

rubric:
nascent

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nascent

Nascent as beginning to exist or to grow, to emerge or develop, is our concern in this first instance. This instance, this primary point of origination which shall inevitably progress to a later state, to another instance, to that-which-is-not-first. This is where we shall site/cite ourselves, in this process of transference, of being-in-motion, of Being in-motion, as be-coming or coming-to-be in this developmental schema which charts a growth or emergence...

...what are the implications here for a progressive development? Where does this development stem from, and how does it operate in extension from its originary locus? If this is indeed a concern about origins as such, is there a co-dependency between the origin and this B/being(-)in motion, or are the two distinct entities?

...but let us consider this concern another way: what form of developmental scheme or methodology may be applied to the art-work as such, if – in terms of ontology here – the work comes-to-be through this process or application of this logic of emergence, at what point does -work become art-work? Does this nascent state promote a terminological evolution from one aspect to another? What is this state and how does it purport to function?...

This question of *production*, of *ductus*, or presently of *ducere*, of bringing forth or leading into being, positions us in relation to the systematic state of becoming.

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we have hope and
strength of
feeling. where
will it take us?
it can do only
good. to be more
aware, to be
more certain or
sure. more
awareness helps
our work and our
way in the
world. we cannot
let ourselves
become
distracted.

1) I am not sure how to begin; (2) It is certainly taking the shape of words; (3) However this is subject to revision; (4) I am hesitant in speaking the words out loud; (5) Categories quiver at the point of collapse; (6) Trying to produce some other way of adequately describing the experience; (7) Without due care things might spiral out of control; (8) She begins. The pages tremble; (9) The subject position is cast adrift; (10) Words unfurl, not knowing how they got there; (11) Uneven and discontinuous; (12) Always out of reach; (13) Full of holes; (14) A tender documentary residue; (15) Not so much a beginning then as a suture; (16) It is a liquid state or heavy like an industrial accident; (17) In which the seams remain critically visible; (18) Unassuming moments when nothing happens; (19) Breaks things down but also leaves them open; (20) Bringing into crisis, intensively, with care; (21) Within the limited constraints of a given language; (22) Things remain insensible or nameless; (23) I won't play by their rules; (24) Pushing at the edges of one meaning whilst holding back the terms of another; (25) Worried until they begin to recombine differently; (26) In a more contingent, disruptive manner; (27) Complicate the possibility of arriving at a single answer; (28) A decision had been taken to begin; (29) By reassembling its languages into counter-narratives; (30) Always happening in the present; (31) It is impossible to ever exactly duplicate an action; (32) The discrepancy between what is visible and what is not; (33) I feel something; (34) Flutter-flutter; (35) Wanting more; (36) To feel its letters over my tongue; (37) I try to take it all in at once; (38) Fragments that had perhaps seemed incidental or unremarkable at the time; (39) I have not forgotten; (40) A graft of something already existing; (41) Meaning to try, a tentative attempt; (42) As an echo or vibration drawn and performed through the body; (43) Clandestine love affairs with another's thoughts; (44) Once uttered they become rather hard to delete or forget; (45) Each bringing the other into being; (46) Silences that mark unexpected endings; (47) Ideas buried beneath the surface; (48) They seem to resist forming words; (49) Instead bleed across one another; (50) Contiguity is only ever a form of being in contact with; (51) Rather than unnecessary interference at its periphery; (52) Both a spatial form and a temporal event; (53) A pivot about which things turn; (54) Proposing tangents to be – both literally and literarily – followed; (55) Haunted by memories of earlier inhabitations; (56) Whether this thought can be mine alone; (57) A memorial to those unspoken; (58) By one's own volition; (59) In the process of writing about other things (60) Intellectual holes that may well be revealed in time; (61) I feel duly torn in two; (62) Not wholly knowing how to respond; (63) It is not that easy; (64) Something has been left unsaid; (65) Sometimes a foil is needed through which to conjure reflection; (66) Language can be irredeemably imprecise; (67) I have had such thoughts before; (68) Only infrequently captures the experience of the moment; (69) I am letting you in; (70) As a process for producing tangential experiences; (71) I am willing it to happen soon; (72) An intuition for knowing when to yield; (73) Touching upon; (74) There can only be so many ways of saying the same thing; (75) Yet there is an inherent incompleteness in the task at hand; (76) Dialogue broken, a sentence stalled; (77) A speechless mode of incommunicable proximity; (78) A mode of attendance or attention; (79) The prospect of hearing me on your lips; (80) As closely as possible; (81) Logic might become frayed; (82) A kind of restlessness; (83) In a language that cannot be read; (84) Being struck by something; (85) In case of an emergency to let in breath; (86) A desire to avoid the temptation to simply repeat; (87) Making blind leaps into darkness; (88) Stammering in the path of understanding's procedural flight; (89) Resilient sites of criticality; (90) That emerge simultaneously; (91) An action is required; (92) Proximity to the work does not guarantee any certainty or assuredness; (93) Conditions; (94) Refusing to play by the terms of existing power relations; (1) The cycle of iteration begins again once more; (95) The notion of the telos is often rejected or sabotaged; (96) Beyond words as such; (97) Without obligation; (98) The continual reconfiguration of the rules of engagement; (99) Between producing illumination and further opacity; (100) Before other meanings have begun to fully form; (101) Where an end or outcome remains uncertain; (102) Rather more of a return; (103) The task remains unfulfilled; (104) Its secrets sink – heavy pebbles, dark stones; (105) Things that I may have failed to notice; (106) Willfully errant, a little blind; (107) Speaking words that I fear might not be mine; (108) A sense of not being able to know for sure; (109) Of and with the world; (110) A relationship, however fragile; (111) Now that I have told you do you already know too much; (112) A residue or demonstration of wasted energy; (113) Positions can be adopted and then relinquished; (114) The sounds that it makes in my mouth; (115) Making careful incisions to see which way the sense flows; (116) A form of praxis based on fidelity; (117) The explicable fluttering of an unbidden love; (118) Like the honoring of a promise or of a pledge or of a contractual oath; (119) Which in turn evolve and are susceptible to change; (120) An act of rehearsal where propositions become marked; (121) Already missing something; (122) The nomination of love does seem adequate; (123) To bring it into doubt or crisis; (124) Before the reins are drawn in or tightened; (125) Without always being in possession of all of the facts; (126) Makes the content all the more difficult to read; (127) Knocked back; (128) Lost hours; (129) It will only be like borrowing your words; (130) A process of inventory and selection of what has gone before; (131) Able to recognize something that was unrecognizable; (132) Like a trawler trailing heavy nets across dark waters; (133) Double readings are not necessarily incompatible then; (134) The possibility of reversal is necessary to it; (135) Rarely a measure in itself; (136) A little crazy to the logic of reason; (137) Not commensurate to time spent; (138) I am still too slow to catch their tenor; (139) Failing to articulate; (140) So many ways of saying the same thing; (141) Remains hopeful rather than assured; (142) I do not know what else to say; (143) I will cut up the words into tiny pieces and with surgeon's hands craft new forms; (144) A suturing of the self into the space of something else; (145) For holding these inconsistent possibilities in dialogue; (146) Unlikely coalitions arise; (147) Blank spaces; (148) Banned words; (149) Letting them sneak out like fugitives; (150) Only ever borrowed, never wholly owned; (151) Somewhere between the thought and its translation; (152) Somewhere between an incision and a caress; (153) Remove any one to reveal their inextricable interconnectedness; (154) Cannot be pulled apart; (155) Prior to possessing the words; (156) What might constitute infidelity or a betrayal of the work; (157) Too many hours wasted waiting for something to happen; (158) The elusive simultaneity of the 'that's it' with the 'what's that'; (159) The most tentative of apprenticeships; (160) Moving from and also between; (161) Thresholds are often crossed unwittingly; (162) Quiet reminders of what is actually at stake; (163) To give up without giving in; (164) The abandonment or loss of what

