

SITE

► Stills from Jean-Luc Godard's 'Histoire(s) du cinéma', part 1A, 'Toutes les histoires'.

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Reinventing Site

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SITE is a journal for contemporary art, architec-
ture, cinema, and philosophy. When the journal
began six years ago, we attempted to set ourselves
a series of goals, or at least to circumscribe a cer-
tain terrain. Because of the plurality of interests
among the editors—artists, curators, film theo-
rists, architects, philosopher, art critics—this
proved to be a difficult if not impossible task,
and instead of operating with definitions that in
the end do not define anything, we attempted to
do the opposite: to remain as long as possible in
an indeterminate state.

This indeterminacy should however not be
understood as something merely nebulous and
diffuse, but as something that comes from the
subject matters themselves: not only the highly
porous limits between various forms of art, but
also between theory and praxis, and between a
heritage that seems to have lost its binding force,
and a present moment that claims to have undone
all hierarchies of the past.

For us, this insecurity does not mean that all
aesthetic and theoretical practices would merge
in some implosive synthesis, rather that they, in
a reflection that starts from their specific prob-
lems, would be able to enter into a productive
tension in order to produce something new and
unexpected. Unlike most academic institutions,
with their divisions of labor and competence, a
journal is an exemplary place for experimenting
with the very form of knowledge and discourse,
a place where a knowledge of the past can meet a

still undetermined future, where things can re-
main in the making for as long as one wishes.
Whether this succeeds or not can only be decided
by the reader.

From another perspective, the name **SITE** still
points to a certain pervasive theme. On the one
hand the site is a point of intersection between
different theories and practices, where arguments
and concepts can be exchanged in a plasmatic
state. But it also contains a concrete reference,
something that could be called “site specific”,
in the sense that this term has acquired during
the last decades of artistic work. We have often
focused on geographical locations, and issues
have been published with Tokyo, Moscow, Cairo,
and Berlin as their thematic centers. These are
not encyclopedic attempts, but rather temporary
interventions that attempt to grasp a fleeting
moment or to extract certain constellations from
the flux of time. In doing this we have been guided
by Jean-Luc Godard’s phrase: “Pas d’images
justes, juste des images” (“No just images, just
images”). Tracing, inventing, and producing such
images—as they traverse the domains of the
plastic arts, cinema, literature, and the kind of
indeterminate reflection that we for want of a
better word persist in calling “philosophy”—
has always remained a source of great joy; for
one should not forget, all seriousness aside, that
the principle of pleasure is an integral part of
any intellectual endeavor worthy of its name.

Such an undertaking no doubt implies a

moment of fiction—to write or reflect on a place,
to represent one’s interaction with it in any form,
always means to produce an imaginary entity,
perhaps to recreate the other scene, “der andere
Schauplatz,” in the way that Freud once under-
stood Rome as an analogy for the unrepresent-
able topographic overlay of the mind, whose
temporal complexity can only be thought as a
multi-layered non-temporality or a spatialized
co-existence of several times. These things are
at once fictitious and real, they exist in a space
where virtual pasts and futures can appear
alongside each other, and which always remains
under construction. As Baudelaire wrote, a
century and half ago, caught up in a historical
shift in which he attempted to distinguish the
moment of disappearance from the moment of
emergence: “fourmillante cité, cité plein des
rêves/ Ou le spectre en plein jour raccroche le
passant” (“bustling city, city full of dreams/
where in plain daylight the ghost takes hold of
the passer-by”). In order to come back to the site,
one first of all needs to reinvent it, turn it into
its own virtual double—all of which is not an
obstacle to such a project, but its unavoidable
condition of possibility. •

THE EDITORS

► Ivory throne of Archbishop Maximian of Ravenna, 546–556 A.D. (Ravenna: Museo Archivescoveile).

The Reign and the Glory: Giorgio Agamben and the Theological Origins of Political Philosophy

Sven-Olov Wallenstein

“The only true anarchy is the anarchy of power”
Pasolini

I. Homo Sacer and the origins of the political
Is there something like an origin of politics, i.e. of the founding structure of the political relation, of “*the* political” as the name of a particular and autonomous domain of questioning that would precede “politics” in the sense of particular conflicts and value-judgments? And if such an origin could be located, would it then be something like a pure “outside” of the law, the kind of sheer violence that the Sophists Trasymachus and Callicles at the inception of political philosophy opposed to Socrates’ benevolent idea of a justice originating in reason, something simply legally formless that cannot be thought—or would it rather be that to which law and legality always have to refer, if only by repressing it? There is undoubtedly at some level a fundamental divide between, on the one hand, the idea of politics as ultimately founded on conflict and relations of power, from Machiavelli’s strategic analyses at the dawn of secular modern politics to the agnostic philosophies of Schmitt and Foucault and most thinkers in the Marxist tradition, and, on the other hand, the idea of a rational foundation to be attained through procedures of consensus formation, as in Rawls, Habermas and most philosophers in the liberal tradition. This division, however, need not produce a divergence (or for that matter, a shared stance) when it comes to politics as concrete action, and many of those who find themselves side by side on the barricades, promoting a particular cause at a certain point in time, would no doubt disagree fundamentally when it comes to explaining why they are there (one can easily here think of Sartre and Foucault). In this sense, *the* political as an object of philosophical reflection is surely *not yet* politics—and the connection between these two spheres remains highly tenuous and problematic, as can be seen in the case of someone like Schmitt, whose theory of the “concept of the political” remains a source of inspiration for many theorists of the left today, from Chantal Mouffe to Etienne Balibar, while the conclusions Schmitt himself drew belong to the ultra-right.

In Giorgio Agamben we find a radical reflection on these themes, *radical* precisely in the sense that it attempts to unearth the *roots* of the problem, the ultimate foundation of the political and thus of our divergent options within politics. In a series of volumes under the title *Homo Sacer*, which now extends over more than a decade, he has developed this theme in a continually displaced fashion. As this monumental work now begins to approach completion, what has appeared is less a unified system than the expression of a need once more to unweave the very fabric of the overarching theme, and to rephrase the question. In the first volume, *Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (1995), certain fundamental notions were introduced, most

importantly those relating to the question of the structure of sovereignty and its relation to bare life in the framework of a “biopolitics” (using a term from Foucault); in volume III, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* (1998), the theme of the ontology of bare life and the analysis of the camp (in a sense which goes beyond the empirical reality of the Nazi death camp) as the biopolitical paradigm of modernity is developed further; volume II, 1, *Stato di eccezione* (2003) picks up another thread from the first volume, i.e., the definition of sovereignty as the right to decide on the state of emergency, the analysis of which is pursued on the basis of a (reconstructed) discussion between Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, but also on the basis of the tradition of Roman Law and the enigmatic concept of *iustitium*, which proposes a certain void at the heart of the law.

In the recently published volume II, 2, *Il Regno et la Gloria: Per una genealogia teologica dell’economia e del governo* (Neri Pozza Editore, coll. “La Quarta Prosa,” 2007), the perspective shifts once more, and Agamben leads us back to the Church Fathers and to a whole philosophical complex originating in early Christian theology. The guiding questions now become: why has power assumed the form of *economy*, a “governing of men” in a sense which precedes and exceeds modern political economy? And secondly, what is this other dimension, beyond the structures of power and governing, that would be indicated by the term “glory,” which has always functioned as a correlate to governing, but also in a certain way points *beyond* it?

Agamben opens by locating two fundamental paradigms that derive from theology: first, a *political theology* that founds sovereign power in the one transcendent God, and second, a *theological economy* which presents an immanent and domestic order for divine as well as human life. The first is the source for discourses of sovereignty, and the second is the source for modern biopolitics in its focus on the administration of the productivity of life, which begins to unfold in the various theories of political economy of the 18th century.

Drawing explicitly on the concept of “governmentality” developed by Foucault, but also greatly expanding the chronological scope of the latter’s genealogical analysis, Agamben points to the importance of the elaboration of the concept of *oikonomia* in the Patristic debates on the structure of Trinity, which played the role of a “privileged laboratory” where a set of concepts were forged that still secretly determine political theory. The whole project *Homo Sacer*—a title whose empirical content, derived from a reading of archaic Roman law and religion, admittedly seems increasingly less relevant for these new lines of research, although the figure of a certain *topological fold* remains, as we will see—here attains a “decisive juncture,” Agamben says. The double machine of power outlined in *The State of Exception*, consisting of *auctoritas*, the

meta-legal force delimiting the legal system, and of *potestas*, the dimension of rule-bound action inside the system, which together constitute the applicability of any set of laws and rules, is here transformed into the duality between Reign and Governing, and the essential tension now holds between governing as *oikonomia* and reign as glory. To some extent this repeats the former division, but it also displaces it in crucial ways.

The question of why the exertion of power needs such a plethora of insignia and ceremonies has not been given its proper philosophical weight, Agamben claims, although he duly notes his debt to forerunners like Kantorowicz’s classic studies of medieval political theory. The question why power needs glory can undoubtedly be answered in many trivial ways, and contemporary media studies and political journalism have by no means avoided it, although for Agamben their answers remain circular: power needs glory in order to appear glorious. Unearthing the theological roots of this complex means something else, namely to disclose the “ultimate structure of the governmental machine of the Occident,” and in this it points to a dimension more profound than the one addressed in contemporary analyses of communication, popular sovereignty, public opinion, etc. If glory is the “central secret” of power—which today remains operative in the formation of public opinions and consensus—the importance of media lies in the way that they administer and distribute glory in a certain stricture of “acclamation,” and not in a cognitive or reflexive content. For Agamben this is the true meaning of the “society of the spectacle,” whose roots he locates in a tradition that no doubt will surprise many scholars of modern as well as classical political philosophy: the paradigm of “governing by consent,” he suggests, was written “not in Thucydides’ Greek, but in the arid Latin of the medieval and Baroque treatises on the divine governing of the world” (and to some extent, this less colorful and subdued prose style is also what characterizes the unusually meticulous writing of *Il Regno et la Gloria*, which probes deeply into the most minute philological details; this book above all requires *patience*, and the following schematic remarks can in no way do justice to its richness in detail and the density of its argument).

One of the more startling consequences of this concept of glory—prefigured to some extent in the earlier books, but here appearing in a much more radical way—is that the *center of the governmental machine is empty*. In this sense, the empty throne that awaits the presence of God since it in fact was there *before* him, the *hetoimasia tou thronou*, the “being ready of the throne,” can be taken as the most striking symbol of power. In the face of this emptiness, this strange void, the project reaches a limit and a *provisional* ending, the “hidden center” of the analysis that Agamben himself locates at the end of chap. 8, “The Archaeology of Glory.” Politics would here

be brought back to a certain “inoperativity” (*inoperosità*), to an operation that which consists in rendering inoperative and which both founds *and* opens up politics to kind of abyss, which however is only the negative aspect of a new mode of acting and being—a kind of promise that tends to return in different guises in the concluding sections of Agamben’s books, and shows the strategic importance of the recurrent chapter heading “threshold” (*soglia*): we are brought to the threshold, to the line separating completed nihilism from another relation to *the whole of that which is*, to *being*, and in locating his thinking in the expectancy of such a “turn” he remains a somewhat erratic yet ultimately still loyal disciple of Heidegger. Beyond the figure of the empty throne, which no doubt could be cross-read with the figure of the Framing of technology as a “Janus-head” of ultimate danger and saving power in Heidegger, there is something that appears as “eternal life,” the *zoe aionos* of the Gospels—not the qualified *bios* of theory, politics, or pleasure (*bios politikos*, *theoretikos*, and *apolaustikos*) in Greek philosophy, which remains inscribed in the bipolar machine of power, but the life of a “glorious body” held in reserve outside of the span of the history of governing, which is perhaps the positive and affirmative aspect of that kind of “bare life” that from the outset of the *Homo Sacer* project was determined as the “production” of sovereign power. Whether this interpretation makes sense or not can only be decided when Agamben’s investigation reaches its conclusion, and more specifically when the concepts of “form-of-life” (*forma-divita*) and “use” (*uso*), which at present remain at the horizon, have become clarified, even if this, as we will see, will probably only entrench us further in a certain paradox.

II. From the economy of mystery to the mystery of economy
The economic paradigm has been obscured among historians of theology, perhaps due to a certain *pueritia origo* that refuses to see the origin of the Trinity in worldly and immanent concerns, but which has also led to a foreshortened version of the genealogy of political philosophy, and what Agamben provides us with is a cross-reading of these two discourses that points not only to their intertwined relation, but also opens up a zone of indeterminacy, a plasmatic state out of which our concepts have emerged. In this he encounters Carl Schmitt’s famous thesis in *Political Theology* (1922) that all decisive concepts in the theory of the state are secularized theological concepts, and he suggests that this insight needs to be expanded and integrated in a more encompassing hypothesis that also includes economy and the sphere of reproductive human life. Divine life and human history are from the start understood in terms of this “administrative” or “governmental” paradigm out of which modern political rationalities have emerged.



Philosophical concepts, Agamben suggests, should be understood as “signatures,” in the sense that they straddle different spheres and create strange compounds out of different times and places: both the “hieroglyphs” of Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals and Benjamin’s “secret indications,” as well as Derrida’s and Foucault’s respective ways of reading belong here, he argues. This means that such signatures are not just objects of study for a history of political and philosophical ideas, but “historical elements in a pure state,” and in this sense they make possible a kind of *historical virtuality*. That the secularized concept bears a theological signature can and has indeed been used to promote secularization as a specifically Christian concept, as for instance in Friedrich Gogarten’s *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit* (1953), and Agamben follows the ramifications of this theme in an important German debate in the 1960s that was spawned by Karl Löwith’s *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen* (1953), and followed up by Hans Blumenberg, Odo Marquard, and Carl Schmitt. Löwith proposal was that the Enlightenment belief in progress as well as German Idealism was only a secularized theology and eschatology, an interpretation that was emphatically rejected by Blumenberg, since it undercut the “legitimacy” of modernity (see his *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, 1966), while Löwith and Schmitt, no doubt inadvertently and for opposed reasons, ended up in the same camp. This connection was of course not hidden to German Idealism, and Hegel himself was indeed sufficiently aware of it that he could present his philosophy of history as the only true theodicy: theology and religion comprehended, brought to its concept, is philosophy itself. Schelling too would subscribe to this proposal, although in a different fashion than Hegel, as when he at the end of his *Philosophie der Offenbarung* pointed to the co-belonging of pure theology, *akratos theologia*, and *oikonomia* in terms of the relation between the essence of God and his activity. For Schelling economy introduces action and freedom in God, so that he may become the “Lord of Being,” and in this sense the becoming-man of Christ is the possibility of a philosophy of *revelation*, which unlike the necessary process in the “philosophy of mythology” is wholly free. Revelation is a “second creation,” and *oikonomia* introduces an *an-archic* moment in ontology, which is essential for Agamben; one of the tasks of his book, he says, is to “once more render Schelling’s affirmation intelligible” (and here he returns to some of the rather enigmatic remarks on Schelling in the first volume of *Homo Sacer*, in the long footnote added to section 3.3, and the concluding remark on the how Schelling “expressed his ultimate thought in the idea of a being which is only the purely existing” [Schelling *esprimeva la figure estrema del suo pensiero nell’idea di un essere che è soltanto il puramente esistente*], p. 210; this sentence is curiously lacking in the English translation).

The Greek term *oikonomia* originally signifies the administration of the house as distinct from the *polis*, and this is how it used in Aristotle and Xenophon. The *oikos* is however not just a family, but a complex of relations (despotic, paternal, and conjugal) united by an administrative and not an epistemic paradigm: the quality of the *despotes* does not reside in an *episteme*, but in certain way of being, a way of handling order (*taxis*). Xenophon’s *Oeconomica* presents the image of the ship, where everything should be at its proper place, and there is a need for oversight (*episkepsis*, from which *episkopos*, “bishop,” is derived). The term was expanded into medicine, and then, in Stoicism, to the order of the universe itself. In rhetoric it was understood as the order and *dispositio* of a speech, the economy of the whole, which could then be opposed to the sublime which “breaks everything apart,” as Longinus says. In this way, the sense of the term remains the same, but the reference expands, until it finally receives the application in theology, which is Agamben’s focus.

Traditionally, Paul is seen as the first to give the term a theological sense. Agamben stresses that it first signifies a *task*, something entrusted to Paul by God, as in the expression *oikonomian pepisteumai* (1. Cor. 9: 16-17), and not a “plan” in God’s mind. The “mystery” later associated with *oikonomia* is at first not an issue: God’s word has been hidden and is now revealed, and the

“The guiding questions now become: why has power assumed the form of economy, a ‘governing of men’ in a sense which precedes and exceeds modern political economy?”

oikonomia is the task of spreading it, and in this sense the *oikonomia* of mystery in Eph. 3: 9 is the *administration* of mystery. The task is to faithfully announce the secret of redemption hidden in God’s will, which now comes to completion. In Hippolytus and Tertullian however a shift occurs and the terms becomes technical (I’m greatly simplifying what is a long and painstaking analysis of various intermediary stages), and it is used in order to analyze the structure of the Trinity. This also entails a shift from the economy (administration) of mystery to the mystery of economy (God’s acting). The context is a polemic against the “monarchs” who stress the uniqueness and singularity of God, and *oikonomia* became the strategic tool for articulating

the notion of a Trinitarian God without losing sight of his unity, until the dominant philosophical vocabulary was stabilized in the 5th and 6th centuries, in the language of Nicea and Constantinople, and *oikonomia* migrated into the exclusive sphere of salvation. There has been a considerable polemic among scholars as to whether the term refers to the internal structure of divinity (God as he is himself) or the Incarnation (the act whereby he steps out of himself and is as it were “historicized”), but for Agamben it is important that there be only *one* sense of the term, and that this is an elaboration of divine acting and administration on the heavenly as well as on the earthly level.

The problem of how to articulate unity and multiplicity in God can be seen in Hippolytus, who distinguishes between God’s *dynamis* as unity and his *oikonomia* as multiplicity, and in Tertullian, who talks of God in terms of *status* (oneness) and *gradus* (multiple). In the “mystery of *oikonomia*” that now emerges we can see the extent to which it is God’s activity itself which has become mysterious; it is no longer a task entrusted to the believer, but the mystery impersonated in the Son/ Word. God’s own praxis is concealed to us, and henceforth it will be possible to speak of a *hidden plan*. Economy is thus an articulation of one sole reality in two parts, where the heterogeneity concerns God’s acting and praxis, not ontology and divine being. Tertullian also refers the term to administration of angels, and notes that a monarch indeed can have a son without disrupting his chain of command, and that he may safely administer the world through others close to him. In this sense, multiplicity need not be understood as a subversion (*eversio*) of the unity of a domestic governing, but in fact constitutes its highest fulfillment: the sheer profusion of proxies and subordinated messengers testifies to the altitude and transcendence of the master, whose dignity resides in not attending to all the details of the house.

The mystery of economy is fundamentally practical and not ontological; it is the praxis through which God articulates his own life in a trinity and gives every event a hidden meaning through his providential *governing* of the world. The importance of time and history in Christianity is in this sense also rooted in economy, and the link is first established clearly by Origenes and his theory of reading: Mysteries become clear if we read in the proper allegorical fashion, *historian allegoresai*. This mystery is however no longer the pagan *Fatum* or Stoic *Ananke*, neither Fate nor Necessity, but a certain type of freedom that yet must be reconcilable with divine *providence*, the *fore-seeing* of *pronoia* which is not a blind deterministic necessity, but the mystery of economy and freedom.

Against the Stoic God’s estrangement from the world, *oikonomia* proposes an immanent praxis of governing where divine mystery coincides with human history, and merges ontology and

history. Divine essence and salvation through history belong together like two facets of *oikonomia*, the first articulation of which however is domestic and mundane and occurs within an administrative and not a metaphysical paradigm, all of which indicates for Agamben that the secret essence of ontology is always *practical* and related to *action*. The Church Fathers wanted at all costs to avoid a plurality within the divine, thus their distinction between divine *dynamis/ousia* and *oikonomia*, but what this produced instead was a fracture between being and acting, ontology and praxis. The economy of governing the world becomes distinct from being, in the sense that an ontological analysis of the essence of God will not tell us how he acts and governs the course of events; the mystery resides in his free choice, it is practical, and the doctrine of providence will be the instrument for bridging this gap. In Agamben’s view, ethics in the modern sense, with its divide between the Is and the Ought, begins here, as well as the problem of the free will, that emerged in breaking away from the previous ancient theory of fate. *Henceforth there will be no foundation for acting, since acting is an-archic*.

This becomes clear in the problem of creation. The problem is not divine operation as such, for which Plato’s demiurg can be seen as a predecessor, but rather the free choice of a creation that does not proceed from God’s essence. We must distinguish God’s essence (*ousia*) from his will (*boule*), Origenes says, otherwise he would on the one hand be necessitated to act, on other hand he would be split up into many entities since he does many things. The primacy of will in Western metaphysics, of which Heidegger has provided several far-reaching analyses, is in fact rooted in this rather than in classical Greek philosophy, Agamben implicitly argues, and it is in Neo-Platonism that we find the first instances of an *autobouletos boule*, a “will that wants itself.”

In this light we may also reread the dispute over Arianism. The question is the status of the *arche* of the Son as we find it in the eminently dialectical opening of the Gospel of John: in the beginning there was the Logos, and the Logos was “with” God, and God was the Logos (*En arche en ho logos, kai ho logos en pros ton theon, kai theos en ho logos*). Both sides agree that the Son is generated from eternity, but the question is in what sense he can be said to have his foundation in the Father, and when Arius claims that the Son is founded whereas only God is singular and *anarchos*, the official doctrine will claim that the Logos could not exist absolutely if it has an *arche*: the Son reigns, together with the Father, within neither the beginning nor the end (*anarchos kai ateleutos*). The Nicean thesis attempts to solve the mystery of how the Son, who carries out the economy of salvation, can be unfounded in the Father, so that both are *anarchos*. *Oikonomia* and Christology belong together, and God’s “Word” is just as anarchic as God himself. As we have



seen, this seemingly technical problem inside Trinitarian discourse for Agamben signifies a much more general and fundamental decision that will resonate throughout Occidental philosophical and political thought: the battle of the giants over being, the *gigantomachia peri tes ousias* outlined in Plato's *Sophist* and reopened by Heidegger in terms of the *ontological* difference, must ultimately be understood as a conflict over praxis, since praxis is that which ultimately has no foundation in being. (A question that would no doubt require much reflection in this context is how this split *between* ontology and praxis could ever *systematically* escape all "ontological-epistemic questions," as Agamben constantly underlines: in what language should we address the difference between being and action?)

This genealogy, Agamben suggests, also accounts for the somewhat enigmatic nexus between anarchy and governing in the modern world. Providential divine governing is possible because there is no foundation for praxis in being, and its basis is in the Son precisely as an-archic, as *anarchos*. When Benjamin says that nothing is more anarchic than the bourgeois order, or Pasolini has one of his libertines in Salò exclaim that "La sola vera anarchia è quella del potere," this only brings out, for Agamben, the final implications of the problem of the groundlessness of praxis. But we should also note the *other* dimension that is announced here, discreetly to be sure, yet no doubt decisively, as in the seemingly parenthetical aside on p. 80: "This does not mean that, beyond government and anarchy, we could not think an Ungovernable (*un Ingovernabile*), i.e., something that can never assume the form of an *oikonomia*." The promise of the Ungovernable as a groundless principle of action is perhaps what is outlined here, and what Agamben's genealogy wants to uncover seems to be that such a promise has been underway towards us since the beginning—which can be thought with or without Heidegger, as Agamben notes in his brief comments on Reiner Schürmann's reading of Heidegger in his *Le principe d'anarchie*.

But how does God then govern the world? To some extent the problem was already outlined in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Lambda, which presents us with a good that exists in a transcendent God, a prime mover, but in Agamben's reading this relation between God and world is an *order* and a system of implications. In Aquinas and other later commentators on Aristotle we can see how transcendence and immanence become intertwined so as to form a machine that is both cosmological *and* political, and forms the basis of a theory of governing (*gubernatio*). Immanence is order, an interrelation among all things, and Aristotle gives us a military and a domestic analogy that indicates the order of implication: in the army the commander does not exist because of order, but order because of him, and in the order of a house all things are joined together (*syntetaktai*)

so that there is both division of nature and function among the parts, and a unity under a sole sovereign (the *despotes*). Economy here too forms a bipolar system of reign and governing, and order is mutual and respective between all the parts. The onto-theological structure of metaphysics has its roots in this, Agamben suggests, and order is what bridges the gap. For medieval thought this order becomes the solution to a decisive question of God vs. the world, but as we have noted it also extends this *duplex ordo* so that it comes to be co-extensive with the political sphere: absolute and subordinate power (*potentia absoluta* and *ordinata*) form a unified system, in the divine as well as the earthly order.

This structure also forms the basis for the governing through "providence": God governs through a logic of "collateral damage" (the ubiquity of which in contemporary political and military rhetoric hardly need be pointed out), in the sense that he allows the contingencies and side-effects to merge with an overarching plan that remains rooted in a transcendent reality: the act of such an economizing governance, Agamben says, "represents a zone of non-decidability between the general and the particular, the calculated and the non-intended."

III. Glory and beyond

A curious dimension of God's governance is his dependence on angels, and in chap. 6, "Angelology and bureaucracy," Agamben provides a fascinating analysis of this somewhat neglected aspect of theological discourse, which also forms the turning point of the book. Through a reading of Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise on the celestial hierarchy and Aquinas' *De gubernatione mundi* he shows the systematically double nature of angels: on the hand turned toward "assisting" in the praise of God, on the other toward the "administering" of the world. In this they also precisely reflect the two dimensions of earthly power, on the one hand an immanent exercise of power (governing), on the other a withdrawal into the radiance of glory. This second aspect shows the angels as essentially *hymnic* creatures whose office is to sing the praise of the Lord, and in this they provide him with a dimension of publicity, radiance, and presence, all of which are contained in the Greek word *doxa*, which is what will survive after the Final Judgment.

