 at the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris. In that talk, he makes a trenchant distinction. On one side, there are activist writers such as Döblin, Kästner, and Tucholsky, who have staked their revolutionary allegiances with the proletariat, stating their position against the dominant relations of production, yet without ever reflecting on their own position in the process of production. Whilst acting in good faith, what their political commitment achieves is packaging revolutionary themes so that the 'bourgeois apparatus of production and publication' may easily assimilate them. On the other side, there are artists such as Bertolt Brecht, who strive to transform their own means of production and position in the process of production, helping the struggle of the proletariat by entering the revolutionary fray as specialists or experts. Fundamental in this transformation is their work on melting down old artistic forms and reinserting them into new forms of action, whilst overcoming barriers between different autonomous

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 85–103.

fields of bourgeois society. In Brecht's case, this is achieved by means of epic theatre, which does not stage actions, but, rather, invents theatrical techniques that enable it to perform an interruption in the course of events in order to represent the conditions that produce them. Ultimately, and this is Benjamin's injunction, there is no revolutionary art without transforming the way that art is made and becomes operative.

Transforming the means of production might seem a tall order today. After all, while capitalism spent most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rapidly revolutionising the forces of production, art has sought to transform functionally (*umfunktionieren*) its own means of production. However, we should not resign ourselves – especially in the context of advanced capitalism that is equally deft at structuring social reality and assimilating political acts as was the capitalist system of Benjamin's time – to the facile notion that there is a way of doing art politically without transforming the means of its making.

For instance, how should one define political theatre? As a type of theatre that takes political events as its subject matter? Or as a type of theatre that takes a political stance or creates a political distance? Or, as a type of theatre that maintains a committed position in relation to a given political situation? Or, as a type of theatre that urges us to stand up for or against something, a type of theatre that seeks to mobilise us?

Or rather, is there a latent political core in theatre as such, as a form of art? A core that has its historic roots in Greek tragedy and that provides a communal mirror-event for its community to behold its own inner social drama? Politics will always feature in theatre, even when we don't suspect or intend it. In this account, theatre is viewed as a medium that politicises whatever enters its frame.

Well, we are no doubt wary of both options: either that political action can be extended in and through theatre's subject matter, or, conversely, that theatre as a form allows us to experience the political core of social antagonisms. While it is true that over the past few years realism has made a big comeback in theatre, it predominantly functions as a sanitised form of edification, modelled after the bourgeois notion of the public sphere, or as an extended format for voicing social discontent and helplessness. This format is then regurgitated in the media, reproducing forms of a pathologised and blocked reality, producing only generalised discontent and no concrete commitments. There is nothing more depoliticising than recycling the opinions and affects of a generalised discontent. Such forms of political theatre become part of the problem rather than the solution. On the other hand, as theatre is an institutional form, it tends to reproduce positions of domination and arrangements

of interests in the artistic field that are more or less covertly political. Nowadays, we see two dominant models: the hardened hierarchical structures of the traditional production model of theatre houses and an increasingly rationalised independent circuit. In the latter model the financial squeeze and a shift in institutional arrangements have gradually reduced performances to the minimal forms of solo and duet; these are single-issue, perfectly marketable, and distributable acts created by easily recognisable individual authors and selected and promoted by individual programmers, who are now assuming a role comparable to curators in the visual arts. And these two models play well together. But at the same time, they reproduce an institutional politics to which not everybody would subscribe. They tend to reproduce the politics of blockage rather than transformation. In fact, the premise of this politics is by and large to police privilege and various forms of exclusion from the means of production.

So there is a persistent ambivalence when it comes to making political art. Political art must arrive at a politics of its own. Its politicisation can be effected neither simply from without – by means of borrowings from political debates or aspirations – nor from within – by manifesting its own latent political character. It has to be worked through by means of rehearsing and staging.

There is a deeper reason for this. As Pierre Macherey noted in his *A Theory of Literary Production*,<sup>2</sup> a work of art does not simply reflect the intentions of its creator, but is rather produced under determinate conditions that are reflected in it. In the overt multiplicity of meanings that a work contains, it is marked by a multiplicity of fictions that are incomplete and exhibit cracks, which bespeak a determinate absence, one that the work is never able to express completely and manifestly. The creator is thus never in command of her work, nor do her intentions of this or that kind seem intended to the reader. Thus, when a work of political art resigns its status of fiction and aspires to the truthfulness of its statements and political agency, it must concede that truthfulness is not a reflection of intent and always runs the risk of lapsing into unintended demagogy. So, if it wants to avoid compounding the necessary volatility of intents in an artwork with the volatility of an improvised political opinion, it must willy-nilly start from the process of understanding social reality, from knowledge and learning. However, and this is a great learning from Brecht and Macherey, political art can achieve this only by transforming its own means and conditions of production, by learning through a transformed process of rehearsing and enacting a theatrical situation, and not by preaching political truths to its audience.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2003).

But before I try to suggest what such transformed processes in contemporary political theatre could be – instead of what they are simply taken to be – let us look at the way the artwork is prefigured in the contemporary formation of social reality, the determinate conditions under which art is produced and to which it points, without ever addressing them.