is known; (165) Adrift without the possibility of ever achieving stability; (166) A site of tensions and critical inconsistencies; (167) Pleasurable exchanges and late nights lost to darkened corners; (168) I am scared that I will not find my way back; (169) I am afraid of letting you down; (170) Conscious of appearing thick or dense; (171) A felt quiver on the brink; (172) Might leave indelible bruising; (173) To throw out the loop of an idea; (174) The desire to (re)produce the experience of that original event; (175) One that is perpetually in progress, still unresolved; (176) Surpluses beyond and out of the range of what I have thought; (177) It moves between naming and the thing named; (178) Between the fall of my fingers one by one; (179) Of what I have forgotten; (180) Never-ending permutations of possibility; (181) Not one of continuing to be as before; (182) Edges touch but still remain intact; (183) Between one word and another; (184) Dependent upon the presence of other forces; (185) Until it is almost breached; (186) It is not the same as breaking down; (187) Until, and only until, they begin to touch; (188) A mode of critical punctuation or spacing; (189) A different kind of attention; (190) Held; (191) She continues to add pressure until; (192) A gesture of tilting that sets in motion; (193) Produces pause for thought, the space of thinking; (194) Recklessly complicit; (195) Through its proximity to another; (196) Before something can be wholly or coherently declared; (197) Called to bear witness; (198) An act of refusal or of listing and of letting go; (199) Sending myself ransom notes to which I must find answers; (200) Having made a vow to see something through; (201) Bound into relations with these other things; (202) Pause is then a critical gesture; (203) With any critical attention comes some degree of interpretation; (204) An absurd and capricious logic; (205) Feeling I had spoken too soon; (206) Not yet there; (207) A zone of working doubt; (208) That lingers on beyond the duration of the event; (209) Activated or brought into action by other things; (1) But then performs an ellipse back to the point of origin; (210) All can and must start over again at the same point; (211) Gasping for breath; (212) Certain undefinable or unnamable sensations; (213) Saying without wholly saying; (214) Waiting for something to happen; (215) This aching which is often a sign of something more tangible; (216) They have a tendency to linger; (217) I am trying to look only at what is taking place; (218) Progressing through intricate chains of relations; (219) Having ideas in reverse; (220) Becoming inhabited by the gestures of another; (221) Performed according to an ephemeral, unfolding logic; (222) Requiring listening attune itself to a different key or timbre; (223) Terms need to be perpetually re-negotiated, re-worked or re-defined; (224) Does not attempt to prove or disprove; (225) Resisting or rejecting consistency as the desirable paradigm; (226) Never getting anywhere or by forever folding back on itself; (227) But which later turns out to be unimportant; (228) Always in the intonation; (229) Always a double use for language; (230) A spillage beyond the definitive (231) Interpretation remains multifaceted and shifting, never fixed; (232) A little like the act of photographing water; (233) No longer possible to discern the edges of either; (234) Encounters are too true; (235) Meaning is never still, nor ever wholly certain; (236) Synchronous presence of different vocabularies; (237) Awkwardly, struggling to find the right words; (238) Sometimes I have felt my words fleeing like I were a sinking ship; (239) Half-sentences; (240) Empty promises; (241) When comprehension stumbles; (242) Cautious strokes, hesitant steps; (243) With intrepid hands; (244) Acutely aware of one's own agency; (245) Certain meanings might indeed not make it across the gulf of translation in one piece; (246) Repeated inquisition or troubling of its surface; (1) Nearly; (247) An irrefutable conviction that still needs to be further convinced; (248) Difficult to distinguish where one stops and the other takes over; (249) A point of pressure or leverage against which to work; (250) From which to then explore the resultant peripheries; (251) Meaning dissipates; (252) There will always be something withheld, something incommunicable; (253) Where the original has disappeared; (254) The material refuses to give up its meaning; (255) Keeping certain voices at bay; (256) Learning to surrender; (257) Obliquely, without looking directly; (258) Possessing the words; (259) To speak without speaking for; (260) Thwarting easy assimilation; (261) When an end or destination is kept at a distance; (262) Performed as a gesture of circling; (263) Thus only ever approximate; (264) Tinged by the probability of its imminent failure; (265) I had thought that it would make sense; (266) Forgetting all I had known; (267) But rather to conceive of new names; (268) Reminders of what has already been; (269) The pages flutter like butterfly's wings warmed in the sun; (270) Proximity always leaves an unbridgeable gap; (271) Corresponds to an unsettling; (272) As one force gives way to allow the emergence of another; (273) The pages continue to tremble; (274) Not knowing when enough is enough; (275) To commit allegiance to the terms of this disquiet; (276) Choreograph the reply as a silent eulogy; (277) Where am I; (278) There were moments when my attention began to wander; (279) Some things remain close to the surface while others are allowed to sink; (280) All that has been felt; (281) The spell must not be broken; (282) A site of perpetual oscillation; (283) Slips beneath the register of concrete meaning; (284) Where things shimmer or remain hanging in the balance; (285) Waiting for something tangible to emerge; (286) Where do I stop; (287) Being unable to say no; (288) Closure is deferred; (289) Elsewhere; (290) The loop of thinking thus begins afresh; (291) Enabled to perform again once more; (292) Postures taken become pleasurably collapsed; (293) Contradiction renders knowledge impotent, a little tender; (294) Seemingly uncertain about how to resolve her appointed task; (295) Always under erasure; (296) Not being able to leave it alone