Now, this point about angels is also where Agamben's investigation takes a different direction and begins to address the dimension of that which *supersedes* governing, which is the question that theology faces when it must decide what remains of the power of God "after" the end of providential history. (And in this, Agamben adds, it is similar to Heidegger's questions of how we should approach the presencing of being after the completion of nihilism, or Kojève's interpretation of the end of history in Hegel.) What would be the meaning of a Reign beyond Governing and Economy, can there be a

power without efficiency? As Agamben shows, if the messianic promise implies a "deactivating" (*katergeo*, in Paul's vocabulary) of the Law, a certain becoming-inoperative (*anapausis* or *kata-pausis*) of God, then the emergence of a liturgical and hymnic community of angels is essential to the continuation of the Reign and the *doxa*. Significantly, Agamben here picks up the thread from the final paragraphs in *State of Exception*, and once more refers us to Kafka (in particular as read by Benjamin): "The theme of a law that is no longer applied but studied, which in the novels of Kafka is closely connected to the constantly inoperative functionary-angels, here shows its messianic significance. The ultimate *telos* of the law and of the angelic potencies, just as of the profane powers, is to become deactivated and to be rendered inoperative." (185)

Glory, gloria, doxa, would be the name of such a state, and Agamben provides us with an "archaeology" of the concept that once more shows the essential imbrication of theology and politics. Drawing on the work of the theologian Erich Peterson (who also surfaces in many other crucial junctures, and whose debates with Schmitt on the possibility of a "political theology" is another thread that could be followed throughout the book), Agamben shows how the structure of "acclamation," which has its roots in Roman political rituals and was developed in Christian liturgical formulas, can be understood as a matrix for politics and the constitution of a people and a public space in a kind of "performative" located below the threshold of politics, law, and religion. The ceremonial aspect of power is thus a necessary dimension of governing, and it remains with us today, not only in the all too visible forms of the party rally and the somewhat crude displays of totalitarian regimes, but also as a hidden substructure in the democratic forms of production of consensus and "government by consent": "Public opinion," as Schmitt remarks in his treatise on *Volksbegehren* and *Volksentscheidung* from 1928, "is the modern form of acclamation." It is also in this more encompassing context (which in fact could be understood as co-extensive with all possible public space as such) that Agamben locates Debord's analysis of the society of the spectacle, and he demonstrates that what we are witnessing today is far from a dissolution of the ritual and liturgical dimension, but in fact rather "a new and unprecedented concentration, multiplication, and dissemination of the function of glory as the center of the political system." (280)

In this sense, the opposition between a state founded upon the presence of the people in direct acclamation and the "neutralized" state founded upon fluid processes of communication and meditation may be illusory, or at least as stemming from a common root.

But, just as we saw in the case of the possible end of *oikonomia*, there is also a moment of a possible *otherness*, a kind of *beyond of* glory that is occasionally indicated, or discretely implied,

in the logic of Agamben's discourse, but which at the end is postponed to a "future investigation". (284) The same gesture can be found at the end of *Homo Sacer I* and *The State of Exception*, as well as at the end of the next-to-last chapter in *Quel che resta di Auschwitz*: Agamben leads us to the question of the foundation of the structure of sovereignty and life, of exception and emergency, to a living being located in the gap between life and Logos, and to a figure of thought that has connected law and power since early Greek thought if not even further back, and the challenge becomes to extract another dimension from this heritage, to think that which is hidden inside it, although without simply locating ourselves somewhere else. In *Il Regno et la Gloria*, this turn is as we have seen implied in the question of how we should understand divine *inactivity* after the Last Judgment, a certain *non-acting* that is not just *nothing*, but a particular de-activating practice, first on the level of God's Reign, but then, and no doubt more crucially for us today, how this thought can become the guide for a specifically *human* practice. Perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that these investigations in the final sections also explicitly approach the function of *art*, which here appears not only as a particular and perhaps also *privileged* form of de-activating of all everyday practices (linguistic, visual, communicative, etc), but which at the same time also allows us to reflect on what an *other* practice might be: a de-activating, non-practical practice that renders everything indeterminate and consequently demands an answer from us as to what *determination* in fact is, what praxis in the end amounts to outside of the relation to law, power, and governing—and this was indeed how Agamben formulated his basic question already in *Homo Sacer I*: against, or more precisely *inside* the question of Greek metaphysics, "What is being?", *ti to on*, the issue was to discern another question, "What is action?"

If the answer to this question at the final threshold in the book remains highly indeterminate, it seems somehow unlikely that any "future investigations" will provide us with a straightforward answer, quite simply because Agamben's investigation as such—and in this there is also a final encounter with Heidegger—attempts to dislocate the form of the philosophical question in its Platonic syntax, or perhaps unearth another question lodged inside the first and apparent question that binds action to authoritative knowledge of forms and the law. That such a type of questioning, in order to make itself *heard* inside the vocabulary of traditional political philosophy, in the final instance, i.e. when it attempts to cross the "threshold" or pass over to the other side of the topological fold that invaginates the outside (Trasymachus, Callicles) into the discourse of law, reason, and *oikonomia*—will have to resort to a certain type of paradox, is however not the sign of a failure, but of a strict necessity. •



4
Spencer Finch, 'West (Sunset in my motel room, Monument Valley, January 26, 2007, 5:36–6:36 PM)'. Courtesy Brändström & Stene.

The Hermit and the Plant: Spencer Finch's Aesthetics Without Discontent

Lars-Erik Hjertström

Within the “aesthetic regime”, art exists in a particular *sensorium*. Jacques Rancière's description of this sensorium reads like a characterization of almost any of Spencer Finch's works. What is called a *sensorium* is a particular mode of being of “a sensible that has become a stranger to itself awnd the seat of a thought that also has become a stranger to itself.”¹ Finch's works explore objects either easy to define but hard to point out, the other way around, or both, as in *Sky* (January 1–21, 2007): twenty-one colored theater filters recreating the colors of the sky over New York during the specified period. Attached to the windowpane, the sky outside is seen next to them. On a lucky day you may find a perfect match. I did—but only upon reflection. To my mindless eye, the blue of the filter appeared to be too dense, as if it were an abstraction of the blue of the sky, but I couldn't help think that this abstraction was still the same color as the sky: its very essence. This assault on perception came with a humiliation inflicted on thought. No longer did thought understand why or under what conditions it tended to attribute sameness to colors. The detached eye was errant, the autonomous thought was turning away from or against itself. This mode of being defines the *sensorium*.

No wonder a critic (quoted on Finch's home page) deemed his work “viewer-proof”. In fact, how a participant in art could possibly persevere as a subject in relation to such a *sensorium*, art, is far from clear—at least as long as the subject is giving experience coherence by being a “norm of adequacy” operating between thought and perception. (*Malaise* 22) Who, then, was I when seeing Finch's works? At least two different subjects correlated to two different works. After having closely followed the course of action of *West* (Sunset in my motel room, Monument Valley, January 26, 2007, 5:36–6:36 PM), a reproduction of the fading light of a sunset falling on a motel room wall and its final disappearance, in the following dark—a part of the work or its end?—I became a hermit in the desert night. My empty mind coincided perfectly with the obscurity of perception. This subjectivity was extended to an identity with the visually empty space, containing nothing but my seeing and the anticipation of a possible light, a possible work of art. *Snow Shadow* (Giverny, January 8, 2003, 1:10 PM) forced my eyes to search a barely discernible light: the light belonging to a shadow. Like Apollinaire's eyes in front of Picasso's works, my entire being turned into a plant searching its fundamental condition of existence. How do these subjects come into being in relation to something that seems to exclude them? How does this kind of “viewer” find a propitious spot within art?

Let's try to find the level at which both art and subject are constructed. The description of *Sky* above makes it a fairly certain bet that we are dealing with the sensible according to the structure of time: if time is indeed what “splits the

present up in two heterogeneous directions”, forward and backward into past and future.² This structure is evident also in other works. Finch once made pictures of butterflies seen out of the corner of the eye. That kind of object is never there to see in a pure present or presentation, but each time it affects you as something seen a moment ago. It was there and it is still here, somewhere, soon visible again. A butterfly in the corner of the eye is nothing but the flying fragility of time, and the strange thing is that Finch's rendering of them in watercolor makes it possible for the eye to fix these objects such as they are in the corner of the eye: images of time splitting the present *here and now*. Anyhow, when Rancière wants to explain the quality of this *sensorium*, he calls upon a “metamorphosing universe” where the aesthetic is constructed as a tying together of “the forms of art, the forms of life and the forms of thinking of art”. (*Malaise* 116) Lacking further details concerning this universe, I cannot but think that it is time that serves as the element of the *sensorium*; that is also the level at which a subject capable of dealing with art could emerge.

What I've said so far might give the impression that color and light are Finch's objects. It is not that simple. He almost always attempts to recreate a constellation of things specified in the titles: a light, a date, an hour, a place, an artist (like Emily Dickinson, Claude Monet, John Ford, Ingmar Bergman) or an event. Are these things points of reference that permit Finch to orient himself in “the metamorphic universe” at the same time as he constructs an object? Such a constellation makes a singularity, i.e. a bundle of relations deprived of unity; they lack a common measure. No substance, no essence, no identity and certainly no concept is there to give it a unity. The date, hour, etc., just coexist in a singularity without being. Only as an intensity, in affecting something as one, could such an “object” have a unity. This rarely happens in nature, or to the subject of ordinary life: it is not easy to be affected to a perceivable degree by a date or an hour as such...

Finch's recent work seems to repeat the heteronogeneity and lack of unity of its objects. In a work like *Snow Shadow*, the angle of the shadow cast by the corner of Monet's house is repeated by the arrangement of the fluorescent tubes, the light of which recreates the light in the shadow. Now, the latter is not conditioned by the former; on a formal level, there is no necessity or unity to these parts. The unity seems instead to come from their common reference to the objects named in the title, but, as we saw, that object has only a quasi unity in nature and cannot give the work a unity. Or, take the case of *West*: the time and the sunset are presented in form of projected light, the source of which is an arrangement of film stills (from John Ford's *The Searchers*) screened on nine TV monitors, arranged in three piles of three sets next to each other and closely

facing the wall. The rest of the room dwells in darkness. A sculpture, a picture show, a construction of space and light, all of them complete and self-sufficient, each with its own pace and time, gathered under one title. What could possibly be the unity of this work?

One might think that art is there to give these barely existing singularities, having a degree of intensity close to zero, a being or a unity through an intensification that lets them affect as one. Finch does this by repetition. The bare color, or the light, is in fact only the effect of a constellation—the effect that the work of art should reproduce disconnected from its causes—but in “recreating” it (a word Finch often uses in his work descriptions), the work should also repeat the entire constellation as, and immanent in, a pure effect: the singularity. Everything mentioned in the title *Moonlight* (*Luna County New Mexico, July 13, 2003*) (2005) should come back through a transformation of the afternoon light let into a gallery in London. Thus the object of his works is furnished with a unity by being brought to affect as one. That would be a repetition of a singularity.

(Simple as it is, *Sky* is a virtual transmitter that repeats New York, January 12 as Stockholm, March 16, which might in its turn flash forward and be a repetition in advance of a place at a future date. After some practice, you could probably have your own geography and calendar, engage on different streaks of time through distant surroundings, just by looking at the sky.)

Light and color are the central parts of Finch's works in as much as they unify the object, but that does not mean they are also the principal affecting points in relation to the affected subject, nor that they give a unity to the work as such. The work is still scattered in a manifold of rhythms, moments, thoughts, associations and perceptions—which are not to be found in its object—without unity. This is where the production of a subject is necessary from the point of view of the work.

Nietzsche admired “the inventiveness of plants”, blindly striving downwards and upwards but finding somewhere to establish roots even in rock, climbing until they catch a few rays of sun, disseminating seeds.³ (Finch has actually made a work on the theme of moving blindly, disoriented in mist just like those plants: *Wandering Lost on the Mountain of our Choice*, 1999). For Nietzsche, the plant suggested a way of putting thought and sensibility into a productive, unstable unity: a metamorphic subject. It is all about pushing sight to its limits, to the barely visible or the almost blinding, to the point where sight itself needs to leap to a new thought (“a drug not yet synthesized” as Bourroughs said) for its rescue. In its turn, thought should be pushed to a short circuit or to a speculative rage where it eventually will force sight to jump to a new sight in order to keep thinking going. This pushing is what Nietzsche called experimental philosophy. These emergency calls between

thought and sensibility constitute an operative unity for a subject always out of balance, always engaged on different lines of time, lines of auto-affection in relation to sensibility or thought. In front of Finch's work, the spectator does nothing else but push and jump around: from the installation to the title, from the title to the light, from the light to the pictures and from there to the TV-monitor and so on—from one pace, temporality and surrounding to another.

The unity of the work consists in the necessity of the leaps, leaps by which thought and sensibility try to establish an “adequacy”. At the same time as these movements tie the work together and trace the image of the work, the subject is constituted as the work's necessary and immanent counterpart—maybe as the “non-art” which always, according to Rancière, is a part of art. The subject and the unity of the work exist in the moment when you feel you have “got the picture”. As Deleuze writes, “That's exactly what the image is: not a representation of an object, but a movement in the world of the spirit.”⁴ And that movement is also what makes a subject. Rancière points to the lack of a more stable subject—something like a human nature functioning as the “norm of adequacy” expected to serve as a guarantee of intersubjectivity and as a principle of community—as the original reason for the general discontent within the aesthetic regime. (*Malaise* 22) But the subjects of Finch's works are only momentary instances of thought and perception, and certainly not “norms” for them. His works cannot suggest a subjectivity to be shared by several subjects, since they do not constitute the subject's conditions of *possibility*. Instead, the work determines the *actuality* of a subject who in return is the actually unifying part of the work itself. From the point of view of their existence, they determine each other completely, not only sufficiently. That process of actual determination is aesthetics as an intermingling of a restless experimental philosophy, a patient artistic practice opening up a *sensorium*, and a life of short moments. In short: Finch's aesthetics without discontent. •

Notes

1. Rancière, *Le partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique-éditions, 2000), 31. There are analogous phrases in his *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), 90, 97. Henceforth cited as *Malaise*.
2. Gilles Deleuze *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 109.
3. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe* 8, 6 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1999).
4. Deleuze, “L'épuisé”, in Samuel Beckett *Quad et autres pièces pour la télévision* (Paris: Minuit, 1992), 96.

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Lightning and Instant

Pasi Väliaho

The perplexing relation between motion and rest characterizes image-based arts from sculpture to film. When their left foot takes a step forward from the standing position, the archaic Greek statues sculpted by the mythic Daedalos already appear as endowed with an urge to run away if not fastened up.¹ To speculate, it is perhaps this occult capacity for self-motion—one which undoubtedly exceeds human making yet cannot adequately reach divine bringing forth—that in Greek imagination deprives the image of its muse. Among the muses Mnemosyne gave birth to, there are ones for poetry and music, that is, writing and sounds, but not any for plastic creations.

This deprivation still characterizes our understanding of the role of the image in what the muses call forth: knowledge and thought. The following remark uttered by Martin Heidegger during the Heraclitus seminar in the winter semester 1966–67 emblemizes the problem: “Philosophy can only speak and say, but it cannot paint pictures.”² Why that is so Heidegger does not elucidate. Perhaps the reason is that, as he writes elsewhere, “[l]anguage, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their Being *from out of* their Being.”³ It is only in language, Heidegger contends, that the kind of temporal opening occurs in which beings are disclosed in their fundamental unconcealment and truth. Thereby “plastic creations” from architecture to sculpture remain enclosed in the presupposition of language; they “always happen already, and happen only, in the open region of saying and naming.” (“The Origin” 199)

Yet like every premise Heidegger’s statement too has its blind spot. Although works like Daedalos’ may have, as they were ridiculed, “a beautiful head” but “no brain” and remain incapable of speaking, (*Platon et l’art* 89) they nonetheless reveal a fundamental fact: every image—situated between motion and rest—enjoys some kind of temporality and hence brings about a mode of “logos” in its own right. Consequently, categorical separations like, for instance, the one made by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing between figures in space and articulated sounds in time, image and word, gesture and thought, may themselves appear beautiful but are nonetheless nonsensical.⁴ Having that argument as a starting point, it is the objective of this short and speculative essay to muse on intimate couplings between image and thought. This line of questioning opens up as soon as traditional aesthetics may be surpassed by means of a specific notion of the image-medium and complemented with media studies.

1 The problem of the image and time traditionally focuses on the notion of the instant. For Lessing, paintings and sculptures, confined to their spatial character, can grasp time only by means of what Lessing calls “pregnant instants” (*prägnante Augenblick*). (*Laokoon* 115) The image can only become temporal by way of symbolization through the juxtaposition of elements in space (“simultaneity”). As such, the notion of a pregnant instant is, however, a contradiction in terms: the real,

the world’s “eventing,” is not fixed or significant itself, and there is no such instant that would be pregnant in its own right—every moment, by nature non-symbolic and meaningless, rather fleetingly runs away. Lessing’s thought hence leads to a logic of lack and to a kind of cul-de-sac: the image is reduced to a symbolic gesture which merely spatially re-presents what it “sees.” Could there be an alternative “logic” in this respect? At any rate, the intuition that the image couples with time through the instant remains strong. Accordingly, confronting the problem of the image and thought concerns first of all theoretically rearticulating the relation between the image and the instant.

To begin with, the instant became a concern of plastic figuration even in Plato’s time. Lysippos’s statues, now primarily imaginable through their later copies or linguistic descriptions, were praised for their temporal character in an effort to grasp movement in the threshold of its unfolding. (*Platon et l’art* 51) They were attempts to present figures in the moment of their processual formation. Regarding the nature of their temporality, Pierre-Maxime Schuhl relates Lysippos’s works to what Plato in *Parmenides* calls the instant (*eksaiphnês*), one which is of paradoxical nature situated in-between (*metaksu*) motion and rest. (*Platon et l’art* 51) Plato writes,

[T]he instant seems to indicate a something from which there is a change in one direction or the other. For it does not change from rest while it is still at rest, nor from motion while it is still moving; but there is this strange instantaneous nature, something interposed between motion and rest, not existing in any time, and into this and out from this that which is in motion changes into rest and what which is at rest changes into motion.⁵

Curiously, the instant which generates change is both unspatial, or without place (*atopon*), and “in no time” (*en oudeni khronô*). Deprived of spatio-temporal coordinates, it is a *medium* (*metaksu*) which organizes an intensive threshold between the temporal and the “timeless”, the physical and the meta-physical, gesture and thought.

Following Gilles Deleuze’s interpretation of the passage in *Parmenides*, Plato’s instant is to be distinguished from the present or “now” moments of the actual interactions of things.⁶ The intensive instant is not a point in extension and does not indicate the *chronos* of corporeal events. Rather, the instant points to movement “wherein the event implies something excessive in relation to its actualization...” (*The Logic of Sense* 191) Yet what exceeds *chronos*, Deleuze argues, is not the eternal or the “timeless” but another kind of temporality, one which Deleuze terms, mainly following the Stoics, *aion*, and sees as enfolding determinations of actual things and bodies changing in appearance. These determinations are not eternal ideas or forms but differential past and future relations that shape the way in which a thing becomes.

The intensive instant, then, opens up not to

things in their presence but to the relations which determine things. Deleuze calls these relations incorporeal events. These events have no spatio-temporal coordinates; they exceed corporeal actions and passions. As such, they belong to a level of reality in which the interaction of things is not lived through but rather makes sense: things become apprehended through the determinations which constitute them. The intensive instant then enfolds incorporeal or ideal events within which the world becomes intelligible in thought: it detaches from the physical and opens up to a transcendental or meta-physical surface on which thinking operates.

Within the instant, the world primarily becomes thinkable. Plato too suggests this in the Seventh Letter that treats the fundamental concern of his theory of the Ideas: the thing itself (*to pragma auto*).⁷ “There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith,” Plato writes, “for it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other disciplines [*mathêmata*], but, as a result of continued application to the thing itself [*to pragma auto*] and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul in an instant [*eksaiphnês*], as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.” (“Epistle VII” 341c-d, translation modified.) The thing itself, Plato argues, defies enclosure in linguistic reason, a mode of reason that, according to the modern conception, is based on the elements of the signifier, the signified or virtual reference, and denotation or actual reference. This conception parallels with Plato’s classification in the Letter: each thing, according to Plato, has three elements according to which knowledge of the thing is acquired, the name (*onoma*), the definition (*logos*) and the “image” (*eidôlon*), after which comes a fourth element which is knowledge of the thing (*epistêmê*). (“Epistle VII” 342a–343a) However, what is absent from modern linguistic reason is the thing itself, which Plato in the letter posits as the fifth element in thought. The fifth element exceeds the four, as it comes forth only in an instant (*eksaiphnês*) like lightning and not according to the logic of division and combination operated in language—a logic which, in passing, is also displayed in the materiality of writing: figures (alphabets) need to be discrete with respect to each other and clearly distinguished from the ground. The thing itself exceeds linguistic reason but somehow “subsists” in thought. In which way? In analyzing the status of the thing itself, Agamben points out how modern editions (John Burnet’s and Joseph Souilhé’s versions) of Plato’s letter alter the two principal codices on which they rest. The modern editions print the definition of *to pragma auto* as “*pempton d’auto tithenai dei ho de gnoston te kai alethes estin*” (and as a fifth one must posit the thing itself, which is knowable and truly is). However, instead of *dei ho*, the two originals read *di’ho* (by which), in which case the translation would be, “[one must] posit the fifth, by which [each thing] is knowable and truly is.”⁸ According to the former version, the fifth element would appear as the mere duplicate of the thing, which is the object of the first four terms. The latter, however, suggests something else: a

part of a thing immanent to thought by which the thing becomes known. Agamben defines that “[t]he thing itself [...] is not another thing but the thing *itself*; not, however, as supposed by the name and the *logos*, as an obscure real presupposition (a *hypokeimenon*), but rather in the very medium of its own knowability, in the pure light of its self-manifestation and announcement to consciousness.” (“The Thing Itself” 32–33) The fifth element is the thing itself insofar as it has entered the realm of knowledge and thought—insofar as the thing has become intelligible.

The thing manifests *itself* in an instant. It is the instant, as suggested in *Parmenides*, that unfolds a proper meta-physical surface encompassing noetic movement by which things themselves become apprehended in thought. As will be developed in the following, the thing itself can be understood in terms of divergent temporal determinations that the instant enfolds. Now, however, our main concern is that the paradoxical relation between motion and rest that points to a specific instantaneous nature of the image should not only be conceived as re-presenting the interactions of bodies in the present but, more fundamentally, as opening up to the meta-physical field of thinking. It is precisely because of being as if imprisoned in an intensive instant that a statue by Lysippos, just like any image, encompasses not only a single form but also differential relations of forms to be actualized. On the other hand, precisely because of being incapable of speaking, it is the image that becomes the fifth element in thought: the image gives rise to a special kind of instantaneous appearing within which things address themselves to thought. The image, in this respect, is something that neither equals with bare sensation caused by the actions and passions of corporeal events nor is analogous to linguistic reasoning. The image rather becomes a medium by which the world is unfolded through its intelligible character and made sensible, a medium which establishes a meta-physical surface of sorts and in this way gives thought access to things themselves.

As such, images may disclose the world as previously unexplored in thought. This leads to an opening up “possible worlds.” For example, in addition to the lines of phonetic writing in *Alice in Wonderland*, the book would not be the same without John Tenniel’s illustrations, which in more than one occasions do not merely silently repeat and replicate what words depict, but rather manifest the singular traits that shape the world behind the mirror: singularities which may remain “inexpressible” in language. The illustrations, in other words, differentiate the world. Such a differentiation occurs, for example, in the paradoxical instant of Alice’s simultaneously becoming larger and smaller (see FIG. 1), an instant which eludes linguistic reasoning, as words remain crying for directions: “Which way? Which way?”⁹

2 A systematic exploration into the image’s instantaneous nature and corresponding mode of intelligibility is provided by Aby Warburg’s project the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, which nevertheless

Figure 1.
The paradoxical
instant of Alice by
John Tenniel from
'Alice's Adventures
in Wonderland'.



remained unfinished before Warburg's death in 1929.¹⁰ The project consists of a number of black screens on which divergent material—from pictures and photographs to texts—is grouped together, its explicit attempt being to visually trace how in the history of Western culture certain motifs from Classical Antiquity “survive” (*nachleben*), as Warburg puts it, and recur in Renaissance plastic arts. In this respect, the screens or their combinations each follow a specific theme ranging from ancient cosmologies to the figure of the nymph (see FIG. 2).