### Social Totality and Ideological Representation

Analysing ideological representation in a work of art typically starts by uncovering a set of displacements of primary relations, which underpin the organisation of social reality, onto secondary relations that are available to social actors as representations of their social reality. These displacements are rendered through rhetorical devices and tropes that allow the work to suture, more or less convincingly, the rifts that open due to displacing primary, structuring relations (e.g. relations in the workplace and social hierarchy) onto secondary, represented relations (e.g. relations in the family and patriarchal hierarchy). Acting within these confines of ideological displacement, a political work of art then modulates these devices in order to unveil the workings of political imagination.

Such a reading of how a given social reality becomes encoded in and operated by a work of art is characteristic of different strands of socio-cultural analysis that have proliferated over the past twenty years or so. The critique of ideology has made its presence felt across the analysis of popular and political culture. As a consequence of Althusser's proviso of the relative autonomy of politics and culture, i.e. the superstructure, from the economy, i.e. the base, this form of interpretation has increasingly dissociated itself from analysing the base and by and large committed its efforts to understanding how social pathologies are produced and reproduced through mechanisms of ideological subjectivation. However, in doing so, it has developed a blind spot regarding the production and reproduction of social relations at the level of the relations of production. By failing to articulate the specific historical conditions under which economy determines ideology 'in the last instance', this line of interpretation has become a fully autonomised cultural competency. While focusing on libidinal economies, it has lost all grasp of material economies.

Without wishing to keep maligning the fads and aberrations of ideology critique, I would like to argue that the ideological reproduction of the dominant social relations and the process of ideological interpellation that it takes as the focus of its analysis are just the second step in a

two-step process of overdetermination. And it is here that the notion of totality from the title above comes into play. By totality I mean the totalising social mediation of exchange value, abstract labour and commodity production in advanced capitalist societies. They represent a rational core of the production and organisation of ever-expanding segments of social reality that are subsumed under capitalist relations. And they also represent a rational core at the level of ideological operations that organise forms of social representation and collective imagination, i.e. ideology. The rationalisation of one's subjective position within social reality itself is determined by the rationality of the form-determinations of value, commodity, abstract labour time, and accumulation. Hence, the displacements and devices of ideology are themselves determined and structured in a particular way that reflects the rationality of those form-determinations.

Moreover, as those form-determinations produce the rationality of social relations *and* collective imagination, these relations continue to be reproduced only by securing the reproduction of that rationality in people's minds, actions, and functional roles that they perform. Viewed from the perspective of economic form-determination, the relation between the base and the superstructure is more than just relative. Accordingly (and contra Althusser), the displacements and devices of ideology are themselves determined by the rationality of form-determinations in the first instance. Or, in Michael Heinrich's words:

a person behaves like a commodity owner or capitalist insofar as his or her behavior follows a specific rationality. This rationality is a result of the form-determination of the economic process (the economic form-determination of the commodity or capital, respectively). As people's behavior conforms to this specific rationality, they reproduce the preconditioned economic form-determinant. In Marx's presentation, the economic form-determination must be analyzed first, before the behavior of people is addressed.<sup>3</sup>

As an attempt to understand and practically engage this determination in-the-first-instance – and at that, an attempt that runs against the typical interpretative volatility of the critique of ideology approaches, while still remaining in the field of cultural analysis aimed at explaining the blockages of social reality and opportunities for action – one may cite Kluge and Negt's efforts to discern three levels of the mediation of social experience: the bourgeois public sphere (as the dominant ideology that reproduces the relations of domination); material determinations of social reproduction (as the material base that determines social relations); and counter-publics of lived relationality

<sup>3</sup> Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Marx's Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), p. 88.

(as materially determined social positions). In their *Public Sphere and Experience*,<sup>4</sup> they make a production-centred attempt at understanding ideology by focusing on

‘public spheres of production’ [that] include a variety of contexts, such as ‘factory communities’, spaces of commerce and consumption (restaurants, shopping malls) and, of course, the cinema and other privately owned media of the ‘consciousness industry’. Lacking legitimisation of their own, the industrial commercial publics enter into alliances with the disintegrating bourgeois public sphere, from opera and masterpiece theatre to political parties and institutions of parliamentary democracy. The latter in turn dependent increasingly on industrial-commercial publicity for its continued operation and power.<sup>5</sup>

Let us now take a closer look at what those form-determinations are and how they reproduce their rationality through social relations and ideological representations.

### Form-determinations and Historical Development in Capitalism

Capitalism imposes a set of formal determinations that organise social reality. It is the totalising social mediation of commodity exchange that determines the value of labour and its products. However, neither the concrete labour invested in creating a product nor the product itself are the subject of exchange. Rather, the subject of exchange is abstract labour quantified in the abstract uniform time that is necessary to produce the product; that abstract labour is exchanged against other products of abstract labour, which are likewise measured in abstract uniform time. However, the value of the exchanged products and invested abstract labour time is not determined by any individual act of exchange, but by the totality of such exchanges. This totality then expresses the demand and supply of goods in any given society, in terms of socially necessary labour time. The totality of all exchanges determines the exchange value of every single product only after the fact.