ORDINARY ORIGINS: ENCOUNTERING OTHERS ENCOUNTERING OBJECTS

Wood Roberdeau

Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy addresses the question of locating meaning in contemporary daily life with regards to experience. His more recent work differs significantly from Sartre's much earlier efforts, in that it does not presuppose the ability of the self to disengage from others at any time; complete solitude is an illusion that misguidedly posits an 'us' against a 'them'. In order to renegotiate the problem of collectivity as phenomenology has understood it, Nancy eliminates the notion of individuality as the great existential segregator and replaces it with one of singularity, a theoretical experiment that effectively reopens the file on subjectivity in general. In *Being Singular Plural*, the categorical fragments of one's daily life – those which when added together create a biography with a beginning and an end – are set aside in favour of a clean slate upon which non-authoritative experiences can be written. For Nancy, 'singularity' suggests a more neutral subjectivity where meaning need no longer be thought of as derivative of types, traits, or social labels (e.g. divorced, unemployed, foreign, native, etc.) but rather from a relational structure induced by the moment of encounter with one another. He reveals: 'We do not have "meaning" anymore, because we ourselves are meaning – entirely, without reserve, infinitely, with no meaning other than "us".'¹

Discourse then, or the sharing of experience, becomes possible in the company of many, or plural, singularities. They 'are the element in which significations can be produced and circulate.'² In a sense, Nancy calls for the reassignment of value from the answer to the asking of the question; the 'why' always already includes the 'because'. He continues: 'Being itself is given to us as meaning. *Being does not have meaning. Being itself, the phenomenon of Being, is meaning that is, in turn, its own circulation – and we are this circulation.*'³ There are as many world-views as there are singularities in the world and the overlapping of those perspectives is constant: '*Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural coexistence.*'⁴ In line with Merleau-Ponty's observations, such a statement affirms the idea of a transitive world where meanings advance and recede – meaning cannot exist in a vacuum and, for that matter, the very notion of such a space in which one surveys the world in isolation is suspect. Whether from a neighbour, an artist, or an artwork, '*what we receive (rather than what we perceive) with singularities is the discreet passage of other origins of the world.*'⁵ And as the world is not fixed, neither are those origins; because singularities move through time and space, their perceptions are affected by their encounters or experiences. The world, at once the source and the product of such movement, is infinitely kaleidoscopic – it is plural. For Nancy then, the acknowledgement of the quotidian as temporal (i.e. the everyday as a recurrence) serves to affirm a fundamental rule of difference; rather than quantify everyday life as an elusive vessel that is full of anonymous activities and experiences, he recognizes it as the site where the infinite quality of Being, that multiplicity of origins, becomes graspable: 'A "day" is not

simply a unit for counting; it is the turning of the world – each time singular. And days, indeed every day, could not be similar if they were not first different, difference itself.'⁶ To contemplate the world, time, or space as a territory that is categorically distinct from that of lived experience and inherently abstract – an object to be studied by a subject, as it were – is to oversimplify the relationships between individuals and to discourage the possibility of communication. That is to say, by viewing the everyday as the inverse of the exceptional, its own exceptionality becomes overshadowed by the empty promise that the imaginary or disconnected mode of perceiving the world brings with it a state of transcendence or enlightenment; again, constructing such a vacuum does not deliver meaning but denies it instead. In Nancy's words: '*Themes of "wonder" and the "marvel of Being" are suspect if they refer to an ecstatic mysticism that pretends to escape the world.*'⁷

Technically, there can be no spatio-temporal zone that exists outside of the everyday. To seek or desire an experience as such is to delude oneself since the ivory towers that host them are of and in the world. Importantly, Nancy turns to the arts and their connection to the banal in order to facilitate his interrogations. He writes:

*The 'ordinary' is always exceptional, however little we understand its character as origin. What we receive most commonly as 'strange' is that the ordinary itself is ordinary. With existence laid open in this way and the meaning of the world being what it is, the exception is the rule. (Is this not the testimony of the arts and literature? Is not the first and only purpose of their strange existence the presentation of this strangeness? [...])*⁸

Meaning, and subsequently meaningful experiences, should not be reserved for the unreachable or the infrequent and denied to the commonplace – the *rarity* of the art historical 'masterpiece' should not be the only quality that determines its cultural importance. In this vein, Nancy warns against the tendency for scientific endeavours to value rare discoveries while overlooking the value of mundane occurrences. Fundamentally, the position that the ordinary is not and *should* not be escapable is central to debates surrounding the practice and experience of visual art; indeed, ever since the efforts of the neo-avant-garde and its (re) incorporation of the ready-made, a primary purpose for the visual arts has been to support an idea of the remarkable by concentrating on the habitual, or that which engages with the viewer as the familiar de-familiarized (contemporary examples of this orientation have been grounded in participatory or relational artistic agendas).⁹ It could additionally be argued that, in the cultural field, only from this approach can the problematic division between the ordinary and the extraordinary be mended so that our status as singularly plural beings might become more apparent within the contexts of globalization and urban renewal. In essence, the neo-avant-garde sought to bridge the gap between the subject and the object – the artist, by including the real itself as a primary medium could reduce his or her antiquated role as prophet to that of another viewer-experiencer; art no longer needed to imitate life and be isolated as a mere product, but rather could be considered as a conduit also capable of *producing* the stuff of life. This shift introduces an inevitable reassessment of approaches to meaning as it pertains to encounters with artworks and to habitual experiences.