At first sight one could easily conclude that the screens present nothing more than ordinary juxtapositions of figures and texts on a black background. Yet from the perspective developed above, these constellations should not be regarded as reducible to mere static arrangements. While traversing the screens, an attentive eye concentrates on the black gaps *between* images, that is, intervals brought forth by montage. These simultaneously connect diverse actual images with each other and separate them from one another and create a sort of zig-zag movement within and between figures. Warburg himself calls these intervals “in-between spaces” (*Zwischenraum*), and his explicit aspiration in modulating them is to render the figures in movement.¹¹ As black gaps rather than as a fixed harmonious ground, they indeed effectuate movement of sorts: the figures seem to instantaneously emerge from darkness in order to soon disappear back into it. In this way, the screens explore through montage the dynamics of the image: the emergence and differentiation of figures. Finally, what we encounter again is the paradox of motion and rest—the instant pointing to noetic movement. Warburg himself states that the fundamental objective of *Mnemosyne* is precisely thinking *in* images. (*L'image survivante* 452, 497) In this sense, through zig-zag movement the screens pursue a special kind of disclosure which, with reference to Plato's Seventh Letter where the instant entails lightning, can be characterized in terms of the sudden appearing occurring when a thunderbolt strikes in the night sky. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze characterizes—importantly also with respect to the dynamics of the image, as the book itself is based on reflective surfaces between “images of thought” to be surpassed but at once phantasmatic *simulacra* to be proliferated—lightning as challenging clear-cut distinctions between figure and ground. When lightning strikes, there is an instant in which figure and ground do not stand in opposition with respect to one another and hence cannot be clearly recognized. Rather, the instant enfolds a process of intensive differentiation that draws both the relative figure and ground as it proceeds. Deleuze writes, “[I]nstead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself—and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it. Lightning, for example, distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it. It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground.”¹²

Figure 2.
Aby Warburg,
'Bilderatlas
Mnemosyne',
1927–1929.
Screen 46. London,
Warburg Institute
Archive.
Photo: The Warburg
Institute.



Lightning here stands for the dynamics of difference, the differentiation of figures without a fixed and recognizable ground. As Deleuze puts it, “Difference is this state in which determination takes the form of unilateral distinction.” (*Difference and Repetition* 28) On the other hand, lightning manifests a specific movement of thought as such, which also characterizes the *Atlas*: the apprehension of what can be called ontological difference or, to quote Miguel de Beistegui, the “ability to distinguish between things in their presence, and the event of presence itself.”¹³ Accordingly, lightning already guides the first steps of philosophical thinking. Heraclitus writes: “Thunderbolt steers all things.”¹⁴ For Heraclitus, as Eugen Fink puts it, lightning brings things into appearance in their “quintessence.” (*Heraclitus Seminar* 15–16) Lightning incorporates noetic movement, which first of all abstracts things from their particular static appearances and then relates them to a general but immanent “principle,” *logos*, which determines their being. “In the gleam of lightning,” Fink says, “the many things in entirety come into differentiated appearance.” (*Heraclitus Seminar* 16) For Deleuze, this differentiation consists of two heterogeneous but immanent directions: virtual differential relations and singularities and their actualizations through divergence and bifurcation. “Every object is double,” Deleuze writes, “without it being the case that the two halves resemble one another, one being the virtual image and the other an actual image.” (*Difference and Repetition* 209) The virtual image concerns differential relations and singular points that become incarnated in the qualities and forms of the actual image. The virtual image is a dynamic multiplicity that concerns determinations of the actual.

This “logos” of ontological difference becomes visually modulated into Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. What the zig-zag motion of actual figures verging on an abyssal ground amounts to is a process of differentiation: the screens of the *Atlas* eventually disclose dynamic multiplicities. For example, what the screen 46 (FIG. 2) harnesses in its black intervals are the differential relations and singularities of the Nymph, that is, the virtual image of the Nymph incarnated in the stylistic elements, gestures, poses and relative motions of Sandro Botticelli's fresco *Venus and the Three Graces presenting Gifts to a Young Woman* (1485–1490), a piece of a relief from the 7th century, or a photograph taken by Warburg himself of the lady of a farmhouse in Italy. The constellation strives to become “isomorphic” with the virtual multiplicity called “Nymph,” that is, the Nymph itself.

The screen, then, opens up to the virtual. To generalize, every actual image enfolds a virtual image, which means that the image never simply re-presents things in their presence but also opens up to their ideal event understood in terms of virtual multiplicities. The image, in other words, discloses and differentiates the world—in the end (though there is no end), ontological difference. This means that, contrary to what linguistic reason may assume as its object, thinking in images embraces differential relations and singularities. The world becomes apprehended through the virtual image by which things manifest themselves to thought.

3 Following Plato, the instant entails a certain mode of “timelessness.” Accordingly, Warburg's images strive to become a sort of instantaneous cross-sections of the world that pierce through

the present in order to harness differential durations in its intervals, the processes of “*nachleben*.” From this perspective, the screens of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* may be likened to the vertiginous anamorphic image of the Palace of Destinies that Leibniz narrates before our eyes in the end of *Theodicy*.¹⁵ The Palace, a pyramid extending into infinity from the bottom, is made up of an infinite number of halls, each of which presents a possible world. Leibniz explains that “the pyramid had a beginning, but one could not see its end; it had an apex, but no base; it went on increasing to infinity. That is [...] because amongst an endless number of possible worlds there is the best of all, else would God not have determined to create any; but there is not any one which has not also less perfect worlds below it: that is why the pyramid goes on descending to infinity.” (*Theodicy* §415) In Leibniz's story, each hall manifests a possible life of Sextus Tarquinius. The endless diversity of Sextus' forms is thus brought into appearance in the pyramid, each possible life being composed of certain singularities: in one world Sextus buys and cultivates a small garden where he finds a treasure and becomes a rich man of good reputation and dies “at a great age”; in another world Sextus “issues from the temple in a rage, he scorns the counsel of the Gods. You see him going to Rome, bringing confusion everywhere, violating the wife of his friend. There he is driven out with his father, beaten, unhappy.” (*Theodicy* §416)

Each world, as Deleuze puts it, is a series of *inflexions* (singular points),¹⁶ such as “Sextus buying the garden” and “finding the treasure in one world”, or “Sextus going to Rome” and “violating his friend's wife” in another world. These inflexions equate to an endless number of potentialities verging on the amorphous abyss,

potentialities which, as Leibniz says, unfold in perception “at one glance.” Yet Leibniz’s image—like an anamorphic one when perceived from a special viewpoint—achieves a recognizable form out of the inflexions. One form of Sextus belongs to the one and only world and it cannot merge with other Sextuses: metamorphosis is not possible. That is because possible worlds are impossible with and divergent from each other. They do not converge: virtual Sextuses cannot coincide in one world. And when the God calculates between the worlds, a single actual world, the best of all shining on the top of the pyramid, is created, relegating the others into mere shadows.

In the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, in contrast, divergent potentialities, incorporated in actual figures, converge with each other in the interval. There

“Why wouldn’t this language be realized? Perhaps, to speculate again, one reason is that the image (understood in terms of the instant) is by essence analogic rather than digital.”

is no single “type” of Nymph, no fixed harmonious ground with clear-cut separation of inflexions incorporated in actual figures but, rather, continuous zig-zag movement. Hence, the mode of vision and thought the *Atlas* suggests presents virtual multiplicities without subsuming them under any general unity.

From another perspective, this mode is theorized in Friedrich Nietzsche’s conception of eternal return which, whilst attempting to renew ontological thinking, also attempts to revise the notion of the instant. The *Augenblick*, the twinkling of an eye—often translated as “moment”—is a theme that pierces through Nietzsche’s writings.¹⁷ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the *Augenblick* reappears when the eternal return is treated for the first time, and the “abysmal” thought of temporal recurrence becomes intimately linked with a certain mode of vision. Zarathustra asks, “Is seeing itself not—seeing the abyss?”¹⁸

The “riddle” of this kind of vision takes the form of a gateway which is double in the sense that it leads to two separate paths: “See this gateway, dwarf!” I continued. “It has two faces. Two paths come together here; no one has yet walked them to the end. This long lane back: it lasts an eternity. And that long lane outward—that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they blatantly offend each other—and here at this gateway is where they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed at the top: ‘Moment [*Augenblick*].’” (*Zarathustra* 125)

In the *Augenblick*, the past and the future collide with each other; it is a double-faced, dispersing instant of a violent confrontation between conflicting dimensions. It is an instant of differentiation.

For Nietzsche, the world becomes truly thinkable with respect to this temporality. (See *Archaeologies of Vision* 179–180) In the twinkling of an eye one realizes that the world is impregnated with the past and the future, that each thing carries within itself the abyss of time. In other words, in the *Augenblick* potentiality is real: it is not a spectral possibility waiting for its realization but, instead, it has already been realized and thus “subsists” in the world. The harmonious ground dissolves and divergent potentialities that constitute things themselves become embraced in thought. In *Mnemosyne* as in Nietzsche, the manifestation of these potentialities to consciousness means the disclosure of durations that determine things, that is, the differentiations according to which figures recur and become constituted in time. The screens of *Mnemosyne* thus eventually become what Nietzsche in a fragment from the early 1880s thematizes in terms of the *lightning-image*: “[T]he *infinitely small moment* [*der unendlich kleine Augenblick*] is the highest reality and truth, a lightning-image out of the eternal river [*ein Blitzbild aus dem ewigen Flusse*].”¹⁹

4 To sum up, thinking also consists of the kind of dynamics that is inherent in the image. One may open up yet another perspective on the visual mode of thought and have a look at Leibniz’s *New Essays* where Theophilus speculates:

[W]e could introduce a Universal Symbolism [...] if in place of words we used little diagrams which represented visible things pictorially and invisible things by means of the visible ones which go with them... This would at once enable us to communicate easily with remote peoples; but if we adopted it among ourselves (though without abandoning ordinary writing), the use of this way of writing would be of great service in enriching our imaginations and giving us thoughts which were less blind and less verbal than our present ones are.²⁰

The language based on diagrams, one that for Leibniz would write down the “alphabets of thought” based on primitive notions, remained Leibniz’s unrealized wish.²¹

Why wouldn’t this language be realized? Perhaps, to speculate again, one reason is that the image (understood in terms of the instant) is by essence analogic rather than digital. What Leibniz aspired to achieve with diagrams was a discrete symbolic system, based on the world’s regularity and harmony, which would allow enclosing compossible singularities or inflexions in a concept—in the same way as God encloses Sextuses in a single form. This operation is what Deleuze calls the “inclusion” of singularities, and within it the world becomes apprehended in terms of the order of compossibility. (*Le pli* 55) Yet, according to the theoretical exploration

presented above, the image, even the tiniest diagram, indeed *shows* inflexions but does not enclose them in a representation which would straightforwardly allow quantification and calculation.²² To put it in other words, the world shows itself in the image, but the world’s imaging does not succumb to an enclosure in a concept that would allow the operation of “calculus ratiocinator”.

This fundamental aspect of showing, however, does not reduce the image to subsisting as a mysterious “unthought” element in thought. The image differentiates, but it does so in nature and not in degree, that is, according to the singularities that compose things themselves. Calculating on things, as any kind of symbolic operation, requires discreteness, whereas the image is not discrete (it does not divide) but rather intensive or, to borrow Nelson Goodman’s term, “dense”. Yet in contrast with the common conception, the intensive character does not mean that the image would lack the capacity to articulate in its own right. The main argument of this essay is that the lack of discreteness does not equal the lack of a certain kind of differentiation. The image indeed appears as “less blind” in embracing virtual multiplicities (differential relations and singular points). We would be happy to have done away with the old philosophical illusion of articulate sounds—that is to say, sounds written down in a discrete symbolic system—as the only form of true *logos*.²³

Warburg’s constellations evince a mode of intelligence and thought. They, in fact, could be seen as diagrams of sorts, ones that nonetheless do not quantify but instead trace the world in its internal dynamic continuity. The constellations “diagram” the inflexions constitutive of things themselves. In this way, they show a direction that alternative philosophical thinking could follow in an effort to seriously meet the challenge that the image presents to thought. •

Notes

1. Plato, *Meno*, in *Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 97d. See also Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, *Platon et l’art de son temps (arts plastiques)* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1933), 50. Henceforth cited as *Platon et l’art* with pagina.
2. Martin Heidegger & Eugen Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar*, trans. Charles H. Seibert (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 17. Henceforth cited as *Heraclitus Seminar* with pagina.
3. Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, rev. & exp. ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), 198. Henceforth cited as “The Origin” with pagina.
4. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon, oder, über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 2003), 114 (xvi). Henceforth cited as *Laokoon* with pagina.
5. Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. H. N. Fowler, in *Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 156d–e.
6. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Continuum, 2004), 186–192. Henceforth cited as *The Logic of Sense* with pagina.
7. Plato, “Epistle vii,” in *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 341c–344c. Henceforth cited in running

- text as “Epistle vii”. The following analysis of Plato’s letter bases on Giorgio Agamben’s treatment in “The Thing Itself” and “The Idea of Language,” in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. & ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 27–47.
8. Agamben bases on *Parisinus graecus* of 1807 and *Vaticanus graecus* I. Agamben, “The Thing Itself,” 32.
 9. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, in *The Complete Illustrated Works of Lewis Carroll* (London: Chancellor Press, 1982), 23. Of course, literary language also creates worlds in its own right, prescribing, as John Gibson puts it, “imaginings.” John Gibson, “Interpreting Words, Interpreting Worlds,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:4 (Fall 2006): 439–450, quotation in 443. Yet it is the power of the image not only to suggest like words do but to *become* those very “imaginings” by which we apprehend worlds. These imaginings concern not merely concrete objects, persons, etc., but also abstract notions.
 10. I refer to the version published in Aby Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften: Studienausgabe*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, ed. Martin Warnke (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).
 11. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *L’image survivante: Histoire de l’art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002), 288, 496–497.
 12. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28. Henceforth cited as *Difference and Repetition* with pagina.
 13. Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 17.
 14. Heraclitus frag. 223 Kirk, Raven & Schofield (*The Pre-socratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983]) = 64 Diels-Kranz (*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1 [Berlin: Weidmann, 1968]).
 15. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essay on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggart (Chicago: Open Court, 1985), §§413–417. Henceforth cited as *Theodicy*.
 16. Gilles Deleuze, *Le pli: Leibniz et le Baroque* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988), 81. Henceforth cited as *Le pli*.
 17. See Gary Shapiro, *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1–191. Henceforth cited as *Archaeologies of Vision*.
 18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. Adrian del Caro & Robert B. Pippin, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 125. Henceforth cited as *Zarathustra*.
 19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1880–1882*, vol. 9 of *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari, 15 vols. (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 11[156] (502).
 20. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. & ed. Peter Remnant & Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 398.
 21. However, in a way the “artificial” language envisioned by Leibniz is today effectuated in the computer. On Leibniz’s findings in logic and mathematics leading to the invention of the modern computer, see Martin Davis, *The Universal Computer: The Road from Leibniz to Turing* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000).
 22. Interestingly, Deleuze suggests that inflexion is a matter of seeing whereas inclusion a matter of saying (*Le pli* 55).
 23. For an insightful argument on the role of the diagram and the image more generally in ontological thought, see John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London: Continuum, 2006).

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“How About a Space Force?”

An Interview with Peter Fend

Adina Popescu

ADINA POPESCU: Peter Fend, I would like to ask you to describe the installation you’re showing here: *Russland Gegen Erwärmung*.

PETER FEND: Russia has more territory, both land and sea, than any other country in the world. The sea—especially the Sea of Okhotsk and parts of the Black Sea like the Sea of Azov—is more fertile than anywhere else in the world. Live, biological, and non-mineral sources of hydrocarbons can be harvested as excess bioproductivity year after year almost more than anywhere else in the world. So Russia has in its land and sea resources enormous capacity to lead the way towards a renewable energy economy away from the fossil fuels. This is a bit ironic as Russia also has a lot of fossil fuels and is certainly peddling them as well. The point being that, as we see in the headlines, there are thirteen years left before we all have a big catastrophe from global warming, and the fact is, most countries do not have the material resources that Russia has...

AP: So, does that mean that Russia can save the planet?

PF: Russia can certainly lead the way. I wouldn’t say there’s going to be one country doing it, but if Russia were to inventory its resources as soil and water systems in catchments (and I’m know that scientists in Russia do that), if it would make this more a policy then it could very aggressively lead the way—literally lead the way—to a planetary use of renewable resources. Most countries don’t have this possibility. If Germany were to try to lead the way it really can’t because it is too small.

AP: I understand. Could you describe what we’re seeing here on the walls, what we’ve put up here, the map?

PF: Yeah, the urinals are the basins, the catchments, the receptors with salt water for land draining down to respective salt water bodies: the Barents Sea, the Bering Sea, parts of the Arctic Ocean, the Caspian Sea, Baltic Sea and most importantly the Sea of Okhotsk.

AP: But when I look on this map I see that everything is torn apart?

PF: Not really torn apart, just separated out into respective catchments. One can do the same thing anywhere in the world. It’s just to recognize that there are these units, which means quite simply that water flows downhill in these respective units to the blue that you see there.

AP: Okay. Peter, one often reads about you not only in art magazines, but also in places like the *International Herald Tribune* talking in the UN and all these things. What do you think about art and its relation to the power to produce reality?

PF: Reality is pretty much in the mass media, meaning if you have something on CBS News, or if you are on the front page of *The Observer*, then you are somehow real. If you’re in the art world, you’re more or less not real. You’re marginal. It’s a playground. That’s important to recognize because even Bono, for example, is more real

because he’s in the mass media, than almost any artist. I mean the art stars are almost always marginal, and not even credible. Damien Hirst is not credible. He’s there, it’s fine, but it’s entertainment for rich people. Now whatever I do is a residue of what was the dream and aspiration of many people in the seventies. And in the end of the seventies, after what people like Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim and Les Levine were talking about in aiming for the mass media and so on, Jenny Holzer, Richard Prince, and myself—all of whom have been of course obsessed with media issues—and several other artists got together and formed a group that was dedicated to, among other things, working with the UN and other entities outside the art world. The temptation to stay in the art world and have fame, and therefore money, is very great. First because I came from a history background I was never so committed to art. Second, working with satellite data which was a technology, something to sell really that was hard, not just an opinion, and working with Wolfgang...

AP: Wolfgang Staehle, who is also participating in this show.

PF: ...and very importantly a number of other artists, including women artists who actually had very good connections inside NASA. This is very important to remember. I did participate with these people in developing a new service of satellite imaging with civil data of news sites. I was going to say news zones or problem zones and the fact is a news site usually means a war zone. You know we wanted to look at things like acid rain; we usually just ended up looking at things like missile bases. Eventually we became, for the most part, the lone civilian authority on things like the Persian Gulf. By that I mean that what we knew was not published anywhere. What we knew was contrary to what was in the *New York Times*, and what we knew was in some sense not to be known, and that meant we got into a lot of trouble.

AP: So basically if you would use this data and do a simulation it would be art, but what you are doing is constantly exceeding the borders of the art system and trespassing them, and by that it becomes problematic.

PF: When you say that, it’s funny. You have in front of you now a document from the Russian constructivists, a group that argued that there were four kinds of art: painting, sculpture, drawing and architecture. That’s exactly what I argue. I was actually very pleased to see this because I’ve been this lone voice running around saying there are only four kinds of art, and well, they said this in Russia in the twenties, and the point being that we are usually overlooking architecture. I believe that what I’m practicing, and trying to develop, is a practice of architecture. Meaning that satellite imaging is not just pictures; it’s actually a form of defense. And that is within the framework of Lena Battista Alberti’s statement

that architecture should be dealing with the water, the air, the urban planning so to speak, the circulatory space and defense. Now he was from the Renaissance, and what defenses mean, I guess, is building walls, but it can also mean the public’s ability to see what’s happening. When the public is alert, then there is a defense already in place. The public is now alerted to, and able to defend itself against, threats to its territorial integrity, whether those threats are military or ecological. That idea of defense, which is incorporated in Alberti’s definition of what architecture should do, is what I’m trying to achieve with, say, satellite imaging for mass media. Now, the other point is, very important, that I’m not alone here at all. An artist named Taro Suzuki said to me in 1979: “Hey Peter, let’s start an art air force.” And I came back and said, “How about a space force?” And then Eve Vaterlaus, Joan Waltemath, Glenn Steigelman, Wolfgang Staehle, also Paul Sharits and Colleen Fitzgibbon, all got together and started a group called “Space Force”—the notion being that civilians, within the framework of the Second Amendment of the US constitution, have a right to military capacity. And that’s not necessarily having a gun; it means having, in this case, military intelligence, namely satellites. And so we as Americans, Wolfgang being a minor exception, felt entitled to exercise our idea of a militia, with in this case access to and exercise of civilian observation, with the notion again of defense or of territorial protection and identification.

AP: I really like what you were saying about military force and satellite images and the connection to Alberti. He was also the one who was talking about the Godly eye and the Godly perspective. So the illusionist painting in which the viewer, you know, becomes this Godly eye who can overlook everything, this is a way of enabling the subject to a power through visibility. And this is exactly what the satellite images are today—you’re absolutely right. They create space, define space, and at the same time they are like this Godly eye which looks from above, and which is basically structuring the space into symbolic values, power structures, etc. So that’s fantastic...

PF: I’m happy that you like it. I can say that when Lucy Lippard saw our first show and it lead to the mass media work—a show called “Art of the State”—she wrote a very critical attack in the *Village Voice* saying, “Oh, these people want us to play God! Let the viewer play God!” And not only that, but Martha Rosler attacked us as being technocratic and “God-wishing” or something like that. In other words, what you say is good about the Godly eye, they thought was bad. **AP:** But that’s exactly what it is... okay that’s very interesting. So, this concept of the “Saloon” is very strongly connected to the American-Russian relationship, and it is very important to do this in Moscow and only here?

PF: That’s why we’re making this connection

down to the Bering Sea and down to California. As we know, Russia used to own that and, well, thank you very much British Petroleum. Alaska was sold to the United States by Russia as part of an attempt to ward off the British. It has since been bought up by BP, as they say, but there is, or has been, a friendship between Russia and the United States continuing along the Pacific Coast. And actually I would say this is part of the reason why Teddy Roosevelt had the ability to be the arbitrator between Japan and Russia in 1905, because there is or was this relationship or understanding. The irony is that ever since 1917, when the United States entered World War One on the British and French side, the US has become, as we know, tied with England in a special, intimate relationship, which is actually contrary to early American history or feeling. Now, having done that it kind of automatically fell into the camp of James Bond and British Empire, and automatically participated in the classic British-Russian rivalry, but that’s not really the way it was for most of American history.

AP: Okay, one of the reasons I’m interested in showing your piece here is that in Russia there is a long tradition of what we can call Science Fiction: the junction between science and something that we might believe is highly utopian or almost fictitious. At the same time this is something they always took very seriously in history and it has integrated arts, smuggled fiction and utopian models into science, and enabled different disciplines to work together. I somehow feel that your work goes very well with this idea. What is science fiction to you?

PF: I’ll try to answer by revealing a little bit the experience I’ve had in recent years. There’s also here a drawing of the world in which Antarctica is at the centre. Now, if you let your hand do the drawing, you will see certain patterns of ocean currents, and it becomes very clear in your hand what’s going on. Now, what your hand does, as an artist or as a drawer, is—you could say—fiction because it’s coming out of yourself. At the same time, when I speak with, and have since 1980, Russian scientists about this kind of thinking, there’s a great deal of agreement. On the contrary, a scientist from a different background like England would very much object to this. They feel you have to have empirical evidence. Well, sorry but we can’t get an instrument down to five thousand, never mind twenty thousand, feet deep in the ocean to prove this point, but we can certainly make a drawing. In other words it seems that in my experience with Russian scientists—and that’s been, as they say, 1980, 1989, 2004 and so on—we seem to have a lot of agreement on issues of, say, ocean circulation and what can be done with resources. I don’t know if that’s being utopian. I do think it’s allowing your imagination, or even your sense of drawing, to be trusted. I don’t want to make a generalization here, but I have found that in my own experience



◀ Fermentation Flask for Intertidal Algae collected at Elbemündung (mouth of the Elbe) as the physical yield from the entire Elbe basin Vis-à-vis the North Sea, 2007. The map is of the entire Elbe basin extending to Denmark. Courtesy of Galerie für Landschaftskunst, Hamburg 2007.

there tends to be more agreement with, on a number of issues, Russian scientists than with scientists from other countries.

AP: Which leads us back to this idea of where the border between art and reality is to be drawn, and what the production of reality is. In times in which the prime minister and president of Poland are identical twins (who used to play two brothers that had stolen the moon in a Polish movie when they were kids), the tautology of self-referentiality becomes omnipresent. I do not believe in provocation, as provocation is always anticipated within a system and that for me does not have the power to exceed its borders. The project of the avant garde, based on the idea that art should have the power to change our reality, failed. Art today, in the western world, is absolutely irrelevant and has no meaning outside the reality of its own market. Also, a painting can sometimes only be a painting, but I believe that a satellite image, a map or an architectural model contains an action plan, is a performative act and has the power to implement unborn thoughts into our so-called reality. I believe because that art should become architectural.

What is happening with these models when you start showing them? I like what you do because you work with models of the world, which have to be interpreted and which immediately cause a reaction, and these reactions are not only from the art world.

PF: It was also central to my life and the life of Jenny Holzer and others. We thought about that, and I think we all tried to solve it and I think we pretty much failed. Failed so far anyway; it might change. But the question of having your artistic views or understandings become adopted as something to do is a very serious question for anybody who after all lives only once. I mean are you just making entertainment, or are you actually making a point? I'm not so happy that when something is labeled art and is seen in an art context it pretty much stays in a box. Now, there are a number of ways out, and one of them is, again, architecture. I guess that's just part of the current struggle we have in our society. Maybe happily enough, because of the global warming emergency, there will be the loosening of some barriers that block the communication. Right now I'm talking to some beer companies that have the capacity to ferment plant material about using their equipment and their 'know-power', their whole technology, to ferment algae to make methane gas. Now, if you were to get these beer companies behind you and really go for it, they have enough capital that they can actually grow and challenge the oil companies. You could have a situation where a beer company and this technology were able to produce large quantities of methane gas. You're using some reef to collect the algae in the sea, but that's another story. This kind of industrial scenario is not impossible, it's not just science fiction,

given that everybody knows now, and it's all published, that we have to go for biological renewable resources. I mean we can't continue with oil. The fact is that BP, or Exxon Mobile, are not structured to do this: to go for renewables, they're not set up that way. They're set up for—they're committed to—fossils. But a beer company on the other hand is really able to convert plant material into a gas, into a fuel, and I believe that this is a scenario that can be developed. Now if we do that, and we're going to try to do that in Bremen and Hamburg, if we do that and we demonstrate that it works and it has a profit margin, and there's a product CNG, compressed natural gas, for cars, this might make people wake up and go, "Hey, wow." And it all comes out of that corner: Joseph Beuys, once again Duchamp's fountain, and some ideas

“[I]magination is not trivial; imagination actually is a very important tool for survival.”

about Earth Art, Robert Smithson, and a piece done for the Ocean Project sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art in 1969. It all comes out of art history; it's just that all these ideas from art are not being applied, as long as everything stays in the realm of utopia, or "nice idea", or a kind of Buckminster Fuller demonstration project...