This process of exchange is thus a process of transactions between abstractions – between exchange value and abstract labour time, neither of which are concrete – and which organise, through their interactions, the relations between concrete individuals and concrete use values. These interactions between abstractions then produce social reality. And by

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Hansen, ‘Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Permutations of the Public Sphere’, *Screen*, Vol. 34 (Autumn 1993), p. 204.

producing social reality they also reproduce the rationality that organises social epistemology. As Marx indicated and Alfred Sohn-Rethel later elaborated, the real abstractions of exchange condition the possibility of mental abstractions of social reality.

In his form-analysis, Marx describes the fantastic, mystical character of form-determinations – or fetishism. Contrary to the reduction of the notion of fetishism to deception, whereby relations between commodities are mistaken for relations between humans, Marx alludes to the ability of form-determinations to enforce operative dispositions in members of bourgeois society, which are necessary for the reproduction of capitalist relations. Thus, according to the ‘trinity formula’ that Marx advances in Volume 3 of *Capital*, the production of wealth in a society is seen as a ‘division of labour’ between workers, who contribute the labour, the capitalists, who contribute the capital, and the landowners, who contribute the land. Only by bringing their respective properties together can they produce value. However, the form-analysis of value shows us that it is only labour that produces value. Still, to maintain social production in capitalism, each of those three classes must maximise the utility of their own resources, acting under what one might call a necessary or functional illusion or disposition.

The abstractions of the commodity form and law of accumulation drive capitalism as a form of production for the sake of production. But one should amend this understanding of the immanent logic of the functioning of capital and its reproduction of social relations by realising that this logic also represents the immanent logic of a historical dynamic that is marked by constant technological advancement, increasing levels of productivity, and a growing immiseration of labour.

To better understand the specific structure of the production of history in capitalism, let us briefly turn to Moishe Postone’s analysis of the dialectic of abstract time and historic time. Postone posits it as a direct result of the immanent dialectic of the mutual determination of abstract labour, which produces exchange value, and concrete labour, which produces use value; or, what he calls the ‘treadmill effect of value-form’.<sup>6</sup> According to the treadmill effect theory, as the level of productivity in a factory rises, the amount of value produced per unit of time temporarily grows, but as the newly achieved level of productivity is generalised, through pressures of competition, in all factories in that industry, the magnitude of value delivered per unit of time and measured in socially necessary labour time is reset to its initial value. However, in this resetting of value to its initial level, something does change and that

<sup>6</sup> Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 286–305.

is the amount of products, the level of productivity, produced in a unit of time. As productivity, i.e. the use value of labour, grows, the value remains relatively constant.

It has become clear that, with increased productivity, the time unit becomes ‘denser’ in terms of the production of goods. Yet this ‘density’ is not manifest in the sphere of abstract temporality, the value sphere: the abstract temporal unit – the hour – and the total value produced remain constant. That the abstract time frame remains constant despite being redetermined substantively is an apparent paradox that I have noted. This paradox cannot be resolved within the framework of abstract Newtonian time. Rather, it implies another sort of time as a superordinate frame of reference. As we have seen, the process whereby the constant hour becomes ‘denser’ – that is, the substantive change effected by the use value dimension – remains non-manifest in terms of the abstract temporal frame of value. It can, however, be expressed in other temporal terms, with reference to a form of concrete temporality.<sup>7</sup>

Thus historic time becomes denser, filled with ever more products of human labour and accelerated social transformation, ‘an ongoing qualitative transformation of work and production, of social life more generally, and of forms of consciousness, values, and needs’. This growing productivity of labour is eventually disconnected from the immediate labour of producers and becomes sedimented in ‘socially general forms of experience and knowledge’, also known to us as general intellect. However, this historical transformation is always re-determined under the dictate of abstract labour and reset to the dictate of the uniform time of the present, which compels workers to produce in accordance with an abstract temporal norm, but [they] must do so in a historically adequate fashion: they are compelled to ‘keep up with the times’. [...] The notion of historical necessity has another meaning, of course – that history necessarily moves in a determinate fashion. This discussion of Marx’s initial categories has shown that, according to his analysis, these two aspects of historical necessity – the changing compulsion confronting individuals, and the intrinsic logic impelling the totality – are related expressions of the same form of social life.<sup>8</sup>

This form of social life is labour, the double character of which re-determines the historical time of progress by the abstract time of a permanent present, thus keeping history in the tracks of the reproduction of capitalist relations.

In communication theory, breaking away from this double character of

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

labour – i.e. the dialectic of the productivity of labour that propels social progress and its concurrent alienation through the process of abstraction, which is necessary for the extraction of surplus value – forms the basis of its rift strategy.<sup>9</sup> While the reproduction of the proletarian class is premised and perpetuated on the domination of the value-form, it is only by breaking away from the value-relation, the relation that defines the working class as labour, that the working class can suspend capitalist domination at present. Only by negating itself and the law that produces its identity, by identifying with those who are banished from this relation of production based on labour as a commodity, may the proletariat force a revolution in the here and now, as if driving a wedge into the present of time and opening a rift at the beginning of history.