Nancy explains that meaning is fragmented within each singularity and can therefore

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, tr. Anne E. O'Byrne and Robert D. Richardson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 1.

2. *ibid.* 2.

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.* 3.

5. *ibid.* 9.

6. *ibid.*

7. *ibid.* 10.

8. *ibid.*

9. cf. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, tr. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon-Quetigny: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

never be pinned down, ultimately defined, or halted. The subject should understand that he or she is a part of a whole and cannot embody or locate one meaningful perspective of the world. Consequently, the other or the object acts as an alternate part of the same whole and therefore also a point of entry to the originary or infinite. Because the origin is never fixed and the originary can only be recognized from the point of view of any of its fragments, the notion that a creator-god exists *a priori* to the world is erroneous; fragments of the origin (the world) cannot exist external to it but are always of it. Like facets cut into a diamond, singularities within the world reflect the world's plurality. Hence our differences remind us of our sameness, of ourselves as varying access points to the eternal mystery. Importantly, Nancy demonstrates how the arts serve to illustrate this phenomenon – each art form, as a singularity, reveals the originary when it is distilled into an access point or work of art. He writes:

What counts in art, what makes art art (and what makes humans the artists of the world, that is, those who expose the world for the world), is neither the 'beautiful' nor the 'sublime'; it is neither the 'purposiveness without a purpose' nor the 'judgement of taste'; it is neither 'sensible manifestation' nor the 'putting into work of truth'. Undoubtedly, it is all that, but in another way: it is access to the scattered origin in its very scattering; it is the plural touching of the singular origin.¹⁰

The origin (i.e. meaning) is divided and disseminated by the variety of artistic experiences available to us, allowing the infinite to be expressed and confirmed in multiple ways. Artists, therefore, are unified in their underlying and inescapable motivation to reveal something of the world through their practice and make it available to others; their work provides a forum in which the reality of being singular plural is conveyed. Ontologically, what is most effective in art is the common discourse it brings; meaning does not come directly from the artwork, but from us – remember, we are meaning. The art object acts as a reference point to another's world-view, thereby connecting those who encounter it with its producer's subjectivity while at the same time legitimating their own. Artworks, in other words, together in their infinite number of individual contexts do not establish an origin in terms of a beginning (i.e. something created out of nothing), but one that is always already part of that whole to which we all have regular access. Even so, it should be pointed out that Nancy, like others who ground their theoretical claims by asking the reader to extend them to the arts, limits his scope by limiting his metaphor. He relies on the reader's concept of the arts as classical or traditional and their aim at verisimilitude or the representation of nature; this is not to say that, as an example, such a genre fails to capture his observation that each origin can be thought of as 'the birth of a world', but to suggest that by considering the broader spectrum of visual art practices such a claim may be even further solidified. If thought of in Nancy's terms, one of the strengths of modern and contemporary art is that it includes the man-made objects of the world in the space where the 'singular origin' is revealed, but without abandoning an awareness of aestheticism or that quality which helps to evoke something similar to 'affect' in the Deleuzian sense. Old Master paintings and classical sculpture, while able to instil such a response in the viewer, are removed from the real world by the limits of their technique and how they are treated by the art institution as relics of the past. The neo-avant-garde and its successors, alternatively, could be said to provide a quicker route to meaning simply by piecing together fragments of the *actual* everyday into the same traditional territories of aesthetic experience that were once reserved for traditional art forms.

Our daily activities and our objects serve to trigger our recognition of the 'scattered origin' due to their re-articulation through an up-to-date art praxis, which then enables the originary to become recognizable within everyday life in its multiplicitous entirety and not just in the moment of the artistic encounter.

10. Jean-Luc Nancy, op. cit. 14.



AGAIN, A GAIN Luke W Moody



ORGREAVE PRESENT DAY¹

*The past is present. Something has happened and the echoes are still resonating in my head. They are not becoming more difficult to discern; in fact the echoes are becoming increasingly loud and impossible to escape. The past lingers on, yesterday reverberates in today.*²

Again. Again but now to any gain? A gain of scribing, playing out, making present the memory-scape; for whom and with whom do we perform history?

One is (all too) aware of the recent recognised trend toward reenactment in contemporary art³, the former miners of Barnsley battling out unfinished business with the boys in blue for Jeremy Deller's 'Battle of Orgreave.' To what extent are such artfully conducted dramas a 're' and not a contemporary birth of event? Enactment does not partake in the river of echoing past hinted at by Birnbaum; it is a viaduct, an abrupt and towering palimpsest only treading the route of the previous event at a tangential flow.

May artistic enactments proffer space for participatory, collaborative documents of history? The reverberations of yesterday are not passive threads through generations of time

but laborious historiographies, Sebaldian narratives activated by a 'recollection-object,'⁴ a remnant, a souvenir or a sense datum. What role does landscape play as stage to theatrical history? Is there a proxemic necessity in performing enactments, therapeutically standing where one once stood, finding a means of closing open shafts of traumatic history? For Deller's actors it appears this way; the inscription of history is located not only in the act but embodied in the place of the act, a performance locus.

Any consideration of the origin in historiography is a study of creativity, of engrossment of nascent memories, future memories sewn into a narrative ground. Enactments allow a poly-historiographical body to emerge, writing together through being together in a refashioned performance? Are we witnessing a commensalist turn in historiography? This Dionysian act is a breakaway from the Apollonian strand of contemporary artists reworking history such as Goshka Macuga's curating of historical coincidences. Contemporary artists suffering the malady of archive fever perhaps may reevaluate their position as facilitators of a collaborative historiography produced not to contain the past event, inscribing solidity to its remembrance but de-authorising, de-authoring the process to confront and activate new memory-images, momentary fossils.