AP: But this is, I think, the basic misunderstanding of the word "utopian". To me "utopia" means *not* to depict something or to create something which is supposedly never going to happen; by actually thinking, doing and then realizing something—building it, like architecture for example—it immediately produces our present and it immediately becomes reality. For example if I think of Ceausescu, the Romanian dictator, who rebuilt Bucharest by not only changing its architecture, but by changing its structure and moving entire boulevards. By that he tried to implement a model of society which was supposed to be the future, but then it became present by actually, you know, becoming a reality and the reality of the people within their everyday lives. Now, after the downfall of the regime, it became their past but also the foundation of a new, unknown future. So I think if you could take this notion of utopia in architecture and put it into art—and I think it's very interesting that you're more thinking of yourself as an architect—every artwork should become architectural in that sense: by being used (and I think art should be seen in the sense of a Heideggerian "Zuhandenheit"), it will change the way we read, walk, perceive and live within the space surrounding us.

PF: Now when you use the word "utopia", I guess my counterpart word would be navigation, or even the German word "Vorstellung". The fact is that, right or wrong, good or bad, human beings have imagination and it is an instrument for survival. It allows them to see somewhat into the future and to plan, target, organize and orient themselves towards a future that will somehow work. And imagination is not trivial; imagination actually is a very important tool for survival. Whether we get further I don't know, but it's going to depend very much on us using our imagination: our capacity to imagine, to see into the future, to project, to have the will to envision or anticipate, you might say, images. And to act on those imaginings. I think the great failure of our society—western, rational, scientific society—is that there's very little confidence in imagination. There's much more confidence in empirical truth. The problem is if you go to a scientific conference, everybody's publishing papers about how bad things are. Time and again another report about how there's going to be a catastrophe by the year 2080, or a catastrophe by the year 2020. Yeah, we know that! Who has, who dares to have, a scenario for what we can do? Nobody dares have a scenario because it might be wrong. Of course it might be wrong, that's what scenarios are, they're only provisional! But if we don't trust our scenarios and act on scenarios we will perish. That's for sure. So there needs to be, somehow or other, a growing credibility for those people who have imaginings, or scenarios, or visions, or some kind of idea of what can happen, like what I was just saying about the beer companies. People say, "Oh, what a crazy idea," but if you don't have a "crazy idea", you will not get anywhere! Because if you only have the empirical truth you're stuck with just recording how it's all falling apart.

AP: So we have here a direct link between an artistic drawing, Robert Smithson, mapping, earth engineering and geopolitics. They're all linked together. How do you see this geopolitical link, which is also the overall theme of this Biennale?

PF: Well geopolitics is just whatever ownership and value is attached to material resources of the geo, the earth. And obviously that is tied in today with mineral resources, but it can also be tied in with things like land, especially fertility. These maps here are just geopolitical charts, so to speak, of fertility units, and you can see with the satellite very clearly the enormous fertility in the Sea of Accost, the Sea of Asov, the Bering Sea or the Gulf of Finland. And these are resources, and as resources they have value and they are somehow coveted or wanted, and geopolitical struggle is all about who gets to have that resource, or who gets to have the access to that resource. Now, the present fighting and bickering that goes on around the planet is almost entirely geopolitical because it's all about who gets what piece of the pie. One example for what I

call Earth Engineering: for nearly four years our company has been surveying the Iran-Iraq war zone, chiefly at the head of the Persian Gulf. We have studied satellite data dating back to 1972, and from this data we have observed the Iraqis to be steadily building new canals on either side of the Shatt-al-Arab to effect a continuation of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as separate streams to prevent their convergence into one stream. The scale of construction is enormous. The canals extend for nearly 200 kilometers. Since 1985, we have published reports that the canals will very likely benefit the Gulf by increasing the flow of freshwaters into the hyper-saline Gulf. We have published also that the canals would tend to dry up the bogs and marshes upstream from Basra, and simultaneously leach out the salts deposited in the dry, encrusted areas through which they flow. The entire head of the Gulf would consequently be improved. Sodden marshes would become drier land, suitable for agriculture. Salt flats would be rid of their salts and other deposited residues left there largely by irrigation. The evaporation rates throughout the region, sometimes up to 90% of river volume, would diminish, and more freshwater would be available for both cultivable lands and the Gulf. The historical effect could be immense as well. By human construction rather than by geological accident or unforeseen consequences of irrigation, the channels of two major rivers—the Tigris and the Euphrates—would be radically relocated. Rather than converge at Al Qurna, which scholars consider being the ancient site of Eden, the rivers would maintain their separate paths clear to the Gulf. The Euphrates would pass in part through what is now Kuwait. The Tigris would be diverted to pass in part through what is now Iran. What has long been regarded as Mesopotamia, a land between two rivers converging on the Gulf in a much-fabled "Cradle of Civilization", would become a region of two separated streams, each positioned to receive waters from two respectively separate countries. The entire Persian Gulf basin extending upstream from the head of the Gulf could become subject to an ecological vitalization unknown since ancient civilization.

AP: Thank you very much for being here. •

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They’re Conspiring, Stupid

Jeff Kinkle

Two years ago I was waiting for a late friend in front of a Manhattan pizza place and overheard a heated argument between two men in their young twenties. Pointing at a pigeon pecking at a piece of crust a few meters away, the dispute concerned the animal’s identity. One guy was convinced that its common name was “duck”. His friend didn’t agree, arguing that it was in fact “a bird”. This is of course technically correct, but perhaps not as precise as to be the desired answer. A deficit of taxonomic knowledge does not necessarily correlate with historical ignorance, but I could not help of think of this when I read the reports of a *Washington Post* poll conducted around the fifth year anniversary of the 9.11 attacks that revealed that thirty percent of Americans did not remember the year in which the attacks took place—five percent did not even know the month and day. Despite not having unrealistically high expectations about the population’s scientific or historical consciousness, such ignorance really is startling. Not that Americans are unique in this regard; similar polls in various countries have recently exposed extreme levels of ignorance in relation to contemporary politics and past horrors like the Holocaust and Gulag. Still, what is so shocking about the 9.11 poll is that the attacks were so recent and that to this day we are constantly reminded that we are living through their immediate consequences. Their coverage in the media was and still is so constant and their cultural representation so ubiquitous that one would suspect that if one cannot even recall in the year in which they took place, the chances of knowing anything at all about their geopolitical history and significance are miniscule.

Polls conducted during the same period show that a similar percentage of Americans, over thirty percent (other polls suggest even higher numbers in New York), suspect some form of government involvement in the planning and/or execution of the 9.11 attacks (the two dominant scenarios being the “inside job” or “let it happen on purpose”—LIIOP—hypotheses).¹ Obviously there is no reason to believe that it is the same thirty percent: that conspiracy theory is the inevitable result of ignorance or that ignorance leads to deluded conspiracy thinking, even if this is often implied when the term “conspiracy theory” is employed disparagingly.² Awash in symbolic misery and bereft of any conceptual apparatus to understand the antagonisms, fluctuations, and developments in global society, conspiracy theory is often depicted as an immensely oversimplified narrativization of amorphous and anonymous global power dynamics and economic forces. In a formulation often cited in conspiracy theory theory, Fredric Jameson claims that “Conspiracy, one is tempted to say, is the poor person’s cognitive mapping in the post-modern age; it is a degraded figure of the total logic of late capital, a desperate attempt to represent the latter’s system, whose failure is marked by its slippage into sheer theme and content.”³ The fact that more Americans googled “Nostradamus” than “Bin Laden” in the aftermath of

the attacks gives credence to the claim that to its believers/practitioners, conspiracy theory is perhaps frightening in that it supposedly reveals the evil manipulating our lives but ultimately reassuring in that it gives events a meaning and history a design.⁴

In the conspiracy theories of 9.11 corpus, no single piece of work positing an alternative to the official 9.11 account has gained more popularity or courted more controversy than *Loose Change* (2006).⁵ A feature-length film written and directed by Dylan Avery on an inexpensive laptop in his home in upstate New York, Avery and the film’s producers, all in their young twenties, estimate that it has been watched by over 100 million people—primarily via the internet. The film argues the attacks were an inside job and considering the aforementioned poll, its conclusions are hardly marginal. No matter how one judges *Loose Change*—whether one sees it as a courageous, inventive, and commendable product of the “Google generation” or an incoherent and paranoid fantasy—its impact and success makes it worthy of scrutiny. It is not only the veracity of its conclusions that should be thought through but also questions it raises about the overall relevance of conspiracy theory for understanding 9.11 and the “War on Terror”.

Surprisingly slick considering its almost non-existent production costs, *Loose Change* fires off a litany of charges so rapidly that each is difficult to ponder for more than an instant. After the barrage, many of the allegations seem dubious but one need not believe in the accuracy of everything presented in order to be convinced that something is amiss in the conventional narrative of the attacks as told by the *9.11 Commission Report* and propagated by the mass media. The film presents two types of evidence to make its case that members of the Bush administration and other elites colluded in a conspiracy. The first is based on what one could call the mechanics or physics of the attacks and how they contradict the official story—this characterizes the majority of the evidence presented in the film, and there are parallels with the “magic bullet theory” in relation to the JFK assassination and the claims that the moon landing was faked. The second is circumstantial evidence meant to attack the character of their main suspects in order to convince a skeptical public that elected officials, bureaucrats, and elites would be capable of such a malevolent action.

The evidence based on the physics of the events asserts that much of the story presented by the 9.11 Commission could not possibly have physically occurred: the World Trade Center towers could not possibly have collapsed due to the collision of the planes and ensuing fire alone, rather, the evidence points to a controlled demolition; the wreckage at the Pentagon and in the Pennsylvanian field is inconsistent with a plane crash site and thus we must assume something else, probably a missile, hit the Pentagon and that something else created the smoking crater in Pennsylvania. Facts are reeled off about the temperature at which jet fuel burns and at which

steel melts, and video clips of controlled demolitions are shown alongside quotes from “experts”. What is interesting about evidence of this kind is that it is both instantaneously convincing and easily countered. Most people do not have the slightest idea what it takes to bring down a skyscraper, what happens when an airliner hits reinforced concrete, or how difficult it is to turn around a Boeing 757 at 400mph, so having what appears to be credible testimony of any kind can be persuasive. Yet, just by quickly searching online, it is possible to find a myriad of experts disputing the testimonies in *Loose Change* from across the political spectrum. The American

“The Bush administration does conduct itself conspiratorially: constantly acting under a shroud of secrecy.”

magazine *Popular Mechanics* has even released a book debunking these aspects of the film.

The film’s concurrent argument looks at the likely perpetrators of the attacks. Even if one discounts the counter-explanations based on the physical evidence—if one does accept that a plane hit the Pentagon, the towers collapsed due to the impact of the planes and resulting inferno—the possibility of a conspiracy involving actors within the US State remains. This second type of evidence is almost completely circumstantial and is meager in comparison to the amount of physical evidence given. It attempts to show that members of the Bush administration were not only capable of doing something of this magnitude, but that if the evidence is looked at together it suggests that they probably did. A large portion of this evidence has been gathered by trawling the mainstream media, the rest coming from a range of websites of varying reliability. The infamous claim by the neo-conservative think-tank Project for a New American Century claiming that “a new Pearl Harbor” was needed to galvanize Americans into supporting military interventions throughout the Middle East and past instances of American officials recommending committing terrorist acts and then blaming them on a convenient enemy (Operation Northwoods in 1962 involved Cuba) are two of the relatively few facts cited.⁶ Circumstantial evidence includes the owner of the World Trade Center taking out a multi-billion dollar insurance policy in the July prior to the attacks, unusually high amounts of put options placed on American Airlines stock in the days before, and the need of the Bush administration to create a justification invading Afghanistan and Iraq.

By the end of *Loose Change* the conspiracy that emerges is enormous. Not only does it include members of the Bush Administration that must have actively planned the attacks, but—and this is only a partial list—the teams that placed

explosives within WTC and faked the voices of passengers on the hijacked planes to call their loved ones, the owner of WTC and then New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, hundreds of stock traders and the SEC that won’t reveal who profited substantially from the attacks, Pentagon and WTC clean up crews, and even possibly the passengers on United 93, which did not crash in Pennsylvania but instead landed in Cleveland, and Flight 77, which never hit the Pentagon. As such, it is not surprising that more often than not *Loose Change* has been derided by its detractors as an archetypal conspiracy theory. The response of the filmmakers and many that share their views is that the claim that 9.11 was the result of nineteen Arabs armed with box cutters and orchestrated from a cave in Afghanistan is the most far fetched conspiracy theory of them all. Part of the problem here is that there is no unanimous definition of what exactly constitutes “conspiracy theory”. Obviously the term cannot simply designate any claim of conspiracy as the official account of 9.11 is indeed a theory of conspiracy (Zacarias Moussaoui for example was convicted of conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism) and stresses that a small cabal of men were able to drastically change the course of the young twenty first century, provoking wars, curtailments on civil liberties, etc. Furthermore, really existing conspiracies are constantly afoot. To take an example of one of the architects of the “War on Terror”, a cursory look at the biography of someone like former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reveals a life rich in conspiracy: from conspiring against George Bush senior to become President Ford’s Secretary of Defense and as the CEO of GD Searle & Company against scientists and the American public at large to get NutraSweet approved despite evidence suggesting it gave rats brain tumors, to finally conspiring against pretty much the world to propagate belief in Saddam’s WMDs to justify invading Iraq.⁷ There are even documented cases in Western democratic states of criminal conspiracies at the highest levels and elements resorting to false flag terrorism against their own populations so one cannot really reject anything *tout court*. How then do we differentiate between a deluded conspiracy theory and research that actually reveals criminal conspiracies other than just saying conspiracy theories are ultimately incorrect theories of conspiracy?

Conspiracy theory has a long and rich history, in the American context stretching back to the colonial period. In what he calls “the paranoid style in American politics”, Richard Hofstadter claims that the central image of this style “is that of a vast and sinister conspiracy, a gigantic and yet subtle machinery of influence set in motion to undermine and destroy a way of life.”⁸ Instances of the paranoid style stretch from the anti-Masonic and Illuminati discourses of the 18th and 19th centuries through anti-Catholicism to the anti-communism of the McCarthy period. Hofstadter acknowledges that there are indeed real conspiracies but what differentiates the paranoid style is that conspiracy is seen to be the

◀ Previous spread
Julieta Aranda, '100 Bent Spoons', 2007.

"I have become interested in the printing mistakes that take place in the assembly line, because of the questions they pose to the notion of value and how it is generated. Using the logic of newspaper production, the misprints carry no value, as they are errors that occur during the printing process. But from another perspective, the same defective quality that erases their commercial value, transforms them in turn into unique objects and embodies them with aesthetic weight.

These badly printed, unreadable newspapers contain on themselves the ghostly imprint of the information that they were originally meant to distribute. But while the properly printed copies are indistinguishable one from the other, the printing mistakes are all unique in their aberration, in a sense each of them is a different rendition of the same information, a subjective approach to the content that while inaccessible is nonetheless fully present."

▶ Model of Dealey Plaza. From Penn Jones, Jr. Kennedy Assassination Materials 1963–1998, The Baylor Collections of Political Materials, Baylor University.



"motive force" in historical events as opposed to social and economic forces. (*Paranoid Style* 29) Michael Barkun's recent study of conspiracy culture identifies three principles found in almost all conspiracy theory: nothing happens by accident, nothing is as it seems, and everything in connected. He also helpful differentiates between three different types of conspiracy theories: event conspiracies, systemic conspiracies, and super conspiracies, which seek respectively to explain a single event (JFK assassination for example), explain a series of events by uncovering a single, evil organization behind them (Masons, Jews, Catholics, etc.), or a combination of the two in which conspiratorial groups are linked to various series of events over a considerable time span (Illuminati and New World Order conspiracy theories). (*Culture of Conspiracy* 3–7) Jodi Dean meanwhile has put conspiracy culture within the context of the collapse of meta-narratives associated with postmodernity, while Timothy Melley in a similar manner links their rise with what he calls "agency panic": a crisis in belief in individual agency.⁹ Conspiracy thinking became more widespread following the JFK assassination (as well as Moro, Palme, RFK, MLK, etc.) and Watergate, then increased exponentially during the 1990s when they entered into pop culture via the popularity of shows like the *X-Files* and the growth of the internet on which theories could circulate to wide audiences outside of the major publishing houses. The generation of conspiracy theory has become an inevitable consequence of any major event and it is in this context that the attacks on 9.11 took place.

There is indeed ample reason to classify *Loose Change* as conspiracy theory. The researchers behind the film have obviously done a lot of work but the evidence given is highly selective. Any news story or witness testimony that bolsters their argument is utilized, no matter its credibility, while anything that undermines it is either ignored or dismissed as part of the cover up. Even the smallest details have profound meaning: the fact that the tail numbers of the planes that purportedly hit the Pentagon and crashed in Pennsylvania are still listed in the FAA registers as being in use means that they must not have been destroyed that day. Instead of assuming that someone at the FAA forgot to take them off the books for whatever reason, this is seen as a glitch in the conspirators' otherwise mostly flawless scheme.¹⁰ Slips in officials' speech are also taken to be revelatory: for example, a quote by Rumsfeld where he "accidentally" mentions a missile striking the Pentagon. It is also interesting to look at the debate between the makers of *Loose Change* and their debunkers. A key characteristic of a conspiracy theory is it is, in the eyes of its proponents, non-falsifiable. (*Culture of Conspiracy* 7) Every attempt to challenge the theory is dismissed as either a nefarious part of the plot or the result of people tricked by the conspiracy—the more people that oppose the theory, the larger the conspiracy. Thus, in the *Loose Change* vs. *Popular Mechanics* debate, *Popular Mechanics* is dismissed outright as yellow journalism and a

part of the Hearst media empire, which seems to imply that all of corporate America is part of the conspiracy, or at least aiding and abetting.

Overall, instead of placing 9.11 in the historical context of American foreign policy, the rise of radical Islamism, and their combination that lead to the most spectacular blowback imaginable, *Loose Change* concocts around 9.11 an elaborate and ingenious conspiracy perpetrated by elements within the US government and various elites in order to bolster their power at the start of the new century and steal or make billions of dollars. *Loose Change* replaces the complexity of the geopolitical situation that led to 9.11 with an immensely complex and vast conspiracy, and in this sense it is tempting to agree with Jameson's characterization of conspiracy theory as "a poor man's cognitive mapping". One can easily see how the focus on the plot diverts attention away from the documented scandals of the US's policies in the Middle East, and especially certain once-convenient Cold War alliances.

What, however, if beyond these considerations of history and geopolitics, some notion of conspiracy is actually integral to understanding the current situation? While it might not be historically unique in this regard, it may be impossible to understand the actions of the Bush administration simply by understanding "the logic of capital" or by looking at the historical relationship between the US and the Middle East. The Bush administration *does* conduct itself conspiratorially: constantly acting under a shroud of secrecy with decisions made by a small group of individuals, evidence forged, disinformation spread, etc. There was even a small group of policy advisers and analysts within the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans that referred to themselves as "The Cabal". Can we really say that understanding the Bush family's connections to the oil industry or Dick Cheney's role at Halliburton or various other connections between members of the administration and the infamous military-industrial complex has nothing to do with various decisions and policies or that there is no reason to suspect this administration of consistently breaking the law and belittling the US constitution? To put it succinctly: is understanding the conspiratorial behavior of the Bush administration not central to understanding the role of the US state in the world at the present juncture?

Guy Debord claims in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988) that the "conspiracy theory of history"—the notion that a small cabal of elite individuals are behind all historical developments, events, and revolutions—"was in the nineteenth century a reactionary and ridiculous belief, at a time when so many powerful social movements were stirring up the masses."¹¹ The implication being that today, since the masses proper no longer exist after the collapse of the worker's movement, there is indeed small, secretive groups made up of primarily white men with power actively shaping the world. As Hofstadter observed, this conspiracy theory of history dates back to the 18th century and even

Marx felt the International Working Men's Association was being attacked by proponents of the conspiracy theory of history when he writes in 1871, "The police-tinged bourgeois mind naturally figures to itself the International Working Men's Association as acting in the manner of a secret conspiracy, its central body ordering, from time to time, explosions in different countries. Our Association is, in fact, nothing but the international bond between the most advanced working men in the various countries of the civilized world."¹² For Marx, it is this bond that differentiates this organic vanguard from a shadowy cabal manipulating the masses. This Marx quote is doubly relevant in the sense that it addresses the beginning of a specific political, revolutionary sequence that by the time Debord is writing *Comments* has been extinguished. It is the end of this sequence, and the leaving centre stage of its subject—the proletariat—that seems to lead Debord to resuscitate the conspiracy theory of history for what he calls the eternal present of the integrated spectacle.

This centrality of conspiracy to *Comments* partially has to do with the shift in the West that Debord conceptualizes from the "diffuse" to the "integrated" spectacle during the years of "contested spectacle". During this period, the society of the spectacle could no longer rely on "silent compulsion" and as the worker's movement threatened the dominance of capital, conspiracies were hatched to save its very existence. "Formally one only conspired against an established order. Today, *conspiring in its favour* is a new and flourishing profession. Under spectacular domination people conspire to maintain it, and to guarantee what it alone would call its well-being. This conspiracy is a part of its very functioning." (*Comments* 74) In Italy in the seventies, for example, many of these conspiracies were tied to the infiltration and manipulation of militant groups on the left and right by the secret services and others in government in order to perpetuate campaigns of terror that would frighten the population into supporting the status quo. Spectacular democracy, he writes, wants "to be judged by its enemies rather than by its results." The story of terrorism is written by the state and is therefore highly instructive. The spectators must certainly never know everything about terrorism, but they must always know enough to convince them that, compared with terrorism, everything else must be acceptable, or in any case more rational and democratic." (*Comments* 24) While there were elements in groups like the secret Masonic group Propaganda Due (P2) that did indeed want to undermine the state and launch a *coup*, much of their activity did indeed go towards conspiring for the protection of the establish order.¹³ In the integrated spectacle, history is undergoing an eclipse, the revolutionary subject is nowhere to be found, and the antagonism that splits society has been spackled over making the conspiracy theory of history accurate and political conflict "now becomes a struggle between enemy brothers", to paraphrase Marx.¹⁴

Debord is most often thought of as a theorist

of consumer capitalism, but his conception of the spectacle has recently been resuscitated and frequently applied to 9.11 and its aftermath. Almost all of these accounts essentially treat the concept as a synonym for "the world of images" and very few of them deal with Debord's writings on terrorism and conspiracy.¹⁵ There is one notable exception worth dealing with here in that it provides a transition between *Loose Change* and Debord's late writings: Len Bracken's *The Shadow Government: 9/11 and State Terror*. Bracken is the author of a biography of Debord as well as the translator of Gianfranco Sanguinetti's *On The Last Chance to Save Capitalism in Italy* (1976), which was heavily influenced by Debord and dealt with state terror as part of the "strategy of tension" in 1970s Italy.¹⁶ Bracken is one of the few authors to draw upon Debord's late works, but the manner in which he does so it perhaps surprising. A text that tries to mimic Debord's voice in its tone and historical references (Machiavelli, Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, etc.), *The Shadow Government* posits a conspiracy theory of 9.11 that involves the upper echelons of the Bush administration and the intelligence services masterminding the attacks in a manner not drastically different—although better researched and more eloquently argued—from 9.11 conspiracy theorists like Alex Jones, David Ray Griffin, Webster Griffin Tarpley, Michael Ruppert, or for that matter David Icke, minus the shape-shifting lizards.¹⁷

The Shadow Government does diverge from *Loose Change* however in the sense that the focus is entirely on historical instances of state terror, false flag operations and the 9.11 plot, and not once on the physics of the attacks. Using a schema drawn from Sanguinetti's *On Terrorism and the State*, written in the context of Italy's "years of lead" and claiming that elements of the state (particularly the security services) were behind much of the terror and even the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, Bracken sees 9.11—as well as the anthrax attacks and the Oklahoma City bombing—as an acts of defensive terrorism perpetuated by the US state. In Sanguinetti's conceptualization, defensive terrorism is "always and only" perpetrated by States "either because they are deep in some grave social crisis, like the Italian State, or else because they fear one, like the German State."¹⁸ This is set in opposition to offensive terrorism: acts of terror committed by groups or individuals to harm the state. Only "the desperate and the deluded resort to offensive" terrorism, writes Sanguinetti, claiming these acts are "always doomed to fail".¹⁹ Much of Bracken's text is dedicated convincing the reader that 9.11 is more likely a case of defensive than offensive terror and this is done first by setting historical precedents for his theory of 9.11, adopting Debord's maxim that "people who understand nothing of history can be readily manipulated; even more so than others." (*Comments* 25) "Conspiratorial plans," Bracken writes, "play a part in most, if not all, historical events." (*Shadow Government* 60) He then provides a wide range of evidence gathered from various sources (including publications like *The National Enquirer*) that



4 FBI agents, fire fighters, rescue workers and engineers work at the Pentagon crash site on Sept. 14, 2001, where a hijacked American Airlines flight slammed into the building on Sept. 11. DoD photo by Tech. Sgt. Cedric H. Rudisill.

suggest 9.11 is an act of state-sponsored terrorism. Bracken tells *The Village Voice* that he has no concrete proof of anything and that the evidence is entirely circumstantial.²⁰ Still, despite a great deal of dubious sources and leaps of logic there is enough provided to make one suspicious that there is considerably more to the story told by the 9.11 *Commission Report* (and *Loose Change* for that matter). Overall however, despite the fact that Bracken is clearly drawing on Debord's ideas on the role of conspiracies and terror in the governing of contemporary states, in his own narrative of conspiracy he overlooks a key feature of Debord's theory of the integrated spectacle. Debord described it as “a world where there is no room for verification.” (*Comments* 48) One of the defining characteristics of the reign of the integrated spectacle for Debord was the ambiguity of all political events. This, and his thoughts on terrorism in general, were heavily influenced by the situation in 1970s Italy: a “microcosm of the Cold War” in which revolutionaries and secret agents, *coup* plots, conspiracies and assassinations, Euroterrorism and stay-behind armies, mafia hitmen and Vatican spies, and even shadowy Freemasons creating parallel governments combined to create an environment in which truth was constantly shrouded.²¹ There was no way to know if a bombing was perpetrated by the left, the right in the guise of the left, or the state in the guise of the right impersonating the left. One could not trust the courts to hand down a legitimate verdict; one could not trust investigative journalists, politicians, or whistleblowers to uncover the truth. History was no longer decided, or even influenced, by the masses but by men meeting behind closed doors with the law of *omerta* binding elites in every segment of society. In the integrated spectacle, the truth is not simply hidden, but dissolved by a combination of unanswerable lies, disinformation, and the constant bombardment of trivialities in the media.