### Is It Politics? Or Is It Economy?

Now that I have briefly outlined the problems of form-determinations and the historical dynamics of capitalism, let us now return to the problem of understanding the notion of political art. If we agree that making political art has to account for social reality, and that it has to work through its own means of composing a sensuous reality in order to come to an mode of exposition (*Darstellung*) that might produce political effects from that account – be that in the form of edification, mobilisation, identification, or intervention – it must start from the force field of a twofold determination: by the economy and the ideology. To better understand how this tension of form and subject matter might be extrapolated, I will briefly look at two works – one in televisual reconstruction and one in literary interpretation – which were explicitly meant to construct such a mode of exposition. This opens the question whether political art may at all ignore the issues of economic form-determination if it wants to be political in the first place and concomitantly, whether we should speak of economic or politico-economic rather than just political art.

In a television interview with Oskar Negt, Alexander Kluge discusses how long a screen adaptation of Marx’s *Capital* would need to be and how one would go about filming it. For instance, how would one film the segment on the primitive accumulation of capital from Volume I? Kluge tried to answer those questions in his *News from Ideological Antiquity*,<sup>10</sup> spanning three DVDs and over 20 hours of running time. As its point of departure, Kluge’s work takes Eisenstein’s ambitious and never realised

<sup>9</sup> R.S., ‘The Present Moment’, *Sic: International Journal for Communication*, No. 1 (2011), <http://rif-raiff.se/texts/en/sic1-the-present-moment> (accessed 18. March 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike, Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008).



plans to film Marx's *Capital*. The film would have presented a day in the life of a married couple (the wife cooking soup and her husband returning home), modelled after James Joyce's treatment of a day in the life of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* and interspersed with fragments of human history, starting with the part of *Capital* that treats the siege of Troy, the problem of commodity, and ending with the problem of class struggle. Following Eisenstein's plans, Kluge assembles a number of interviews, video essays, caption sequences, musical recitals, films by others, and much else, in order to answer the question that forms the centre of his enquiry: how could objective determinations of capitalism work their way into its subjective determinations, so as to enable the crisis of 1929 to erupt into the horrors of WWII? In Kluge's words: 'What was leftist energy, marches now politically to the right'.

The most striking and extensively used instrument of exposition in this *Gesamtmontage* (Eisenstein) is certainly the captions. They are the methodological counterpart to the programmatic question of the historic transformation of capitalism's objective determination into its subjective determination. Kluge explains their effect by means of the autonomisation of images as language. Today, we read cinematic images that have become codified and conventional in exactly the same way we once read the captions in silent films. Captions here command a particular historical relevance, because it is the talkies that made a break from silent film, starting in 1929, and set free the caption to operate as an 'image-stimulus'. They are the language of cinema and the clashing of two such images/captions opens a lacuna, a void that can host the interaction between the spectator and the film.

The other work I want to mention here in passing is Fredric Jameson's reading of *Capital*, Vol. I.<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, Jameson's might not be the most trenchant contemporary reading of *Capital*, one that might provoke a paradigm shift in our understanding of the workings of contemporary capitalism and relevance of Marx's analysis. However, its merit lies in trying to provide a reading of successive conceptual aporiae that Marx manages to resolve in his analysis in *Capital* in a way that allows him to foreground successive contradictions that capitalism itself must resolve in order to constitute a self-perpetuating and expanding system of production for the sake of production that, in Jameson's view, ultimately leads to unemployment and misery.

The process must then be imagined as a specific proto-narrative form, in which the transformation or recoding of a conceptual dilemma in a new and potentially more manageable way also results in the expansion of the object of study itself: the successive resolutions of the linked riddles or dilemmas lay in place the architecture of a whole construct or

<sup>11</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: Volume One* (London: Verso, 2011).

system, which is that of capital as such. It is this unique constructional process, quite unlike that of most philosophical texts and of most rhetorical arguments as well, that Marx calls the *Darstellung* of the material.<sup>12</sup>

The operative device Jameson employs is that of a riddle – the one that, operating on the horizon of real abstraction, allows us to see capitalism for the abstract contradiction-solving machine that it is and makes us understand that without breaking its riddles apart, we can never occupy the position of historic agency.

### What Could Political Theatre Be?

Before I conclude, I will once more turn back to my initial discussion of political art and political theatre. As I already argued above, political theatre cannot divest itself from the dilemmas of effectivity and truthfulness. While we would not expect an artistic intervention, an act of defiance, or a *pièce de résistance* to account for either effectivity or truthfulness, these acts still take place under determinate structural and historical conditions that determine their political effects and speak truth to power. The question of finding a proper entry point, subject matter, form of exposition, means of production, the artist's place in the production process and that of the public in the process of reception cannot be dismissed or ignored.

In my view, the capacity of theatre to act and work politically hinges on developing ways of approaching and accounting for the determinate conditions and historical dynamics discussed above: on the one hand, the double determination of form-abstraction and ideology and on the other, the subsumption of concrete time, social productivity, and history under abstract time. And as long as the conditions are determinate, the work can never rely on achieving determinate effects. Even when authors make a deliberate decision to deal with determinate conditions of production, both they and their intentions continue to be conditioned, shaped, and misshaped by the fantastic realm of the determinations of totalising social mediation. However, their works can assume a political direction, something late Brecht called a function. And in that process their works can take upon themselves to functionally transform the conditions of production in which they originate.