*'Fossils are created when an object makes contact with the witnessing material of earth.'*⁵

From the open we are pushed and yanked by men's written roads, worked fields and tugged boats. Tugged over aqueducts of watery ductus, intangible beginnings of known history, memory is not a river, it is an engrossing flood, history is a river directed, channeled into a canalian stricture but can history be returned to the flood plains, to the meeting of a hundred memories meandering over and under each other in the act of reacting of scribing. Thus when we speak of the Orgreave enactment, 'based upon a true story,' we ought not be concerned with the honesty of the participants to the original event but rather their empowerment to become historians of the self.

Motive is the architect and the foreman of any historiographical workforce, Birnbaum outlines this drive: *'What is the act of consciousness in question – reminiscence, self-analysis, a process of grieving or a paradoxical celebration of that which has been?'*⁶ Group labour serves to undermine the singularity of the documentary production through distributed embodiment of the document itself.

A strategic, Bill and Teddian bogus performance threads between then and now, otherness of time and otherness caused by individualist perspectives on history, commensal laboured histories eradicate such defamiliarisation and authori(t)zation of one's former soils. Are site-specific practices of historiography drawing History closer in congruence with a natural history, placing human narratives back within a phenomenological landscape of earthly performance strata, retracing traces of faint fossils. The artist as parralactic palaeontologist?

*'Reenactment uses the body as a medium for reproducing the past. Every reenactment is a form of natural history, which is centered upon the comings and goings of human beings.'*⁷

1. Orgreave, Present Day from 'Rockhunter's' flickr photostream

2. Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2005), 33.

3. See exhibitions texts such as; Inke Arns, *History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance* <www.kw-berlin.de/img/program_history_inkearns_en.pdf>, Mark Nash, *Un-making History: Thoughts on the Re-turn to Documentary In Making History: Art and Documentary in Britain from 1929 to Now* (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2006), Robert Blackson, 'Once More . . . With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture', *Art Journal*, Spring (2007), 28 – 40.

4. Laura U Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000)

5. Marks, 84.

6. Birnbaum, 35.

7. Jennifer Allen, ' "Einmal ist Keinmal": Observations on Reenactment' in *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2005), 56.

Allen aligns history with a particularly corporeal agency drawing together temporally disjunct events through bodily, gestural display. Unlike the quill pan or laptop, everyone possesses a body therefore possesses the means of performing a more 'egalitarian' history. This spread of inscription flows beyond the human agent into the recollection-object, the field of drama.

Again. Again but to any gain? In enactment are we released from the history of the individual memory-image to become part of an event; a Dionysian experience-image. We are presented with a confusion of the event and the image – leaky theatre and spectacular society, poly-historiography is a moment of living in the Italian coliseum, an empirical text, and after the performance simply an object-image a new scripture based upon a true story. Based upon a true story. When we read those words, so often thread through the professional voice of a trailer or typed on the face of a modern dvd, what do we wish for? Something more close to observation than performance, something closer to reality than fiction or simply an affirmation that reality is exciting and provides complex unscriptable narratives?





THE ART OF 'CONSERVATIVE DÉTOURNEMENT'

Heys & Hennlich

The revelation that the Operational Theory Research Institute, an Israeli Defence Force 'think tank' directed by Shimon Naveh turned to the philosophy of Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the architectural work of John Forester, Bernard Tschumi and Clifford Geertz, and the 'Anarchitectural'¹ site-specific urban interventions of Gordon Matta-Clark to facilitate the re-spatialization of contemporary military theory and strategy, appears initially shocking.

Upon further inspection, we are able to map a wider system of cultural and ideological assimilation through a range of military organisations that employ theories and works from the traditionally perceived humanitarian disciplines of music, architecture, art and philosophy. Examples include the U.S. military's use of music for 'battlefield preparation' as well as for torture in Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, and Canadian military training centres such as 'Pretendahar' in Toronto preparation of soldiers for combat in the Middle East, which reference 1990's installation art practices. These examples give adage to the notion that this is not military 'business as usual', but rather the martialing of the business of culture.

As a consequence of such forms of cultural assimilation, we propose that the situated territories of the left, traditionally mapped out by cultural producers within the humanities are enduring a 'conservative détournement.' Engaging with Guy Debord's dynamic of appropriating and reusing bourgeois materials in new contexts- turning power systems against themselves; the right are assimilating the tools of the left, resulting in a re-territorialisation of one of Occidental culture's cherished notions of resistance. Subsequently, a gradual disappearance of the traditionally identifiable leftist critical dynamic is discernable, a system of socio-political placement which allied modes of philosophy, art, architecture and music with radical gesture and made identifiable structures of resistance to hegemonic right wing doctrine.

Throughout the history of philosophy, politically oriented resistance theory has been a vital tool of direction and validation to the traditionally perceived leftist artist, writer, architect, musician and politician. With such tools being co-opted by right wing politicians, militaries and law enforcement organisations, it ultimately results in the stark realisation that the traditional leftist position can no longer count on its ideological weapons. By invoking the term 'conservative détournement', we acknowledge the inverted state of socio-political and cultural affairs, and extend the notion to propose that the right has grabbed the rights to culture and the left are now left without arms. Establishing this proposition we subsequently ask how, where and when do we start drafting up a new cultural cartography of resistance?

RUPTURE: FROM PSYCHO-GEOGRAPHY TO BI-POLAR GEOGRAPHY

The geography of the agents of conflict has irrevocably changed, a historical shift beginning with the decline of Communism resulting from the fall of the Soviet Union and the removal of the Berlin Wall stripping the left of its physical weaponry. This forced the left to

retreat into academia to hone its ideas and tactics of resistance to the ever-expanding global systems of capital and military dominance. Right wing thinkers have perhaps arrogantly dubbed this rupture and acquiescent collapse in binary oppositional politics (Capitalism vs. Communism) as 'the end of history', echoing Francis Fukuyama's famous dictate that there was no more history to be written.²

One central shift emerging from this transition is the agenda of a right wing political coalition (made up in part by the U.S., U.K., IDF and Canadian militaries) to co-opt strategies and tactics of what we term 'leftist' resistance and to assimilate them by utilising music, art and philosophy that historically critiqued them. The co-opting of the guerilla's methods of mapping, moving and attacking owes much to a number of theorists and thinkers embraced and celebrated by exponents of left-wing theory. The left is in a bind; their tools of criticism and production have been 'détourned.'