In relation to Debord's conspiratorial turn in his later work, Sven Lütticken develops the notion of “structural conspiracies” in his essay “The Conspiracy of Publicness.”²² “These structural conspiracies function to a certain extent *as if* they were deliberate, actual conspiracies. They may also, at various points, involve real conspiracies, but these do not determine the overall structure.” (*Secret Publicity* 194) They are seen to be a result of the growth of the integrated spectacle and the concomitant growth of secrecy, lies, and the occultization of power. Lütticken continues, “A structural conspiracy has an ambiguous ontological status that does not presume lots of people actively and deliberately conspiring, yet it has much the same effect as a real conspiracy.” (*Secret Publicity* 195) This notion of structural conspiracy need not only be applied to event conspiracies like 9.11. Perhaps we can also think of systemic structural conspiracies where, for example, the “War on Terror” and “terrorism”—“the disjunctive synthesis of two nihilisms”, to quote Badiou—necessarily constitute each other.²³ The collusion between Western intelligence agencies (not just the CIA) and Is-

lamic fundamentalists in both Afghanistan and the Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s could as such be seen as continuing in the present, albeit on a different plane. To oversimplify a bit, we need not believe that there is a conspiracy within the US state to actively aid Bin Laden (implied early in *Loose Change* as he is said to have been treated in the American Hospital in Dubai and visited by CIA agents two months before the attacks), to see how Bin Laden's actions and very existence have helped the Bush administration or how the Bush administration's foreign policy has helped the Al Qaeda franchise.

In the end the point for Debord is not necessarily whether or not these conspiracy theories are true; rather that the integrated spectacle creates a kind of epistemological uncertainty that prevents one from knowing one way or another. The Debordian conclusion that can be reached from this seems inescapably pessimistic: living “without room for verification” we cannot adequately interpret the world and without a revolutionary subject we cannot hope to change it. But there is another side to the generalized ignorance of the integrated spectacle. Debord writes, “To this list of the triumphs of power we should, however, add one result which has proved negative: once the running of a state involves a permanent and massive shortage of historical knowledge, that state can no longer be led strategically.” (*Comments* 20) The same forces that cripple resistance undermine power. When one hears that Bush did not even know that Iraqi Muslim's were divided into Sunnis and Shiites as late as January 2003 or that those that spoke Arabic and knew the history of the region were dismissed by the administration as “Arabists”, it is not that surprising things have gone badly. (*Rumsfeld* 107) Despite not having unrealistically high expectations about the Bush administration's historical and geopolitical consciousness or overall competence, such ignorance—willed ignorance—really is startling. Beyond sitting back and waiting for the spectacle's self-immolation, the writings of the late Debord give little indication of what is to be done to hasten or guarantee its downfall and the creation of a better society.

In the debate around the JFK assassination (as well as similar assassinations like that of Palme), the two competing explanations either focus on a lone gunman or a grand conspiracy. As Timothy Melley observes, “Public discourse about Kennedy's murder routinely revolves around this pair of starkly opposed possibilities, one tracing the murder to an ‘atomistic,’ and often irrational, individual agent, the other positing a highly organized and power collectivity.” (*Empire of Conspiracy* 135) Melley sees these as two sides of the same coin as both theories take on elements of their opposite: lone gunman theorists often look to see how society could produce such a maladjusted individual while advocates of the grand conspiracy see their responsible collective as a liberal individual. An interesting feature of the 9.11 theories is that both the official account and the main conspiracies theories essentially posit a collective agent capable of acting in uni-

son, without leaking their plans, and achieving extraordinary results. And bizarrely, in this conflict, it is those that seem to be the most hostile to the US state that most subscribe to the fantasy of its omnipotence while the official narrative very much demonstrates its fallibility. Despite the calls for action at the very end of *Loose Change*, it is this fantasy of omnipotence that is in many ways the ultimate message propagated by the film. The idea that a relatively small group of Arabs with a relatively small amount of training and resources were able to accomplish such a consequential act is dismissed outright as ludicrous. Yet an administration that has had such difficulty doing *anything* right is accused of pulling off what would easily be considered one of the most brazen and ingenious conspiracies of all time without a single co-conspirator, their numbers in the high hundreds at least, revealing anything. At the same time, the inevitable failure of the 9.11 truth movement is built into the *Loose Change* narrative. With all the elites—media, university, government—in on the plot or afraid to reveal it for whatever reasons, and a government guilty of mass murder unable to make any concessions the movement would consider valid, there is no indication that there is any possibility of the movement succeeding. Even if they were able to convince people that 9.11 was an inside job, there is little reason to think it would make a difference. An ABC News poll taken on the 40th anniversary of the JFK assassination revealed that 70% of the population believe there is more to the plot than demonstrated by the Warren Commission with over 50% believing in a second shooter. Despite millions of Americans believing the state covered up certain details involving the assassination of a president, there is not—and never really was—any real concerted mass movement attempting to discover the truth or dispose of those impeding its realization.

Besides failing to prevent 9.11, probably the Bush administration's other most spectacular failure was its inability to prevent the destruction of much of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. And in a vein similar to 9.11, there are numerous theories (from Lil Wayne to Farrakhan and Alex Jones and David Icke) in which the administration is said to have colluded with various property developers to blow up the levees or let the flooding happen on purpose to rid the city of its underclass in order to turn the city into a sort of Creole Disney. In this case as well Lütticken's concept of structural conspiracy is relevant. The poor living in the flood plain were not protected or effectively rescued, blacks desperately procuring food and water were portrayed by the media as looters while whites doing the same thing were merely doing what they had to do to survive, and housing prices have gone up drastically since the disaster while thousands of the poor have lost their homes. All of this could be interpreted as the nefarious plan of a secret circle of elites within the federal, state, and city governments, real estate, and the media, or as a sign of a reprehensible system that desperately needs to be changed. •

Notes

1. “Third of Americans suspect 9.11 government conspiracy” (www.scrippnews.com/911poll) All web-sites last checked 07.08.01 unless stated otherwise.
2. See, for example, Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy* (Carmichael: Touchstone, 1999).
3. Fredric Jameson, ‘Cognitive Mapping’, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Gossberg (Ithaca: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 356.
4. Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 160. Henceforth cited as *Culture of Conspiracy*.
5. I will be referring here to the second edition of the film. A third edition or final cut is to be released, fall 2007. See www.loosechange911.com.
6. *Loose Change* is far inferior to a lot other 9.11 conspiracy films and literature in this regard. See for example Alex Jones' occasionally decent, often ludicrous film *Terrorstorm* (2006), Webster Griffin Tarpley's 9/11 *Synthetic Terror: Made in the USA* (Progressive Press, 2007), or Len Bracken's *The Shadow Government* (Adventures Unlimited Press, 2002). Henceforth cited as *Shadow Government*.
7. See Andrew Cockburn, *Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy* (Verso, 2007). Henceforth cited as *Rumsfeld*.
8. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Knopf, 1966), 29. Henceforth cited as *Paranoid Style*.
9. See Jodi Dean, *Aliens in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), Dean, *Publicity's Secret* (Cornell University Press, 2002), Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). Henceforth cited as *Empire of Conspiracy*.
10. The actual explanation is that these numbers, like a phone number or license plates, can be recycled.
11. Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of The Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie, (London: Verso 1998), 59. Henceforth cited as *Comments*.
12. Marx, ‘The Fall of Paris’, *The Civil War in France* www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/cho6.htm
13. For Debord's account see, Guy Debord, ‘Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of The Society of the Spectacle’, (www.notbored.org/debord-preface.html) For more detailed accounts see Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters*, (Aurthor's Choice, 2002), Daniele Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies* (London: Routledge, 2005).
14. Karl Marx, *Capital* vol. III (London: Penguin, 1993), 362.
15. See RETORT, *Afflicted Powers* (London: Verso, 2005).
16. Gianfranco Sanguinetti, *On the Last Chance to Save Capitalism in Italy*, trans. Len Bracken (Fort Bragg: Flatland, 1997).
17. See *Terrorstorm: A History of Government Sponsored Terrorism*, dir. Alex Jones (2006), Webster Griffin Tarpley, 9.11 *Synthetic Terror* (Joshua Tree: Progressive Press, 2007), Michael Ruppert, *Crossing the Rubicon* (Gabriola Island: New Society, 2004).
18. Gianfranco Sanguinetti, *On terrorism and the state: The theory and practice of terrorism divulged for the first time* (Chronos, 1982) 57.
19. Debord is not as dismissive of all forms of offensive terrorism. In the Situationist International's journal in 1969 he writes, “From the strategical perspective of social struggles it must first of all be said that one should never *play with terrorism*. But even serious terrorism has never in history had any salutary effectiveness except in situations where complete repression made impossible any other form of revolutionary activity and thereby caused a significant portion of the population to side with the terrorists.” Then in the 1979 film *In Girum...*, a picture of Andreas Baader and Gudrun Enslin is shown over the narration, “The flower of youth dies in prison”.
20. (villagevoice.com/books/0236.gray2.38029.10.html)
21. Anna Bull, ‘Italy and the Legacy of the Cold War’, European Research Institute Occasional Paper Series. www.bath.ac.uk/eri/pdf/op-annabull.pdf (27.09.06).
22. Sven Lütticken, *Secret Publicity* (Holland: NAi, 2005), 191–204. Henceforth cited as *Secret Publicity*.
23. Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought* (London: Continuum, 2003).

Managing the Conflict: The Architectural Occupation of Palestine and the War on Terror

Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen

We are at war. On September 12th 2001, the day after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the American president George W. Bush announced that the United States of America was engaged in a war against global terrorism. It has since been confirmed that he meant this in earnest. The war has not only taken place as scattered engagements or isolated military actions, it has proved to constitute a unique mode of management. Changes in both base and superstructure have taken place after the so-called “War on Terror” was announced. Thus, this war is not an exclusively military affair; it has had consequences for the entire international community.

The war did not arise ex nihilo. Rather, it has been in evidence throughout the 1990s in Iraq, Kosovo, Colombia, Panama, Somalia, Rwanda, Chechnya, and most of all in Israel, which has functioned as a kind of laboratory for the development of the new paradigm according to which war is the natural mode of existence for the state. In the Middle East a still more militarized Israel has functioned as the point of attack for the new model by inserting itself into the Arab world and effectively preventing any Arab attempt to achieve economic and political autonomy. The great mass of Palestinian refugee-proletarians has functioned as a doorstep for the development of an already decomposed Arab world. The intensive military control—which includes a vast number of “security” posts, the destruction of Palestinian houses and bulldozing of whole villages, the slaughter in refugee camps, the bombing of homes and helicopter assassinations, the construction of new settlements and the construction of a vast motorway system reserved for Israelis—that became a reality in the 1990s plotted the course, but it was only after 9/11 that the pieces fell into place on a worldwide scale: that the enemy became visible and the contradictions were really outlined on a global level. But in Palestine the contours of this new emerging paradigm have been visible for years.

As Eyal Weizman’s new book, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation*, makes strikingly clear, this new war paradigm has been tested in the occupied territories for more than three decades. Having read Weizman’s book, it is clear that war is no longer a number of localizable battles; it is a control regime aimed at all of society transforming war into a permanent condition. This is one of Weizman’s conclusions, a conclusion we have to take into account confronted, as we are, with the new global war paradigm: war can in no way be restricted to military matters but takes place through a wide variety of different registers like politics, mass media, legislation and architecture. As Weizman shows, this

has been the case in Israel at least since the 1973 war where Egyptian forces broke through Israeli defense lines in Sinai exposing the Israeli fortifications as insufficient to defend the “homeland”. Following the military defeat in 1973 Ariel Sharon, at that time acting as minister of Agriculture and head of the government’s settlement committee, started creating Jewish settlements throughout the West Bank. These settlements were executed as part of an urban defense system designed to help protect the state from invasion. As Sharon phrased it: “In any attack our lines had to be held by limited regular forces in conjunction with the civilian communities whose role is to guard our border, secure roads, insure communications, and so on.” (84) Thus war and politics fused in the making of space. In this process all spheres of life were militarized: family houses and mobile homes became the new battle units supplementing tanks encircling an enemy and occupying strategically important hills.

As a response to the defeat of the traditional military frontline that was not able to withstand the attacking Egyptian army, Sharon invented a new military discourse that integrated civilian settlements into the protection of the borders of the state. As Weizman puts it: “In the hands of Sharon, his followers and colleagues, architecture and planning were presented as a continuation of war by other means. [...] War was only over because it was now everywhere.” (85) It is this chilling scenario Weizman presents for us as he shows how the Israeli state for more than thirty-five years has been hollowing out Palestine through a ruthless colonial politics where all natural and man-made features are turned into weapons. As Weizman makes clear, in the occupied territories architecture, infrastructure and town planning cannot be separated from warfare and human exclusion. Here architecture is an integral element in war and architecture, and urban planning plays a central role in Israel’s colonization of the occupied territories. In fact the construction of settlements presents itself as the key strategy of the Israeli state’s expansionist aspirations.

It is this way of conceiving space and architecture as elements in a military operation that constitutes the object of *Hollow Land*. Weizman’s book supplies us with a fascinating and disturbing analysis of the physical occupation and colonization of Palestine by Israel and shows how “the mundane elements of planning and architecture have become tactical tools and the means of dispossession” in the occupied territories. (5) As Weizman shows, the occupation is made possible by the use of certain forms and styles of building sustaining territorial claims

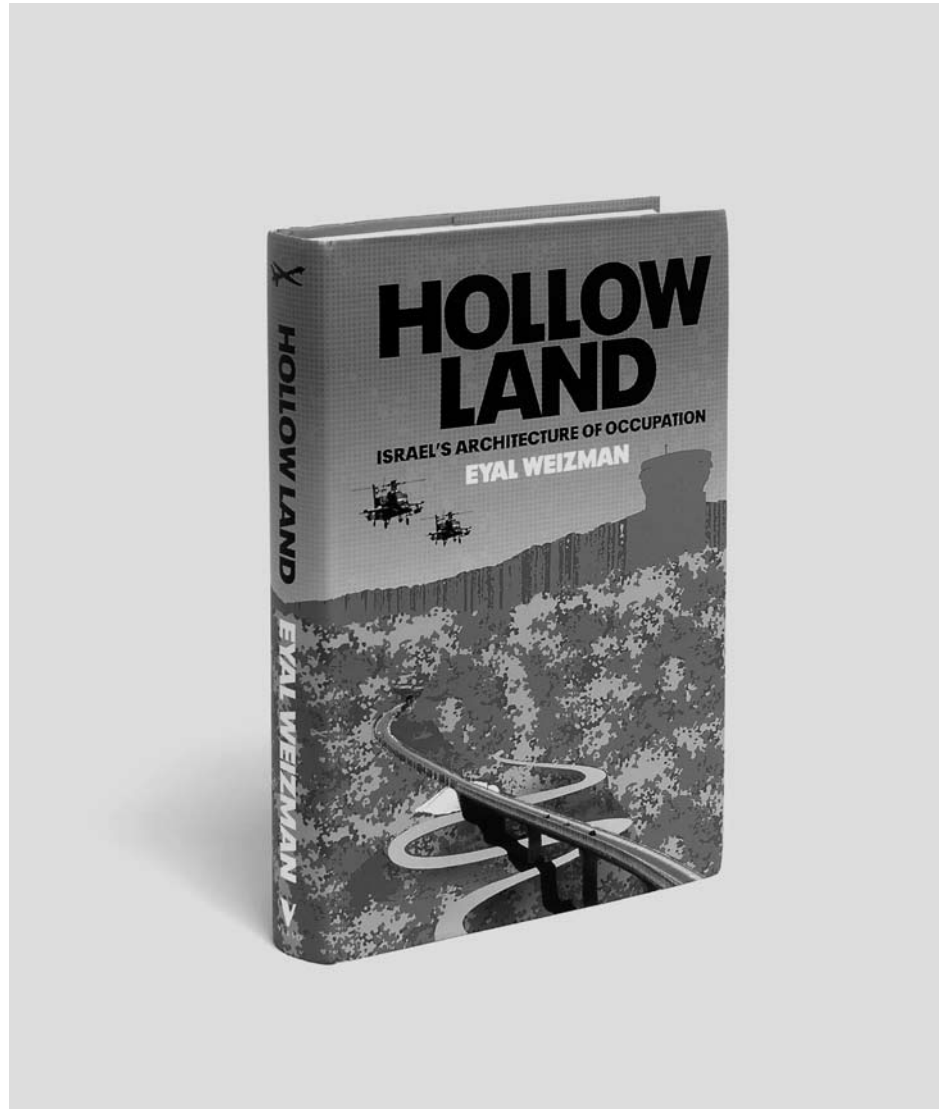
of expansion. These forms and styles go hand in hand with the ruthless destruction of Palestinian homes, neighborhoods and whole blocks. The facts of occupation are blurred through the development of an architectural language domesticating the annexed territories. Specific building materials have for instance been used throughout the years so as to make it appear as if new constructions outside Jerusalem on occupied territory are a natural part of the organic wholeness of the Israeli part of the city. The conclusion is clear: cladding and roofing details, the organization of construction and the form of settlements cannot be considered apart from the colonization of Palestine by Zionism.

Through a detailed presentation Weizman accounts for the existence of innumerable and often invisible security apparatuses set up across the occupied territories that ensure almost total control of the region’s surface, airspace and subterranean acreage by Israeli security forces. Each chapter of the book analyses the different security measures that the Israeli army and government have taken in the battle over the occupied territories: settlements, fortifications, checkpoints and walls, thereby accounting for the various spatial mechanisms that sustain the occupation. If you conceive of building as a neutral activity, you will surely be unable to maintain this notion after having read Weizman’s scathing criticism of Israel’s use of architecture in the colonization of Palestine. Architecture and politics are intimately connected and Weizman argues convincingly for the impossibility of making a distinction between them, attacking Israeli architects for lending an oppressive policy of occupation a veneer of good taste by transforming the unfamiliar occupied territories into a familiar home-ground, thereby naturalizing the construction projects and making them appear as organic parts of Israel. According to Weizman, generations of Israeli architects and urban planners have acted as collaborators in the colonization of the West Bank designing settlements and making spaces functional and more aesthetically pleasing while pretending not to be engaged in a brutal policy of domination and expulsion.

Weizman is pretty straightforward in his conclusions: “[D]espite the complexity of the legal, territorial and built realities that sustain the occupation, the conflict over Palestine has been a relatively straightforward process of colonization, dispossession, resistance and suppression.” (8–9) He drives this argument home by drawing attention to the expropriation of water reserve and labor: Israel uses 83 percent of the water reserves of the West Bank and Israeli Arabs earn

approximately 60 percent of the annual wages of Jews. Although the Israeli government tries to keep the expansionist process at arms length, there is no doubt, according to Weizman, that all Israeli governments since 1973 have seen it as their mission to augment the number of settlements and prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. And he shows how it has been possible to sustain the colonization process through complex legal processes where the state can requisition any piece of land Palestinians cannot prove is privately owned. What may come across at first hand as a practical policy to increase agricultural production is, in effect, an attempt to appropriate Palestinian land. The ability to deny Palestinian farmers access to water further accelerates the process where plots of land come under Israel’s control. There is no question that this is a conscious attempt to fragment the occupied territories on the part of leading Israeli politicians. As Sharon uttered when returning as Foreign Minister from negotiations with the Palestinian Authorities in 1998: “Everything we don’t grab will go to them.” (3)

One of the most fascinating aspects of Weizman’s book is his analysis of the way parts of the Israeli military conceptualize war and how they use poststructuralist philosophy in an attempt to rethink traditional warfare. According to the exponents of what Weizman terms post-modern warfare connected to the Israeli army’s Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI), war is no longer mainly concerned with the conquest or destruction of space but has to do with the reorganization of space. Taking concepts and picking up ideas from philosophers like Gilles Deleuze and Georges Bataille and architects and artists like Bernard Tschumi and Gordon Matta-Clark, the Israeli military has been able to develop new and different military conceptions that can be directly utilized on the battlefield. Weizman shows how OTRI has used concepts like “swarming” and “inverse geometry” when describing and executing military operations in the occupied territories. As the former director of OTRI Shimon Naveh explains: “We want to confront the ‘striated’ space of traditional, old-fashioned military practice with smoothness that allows for movement through space that crosses any borders and barriers.” (201) As Naveh’s statement makes clear: Deleuze’s concepts of “smooth” and “striated” space helped the military reorganize by providing a new language in which to speak to itself and to others. When Israeli forces entered Nablus in April, 2002, they rethought the space in which they moved, not moving through streets, roads, alleys and instead moving through walls, ceilings and floors. Inside and outside,



house and city were dissolved in this operation as the movements of the Israeli army produced space rather than letting space dictate its movement. “The tactic of walking through walls involved a conception of the city as not just the site, but as the very *medium* of warfare—a flexible, almost liquid matter that is forever contingent and in flux.” (186) War is thus transformed into a reading process where the urban fabric is a text in need of deconstruction and where homes and walls are a kind of flexible material that can be transgressed in a continual movement of war. This is post-modern war where soldiers infiltrate enemy space like clouds in small, loosely coordinated groups communicating with one another in a fluid, amorphous environment.

The development of this post-modern war matrix is connected to the widespread notion within the Israeli government and within the Israeli Defense Force that the conflict is unsolvable and should remain so. Indeed that war is a desired condition that creates “opportunities”. Israeli leaders therefore espouse a doctrine of ongoing war, looking upon the conflict as a conflict that will never end and sabotaging prospects of political progress. Traditional notions of peace and war no longer make sense in this scenario where war is considered to be a kind of constructive chaos. As Weizman writes, the Israeli army looks upon the conflict solely as a military problem thereby foreclosing a political peace process and real negotiations. In the words of Dan Halutz, Chief of Staff in the Israeli Defense Force, the Israeli army sees the conflict as “un-resolvable and permanent”. (253) Therefore the army has “geared itself to operate within an environment saturated with conflict and within a future of permanent violence. [...] The question was not ‘What is the solution?’ but ‘How do we live without a solution?’ In the absence of both options—a political solution or the possibility of a decisive military outcome—the Israeli military would merely be ‘managing the conflict.’” (253) The result is the state of exception that characterizes the occupied territories where everything can happen, where targeted assassinations take place on a regular basis, houses are demolished and roadblocks are set up at ever new spots preventing Palestinians from tending their crops and visiting their family that happens to be on the other side of the wall. Palestinians spend hours waiting at roving checkpoints while Israelis can get from one settlement to another without ever seeing a Palestinian using a multilevel system of roads and walls. The fragmentation of the occupied territories is spelled out in all its insane and violent complexity by Weizman. The total spatial incongruity becomes

strikingly clear when looking at the map of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank reproduced in the book: a chaotic territory not likely to become a functioning state in the near future. But that is off course the point: the situation is now too complex and blurred to be solved through a partition of the territory and it is only the Israeli government that is able to manage the area and resolve the contradictions (that it has in fact helped create). “The ‘occupation’ of Gaza has been [...] reconceptualized as ‘crisis management’.” (158) Domination is obfuscated and naturalized.