So, rather than attempting to answer what political theatre is, I'll conclude with a short and idiosyncratic list of three propositions of what might preserve its potential to become political. First, turning

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

to theatre's relation to cinema. While theatre as a spatio-perceptual experience is a historic point of departure for the development of the advanced form of cinematic spectatorship that is organised around a black-box, a single audio-visual stream, and a unifocal attention point, early cinema was much more of a fragmentary affair, comprising the separate elements of film projection, sound through orchestration, and embodied acts (parodied, for instance, in Buster Keaton's *Sherlock, Jr.*); since the onset of television, this fragmentation has returned to the cinematic experience by way of the rising prominence of other audio-visual media and screen-based technologies.<sup>13</sup> But starting from that historic juncture, theatre has developed as a dispositive that we could define as cinema minus the synthesis of the moving image. It is propelled by its incapacity of montage, of removing the continuity of presence, of sublating the temporal dimension of appearance. Positively, that means that it is free from the work of synthesis, that it can stage heterogeneous modes of exposition in parallel, render different temporal situations simultaneous and absorb a variety of media, their procedures, and encounters. What dialectical cinema achieves through montage of images, theatre can achieve through parallel espacement, the espacement of parallelisms, a synchronous exploded view of diachronic processes.

Second, while acts and works are produced under determinate conditions, their re-enactment in theatre is accomplished by transforming the determinate conditions under which they were initially produced. This means not changing an act, but re-enacting it under a different set of conditions. Theatre is neither a replication of reality nor its transformation, but rather a bifurcation of an act under determinate but changed conditions. Theatre does not stage a sequence of acts, but rather an alteration of conditions.

Third, and this follows from the foregoing two propositions: a theatrical situation can operate a suspension of the present, a suspension of the identity of agents onstage with the conditioning determinations of their acts represented onstage, a break with the functional dispositions they inhabit— in Marx's words, their "economic character masks".

All members of bourgeois society are subordinate to the fetishism of social relations. This fetishism takes root as an 'objective form of thought' that structures the perception of all members of society [...]. Neither capitalists nor workers have a privileged position that allows them to evade this fetishism. However, this fetishism is also not a completely closed universal context of deception from which

<sup>13</sup> For more on the spatio-perceptually fragmented and medially heterogeneous experience of early cinematic spectatorship, see Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

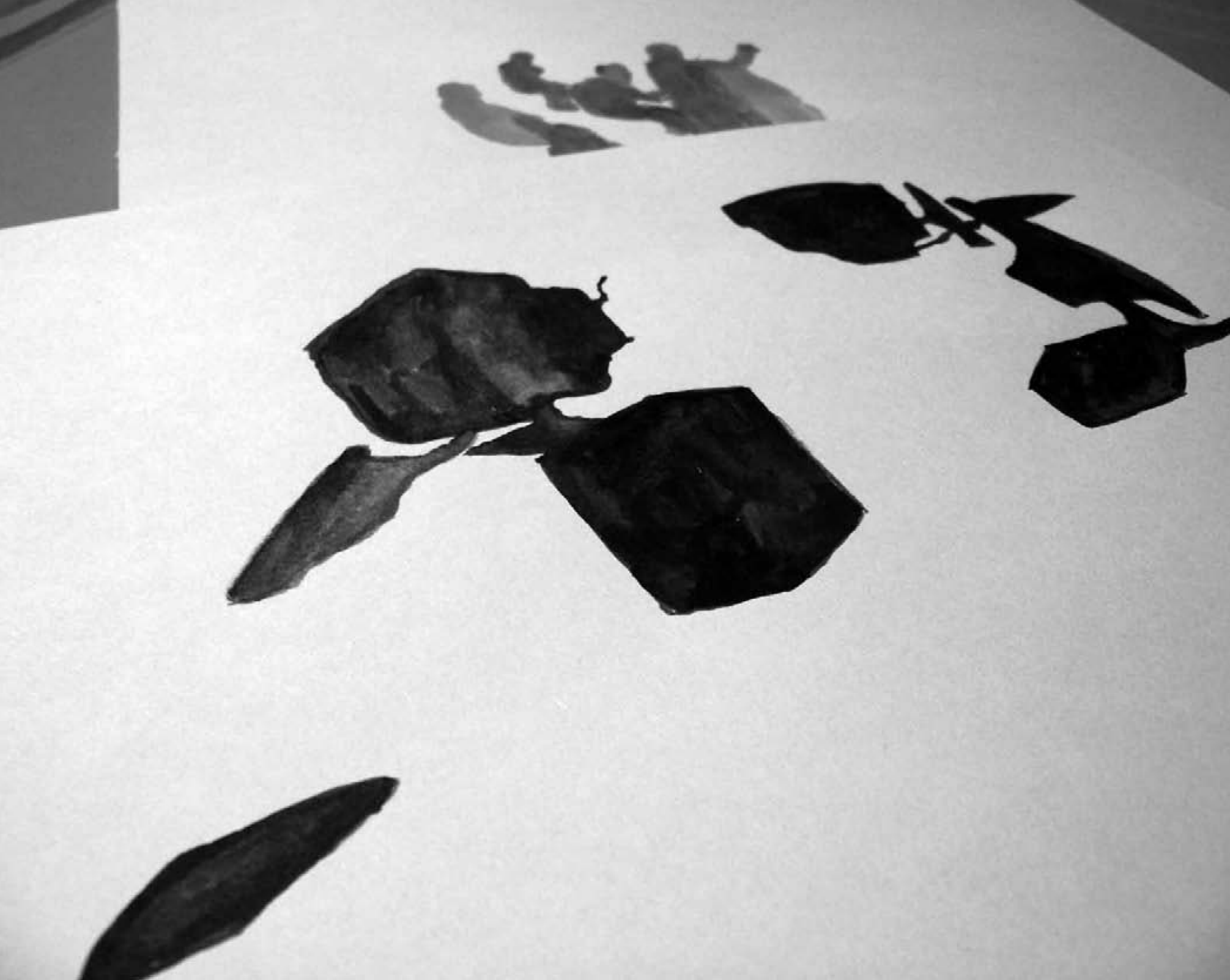
there is no escape. Rather, it constitutes a structural background that is always present, but affects different individuals with varying strength and can be penetrated on the basis of experience and reflection"<sup>14</sup>