Philosophy, art and music have become pacifiers of resistance; they have re-activated strategies of attack and proliferation upon their own value systems. A pertinent example is the IDF's utilization of guerrilla strategies (the traditional nomadic left wing mode of conflict agency) to circumnavigate the streets and houses of Palestine by literally cutting holes into inhabited abodes. The IDF's rhizomatic strategies³ extruded a set of practices out of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari; overtly referencing Gordon Matta-Clark's cutting of voids into buildings. Matta-Clark's commentary on the decay of industrial urbanization, détourned by the IDF to protect the Israeli soldier, results in increased Palestinian civilian casualties. Other examples of such political assimilation include the U.S. State department's use of Hegel, which can be seen as a refusal of Marxism, and Paul Wolfowitz's studies with Leo Strauss which afforded the Bush administration the conservative philosophical tools of Heidegger and Nietzsche.⁴

Nazi Germany is the last time we witnessed anything akin to such exploitation of the arts supplementing physical force in a right-wing hegemony. The difference with the Third Reich was that art, music, philosophy and architecture perceived as being anti-Nazi such as Dadaist, Cubist, and Expressionist painting and sculpture was tagged as 'degenerate' and was subsequently destroyed. Joseph Goebbels, Albert Speer and Bernhard Rust employed art, cinema, architecture and philosophy that they considered cultural and historical evidence of the Nazi's perceived entitlement to power. Whereas Nazi Germany only used culture that they deemed to be aligned to their own aspirations, the current coalition of right wing adherents has started to use metaphorically 'degenerate' culture against itself, rendering it so starved of political manoeuvre that it devours its own potency. By asserting that culture currently finds itself in this political position, we purport that the roles of philosophy, music, art and architecture are currently ethically ambiguous and further declare that their 'worth' as ideological tools of struggle are toothless, corrupted and defused and when redeployed by conservative systems of power - dangerous.

Writing during the rise of Fascism in Italy, travelling as a journalist and labour organizer from southern Italy to Turin, Antonio Gramsci faced questions of the potency of the intellectual in capitalist culture. He outlined the hegemony of Italian political society as being codified between agents of the state (originating from the south) and a northern bourgeoisie

2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (New York: Free Press, 1992).

3. Eyal Weizman, *Israeli Military Using Post-Structuralism as 'Operational Theory'*, available online at www.frieze.com.

4. Tim Brennan's *Wars of Position* provides a history of the relationship between right-Hegelianism and cold war philosophical engagement.

1. James Attlee, 'Towards Anarchitecture: Gordon Matta-Clark And Le Corbusier', *Tate Papers*, (London: Spring 2007), <<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/07spring/attlee.htm>>, (accessed 14/01/09).

who controlled and defined the conditions of labour.⁵ Gramsci located the power of the intellectual as both avant-garde and populist- ultimately believing that the intellectual's critique can undermine capitalism. Bound in historical materialism, Gramsci demands that the intellectual constructs a 'counter-hegemony' in 'practical life, as [a] constructor organizer, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator.'⁶ This has the impact of countering the ideology of the right, denaturalizing the politics and practices of their appropriations. In the current theoretical bind that the intellectual and cultural producer finds him/herself in, it is necessary to not only map the appropriation of leftist criticisms but to go further by deploying cultural practices that engage with disappearance to reveal modes of political crisis.

DISAPPEARANCE: LOST IN THE POST.

In the Chilean coup d'état of 1973 President Salvador Allende was overthrown by the U.S. backed military pre-empting a new era of martial brutality and co-option, codifying the traditional dualistic division between oppressor and resistor. This new political environment of cultural suppression meant that the cultural producer as a social bearer of resistance was removed from view. As the overt signifiers of struggle morphed, practitioners of resistance became enveloped in the guerrilla tactics of mobility. The example par excellence of this transitionally subversive practice is Eugenio Dittborn's Air Mail Paintings. His works were folded and sent to international galleries, the envelopes displayed as an integral part of the art form.

Dittborn's work represents the artist's disappearance from the externalised geography outside of his homeland, which recharged and reignited the explosion of interest in his packages. The work was forced to vanish as it entered alternative systems of transmission (in a politically analogous manner to the way Picasso's *Guernica* was forced into exile at MoMA) forcing the aesthetic to be consumed in illicit networks. Edward Said identifies the work of the intellectual as existing in similar spaces to those proposed by Dittborn's air mail paintings, arguing that exile is not to be excommunicated, but acknowledged as existing in 'half-involvements and half-detachments.'⁷ Said invokes Kissinger (whose policies displaced Dittborn), noting that as a displaced German-Jewish scholar he assimilated to American political culture, eventually taking an active role in directing it. However Kissinger is not a model of exile for Said. Instead he suggests that exile is outside and unsettled, always restless, defining a new style of criticism.⁸ Theodor Adorno becomes a key example; here the intellectual in exile is discontent, desiring to share his work, pushing against both the home and exiled community.⁹ Said notes that exile is not just bound by nationalism, but rather being outside of dominant systems of power and its discourses is in itself a system of exile.¹⁰ This conception of alienation and intellectualism places exponents of the left in a unique position of being exiled in their own homeland.

Rather than work with metaphor, (as have many artists throughout history under re-

5. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*. (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12.

6. *Ibid.* 10-11.

7. Edward W. Said, 'Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals', in *The Edward W. Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, (New York: Vintage, 2000), 370-71.

8. *Ibid.* 372-373.

9. *Ibid.* 375-76.

10. *Ibid.* 373.

gimes which forbade public acts of resistance to the ruling party), Dittborn translated his message via post, substituting allegorical and intellectual readings for direct and physical deliveries. The work bespeaks exile, veiled inside the envelopes that hold them, juxtaposing a critique of his homeland with the lack of dissent from external sources of influence. Military strategies in 2009 reshuffle cultural producers like Dittborn, from a marginal position of exile into a socio-political core of influence. Through the aesthetics of disappearance, military identity becomes abstracted between the lines of commerce, industry and now culture. The military's models of classification, territory and perception are disappearing into an everyday civilian matrix of subjectivities, surveillances, and rhetoric. Donning cultural camouflage and creating new taxonomies of meaning, the 'military-industrial complex', would be more relevantly renamed the 'military-cultural complex'.