Weizman makes clear that war is no longer a short phrase but a permanent condition; you no longer enter a war to win it. “Wars between states may be long, but they tend to have clearly delineated beginnings and ends. In contrast, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict [...] is an ever-present asymmetrical, low-intensity conflict between a state and quasi-state actor. [...] Throughout the occupation, ‘war’ and ‘peace’ are no longer been simple dialectical opposites, but merge into a single extended continuum. Resistance is violent, constant, but sporadic; pacification missions are sometimes brutal and at other times bureaucratic. Peace is not possible but war has no end.” (105)

Hollow Land is undoubtedly a very important and timely book that shows the connections between architecture and military operations, and the analysis of Israel’s function as a laboratory for the development of the present war paradigm makes Weizman’s book extremely useful. The construction of a wall in Baghdad separating Shia and Sunni areas is just the most obvious example of Israel’s function as the avant-garde of military-architectural practice. But as Weizman makes clear, the Wall is just one example of the complex merging of architecture and military in the occupied territories that is currently being exported elsewhere: “The architecture of Israeli occupation could thus be seen as an accelerator and an acceleration of other global political processes, a worst-case scenario of capitalist globalization and its spatial fall-out. The extended significance of this ‘laboratory’ lies in the fact that the techniques of domination, as well as the techniques of resistance to them, have expanded and multiplied.” (10)

With the rise of the neo-conservative movement in America after 9.11, these techniques of domination have been deployed on a global scale in the so-called war on terror. In accordance with its ideology, the neo-conservative movement trumpets the superiority of American values and strives to promote these in a global crusade against terrorism. The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq are the most obvious examples of

this new war paradigm promoted by the neo-conservative elite that is desperately trying to preserve American interests confronted with the accelerated movements of globalization in which former bonds of social solidarity are being dissolved. The rhetoric employed by the new war paradigm is important; the reference to a struggle between civilized Christians and barbarians where resistance to Israel is resistance to democratic pluralism conjures certain scenarios and anticipates later actions. The sense of moral superiority provokes antagonism and makes open dialogue and negotiations impossible. The peculiar sound audible in Bush, Sharon and the other crusader’s speech is nothing but the sound of *ressentiment*. We are confronted by an emotional speech where any ability for intelligence is weakened in favor of suspicion, reactivity and hatred. You are evil, I am good. As Gilles Deleuze paraphrased Nietzsche: “We can guess what the creature of resentment wants: it wants all the others to be evil, it needs the others to be evil in order to feel that it itself is good.” (*Nietzsche et la philosophie*)

The refrain is constant: the war on terror requires new measures because we are confronted with an invisible enemy. There is no real state power with a clearly marked geographic territory or an ideology in the traditional sense. The crusade, the war on terror, is characterized by the absence of a definable enemy. Terrorism is potentially present everywhere, therefore new measures must be taken into account resulting in the abolition of the distinction between inner and outer enemies and the disappearance of the distinction between police and military actions.

In the new war paradigm, the role of the state is to manage and direct the threat from terrorism. Security is no longer just one of the tasks of the state but the primary task; the state legitimizes itself through (in)security. Security measures are thus legitimized by reference to the constant threats lying in wait. For several decades, as Weizman makes clear in his exposition, the Israeli state has chosen this logic of security. When the Palestinian problem presented itself as more important than the problem Israel had with the Arab states, security replaced defense as the main objective. Whereas “defense” had to do with clearly defined borders and barriers, “security” presupposes that “the danger is already inside, presented by a population in which subversive elements exists”. (106) Weizman continues: “The relation that ‘security’ implies between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, as well as between military and police action, is ambiguous.” (106) The legal parameters of the constitutional state threaten to disappear when this happens; Weiz-

man provides ample examples of this occurring in the occupied territories. In the war on terror, the prime example is of course Guantanamo Bay where the US detains subjects that are said to present a danger to the nation. The camp is outside any lawful jurisdiction and more than six hundred people are imprisoned there, stripped of their juridical status and withdrawn from the possible alternatives of international law—neither prisoners of war nor criminals able to try their case. The detainees are thus placed in a situation of maximal indeterminacy and are reduced to what Giorgio Agamben terms bare life.

The formlessness of terrorism causes a transformation in the functioning of the capitalist state, whose object is now the threat. As Brian Massumi has written, the threat is of a special character because it is indefinable and prospective by nature, even without manifesting itself it is present, it is effective here and now. The problem is of course that the distinction between terror and state disappears when the most important mission of the state is to create security and intervene in dynamic social processes in order to direct them. As Weizman shows, the risk is that the state resorts to terror and brute force when confronted with terrorism. The number of targeted assassinations, or “focused obstructions” as the Israeli Defense Force calls it, that the Israeli military has carried out since the Al-Aqsa Intifada broke out in September 2000 says it all: 339 Palestinians have been killed, out of which 129 were innocent bystanders that happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. •

Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

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Petrodicy: A Petropunk Dialogue

Reza Negarestani

x: The contemporary war machine (grasp war as a machine) does not correspond easily to the Deleuze-Guattarian model because:

- it includes Abrahamic escalation and monotheism as stimulating components.
- it has war as an object, or—more exactly—a product.
- it consummates the technocapitalist oecumenon through synthesis with Islamic monotheistic enthusiasm (subtracting the supposed potential for “secularization” as an Abrahamic teleology).

z: To grasp war as a machine—or in other words, inquiring into Abrahamic war machine as related

to the technocapitalist war machine—we should first realize in the wake of which components Technocapitalism and Abrahamic monotheism are able to reciprocate, even on a synergistically hostile level. War on Terror cannot be radically and technically grasped as a machine without oil greasing its parts and recomposing its flows; it should take form upon the twilight of hydrocarbon and the dawn of the Earth. Have you read Dean Koontz’s novel *Phantoms*? Timothy Flyte, a renegade paleontologist who considers himself a professor of Ancient Epidemics, is a tabloid writer researching an unnamable Tellurian sentient that he calls the Ancient Enemy, responsible for devouring countless civilizations (the Aztecs and the Lost Colony at Roanoke, for example).

A bio-chemical combat unit invites him (in line with *The Exorcist* in which neurologists invite a vicar for assistance) to trace the mysterious disappearance of people in a village in Colorado. The Ancient Enemy is a Thing-like bio-hazardous predator hunting organic entities, using bio-sorcery and mutating various organic phyla (possessing a soldier and turning his blood into a small lizard). The Ancient Enemy is trying to spread its gospel via three chosen characters. Timothy Flyte finds many parallel traits between the Ancient Enemy and the Antichrist. Examining the corpses of victims, he detects traces of porphyrin, which is a common chemical substance in blood, plants and petroleum. The Ancient Enemy or the Tellurian Antichrist that persistently looms in the Mesopotamian dead seas (where originally the Antichrist comes from) or near the oceans is Petroleum or *Naft* (Arabic and Farsi word for oil). According to the classic theory of fossil fuels (i.e. excluding Thomas Gold’s theory of *Deep Hot Biosphere*), petroleum has been formed as a Tellurian entity under unimaginable pressure and heat in the absence of oxygen and between the strata in the absolute isolation—a typical Freudian Oedipal case. Petroleum’s hadean formation has developed a satanic sentence through the politics of in-between, which is inevitably welling up through the God-complex deposited in the strata (the logic of “double-articulation, the double-pincer” Deleuze and Guattari) to the surface. Envenomed by the totalitarian logic of the Tetragrammaton as well as chemically and morphologically depraving and traumatizing the Divine’s logic, petroleum’s autonomous line of emergence is as twisted as possible.

Monotheism in its worst scenario is a call for the Desert—the monopolistic abode of the Divine on which no idol can be erected. In the end, everything must be leveled to fulfill the omnipresence and oneness of the Divine. For radical Jihadis, desert is an ideal battlefield, or in other words, both conventional and unconventional battlefields such as urban spaces must be desertified. To desertify the earth is to make the earth ready for change in the name of

the Divine’s monopoly, not the terrestrial idols. In line with Wahhabi and Taliban Jihadis for whom every erected thing, so to speak—verticality—is a manifest idol, desert as a militant horizontality is the promised land of the Divine. In the wake of emphatic horizontality of the desert in monotheistic apocalypticism, Deleuze and Guattari’s model of horizontality or plane of consistency is nothing but a betrayal of radical politics and a hazardous misunderstanding of war machine.

It seems that both the technocapitalist process of desertification in War on Terror and radical monotheistic ethos for the desert converge upon oil as an object of production, a pivot of terror, a fuel, a politico-economic lubricant and an entity whose life is directly connected to earth. For radical jihad, the only way that the western man can grasp the immensity of the desert is by choking on *napht* (oil). While for western technocapitalism, desert is ensued by the oiliness of war machines and hyper-consumption of capitalism en route to singularity, for Jihad oil is a catalyst to speed the rise of the Kingdom, the desert. Thus for Jihad, the desert lies at the end of an oil pipeline.

Moreover, take Oil as a lubricant, something that eases narration and the whole dynamism toward the desert. The cartography of oil as an omnipresent entity narrates the dynamics of planetary events. Oil is the undercurrent of all narrations, not only political but also the ethics of life on earth. Oil lubes the whole desert expedition toward Tellurian Omega (either as the Desert of God or the host of singularity, the New Earth). As a tellurian lube, oil simply makes things move forward. Dean Koontz’s *Phantoms* is a key for moving toward Tellurian Omega, through the superficial (Gas pipeline), subterranean (Oil reservoirs) and the deeply Chthonic (Thomas Gold’s *Deep Hot Biosphere*) Thingness of petroleum, the Blob. To grasp oil as a lube is to grasp earth as a body of different narrations moving forward by the oil. In a nut shell, oil is a lube for the divergent lines of terrestrial narrations. >

Petropolitics

Petropolitics as Retropolitics: Oil and the Geopolitical Imaginary

Alberto Toscano

Resource wars, blood for oil, energy conflicts, peak oil, great games, grand chessboards... The politics of oil is beset by competing modes of political simplification—be they critical or governmental. Recent writings on the politics of oil seem bewitched by the idea of oil’s curse as a kind of *temporal* damnation, by oil as the viscous element that mires us in anachronistic or even primal forms of politics. But why is petro-

politics so often lived and portrayed as a kind of retropolitics, as a burdensome brake on the very possibility of political innovation? In his arresting, panoramic presentation on “carbon democracy” at the recent “Oil and Politics” symposium in London—tracking the shift from the sites of class struggle in the coal economy, and its miner—transport worker—docked alliance, to the politics of petroleum,

whose flow was imposed on Europe on the back of the Marshall Plan—Tim Mitchell referred to Sartre’s idea of oil as “capital bequeathed to man by other living beings”. In this respect it is of more than anecdotal interest that, writing a film-script in 1946 about the tragic aporias of political freedom and revolution—a script originally entitled *Les mains sales* (Dirty Hands) and now called *L’engrenage* (translated as In the Mesh, but more literally The Mechanism)—Sartre would choose the predicament of a subaltern oil-rich nation to dramatize a politics in which freedom is condemned to repetition, where actors who wish to dirty their hands with change cannot but eventually submit to the demands of the international and the constraints of the practico-inert, and finally to betray novelty.

In 2003, responding to the apparent rebuttal of his notion of “Empire” by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and seeking to dispel the specter of a resurgent imperialism, Michael Hardt opted for a pastiche of Marx: his diagnosis was that of a coup d’état within Empire, an “Eighteenth Brumaire of George W. Bush”, that is an attempt to attain a kind of monarchical monopoly over the power-structures of capital after the hegemonic multilateralism exercised by Bush père and Clinton. As Hardt wrote, in a “venal vein, the efforts to control the vast oil fields in Iraq and the Middle East certainly recall numerous imperialist wars to accumulate wealth, such as the British attempts a century ago in the Boer War to gain control of the great South African gold mines—blood for gold yesterday, blood for oil today. Despite these resemblances, however, the old imperialisms do not help us understand what is central in our contemporary situation.” Though few analysts of our political situation would hazard that we are in the throes of a mere cyclical repetition of the imperialism of yore, the notion that we are simply experiencing a fleeting fit of unilateralism, a glitch in the general tendency towards an increasingly deterritorialized and postnational configuration smacks of wishful thinking and remains heuristically toothless.

The global political developments following Bush’s electoral victory in 2000 and the military campaigns begun (or in the case of Iraq, intensified) in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, have been greeted by many, be it with enthusiasm or bemusement, as a revenge of realism, an imposition of the tried-and-true tenets of power-politics after the market-driven multilateralism and human rights rhetoric of the Clinton years. More specifically, and with particular reference to the politics of oil, numerous commentators have latched on to the idea of a return of *geopolitics*. Michael Klare, for instance, defines geopolitics as “the contention between great powers and aspiring great powers for control over territory, resources, and important geographical position, such as ports and harbors, canals, river systems, oases, and other sources of wealth and influence.” Borrowing from Neil Smith’s *American Empire*, we could speak of “a vicious resuturing of politics with geography”. Just as German expansionism and the US entry into the war triggered a surge in the buying of atlases and in the popular American geographical imagination (as Smith tells us in *American Empire*) so today green zones, Sunni triangles, the al-Shatt waterway or the silhouettes of Caspian pipelines grace our broadsheets. The *US Army Journal*, for instance, sees fit to resuscitate the naval geopolitics of Alfred Thayer Mahan (baptizer of the “Middle East”) in order to enlighten its readers about China’s “oil obsession” and its consequent strategic conundrum: how to bypass the Strait of Malacca, which currently witnesses 80% of its oil traffic, and avert a remarkable military and strategic weakness. Or consider the kind of mental horizon, or geopolitical imaginary, behind these lines from the Baker Institute’s Task Force Report on America’s Energy Security: “An accident on the Alaska pipeline that brings the bulk of North Slope crude oil to market would have the same impact as a *revolution* cutting off supplies from a major Middle East producer. An attack on the California electric power >

x: A lot here, crude summary; Oil as:

- Narrative organizer—definitely (heart of gloopy darkness). There is no darkness in this world which does not have its mirror image in oil. The end of the river is certainly an oil field.
- Cybergothic convergence—demonic/ technomic lube
- Oil cult: pomo-leftist conspiracy mongering greases into archaic slithering rites (Petro-Masonism and its trans-historical tentacles)

z: Also don't forget petroleum and fossil fuels as another Telluro-conspiracy towards the Sun's solar economy: trapping the energy of the sun accumulated in organisms by means of lithologic sedimentation, stratification, anaerobic decay and bacteria in highly stratified sedimentary basins. Petroleum as a terrestrial replacement of the onanistic self-indulgence of the Sun or solar capitalism. If basking in solar capitalism overlaps with the annihilationist and nihilistic capitalism of the Sun, then how is it possible to dismantle this infernal capitalism without eradicating it, because an instance of eradication or heat-death is again a homage paid to the solar economy and its thermonuclear self-indulgence? Petroleum definitely plays the role of the alpha-mutineer in Tellurian insurgency.

x: Koontz's imagery is really helpful for the "Thingness" of oil, its subterranean cohesion as a singular anorganic body with its own agendas—assuming here that "the blob" takes on an increasing "agentic" function on the journey "up-river" (from gas-station to chthonic reservoir? Tellurian journeys are feeding on the rotting black corpse of the sun.) Bush and Bin Laden are obviously petropolitical puppets convulsing to the chthonic stirrings of the blob. Collapse all manifest policies and ideologies onto the Tellurian narratives of oil seepage. Even if Omega-Pest runs on hydrogen nanofusion, the concrete war machines chopping up contemporaneity are indubitably very oily.

Do you think there's a relatively clear way to specify the Oil/ Islamic Apocalypticism relation that

differentiates it more or less reliably from the residue of non-Islamic oil-fueled disorder on the planet?

z: Oil industry is utterly ruinous for separate and non-collective oil producers. The problem with the countries of Latin America is that tradition, culture, society and language links them together, but when it comes to oil, they are distanced from each other by different petroleum extraction policies and political agendas. In terms of oil, what they only share is poverty and ruination leftover. However in the case of the Islamic front (Pax Islamica), oil has been mutated into a kind of constructive parasite through which economic, military and political brotherhood is emerged. For the Middle Eastern countries there is a strategic symbiosis between oil as a parasite and Islam's burning core, because oil is welled-up on an "Islamic Continent" and not a mere geopolitical boundary. In other words, Islam has made a petropolitical network fueled and meshed by Jihad and its monotheistic protocols. Jihad positively participates with oil both in feeding blob-parasites (western and eastern oil mongering countries) and fueling its body to propel forward. At this point, Islamic Apocalypticism of Jihad as a religio-political event and the role of oil as the harbinger of planetary singularity overlap. Unlike Latin America, Islam has perceived oil as an ultimate Tellurian lubricant or the lube of all narrations on the Earth—a radical field of tactics by and through which Islamic war machines can slide forward, fuse with the Earth's flows and become planetary entities rather than merely religious agencies with a certain geopolitical range. If for monotheism earth is not a planet but rather a religious object, it is because as Sayyid Qutb emphasizes the earth itself moves towards the Divine by submitting itself to the "exterior" Will of Allah; or in other words, the Earth is a part and property of Islam, that is to say, the religion of utter submission to Allah. Islam does not merely perceive oil as a motor-grease—in the way Capitalism perceives oil—but mainly as a lubricant current or a tellurian flux on which everything is mobilized inevitably (oil goes everywhere and so do the things dissolved in it).

x: Any possibility to develop a taxonomic diagram or list of petroleum avatars in different narrations? Brief formulation of different entities that oil takes in different terrestrial panoramas gives a more lucid grasp of petroleum as a component of contemporary war machines and the War on Terror.

z: Major narrative entities of the Ancient Enemy or Oil as an elusive planetary undercurrent for politics, economy, religion and culture:

i. Oil as a lubricant or Tellurian Lube on which everything moves forward, spreading so smoothly and inevitably. Events are configured by the superconductivity of oil and global petrodynamic currents to such an extent that the progression and emergence of events can be influenced more by petroleum than time. If narrative development and unfolding of events in a narration is ensured by the progression of chronological time, for contemporary planetary formations, history and its progression is determined by the influx and outflow of petroleum.

ii. The Hunter of the Dead Seas. *Ghoul-e Naft* or the Oil-fiend in old Arabic and Farsi fictions and folklore stalks over the solitudes of Arabia. The terror of the oil-fiend is a cultural product of certain societies' folklore.

iii. The Nether Blob. An anorganically synthesized material seething up from the primal inter-stellar bacterial colonies existing in the bowels of the Earth (Thomas Gold and his theory of *Deep Hot Biosphere*). According to Gold, since oil is anorganically produced by existing bacteria inside the earth, oil reservoirs are to some extent renewable and inexhaustible. And since the colonies of these oil-producing bacteria are moving, oil distribution is not permanent and will shift. Rejuvenation, inexhaustibility and change in the current patterns of petropolitical distribution have immense impacts on planetary understanding of politics, economy and militarization. Either the end or the continuation of oil wars will lead to huge revelations and their corresponding consequences on every level of planetary life.

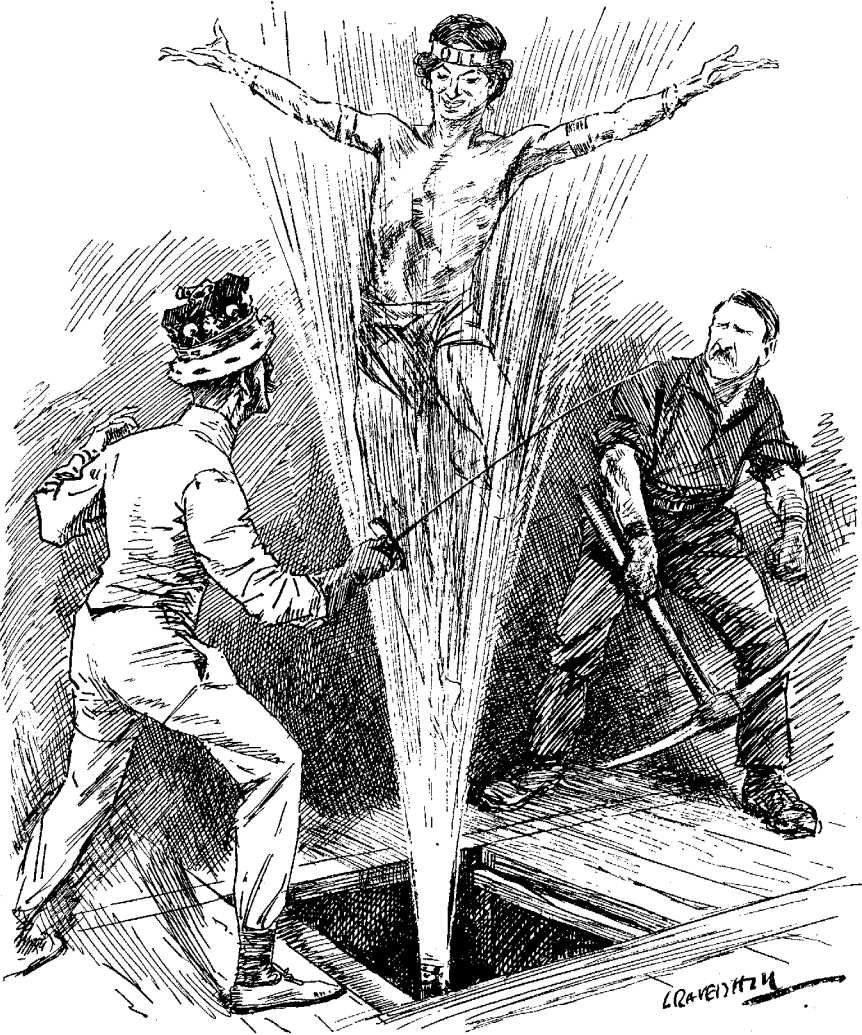
Through the myth of fossil fuels in which hydrocarbons constitute the origin of petroleum, the classic pacifist slogan "No Blood for Oil" can be connected to the petropolitics of porphyrin; given the fact that porphyrin is a substance available in both blood and oil. According to Thomas Gold, the existence of porphyrin in blood and oil is manipulated as a fact attesting the validity of fossil fuels theory. For advocates of the myth of fossil fuels, porphyrin is the evidence of a common lineage, the hydrocarbon. Equating blood and oil—assuming blood is the price of oil—can only be grounded on the impoverishing theory of finite fossil fuels or oil out of organic matter. Oil pacifists support the totalitarian poverty of oil through the myth of porphyrin (fossil traditionalism) they accept.

iv. The Black Corpse of the Sun. Earth's response to the Sun's hegemony. The petropolitical traffic generated by the black corpse of the sun in the planetary sphere is creatively far more dangerous than the annihilationist sovereignty of the Sun.

v. An autonomous chemical weapon belonging to earth both as a sentient entity and event. It poisons Capital with Absolute madness. A planetary plague bleeding into economies mobilized by technologic singularities of advanced civilizations. In the wake of oil as an autonomous terrestrial conspirator, capitalism is not a human symptom but rather a planetary inevitability. In other words, Capitalism was here even before human existence, waiting for a host to develop.

vi. Hydrocarbon Corpse Juice: A post-apocalyptic entity composed by organic corpses flattened, piled and liquidated in sedimentary basins (mega-graveyards); geologists suggest that if a high sedimentation rate will preserve organic material, a catastrophic sedimentation rate (The Flood) would uproot, kill, and bury organic material so rapidly as to cut the porphyrin off from oxidizing agents which would destroy them in the ocean water. Oil as the post-mortem production of organisms is bound to death. Since its ethos—both origin and the end—is purely teleologic, whatever it inspires then is founded >

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▲ 'The Discovery of Oil in Derbyshire' Punch Magazine, 1919

grid could cripple that state's economy for years, affecting all the economies of the Pacific Basin. A *revolution* in Indonesia would paralyze the liquefied natural gas import-dependent economies of South Korea and Japan, affecting domestic politics and all of their trading partners."

To what extent can the link between oil and politics, and more specifically oil and war (or political violence more broadly) be captured by a geopolitical vocabulary? Now, much as geopolitics may have appeared as an anachronistic intruder in a conceptual arena dominated by debates on human rights, governance, and economic globalization, it was never off the agenda—far from it. As Peter Gowan notes, the apparent obsolescence of geopolitical discourse after the Soviet's demise hid a preoccupation with the geopolitical that was actually exacerbated by the collapse of the Cold War as a principle of equilibrium. Among certain US intellectuals and strategists the end of the USSR was regarded not just as an opportunity to extend political and economic hegemony, but also as a potentially grave threat. After all, the absence of a need for protection threatened partially to unmoor Western Europe and Japan from their relative subordination to US economic and foreign policy. The end of the rationale behind what Gowan calls the "protectorate system", which made for the unipolarity of the capitalist world now confronted the US with a dilemma: "Should it pull back from the protectorate game in Europe and let Europe float free? Or should it instead attempt to rebuild the security dependence of Western Europe, mindful of the fact that such rebuilding could only be achieved by *extending* the system of hub-and-spokes protectorates much further East, deep into the heartlands of Eurasia? In short, it would mean extending US unipolar unilateralism to the entire globe." Even the so-called humanitarian intervention of the 1990s in the Balkans cannot be regarded as immune to such geopolitical considerations—to which the persistent American military presence in the area testifies.

As Gowan points out, contrary to the image

of a humanitarian multilateralism that had unburdened itself of the ballast of the Cold War, there was remarkable consensus across the American political spectrum, and within the Clinton administration itself, regarding these geopolitical stakes. In 1993, Clinton's National Security Advisor Anthony Lake summarized this widespread sentiment in the slogan "From Containment to Enlargement". In 1995, Zalmay Khalilzad, neo-con point-man, former ambassador in occupied Iraq and one of the figures behind the infamous Wolfowitz Doctrine synthesized in the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance report, produced a RAND corporation paper entitled "From Containment to Global Leadership". Two of the sub-sections make the focus of Khalilzad's proposals evident: "hedge against reimperialization in Russia" and "discourage Chinese expansionism". Not only do such aims express a consensus among many policy analysts across the partisan divide, but they have a *specifically* geopolitical character, repeating one of the commonplaces of geopolitical discourse: the strategic centrality of Eurasia. In the first half of the 20th century, British geographer Halford Mackinder had formulated the idea of the core of Eurasia, what he called the "Heartland", as the pivot of geopolitical contention, an idea he distilled into the following motto: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island [Africa-Eurasia]; Who Rules the World-Island commands the World."