Whist unable to leave the continuous present of the stage, a theatrical situation can upstage the continuity by creating parallelisms and bifurcations in the fetishist conditioning of social relations and thus produce acts of dissociation. Dissociations form a persistent redetermination of the future by the present of abstract time.

<sup>14</sup> Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Marx's Capital*, p. 88.

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**Zenacceleration (n., no pl.)****1**

*Zen koan: When Banzan was walking through a market he overheard a conversation between a butcher and his customer. 'Give me the best piece of meat you have', said the customer. 'Everything in my shop is the best', replied the butcher. 'You cannot find here any piece of meat that is not the best.' At these words Banzan became enlightened.*

Zen koans are parables or paradoxical anecdotes that convey the wisdom of Zen masters in a deliberately irrational manner. For Zen Buddhists, a koan is the 'space, time and event, when truth comes to reveal'. The example above attempts to reveal a certain truth at the heart of its incomprehensibility that may also apply to zenacceleration – although not merely as a flash of truth but also as a reason for a particular transmission, transformation, or twist of Zen in contemporary societies, where time has become a crucial economic and political concept that regulates and governs our lives. This reason stems from the realisation that the truth that is revealed is that everything is as it is and that in that way it is the best it can/could be; we only need to recognise that.

Zenacceleration doesn't question the practices related to Zen Buddhism that were imported and implemented in contemporary Western societies directly (although it indicates a different kind of 'effect' of these practices), but emphasises the usage of Zen methods as a tool for realising a different kind of 'truth revealed'. In Zen Buddhist meditation, awareness and koans should help one to focus on direct personal

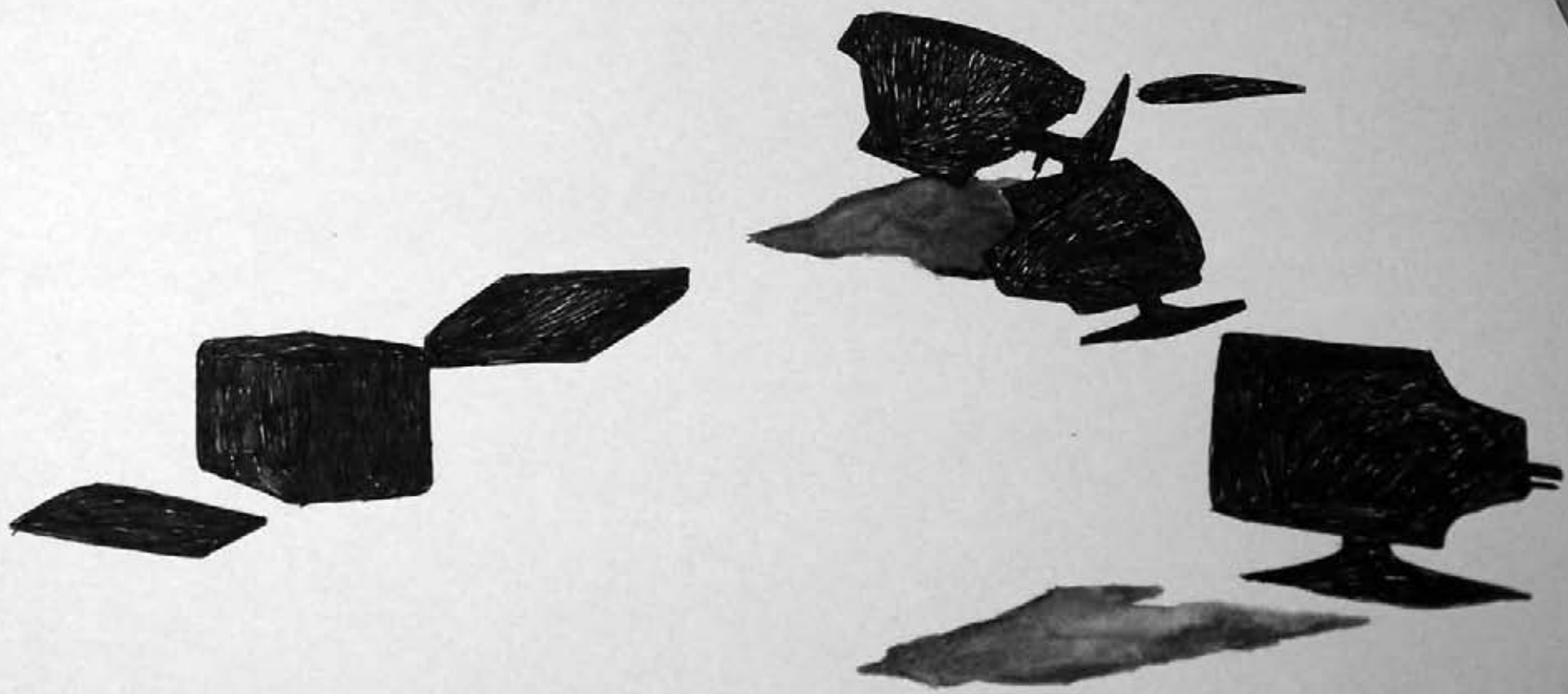
experiences (without distortions caused by rational beliefs or searching for answers outside of oneself that generate a misleading impression of reality) in order to attain insight into the nature of existence and thereby gain enlightenment. Popular forms of Zen practice in the West are often promoted as methods that help one to relax, to calm down one's mind, and achieve inner peace and balance, but they do not mean to drop the illusion of a certain view of the world or to perceive reality without distortions (created by one's own mind). Rather, they strive to cope with everyday life in a better or easier way, which for Zen practitioners means that they have to deal with themselves. Zenacceleration is close to Zen Buddhism insofar as it likewise attempts to eliminate the ego and dispel the deceit of our perception, but contrary to Zen Buddhism, it is not concerned with 'revealing the truth' that would be valid for the world as a whole. Zenacceleration is linked with the attempt to disclose the truth of specific temporal characteristics that shape our contemporary society. This truth has a different nature – the truth revealed in *zenacceleration* is the acceleration mode of postmodernity. This realisation goes hand in hand with deep understanding and acceptance. Therefore, *zenacceleration* practitioners recklessly plunge into the flow of acceleration and refrain from assuming a critical attitude. They are not interested in the question of how to 'cope' with the 'acceleration problem' in contemporary societies because in their opinion, there is nothing to cope with and therefore they are not worried about searching for escape or emergency routes or conditions of resisting the modes of projective temporality and demands of our society to keep accelerating (which go hand in hand with the denigration of laziness, non-productivity, and time-wasting – see also: *in0wasting* and *pregnant boredom*).