REAPPEARANCE – EXPOSURES OF GUANTÁNAMO BAY

The military has disappeared as being an organized representation of extension and protection of territories through physical aggression and has reappeared as a joint representative of culture as force. A politics of transformation is present in the culture of military accumulation and transformation of theoretical texts, music and installation art aesthetics into repressive state practices. In an intellectual sense and through brute force, the armed forces of Israel, Great Britain, and the United States expose the point that cultural producers and critics the world over have been laying claim to for years, that access and control of culture is empowerment, whether it be in Palestine, Northern Ireland or Iraq.

The second Gulf War turned out to be a tragedy of epic bloody proportions, where the body has been the target and the carrier of eviscerating uncertainties in the shape of the suicide bomber who lays waste to Baurdillard's notion of the video game landscape with digitized bodies standing in for their somatic counterparts. The martial theatre of operations that is Iraq has seen the reappearance of the body in war, centre stage, under international spotlight.

Whilst history proved Baudrillard somatically inaccurate, his writings about simulacra are still pertinent and revealing. The 'détourned' space of the Canadian Military's training centre named 'Pretendahar' (a verbal pun on the simulated construction of the city of Kandahar) being a case in point; with its aesthetics of lo-fi assemblage reminiscent of the ad hoc, thrown together stylistic tendencies of late 90's YBA (Young British Artist) culture, Pretendahar constructs an interior landscape of floating signifiers, eschewing the grounded realities of life in an Afghani city. Reminiscent of works from the 1960's Italian Arte Povera ('Poor Art') Pretendahar reconstructs a Middle Eastern 'Mise en scène' using the excess of everyday materials, but for very different reasons than Arte Povera's pioneer – curator Germano Celant's intended.

Guantánamo Bay, the troubling alter ego of Pretendahar, forms an offsite locale to a simulated centre of disappearance. As divisive as it is complicated, Guantánamo Bay, with its secretive games of exposure caught in photographs and videos represents the copy of the infinitely reproducible body contained in an orange suit, the endless display of tamed 'threat'. As a nexus of political destabilisation relaying the notion of hegemony, Guantánamo makes the threats of a repressive state all the more terrifying because its activities are veiled and exposed at the same time. The military desire, and know that there is, an audience. As voyeurs we think we know exactly what goes on as we watch captives that have been made

to vanish from their indigenous surroundings, re-emerge, forced to enact prescribed roles in plays that simulate disappearance; a gruesome theatre of hate.

Publicly acknowledged that it exists without a humanitarian or legal pretext by international treaty, this detention camp represents the ultimate spatiality of government-sanctioned violence. There is not only the illusionistic disappearance of bodies, and legalities binding international etiquette for dealing with 'threat', there is also the disappearance of known and accepted military modalities of torture. It is here that we witness the adoption and co-option of culture, in the form of music, as a tool for manipulating and damaging psychologies and physiologies. As exposed by the 'Zero db' campaign¹¹ (an artist led coalition against the use of music as a weapon) TV show themes, heavy metal, and disco music are all used repetitively, played over hours or days to 'fracture' a prisoners resolve and/or sanity in an effort to extract information from their broken systems. Often using music that has anti-war sentiments, such as 'Born In The USA' by Bruce Springsteen, Guantánamo Bay confirms the co-option of sonic culture much in the way that Palestine is witness to the co-option of philosophy for IDF strategies and Afghanistan is witness to the co-option of art installation techniques for training soldiers to fight against the Taliban.

Harking back to the Chilean dynamics of hidden jails and death camps where disappearance was all too common, clandestine, and too real; where people today still don't know if their loved ones are alive or dead; the body disappeared from the social fold, often irrelevant of whether the captive considered him/herself as an agent of resistance or not. Representatively Guantánamo announces the reappearance of the body as a target for the political demonstration of discipline, punishment and will in a similar way and with equally nebulous 'evidence' of any 'wrong doing'. The ritual abuse in Guantánamo becomes the martial art of reappearance, as photographs, written testimonies and videos expose the brutal situation of the detainees to the world. We have to look at the re-appearance of the abject and how this is controlled, how it territorializes and externalizes latent fear from inside the USA and to the exterior of its borders to realise that the simulation is the threat.

THE CULTURE OF CAMOUFLAGE- SEEN AND YET NOT SEEN, HEARD AND YET NOT HEARD

We conclude by saying that this is not the first time art; architecture, music, and philosophy have been utilized by the military. Slavoj Zizek notes for instance that architectural practices informed by Surrealism were used by the Franco regime to construct a '*series of secret cells and torture centers built in Barcelona in 1938*'.¹² This early precursor is an important precedent, but it does not signify the systematic implementation of military strategies based on assimilated cultural ideologies and practices that the use of music as torture, installation art practices for training centres and the use of philosophy for martial manoeuvres do. We are currently observing the inversion of enemy territory, as the military travels inside and mines its own culture to negate threat, drawing up a new cartography of culture and in the meantime camouflaging the landscape of resistance.

'As the last two great wars have shown, victory goes to the nation most capable of

mobilizing its industrial might' stated Manuel De Landa.¹³ This notion needs updating to read - victory goes to the nation most capable of mobilizing its culture. It is a terrifying moment of reality in our history that philosophy, architecture, art and music matter politically, and that their exposure to the mainstream is being used for right wing purposes which wantonly suppress and abandon human rights in favour of self-interested economic proliferation and return. With this in mind it is to Gramsci's calls to action that we must turn. In these martial environments of counter-conflict simulation and times of chronological digital synthesis in which the past, present and future modes of resistance are all screened at once, culture becomes camouflaged, conflict is lateralized and the military disappears into the midst of the other.