Mackinder's vision was contested by Nicholas Spykman, who instead saw the crucial geostrategic prize as the Rimland, those territories, including Europe and the Middle East, which border the Eurasian core. Spykman, anticipating a post-war consensus, wrote in *America's Strategy in World Politics* that US policy should be "directed at the prevention of hegemony". Coining a counter-motto to Mackinder's, he presented the winning strategy thus: "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." >

on death and the logic of death and eventual conclusion. Oil as hydrocarbon corpse juice is itself a mortal entity that has been the source of ideology for petro-masonic orders and their policies from OPEC to the agencies of War on Terror to pomo-leftists. It is a deity connected to what Thomas Gold calls “the myth of fossil fuels” or exhaustible oil fields. It is extracted through teleological instrumentalization of the socio-political body of the Earth. (OPEC is suspected to be associated with other entities of the Blob as well.) Pathological symptoms effectuated by the Myth of Fossil Fuels can be summarized as:

- i. The policy of underdevelopment and deliberate impoverishment bound to exhaustibility of oil fields: since oil is dying we must use and distribute it wisely and with calculations.
- ii. Inhibition of Excess and inherent suppression (connected to moralization of the earth a.k.a. the Green Judgment).
- iii. Socio-political programization of planetary systems based on the depletion of petroleum. Everything oily has been manufactured with and toward death.
- iv. Fueling economic systems on monotheistic platforms through melding with their belief-dynamics and apocalyptic politics: the exhaustion of the Earth’s aqua vitae is a prerequisite for the Rise of the Kingdom. God can only appear (reveal itself) when all possibilities of the Earth are *depleted*. Myth of Fossil Fuels is connected to institutionalization of religious expectation and anticipation through oil industry: with each thing we produce with oil, we get a little closer to God. The enigma of oil consumption or the exhaustion of the earth’s energy is consummated by a substitute energy source, the Divine’s absolute power. Oil depletion scenarios can be connected to chronological time for which anticipation is not only a premature conclusion, but also participation to attain what is anticipated, either through activity of hope or passivity of despair.

vii. Devil’s Excrement (“I call petroleum the devil’s excrement.” Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso), oil, a

sado-conspiracist that underdevelops societies and economic systems through petropolitics to tear them apart slowly.

viii. Gaia’s aromatic juice.

ix. The Pipeline-Crawler (Go-juice), a code name for an autonomous vehicle which smuggles Islamic war machines into Western Civilizations, but on the other side of the panorama, it is in fact the slow penetration of other narrative entities of petroleum into the rectal depths of all political orientations whether formulated on religious platforms or not. Gas plays as an assistant culprit in making far distances accessible by applying pressure, pushing the flow to far recesses of the globe. Petroleum is at the same time the de-sensitizer, the lubricant and the object of intrusion.

x. Infernotron or simply the us pyro demonism with tentacles spreading through both thematic theism—the cleansing tide of the cathartic fire (the Greco-Latin theme chained to the Aryanistic purity)—and mess engineering processes of in complete burning associated to Zippo Job and NAPALM-obsession of US war machine: “I go to Hell with a can of gasoline in my hand” (Colonel West).

Pipeline Odyssey

To understand the militarization of oil and the dynamism of war machines in War on Terror, one should grasp oil as an ultimate Tellurian lubricant or an epic narrative vehicle. Instrumentalizing oil through production or imposing any authorial line on this narrative carrier is like feeding on Devil’s excrement: there is always the danger of being poisoned to death or even worse. In contemporary Islamic references on radical Jihad as a global process, the Islamic approach toward mobilization of tactics is explained as defense as opposed to offense. In the Islamic approach—that is, the way of Jihad—Islamic war is delineated by defense, diffusion and life-support contagion while the crusading war machines or western lines of tactics are mapped on the plane of the offensive, escalation and militant intrusion. Therefore, western incur-

sive dynamism of tactics is always considered un-Islamic since it perceives war as a manifest dynamic progression of war machines that inevitably turns into something basically intrusive because such obsessively dynamic war machines intrinsically transgress and penetrate borders. “I exist because I move” definitely makes you uninvited in some places. Such a vigorous dynamism cannot operate remotely or strike the enemy without transgressing borders and territories. The western crusade and its approaches to war machines cannot be emulated by Islam because its quality of dynamism does not correspond to the laws of Islam and the belief that transgression is idolatrous because all lands and territories belong to the Divine, not to the war machines or their tactics.

For Islamic Jihad, everything must operate as a defense. Consequently, the mechanism of the clash is dynamically asymmetrical. This asymmetry is not the asymmetry of warfare but the principle of war itself. If according to Islam, Jihad cannot be transgressive or intrusive and should be merely conducted as pure defense, then how is possible to uphold the responsibility of making the earth ready for the Divine or make Islam a global religion rather than a Middle Eastern or Africo-Asian cult? The answer lies in the invention or discovery of new war machines whose medium of offense is of peaceful or natural communication and justifiable defense, or engineering a peaceful and non-transgressive medium or vehicle to host war machines of Jihad. In short, since western tactics belong to the crusading fronts and also Jihad should be grasped as a strategic and remote assault on idolatry without manifest transgression, the contemporary inclination of Islamic war machines and politics of militarization is searching for or engineering a dynamic vector or neutral vehicle to smuggle and mobilize Islamic war machines. Such a medium or host-vehicle can only represent peace; it is dissociated from offense because it is part of nature, that is to say, a third neutral party. For the Islamic side, this non-problematic medium should be from and toward the Divine, for the Western front however it

should be politically non-intrusive (neutral) and generous toward capitalism. An entity capable of satisfying both ends is necessarily a natural entity, something from nature, the representative of the planet’s sentience. Only as a planetary entity and a natural event can this medium host war machines without a problem. Since tactics as the dynamism or the mode of movement belongs to war machines rather than the Divine and is connected to human logistics or line of command, then Jihad can only use a platform of movement which transports war machines naturally or, to be exact, by a property of the Divine. There is nothing more appropriate and more relevant here than Oil. Islamic Apocalypticism has understood well that anything can be pumped into gas pipelines and oil can slide them forward as well as permanently dissolving them. That means what reaches the crusading civilizations cannot be extracted or separated from petroleum. Oil cannot be politically distilled. The entities in oil have got a new chemical compound. For the other side of the pipeline—the point of evacuation and consumption—everything in oil remains under constant camouflage; they are nothing but petroleum by-products. The military magic of taking oil as the medium of movement rather than tactics unfolds when one claims that oil as a neutral entity itself is part of nature and a planetary entity, hence omnipresent despite different degrees of concentration on earth—the decline of tactical offense and the rise of ubiquitous offense assimilated within the seemingly peaceful omnipresence of nature.

War machines are dissolved in oil. The role of the oil pipeline is life support instead of being militarily offensive. The pipeline provides oil as a strategic lube and a neutral vehicle of war machines with a mobile and diffusing effectivity. Oil reaches the crusading fronts through pipeline, far corners can be reached by pumping gas in addition to oil into the pipeline. Once oil reaches its destination, the crusading war machines whose first disposition is being dynamic will fuel up and build themselves with the oil and its derivatives. As the machines of the western enlightenment consume oil either by

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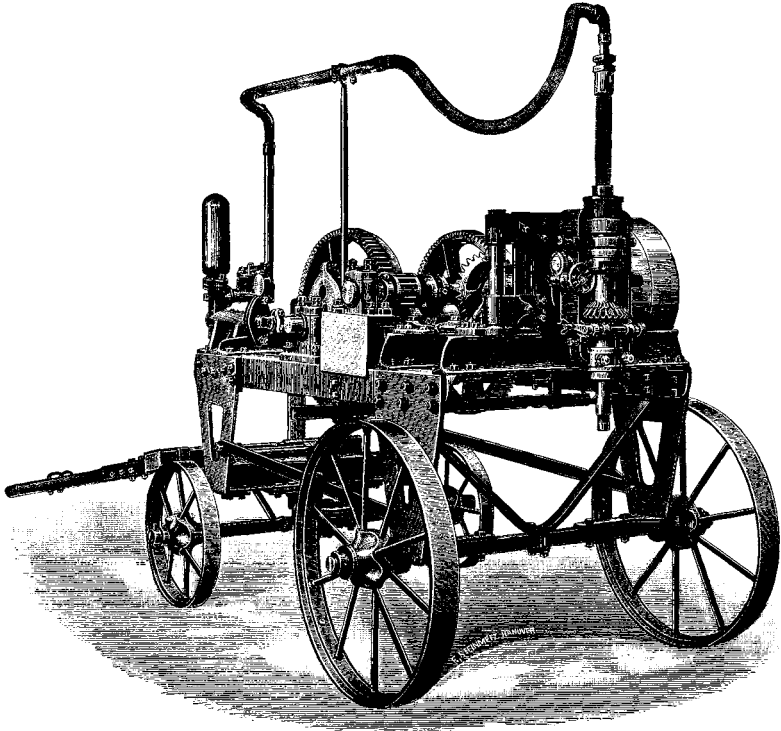
Returning to the contemporary implementation of geopolitics, it is evident that within the us the link between energy issues, geopolitical strategy and economic hegemony straddles tactical political and partisan disputes. Consider for instance the influential musings of Zbigniew Brzezinski on the significance of Eurasia, or what he calls the “grand chessboard”, for a post-Cold War us strategy. Once again, the persistence of the prevention of alternative hegemonies—rather than the open affirmation of dominance—reveals itself as a constant of America’s foreign policy from the Monroe doctrine to the Bush doctrine; a prevention that is geographically modulated and specified, not just in terms of the inhibition of powerful rivals but also, and at times especially, in terms of the required openness of territories to flows of capital and flows of energy (witness the Carter Doctrine, formulated in 1980, which declared any threat to the “free movement of Middle East oil” to be an “assault on the vital interests of the United States of America”). For Brzezinski in particular, this invariant theme of the prevention of hegemony takes a classical geopolitical, which is to say Eurasian, focus. As he writes in *The Grand Chessboard*, “it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus of also challenging America. [...] For America, the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia [...] America’s global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained.” Following very closely in Mackinder’s footsteps, Brzezinski goes on to emphasize that Eurasia is “geopolitically axial”, that “a power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world’s three most advanced and economically productive regions”, namely inasmuch as “Eurasia accounts for 60 per cent of the world’s GNP and about three-fourths of the world’s known energy resources”. It is thus imperative for the us to identify possible Eurasian competitors and elites that could cause a “shift in the international distribution of power” and “formulate specific us poli-

cies to offset, co-opt, and/or control the above...”.

Despite the fact that Brzezinski tends to prioritize the velvet glove over the iron fist, he is candid about the imperial coordinates of such a project: “To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.” As for Mackinder, it is the regional cohesion of Eurasia (the coming together of the barbarians, so to speak) which poses a threat, all the more so because of the conjunction of rising energy consumption and Asian economic development, which “is already generating massive pressures for the exploration and exploitation of new sources of energy and the Central Asian region and the Caspian Sea basin are known to contain reserves of natural gas and oil that dwarf those of Kuwait, the Gulf of Mexico, or the North Sea.” Prevention of hegemony and openness are once again bound together, inasmuch as “America’s primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space and that the global community has unhindered financial and economic access to it.” Now, though it may be disputed whether the implementation of the so-called Bush doctrine has entailed the “comprehensive and integrated Eurasian geostrategy” that Brzezinski called for—he himself seems to vigorously dispute this, as evidenced by his trenchant criticisms over the preparations for war in Iran—the link between the flow of oil, American unipolarity (rather than unilateralism per se), and geopolitical design cannot be easily dismissed.

Some analysts, such as Michael Klare, who speaks of the possibility of a “new cold war in south-central Eurasia”, have regarded the conjunction of energy requirements and this vision of geopolitical supremacy as the sufficient reason for the fortunes of recent American foreign policy. As Klare writes in a 2003 article precisely entitled “The New Geopolitics”: “American

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Portable prospecting drill, from Scientific American, New York, December 19, 1885.



► Black smoke plumes over Baghdad. Acquired the morning of March 31, 2003, by the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) instrument aboard NASA's Terra satellite. Image courtesy NASA/GSFC/ MITI/ ERSDAC/JAROS, and US/ Japan ASTER Science Team.



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leaders have embarked on the classical geopolitical project of assuring US dominance of the most important resource areas, understood as the sources of power and wealth. There is an ideological consistency to what they're doing, and it is this geopolitical mode of thinking... Against this background, it can hardly be questioned that the purpose of the war in Iraq is to redraw the geopolitical map of Eurasia so as to insure and embed American power and dominance in this region vis-à-vis these other potential competitors." In this regard, for the likes of Klare, a geopolitical constant interacts with the absolute and produced forms of scarcity that afflict a global oil industry plagued by an imbalance between increasing demand and increasing capacity. The result is a new, or at least more intense species of inter-imperialist rivalries: *resource wars*. To paraphrase Hobson's classic *Imperialism*, we would have moved from capitalism in general as the "economic taproot of imperialism" to oil as the energetic taproot of imperialism and of coming inter-imperialist conflicts. It is worth noting here that the discourse of geopolitics and that of resource depletion have a profound affinity, being both founded on a notion of closure: just as geopolitics in its formulations by Ratzel and Kjellen depended on the notion of a finite planet whose political surfaces could be recombined but not expanded, so the discourse of resource finitude or scarcity (which was already contained in that of geopolitics) feeds on the image or myth of a zero-sum game. It is also worth noting here that much of the Marxist discourse on imperialism, which depends not just on the existence of non-capitalist territories but on the possibility of *intensively* opening up productive resources, does not necessarily require such a notion of a finite politics.

Whether as one of the driving ideological motors behind the neo-con revolution and its less radical forebears, or as a privileged source of its critique, this resurgence of a geopolitical imaginary—which the nineties' consensus had largely dismissed as dead and buried—has encountered

important adjustments and critiques. To begin with, the idea of a geopolitics of oil as founded on the *control* of oil leaves rather open the issue of how such a control might be exercised, especially if we consider that access, pricing or the enhancement of extractive capacity are neither easily garnered through military-territorial means, nor is it in the least evident how a "national" differential advantage could be drawn from a resource whose centrality lies precisely in its capacity to fuel an intensely integrated global economy. Here the geopolitical comes into friction with the geoeconomic, or, to use the terminology of Giovanni Arrighi and David Harvey, the territorial logic of power and the capitalist logic of power betray the fact that they do not always work in concert. Many authors concerned with the debate over imperialism and American hegemony have indeed asked whether the kind of geopolitical horizon projected by the likes of Khalilzad or Brzezinski is really of a piece with the geoeconomic desiderata of the US government or of dominant fractions of US capital. For Immanuel Wallerstein, for instance, writing in *The Decline of American Power*, three elements of the oil industry are key for US strategy: participating in profits of the oil industry, control over the price, and access of supply. The US government wasn't to be unduly worried on any of the three counts and the gains to be made of marginal importance vis-à-vis losses. Others, such as Cyrus Bina, have pointed out that the internationalization of the oil industry entails that any direct politics of preferential access through military means is off the agenda. For Bina, as for Wallerstein and many others, it is a weakening of hegemony—in a broad political, economic and ideological sense—and not a thirst for resources that pushed America to war. Given his view of the oil industry as globalized, post-cartelized and beyond what he calls "administrative pricing", from the purely energetic angle America's political behavior is anachronistic, and so is the critical perception of it as a kind of "oil grab". The transformations of the oil industry have rendered "physical access,

pre-arranged inter-company allocation, and indeed administrative pricing and control of oil redundant". It might also be worth noting, as Gareth Stedman Jones did some years ago in a fine study of US imperialism, that it is not occupation or colonization but rather the Open Door policy, inaugurated in 1899 in China as a kind of continuation of the Monroe Doctrine, and a constant all the way to the Carter Doctrine on the Middle East, that marks out the specificity of US imperialism. Praising Hay, the initiator of the Open Door policy, Woodrow Wilson declared: "If we are not going to stifle economically, we have got to find our way into the great international exchanges of the world. [...] The nation's irresistible energy has got to be released for the commercial conquest of the world."

Of course, much of the critical consensus on US policy is based on the notion that its flagging commercial and productive "energy", joined with its increasing material need for energy is the spur behind the catastrophic geopolitical fantasies that have come to possess the militant end of the US establishment. These fantasies, breeding a kind of imperialism of decline, are not just catastrophic, but deeply contradictory: if the singularity of American-led economic imperialism is to "make the world safe for capitalism", so to speak, then the pursuit of an open pre-emptive geopolitical design—of the kind that would join its Iraq venture and its overall system of bases with the aim of a geostrategic intervention into the Rimland of Eurasia—cannot but seem a dubious avenue for US interests and hegemony.

So is Harvey's riff on the geopolitical mottos mentioned above—"whoever controls the Middle East controls the global oil spigot and whoever controls the global oil spigot can control the global economy, at least for the future"—a dead end? Does it really make sense for a declining US power to "ward off that competition and secure its own hegemonic position [by controlling] the price, conditions, and distribution of the key economic resource upon which those competitors rely"? Only if we think that: (a.) the

oil industry allows such forms of control; (b.) the securing trumps the backlash against such a brazen geostrategic gambit; (c.) it is clear what the interest of America or "US capital" *tout court* might be. According to John Bellamy Foster, the neo-cons attempted "to create a US-led global imperium geared to extracting as much surplus as possible from the countries of the periphery, while achieving a 'breakout' strategy with respect to the main rivals (or potential rivals) to US global supremacy. The fact that such a goal is irrational and impossible to sustain constitutes the inevitable failure of geopolitics."

But how are we to deal, at one and the same time, with the return and with the failure of geopolitics? With the insistence and very real effects of its projection of the world and *onto* the world (e.g. the US basing strategy), as well as with its deeply fraught and contradictory nature? One interesting tack, suggested by the work of Tim Mitchell and Andrew Barry, would be to interrogate the efficacy and pertinence of the brutal simplification of the socio-political dynamics of energy that it undertakes, to bring to the fore the myriad agents, relations, and precarious assemblages that give oil its political substance. Another, perhaps closer to the political economy debates on imperialism mentioned above, involves questioning the very notion of "national interest" or "national capital" that underpins the geopolitical imaginary of states and their critics. In their provocative and theoretically innovative book *The Global Political Economy of Israel*, Nitzan and Bichler engage in just such a move by questioning what they term "the familiar straitjacket of aggregates" and the "Hobbesian anthropology" that views the politics of resources in terms of national interest. Looking specifically at the "differential accumulation" of capital, the authors suggest that in the period following the upstream nationalization of oil in the Middle East (what they call the period of limited as opposed to free flow), "Middle East conflicts were the main factor 'regulating' the differential accumulation of

burning the blob or fattening up on the blob, the smuggled war machines start to activate and are chemically unbound. The nervous system and the chemistry of war machines smuggled through oil infuse with the western machines feasting on oil unnoticed as petroleum has already dissolved or finely emulsified them in itself as its chemical elements or its essential derivatives (Islamic ideologies, ambitions, implicit policies, socio-religious entities and formations, etc.). These war machines carry strategic lines of Islamic Apocalypticism, which fuels and escalates the transgressive impetus of western war machines, because the Divine and its desert can only be reached by participation. The extremist doctrines of Jihad discuss that everything functions as a micro-management towards the provocation of Islamic Apocalypticism, and the Kingdom is only constructed on participation. The role of Islamic war machines then is to dismantle the transgressive western military dynamism and at the same time incite the western war machines to escalate their desertifying impetus. In other words, escalation of western war machines is in the direction of liberating the desert of the Divine: the desert freedom. For Jihad, escalation of western war machines without adhering to their idolatrous logic of transgression is only made possible by diffusing through them within and by way of oil.

If western war machines have a capitalist zeal to waste energy and material there is no altar better for this wastage than Islamic Apocalypse and its divine cause. Now, contaminated by the sentence of oil and the war machines running through it, western Technocapitalism, as well as its war machines as particularly petrophilic entities, are attracted and drawn to an agitated participation with Islamic war machines, Islamic populations and their lands overlapped with petroleum reservoirs. The disparity and asymmetry between the war machines of the two fronts and the aggravated appetite for oil building up in western machines nourished by oil pushes this fermented participation mainly to a complicity of a combustive and conflictive kind. Correspondingly, the asymmetry of Jihad's

defense and Crusade's offensive invasions become as synergistic as they are asymmetric. As the western machines are depleted of oil in this heated participation, they rush for thicker layers of the blob which transport more enthusiastic war machines with weirder sentence. The more subterranean the logic of oil extraction becomes, the more abysmal oily avatars turn out to be. The pipeline is a superficial carrier of oil and its dissolved entities, so it is the duty of the crusading machines of enlightenment to fathom deeper levels. The capitalist policy of terminal accessibility or marketism in regard to oil shifts the depth of the Blob. In a secret twist, with a more Islamic enthusiasm than Islamic entities themselves, the berserkers of capitalism rush towards Islamic Apocalypticism by fusing with Islamic war machines running through oil. When it comes to seeing through the pipe, the machines of enlightenment are particularly petro-mongoloid. •

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Petropolitics

the Petro-Core”. Rather than accepting the policy discourse of national interest Nitzan and Bichler point to the differential advantage accrued through the “energy conflicts” of the Middle East by a faction of dominant capital (rather than capital as a whole)—what they refer to as the “Weapondollar-Petrodollar Coalition”. It is the power exercised by such a coalition vis-à-vis its capitalist rivals (for instance the “technological” capital that rose to prominence with the new economy), which determines the interests at stake in visibly geopolitical conflicts.

A very different attempt at questioning the return of geopolitics can be encountered in the very recent collection *Oil Wars*, edited by Kaldor, Karl and Said. Pitting the multilateralist discourse of governance, stakeholders and human rights against the stark imperatives of geopolitics, Kaldor et al. speak neither of resource wars nor energy conflicts but of *new oil wars*. Rather than attacking the imperialist aims of the us, these essays, which tellingly issue into policy suggestions, view the carrying out of “old wars” as both anachronistic and counterproductive. As the case of Iraq allegedly proves, while the us may think it is operating in an old-school geopolitical arena, it has mired itself in a new war. Such a war is “associated with weak and sometimes ungovernable states where non-oil tax revenue is falling, political legitimacy is declining and the monopoly of organized violence is being eroded. In such wars, the massive rents from petroleum are used in myriad ways to finance violence and to foster a predatory political economy.” Carrying out old wars in new war scenarios is thus regarded as the main category mistake that has led the us into its current predicament. Despite the salutary reminder of the failure of the geopolitical imaginary when it is faced by non-state actors and criminal political economies, such a multilateralist proposal falls short on a number of counts.

First of all, it has the tendency to treat the geopolitical as a mere illusion that can be evaded by good policy choices and proper “governance”.

In so doing, it also seems to exculpate imperialist ventures and to take their “good intentions” at face value. Second, it appears entirely oblivious to the specific ways in which multilateralism—understood in terms of the coordination of dominant governments, corporations, international organizations, and so-called civil society—is a very determinate product of Cold War and post-Cold War unipolarity, specifically in terms of “democracy promotion” as part of a certain hegemonic agenda (see Nicolas Guillhot’s *The Democracy Makers*). Third, it puts the weight on the victims of war rather than on its perpetrators: a typical sentence such as “on the eve of the invasion, Iraq showed all the signs of irreversible state failure” could be rudely translated as “they were asking for it”. Fourth, and finally, by linking the new oil wars to the idea of an “oil/rent-seeking/conflict cycle”, Kaldor et al., even as they demystify the “magical” powers of oil, engage in myth-making of their own: oil, as a kind of retropolitical substance, seems to determine polities into the pre-modern temporality of fate (cycles), a temporality from which persistent colonial and imperial intervention is written out. Moreover, such an account is founded on a rather widespread moralization of capitalism that stigmatizes always-already failing petro-states by depicting them as states that culpably try to bypass the pedagogical virtues of production. In their terms, oil is pernicious for national economies because of the manner in which it triggers a “de-linking between wealth and work” (something which is hardly the province of oil states alone, since it could be said to characterize highly financialized capital as such). Thus, while the novelty of the oil wars might allow us to break from the geopolitical obsession, it also fosters a deeply unhistorical and mystifying vision of oil as a fateful material whose pernicious effects only the stewardship of “responsible” governments, NGOs, and civil society can neutralize. The escape from retropolitics thus risks leaving us with an anti-politics, under the guise of “governance”.

To conclude, perhaps the only way to escape an oscillation between a multilateral governance and a unipolar geopolitics, which are often indistinguishable in the last instance, is to re-discover, as Tim Mitchell has suggested, the politicizing effects of oil, the manner in which it both catalyzes and congeals forms of democratic action and resistance. To do this, we also need to think about the link between oil and violence outside of the often mystifying domain of “national interests”. Returning to Sartre, we might then choose to reflect on how the notion of scarcity, so closely linked in the recent period to oil, might be seen as a driving force in the conflictual character of this material and political substance. As Sartre writes in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, “in so far as anyone may consume a product of primary necessity *for me* (and for all the Others), he is dispensable: he threatens my life to precisely the extent that he is my own kind; he becomes inhuman, therefore, as human, and my species appears to me as an alien species”. The politicization of finite resources can thus link indispensable resources to dispensable men, humanization to dehumanization, such that violence “is that of freedom against freedom through the mediation of inorganic matter”. While scarcity is both produced and reproduced in ever new forms, and is not perforce the cause of open conflict, it does entail that “the relations of production are established and pursued in a climate of fear and mutual mistrust by individuals who are always ready to believe that the Other is an anti-human member of an alien species; in other words, that the Other, whoever he may be, can always be seen by Others as ‘the one who started it’.” In order to break the link between retropolitics and petropolitics, or between Hobbesian violence and oil, it will also be necessary to confront the fact that the economy of oil perceived as an economy of scarcity is the bearer of such specific forms of dehumanization and antagonism against dispensable Others, against “the ones who started it”. •

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Architecture and the Death of Utopia

Reading '4 ark'

Claes-Magnus Bernson

The notion of utopia is without a doubt an important figure in architecture. It gathers together visions, hopes, and dreams at the same time as it demolishes established truths. But beyond the grand narratives, utopia can perhaps be no more than fragmented, volatile, and without a center. With its first thematic issue, the recently started magazine *4 ark* seeks to question the supposed death of utopia, construct new lines of flight for thought and, with an epic prism before its eyes, capture what might be left of the notion of utopia in a postmodern era.