Zenacceleration is a way of being and a state of mind. It refers to a practice whereby one's personal experience of an accelerated world is accompanied by a high degree of awareness and concentration as well as a mind lacking in opinions and critical urges. It is a state of mind that opens up to this world as it is now, unconditionally. Carelessly riding the waves, the zenacceleration practitioner is a master of immersing in the boundless speed that characterises accelerated modes of life and work. His insight is a total commitment to the demands of his time, detached from (teleo)logical ways of thinking and free from its consequential uneasiness and uncertainty (about the future, being late, being old-fashioned, rushing, passions, conflicts, pressure, expectations, evaluations of good and bad, the possible and the impossible, contemporary, etc.).

**2**

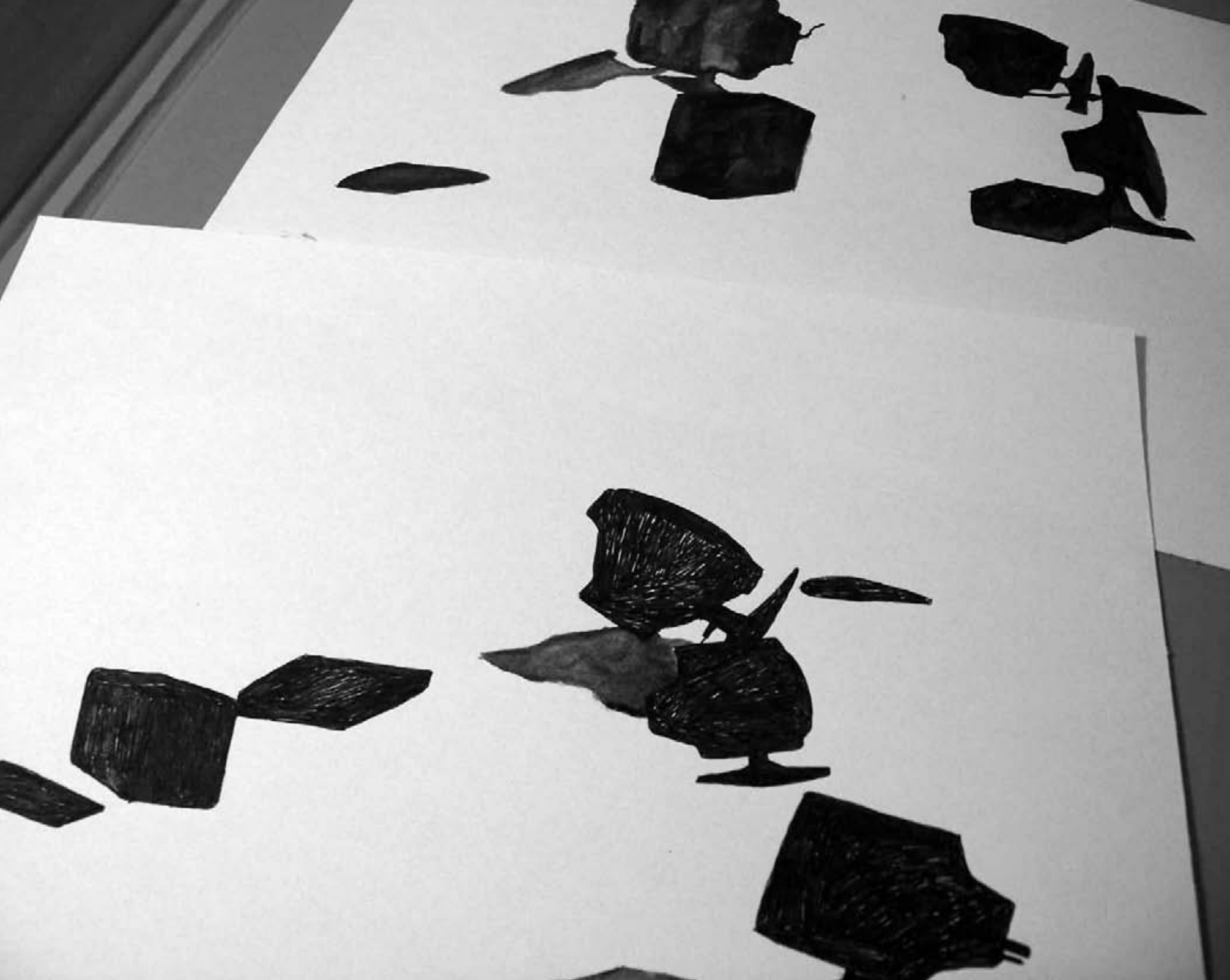
According to this definition, *zenacceleration* is clearly related to Zen, but cannot be defined as a life orientation; rather, it may be defined as a methodology, a way of working, or a specific creative strategy. Zen

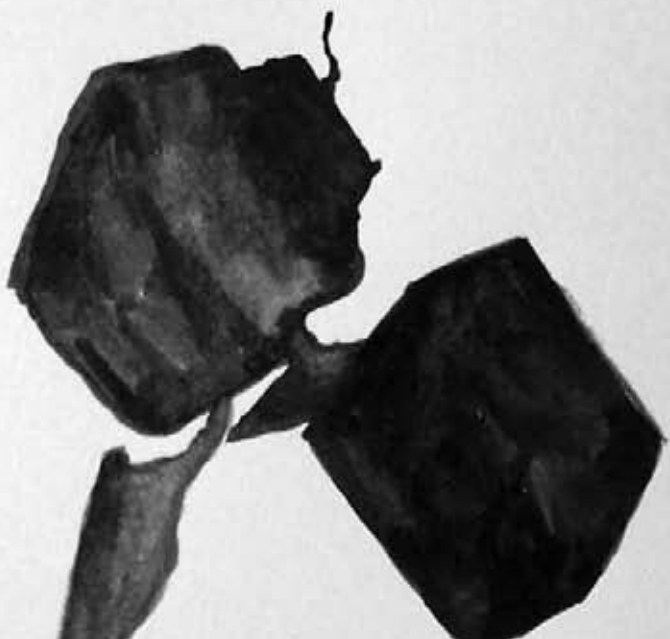
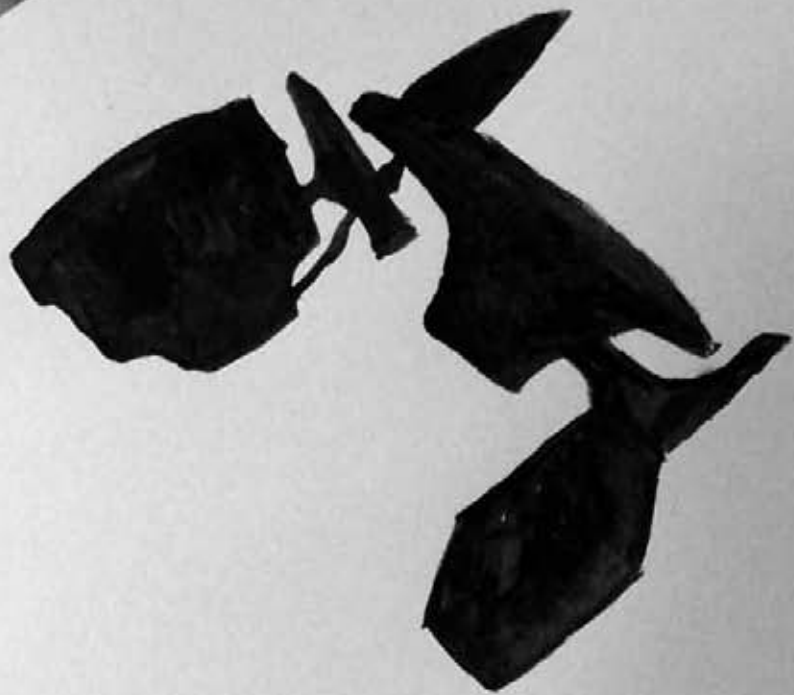












## Time and

## Authors (In)Completion

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