4 ark is a project initiated by students at the Department of Architecture at Chalmers in Gothenburg that boldly tries to discuss the forbidden in a society that is suspicious towards that which deviates and is unfamiliar. "In the same manner as the magazine's content is straggling and at times contradictory," *4 ark* claims that the view on architecture "needs to be broadened" and be replaced by "an architecture colored by a manifold of perspectives, conflicting ideas and a continuous questioning of established constructions." They wish to dissolve ingrained opinions in an acid bath in order to be able to continue—continue in a better way.

At times, utopia can be awkward with respect to the prevailing standards. From a queer-feminist perspective, Fredrik Metso wishes to do away with the binary division of male and female at the public bath Valhallabadet in Gothenburg. Instead of organizing the space around a binary logic of the sexes—a logic he actually compares to apartheid—he seeks to arrange it in a more gender-neutral manner. In his queer-feminist utopia the areas in the bath are to be divided in terms of openness/closedness, depending on how comfortable the bathers are exposing their bodies.

The concept of utopia encompasses its inevitable other: dystopia. Obviously, however, the reverse also holds true: the trajectory of dystopia can, by means of negation, be turned toward the hope and promise of a better future. In a satirical text, Frans Magnusson paints a nightmare scenario of social oppositions where individuals in a car-reliant urban population are secluded monads among strangers. The geographical and cultural economy of the city organizes a striated space in which the stranger is repressed and driven off by a paranoid fear of the unfamiliar and uncanny. In contrast, the good life would consist of a fostering and sanctioning of the stranger by the city. In Magnusson's view, the closed city with its regulations is to be transformed into an open and tolerant city in which a gaze beyond oppositions can face its environs without fear and anxiety.

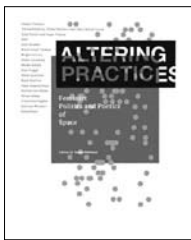
Utopia seems to unite around the unrealized, around a conceptual or material void. Every city has its rifts: abandoned buildings or simply empty spaces, but, as Martin Nordahl reminds us, these rifts are not really voids in the proper sense of the word; instead they assemble their surroundings into a new image by means of reflection. His essay poses the question on how the architect is to relate to tears in the urban fabric. Every plan, project and building produces a new Order, a law that distributes the city in a new shape. The utopian potentiality of the rift is dressed in a new fabric by each architectural project that threatens to expel the unrealized becoming and revolt. According to Nordahl, the architect must precisely and prudently consider whether or not the rift as such consists of an affirmative space and tendency in the city—hence the possibility and the non-site are written into the spatiality of the order as such. Utopia as the trace of formlessness...

But if one want to bring forth the tools of dissection, one can cold-heartedly conclude that

4 ark, at least in part, fails to realize its ambitions. The analyses start to limp when closing in on the essence of the concept of utopia: they fail to produce an interesting analysis of what utopia might amount to in a broader architecture-theoretical discussion. It is as if the authors are silenced by the unknown instead of trying to bring into form the unnamable that utopia is. It might of course be a good strategy to present, rather than to prove, one's thesis, but it feels a bit dispirited and cowardly. *4 ark* might have thought a step further on this point.

The magazine contains not only of a vast number of thought-provoking articles but also urgent images that condenses the ambiguity and *raison d'être* of the concept of utopia. A desolate desert landscape that hardly lends itself to the wet architectural dreams of the blueprint lines, a CAD image with space-time out of joint and a "testopia" that upholds utopia's modernistic mysteriousness and indeterminableness in an interactive play with the reader. It is a demanding read but the extensive pretensions are counterbalanced by good, honest and openhearted intentions. *4 ark* is never indifferent reading. •

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Parenthood of Form: Materiality and the Patriarchy

Reading 'Altering Practices'

Malin Zimm

This book really smells. I am struck by the intensity of the scent, a thick asphalt-like fragrance of imprint color that oozes especially from the all-black chapter-separating pages. Of course, it is the materiality of the book that announces itself by this sensation; the smell has got nothing to do with its contents. Needless to say, this olfactory point of view is no decent way of presenting a serious publication. Surely there must be a content to attend to? Of course there is. What is at stake is precisely this: the perceived inferiority of matter in relation to form. The smelly book that brings this discussion into focus is *Altering Practices—Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space*, essays collected by Doina Petrescu as a "situated account" of the Alterities conference held in Paris 1999. The book title should be interpreted as various constellations and projects that make a difference, from the history of the pioneering feminist practice and design collective *Matrix* 1980—1996 (as told by co-founders Julia Dwyer and Anne Thorne), via an array of altering practices presented by architects, artists, critics, designers, curators, researchers, sociologists and urban planners, to the three final essays dealing with the notion of matter in relation to form. These texts by Francesca Hughes, Jennifer Bloomer and Sadie Plant respectively, all discuss the architectural labor that negotiates form and matter and the low status of matter in relation to form, forming a theme of its own within this book held together by the vague parenthesis of *Altering Practices*.

The feminist perspective of space implies alteration and a strict observation of the self in relation to others, as it challenges pervasive power structures and one of the major assumptions in architectural culture is the submission of matter to form, as a consequence of the prescriptive attitude of the architect. The book opens with a history of the feminine and feminist practice of the design collective *Matrix*, formed in the early 1980s out of the late seventies *Feminist Design Collective*, and dissolved around fifteen years later when *muf* and other feminist architectural practices would pursue the agenda of an architecture of inclusion and participation.

The notion of transformation and "in becoming" as well as the priority of process over product, well before this came to be an accepted order in traditional commercial architectural practices, was embraced by *Matrix*. While rethinking architectural practice, the feminist spatial practices gradually shifted from politics to poetics, from issues of identity to divergence. In the climate of a 93%-domination of male architects in Britain at the time, *Matrix* was in opposition to the forces of both patriarchy and capitalism, but as its history is told, it becomes more formative as a sociological forum than as a spatial practice. Marking a difference from the patriarchal order of architecture and planning, the nature of *Matrix'* alterity is the selfless order of the feminine, the including and attentive practice. As a practice, *Matrix* spoke with the voice of the mother, a role that at its extreme tends towards the selfless and non-authoritative. Jane Rendell identifies, in her text, the discomfort with this role. The vertical power structures of the patriarchal model must be challenged, and the responsibility to do this lies with those, like Rendell, who have acquired the knowledge and occupy the positions from which a critique may be delivered. With the will to challenge vertical power structures, Rendell has experienced the difficulties to construct an alternative horizontal network that will facilitate a free exchange of ideas. She problematizes the method of challenging the position of authority by giving up one's own voice. Wherever one aspires to impose a pattern or dictate form, one tends to repeat those constructions one set out to destroy. In order to create a new feminist order, one would need to speak the language of power and repress the traditionally feminine voice of selflessness to the benefit of the collective choir.

The Alterities conference was planned at the same time as *Matrix* was dismantled as a practice, and by the time of the conference, another "matrix" would occupy the interpretation of the word as the Wachowski brothers' film premiered in 1999, where the term denotes the computer-generated virtual world constructed to keep us within the illusion of an autonomous humanity. Probing into the word, the Latin *mater*—mother is the etymological core of *matter* and *matrix*. Matter is what the architect masters by applying form to it, using the methodology of the drawing whereby matter becomes quantifiable and domesticated. Precision and purity replaces matter as the drawing lifts the uncontrollable matter to the refined state of materiality. As Francesca Hughes argues, "materiality is matter domesticated". Matter, according to Hughes, is so subsumed by form, "that in the form/function paradigm, we find matter has all but disappeared". (264)

If there is a *mater* involved in the making of space, I ask myself, where do we find the *pater*? Not too far away, at least within audible distance, we find the word *pattern*, derived from Latin *pater*, introduced here as a cultural component in (or out of) balance with the maternal terminology. This etymological parenthood is a game in which the cultural product of these terms dwells, and as I read the final texts, I introduce the *pater* to the discussion of matter and materiality.

Hughes, Bloomer and Plant demonstrate just how deep this terminology is embedded in culture as they analyze the dictionary on the mother's side, especially the meanings of *matter* and *matrix*. Hughes suggests an Aristotelian hierarchy of form and matter, where matter is potentiality and form is actuality, hence form subsumes matter as matter is changed during the process of production while form remains unchanged. She argues, "matter is difference, is gender, is race, is everything that is difficult." (272) In order to deal with what is difficult, the architect would benefit from a more conscious relationship to matter itself. Hughes argues that "precision is the key agent in the repression of matter by form" (268), an agent favored by architects in the process of subsuming matter, using sharp tools to outline the actualization of form from matter.

Matter stands for a material substance of a particular kind or for a particular purpose, for instance something written or printed. In fact, matter is the substance by which any physical object is composed. It is the material substance that occupies space, has mass, and is composed predominantly of atoms consisting of protons, neutrons, and electrons, that constitutes the observable universe, and that is interconvertible with energy. Matter is also the material (as feces, urine, or pus) discharged from the living body. Matter stands for the indeterminate subject of reality, the element in the universe that undergoes formation and alteration. Matter is "the formless substratum of all things which exists

only potentially and upon which form acts to produce realities". The *matrix* stands for, quite simply, that which something else originates from, and takes its form from. It could be the mold in a graphic process - for example the relief surface of a piece of type or a stamp, or the original from which phonographic impressions are made as records. In botanics, the matrix is the parent plant; while it denotes the female animal used in breeding. The matrix denotes the natural or artificial material in which something is enclosed or embedded, such as the soil or rock that surrounds a fossil or crystal.

Where Francesca Hughes observes formless matter, Jennifer Bloomer observes the force that holds matter together by the term gravity (Latin for heavy, serious) and on that same branch, gravidity, as in the condition of pregnancy. Nothing escapes gravitational forces. We struggle to reduce matter, to lose weight, to eliminate smell; at the very least we want to bring the material world under control. The repression of materiality is especially strong in architectural high modernism, where Bloomer points out, matter is "imagined, and produced, to be as two-dimensional (as thin) as possible". (286) The weightless drawing process is a temporary moment of control over matter, and with a virtual tool or instrument, we might aspire to maintain control, constructing architecture in a grid without the grit. Bloomer observes how the virtual is set out to be the ultimate control of the object through eradication of materiality. In virtual reality, we are liberated from all aspects of materiality except the visual characteristics and all the messiness of materiality is purged: it conveys no smell, no irrational stuff out of order. Yet the virtual, like the fossil embedded in the bedrock matrix, is embedded in the real, as our new technologies won't let us forget where we come from: "The relentless drive toward the New is a strangely directed attempt to escape from *Materia*, the old, generative soil, the origin." (292) Going back to the roots—our origin as *Homo Sapiens*—Bloomer finds the Latin term *sapere* in sapiens: to taste, to sap knowledge with the tongue. In other words, the ability to apply our senses to matter. Yet we deny our origin, we oppose to the organic order (especially in the role as architect), and engage in the repression of the matter of mater—the sensual, the material, the haptic, taste.

Bloomer habitually navigates the vegetation of words, pointing at deep senses and formations just below the letter surface. The translation of the world into word, and vice versa, is a creative game in which relations between even the most disparate objects, dressed by their terms, are exposed. In her text she probes into the motherly side of matter, while she observes that matter occupies the bottom of the scale of creation. Matter is, to the traditional architect, what Bloomer calls the "dirt", the substance that must be submitted to form, while Hughes declares that "nothing is lower" than matter. Plant observes that the most complex systems of biology and information require the random formless processes of matter, as found in flat, open systems. The ultimate challenge to the patriarchal order is that systems and structures are not in need of a central governing point. The most complex systems—artificial as well as natural—do not require a central, transcendent point of organization, a new order based on the organic rules of matter, which is hard for the patriarchal order to accept. In this perspective, Sadie Plant speaks of the "possibility of a self-organizing materiality, ultimately contesting the notion that matter needs form". (302) The formless matter that evades all efforts to measure plot, and refrains from all efforts to be brought into architectural order, is considered by Plant to be the ultimate contest to the notion that matter needs form. She observes that architecture has formed a new relationship with matter that follows the development of self-organizing structures, as found in open systems and artificial intelligence. Plant finds that a "new sense of activity" in "what has long been considered to be dead matter", and following this molecular or even nanotechnological order, architects may have to give up the idea of a complete control of matter. (305) To be able to create a truly intelligent architecture, we need to question "the inert passivity of matter and the random, formless nature of its processes". (306)

The architectural drawing is a kind of pattern, the prescriptive kind, not unlike a dressmaker's pattern, that which is designed or used as a model for making things. In this sense, the pattern stands for a form proposed for imitation, not unlike the matrix in graphic processes. The pattern stands for an artistic, musical, literary

or mechanical design or form, and it is used to describe movements, tendencies and behavior in an observable population. To mark something with a design is to form a pattern. Also, patterns appear in nature as natural or chance configurations. The matrix, imposed with a pattern for reproduction, is thus the bearer of pattern. Patterns are used to control matter. The surface of matter may be embellished by the geometrical or figurative type of pattern. The matrix is a negative form, that is, it forms the hollow space in which the desired or sought after object might be found, therefore it need not to be designed in order to function, it just needs to be there, a dark mass embracing the object. The pattern is more often the result of a conscious and controlled design process. Pattern relates to pater as matter relates to mater. From pater comes patron—a person chosen, named, or honored as a special guardian, protector, or supporter. More specifically, the patron is a wealthy or influential supporter of an artist or writer. The patron holds economic power, as a social or financial sponsor of a social function, is someone that uses wealth or influence to help an individual, an institution or a cause, and finally the patron is the proprietor of an establishment.

The mater and pater converge in the parenthood of form and architecture, each bringing their worldly weight to the trade. Mater (matter, matrix) gives the innate quality; matrix embeds and carries the form, while Pater (pattern, patron) controls the more external traits, the finishing surface. Matter/ matrix follows a principle of creation from within, while pattern is an external manipulation of matter. Matter “fills” a preset form, while pattern is created from without. Matrix denotes chance configurations; pattern describes intentional and/ or intricate design—even though nature in all its materiality achieves botanical wonders and snow crystals, each individually designed. Smell, however, is unquestionably a matter of matter: no pattern can be derived from smell since it is so distanced from our visual perception. Matrix is the soil upon which structures are raised, and in order to erect these, we pile matter on top of matter, we mold dirt to building blocks, we carve our names into matter. The patron will be the landowner and responsible for the (material) establishment. The matrix is a warm embrace, a mold, the embedding material. It is the high origin, the parent plant, the breeder, as well as the simple reproduction process where the matrix is the form that facilitates the making of a number of copies. The pattern is applied whenever we want to generalize, in statistics, in psychology—as in “behaviour pattern”. Based on observation, a pattern emerges. Matter does not appear out of nowhere, it is always there, involved in slower or faster transformations.

Matrix comes from the Latin *mater*. Pattern comes from the Latin *pater*. Both terms are involved in the description of form and how form comes to be, and only slight differences set the meanings apart, but the differences are subtle enough. Where matrix stands for that which something originates from, as the mold or the mother plant, the pattern is a means of controlling the surface, of ordering and inscribing, a way to raise attention to the surface of matter so as to distract from its materiality, and within this suggesting a repetition of the behavior or inscriptions that constitutes the pattern. *Altering Practices* operates in the continuum of feminist philosophy that in the seventies began to investigate just how far patriarchal structures extend beyond the construction of social relations. The texts, leading up to the final three texts on the discursive depths between materiality and form, all spring from this fundamental investigation: finding and questioning the workings of patriarchal systems as they reach into the profession of architecture and the teachings of architectural design, and, most importantly, presenting alterities.

A pattern emerges, we say, when we observe an order among things. Most often when we speak of patterns, it is of a visual quality. Patterns, in the sense of graphic, geometric, mathematic manifestations, are almost exclusively available to the visual sense, as we have little experience in organizing smell, for instance, in a chart, while we almost compulsively trace patterns in the observable reality. The sensual world of matter is in conflict with architecture and other methods of controlling the material reality. So far, it seems the “pater” is the dominating force in the raising of form, while “mater” is repressed on account of its messiness and irrational amounts of information and mass.

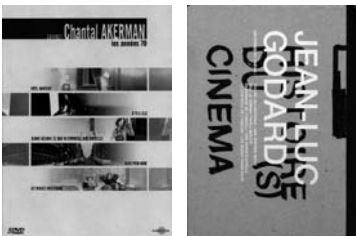
This book spans various accounts of challenges

to the elitist and gendered role of the architect as a legacy to the independent design group Matrix and other collective efforts of undoing of the power structures embedded in architectural drawing, design and authorship. Its authors speak individually of possible ways to produce difference, and collectively, to describe the multitude of alterities already in operation in political and poetical practice.

The strong scent of this book is an undeniable aspect of its materiality. As Bloomer has showed, smell is the “sapiens” in “homo sapiens”—directly linked to our ability to gain knowledge from the material world. The parenthood of matter and learning, or the fertile meeting of form and experience, might just result in a smelly book. ●

Altering Practices—Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space. Ed. Doina Petrescu. London: Routledge, 2007.

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Akerman / Godard

**Chantal Akerman:
Les Années 70**

**Jean-Luc Godard:
Histoire(s) du cinéma**

Kim West

In the spring of 2006 the exhibition *Le Mouvement des images* opened at Centre Pompidou in Paris, curated by art historian Philippe-Alain Michaud, head of the center’s cinema department. It was an historic exhibition presenting a large number of works from the early 1900s through today, all from the Centre Pompidou collections. Michaud’s idea for the exhibition was clear: to read the history of “experimental film” together with the history of the visual arts, to conceive of these histories as one history of moving images and the movement of images. In the long, central corridor and connecting rooms of the exhibition space, works from different decades and in different media were juxtaposed according to similarities in form, theme or motif. The different sections’ headlines were borrowed from the vocabulary of cinematography: “Projection”, “Montage”, “Narrative”, etc. Consequently Richard Serra’s *Hand catching lead* was shown next to Stan Brakhage’s *Chartres series*, close to which Donald Judd’s *Stack* and Warhol’s *Ten Lizes* were installed, in a section concerned with the variations of “repetition”; at another place, Moholy-Nagy’s *Ein Lichtspiel Schwarz-Weiss-Grau* and a photogram by Brancusi were shown next to Mona Hatoum’s *Light sentence*, in a section discussing film projection and the spatiality of light.

Le Mouvement des images was an invigorating exhibition. It not only presented a complex rereading of a number of central tendencies in 20th century art from the viewpoint of techniques, methods and concepts developed within the “art of cinema”. It also made it possible to experience many canonized artworks anew from other perspectives, liberated from their established contexts and histories. But there was also a note of melancholy to *Le Mouvement des images*. It was an exhibition about a history that *could have been*. Despite presenting an overwhelming number of examples of interweavings and analogies between the “art of cinema” and the “visual arts”, it had to create its own context, even to fabricate the fiction of a common history for all the works it exposed. The “experimental film” no doubt has an extremely rich tradition; but the history of the relationship between cinema and

art is above all the history of a non-relation, of a separation. It is the history about the dominance of the “movies”, about Hollywood, its projection apparatus, production companies, distribution network and ideology. It is the history about how a form is established as normality and how deviations from this form are either suffocated before they can be realized (the history of cinema, says Deleuze, is a “martyrology”), or defined negatively, as “subgenres”, “underground” and so on, their critical experiments confirming the existing distribution of roles and the dominance of the movie system.

There is obviously a great number of practices and works, even genres, that do not fit into such a polarizing division between a “visual art” that can, however, experiment with the means of cinema or film, and a “film art” that can, however, be influenced by or borrow from the archive of visual arts, but that remains confined within a closed projection and distribution circuit. There is today reason to return to two artists that are not only among the greatest of our times, but whose works are also seminal in this context. This spring Chantal Akerman’s 1970’s films and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* have for the first time been released on DVD. Both Akerman and Godard are normally seen above all as film directors, but they both make works in the visual arts, which use the greater mobility concerning screening modes and installation that can be found in contemporary art institutions. For them these are not purely accidental visits to the spaces of the visual arts, no wild experiments with alternative media. For both Akerman and Godard it seems fundamental that cinema belongs to a bigger world of moving images, stills, words and things. The need to work with the spatial articulation of the moving images or their relations to other media or objects therefore seems to be inscribed within their artistic projects from the outset.

Already in one of Akerman’s earliest works, the short film *La Chambre* (1972), one can discern a corresponding attitude. The film consists of one single, long shot that carefully and repeatedly examines the unassuming room Akerman lives in. Akerman herself is present in the room/ film, she is seated on her bed and laconically but attentively studies the camera eye as it passes her. Despite being only eleven minutes long, the film creates a surprisingly vivid and palpable experience of what it means to inhabit, dwell, exist in a space. For Akerman the most important quality of cinematography does not seem to be its ability to show movement, but on the contrary its ability to show rest. In the films that are included in *Chantal Akerman. Les Années 70* she uses the time based film medium not primarily to link together events and actions into plots and stories, but to show and reflect over time itself, to communicate an experience of duration. *Hotel Monterey* (1972), in which Akerman’s calm, lingering camera shoots the rooms and the corridors in a hotel of the same name, shows the movement of time by showing how nothing moves, how people are only dwelling, waiting. *News from Home* (1976), which consists of slow takes and tracking shots of New York’s urban space, over which Akerman off screen reads letters written to her by her mother, shows people that in similar ways seem busy with dealing with time as such, as emptiness. And the monumental, over three hours long *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) is a relentless portrait of the completely monotonous everyday life of a homemaker. The film depicts the widow Dielman, played by Delphine Seyrig, who in order to make ends meet for herself and her teenage son works as a babysitter in the mornings and receives gentlemen in her bedroom in the afternoons. The rigorous pattern of life she has subjected herself to is disrupted when she one night sets her alarm clock too early, which leads her to manage her time and the day’s events in a radically different way.

What the films in *Les Années 70* have in common is that they not only depict and show duration; they also make it palpable and present for the spectator. A not unsubstantial part of all films that are being made today aim to “entertain” the viewer, that is, to organize her time and make her unconscious of its passing. To see *Hotel Monterey*, *Je tu il elle* or *Jeanne Dielman* is rather to become physically conscious about the extension of time and of one’s existence in a certain space. Consequently, these films paradoxically have a more clear affiliation with “non-temporal” art forms that produce specific experiences of spatial presence, such as sculpture or installation art, than with “temporal” ancestors of the movies, such as the theater and the novel. Already in her

films from the 1970s, the space and the *mise-en-scène* seem to be artistic questions for Akerman. A straight line runs between these formally “traditional” films and Akerman’s later, “experimental” and multi-channeled works, where she is directly occupied with configuring the viewer’s movements and presence in the space.

In the spring and summer of 2006 not only *Le Mouvement des images* was shown at Centre Pompidou, but also Jean-Luc Godard’s exhibition *Voyage(s) en utopie* (see Trond Lundemo’s article in SITE 18–19/2006). The exhibition was to some extent a continuation of, or an autonomous sequel to, Godard’s immense video project *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which has now finally been released on DVD. It may appear strange to mention *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in the same context as *Le Mouvement des images*, whose project at least to some extent was to question the definition of cinema and its borders towards other media and expressions. And there are without a doubt decisive differences between Godard and Philippe-Alain Michaud’s attitudes. But a project with the claims of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* can not be limited to an isolated medium or a single tradition. One could say that *Voyage(s) en utopie*’s mixing of media, technologies and objects confirmed this. For Godard, cinema only has *une histoire seule*, its own, single history, to the extent that this history is at the same time *toutes les histoires*, all the histories. Cinema, he means, is inextricably linked to the history of the 20th century, constituting both the effect and the realization of its utopias and catastrophes. It is therefore only with cinema one can tell the history of cinema, which is the history of the aesthetic and political projects of the past century.

Histoire(s) du cinéma has such a reach, and, since it was first shown (the first two parts in 1988, the two second in 1997), it has given rise to such an ungraspable number of commentaries that one asks whether it is at all possible to see it “naively”, that is, for the first time today, without having read everything that has been written, without being able to identify all quotes and references. Luckily it is. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* uses a sophisticated collage technique. Godard links together film clips, images, voices, texts and compositions from the histories of cinema, literature, painting and music into coherent stories where each element gets its significance from the new context it becomes part of, but where this new context gets its significance from the larger references and contexts the single elements bring to the whole. In this sense *Histoire(s) du cinéma* seems to be based on a principle of affiliation according to which the elements are interwoven, confronted, placed in analogy with each other in a common space. The virtuosic and sentimental tribute to Italian neorealism at the end of part 3A, *La Monnaie de l’absolu*, and the almost unbearable juxtapositions of images from concentration camps and Hollywood industry in part 4A, *Le Contrôle de l’univers*, in different ways play with the same idea about the images’ fundamental similarity and correspondence. But *Histoire(s) du cinéma* also seems to be based on an opposite principle, according to which the separate elements are given back their inherent force and meaning. Detached from their original contexts, the scenes and cuts Godard singles out can become visible as such, as a sequence of isolated elements. In this sense *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is a stream of powerful images: gestures, glances, insignificant actions, dramatic events. A spear hits a man in the back, people run through a waterfall, the high society rounds up for a colorful ball, a hand is held up in front of a forest landscape, an informer is struck with a terrible insight in Second World War Rome. Even those acquainted with the sources of the cuts can here see images they have never seen before, as if one of the tasks of history for Godard was precisely to render the glance naive, and as if one of its abilities was to liberate things from the past and show them once more, this time for the first time. ●

Chantal Akerman: *Les Années 70: Hotel Monterey, Je tu il elle, Jeanne Dielman 23 Quai du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles, News from home, Les Rendez-vous d’Anna* Carlotta films, 2007
5 DVD, no subtitles

Jean-Luc Godard: *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Gaumont Vidéo, 2007
4 DVD, English subtitles