Paul Virilio intonates the cultural producers power in wartime, but does not go on to explore the idea in *The Vision Machine*; stopping short of giving it the exposure and research it warrants. The statement he makes is relevant to WWII but is an important reference to the trajectory of cultural utility that we have been discussing: '*the Special Branch (Propaganda) would finally twig that artists who had just won the battle for the New Deal in the United States and raised the morale of a whole nation in the grip of economic depression, had the power, with their particular talents, to do likewise in time of war... finding as yet unguessed shortcuts to victory.*'¹⁴

Virilio's suggestion comes at a time of cultural crisis; the conservative détournment of the left has become normalized, seen and yet not seen, heard and yet not heard. The IDF is open about its use of philosophy, documentation of Pretendahar flaunts its own aesthetic tendencies, and we have a continual unveiling of the repressive forces and musical torture tactics practiced in Guantánamo Bay. The power of the cultural producer in times of war must be taken back at this moment of economic and political crisis. There needs to be exposure of the factors that lead to the blurring of identities, functions and allegiances between civilian and military institutions. Resistance must reappear out of the disappearance of its cultural tools. It must engage in those very same practices that the IDF deployed to construct a counter-hegemony capable of renegotiating and transforming cultural and political systems creating a desire for utopia.

11. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/dec/11/gunsroses-elvis-presley-human-rights>

12. Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. 2006), 3.

13. Manuel DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, (New York: Zone, 1992), 34.

14. Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 53.









54 INCHES ABOVE THE FLOOR CLOSER TO MUSIC David Berridge

Arrange the words in space.

*The space is equivalent to time. Real time? Reader time?
Viewer time? Or to the disjunction between them. Or-*

The height of 54 inches off the floor is the place "where knowingness happen[s],"¹ according to the artist Richard Tuttle. It's the intuitively attained height at which he likes to position his sculptures, which may be a piece of rope or a small paper shape. Minimal, but through such positioning a baroque excess suggests itself, both thought and sensation. An act of tuning, with the end result a clear note. I like it but I also see myself being blindfolded and pinning the tail on the donkey.

The space is not equivalent to any time. It's a new system of measurement. Out of time.

But that's not the words. That's the space between words.

What about the words themselves? Maybe its handwritten, still a trace of the gesture. The time of the hand.

More likely a typed text. A commonplace book.

Q: And where do such words-as-movement come from?

A: Tear up the page. Go to the performance.

1. THE PERFORMANCE

Writing in the dark in the theatre. A sensing of page and hand. Of assumptions. Pre-conditions. The relation of writing to mind suddenly of uncertain size and scale. A fear of writing on top of what I have already written,

1. Madeleine Grynsztejn, 'A Universe of Small Truths' in Grynsztejn (ed.), *The Art of Richard Tuttle* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2005), 44.

creating some illegible palimpsest. That would be the most accurate, but it's not = what I think I need.

Don't look down. This text is felt.

Performance Time = Word Time²

This is a version of Gertrude Stein's anxiety over theatre and what she tries to shift it *from-to*:

The thing that is fundamental about plays is that the scene as depicted on the stage is more often than not one might say it is almost always in syncopated time in relation to the emotion of anybody in the audience.

What this says is this.

Your sensation as one in the audience in relation to the play played before you your sensation I say your emotion concerning that play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play.

Anxiety over-compensates. I fill whole notebooks of pages with only one or two words each.

2. THE MUSICAL SCORE

(A) ON THE PAGE

I'm looking at the scores in Alex Waterman's catalogue for his show *Between Thought and Sound: Graphic Notation in Contemporary Music*.³ I respond to the openness of these scores, make decisions about the sounding of typography, punctuation, and space, even if reading silently, *unmusically*, for the page, alone. Then I read Cornelius Cardew's essay on scores, written as one eminent practitioner of experimental score making

2. Q: What are you building? A: A commonplace book.

3. *Between Thought and Sound: Graphic Notation in Contemporary Music* at The Kitchen, New York (Sep 7-Oct 20, 2007).

- see *Treatise* (1963-7) - when he has rejected such approaches in accordance with his Maoist politics:

Composers who adopt such approximate graphic indications of what their music is to sound like have lapsed ideologically into the fallacy that music can consist solely of a series of doodles, textures, outbursts, stops and starts. Never mind how artfully arranged, this amounts to adopting the attitude that your score can be used by anyone, to express any ideas, in any context.

These rough and ready graphic composers abandon all musical discipline... Such activity is a safe refuge for the musically incompetent... To 'compose' such a piece no musical experience or training is necessary. (49-52)⁴

Yes, my writing is fallacy.

(B) *Hearing the Music.*

I'm in the Albert Hall watching the conductors of Stockhausen's *Gruppen*. Three conductors, each with their own array of gestures, their own orchestras. The audience a fourth orchestra, perhaps, creating the sound mix depending on where they stand. I'm wondering about the relations of sound, theatricality and social metaphor, how it easily seems to border on becoming absurd.

Stockhausen is running from this absurdity, carrying an orchestra on his back, and a big placard that says GOD. He found it in the street. I like seeing these three orchestras simultaneously, but what it seems to open up in terms of meaning making I want to diffuse through the audience, too. Maybe if, like Steve Reich, everyone wore trainers and baseball caps.

In the Royal Albert Hall most people want to stand in a small channel between two of the orchestras. A photorealism of sound. I'm next to a man playing timpani drums. Hitting the drums. A plosion of sound. The birth of a word.

Sound = Word = (Sound = Word)

4. Cornelius Cardew, 'Wiggly Lines and Wobbly Music' (1976), reprinted in Alex Waterman (ed.), *AGAPÈ* (New York, Miguel Abreu Gallery, 2007), 44-59.

INTERLUDE: PLEASE PROPOSE YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR RADICAL MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION

ACT1: I TRIED DRAWING WHEN IT WAS LATE AND I WAS TIRED

I have tried writing in ways close to drawing, either visually or through some immediacy of thought-to-hand that equates to how drawing is often understood.

I am looking to replace *drawing* as an all pervasive metaphor with *song*. I am thinking that lines could become staves. I can speak using the same sequence of pitches, but slower, so it becomes more like instrumental music.

ACT2: YES, WE WOULD LIKE TO BE USEFUL.

Yes, there is a difficulty that keeps occurring in this essay due to my relationship to humour. A sense of wit, linked to Oscar Wilde, that is convivial. So you would be invited to the dinner party, make statements, and everyone would love them, even if, directly or not, they were the objects of

Then there's a satirical cartoon, in the newspaper, in the lineage of Hogarth. Then there is my preferred sense of humour, which is a kind of absurdism

In the practice of all these kinds of humour there is a kind of horror, that the point of sharing is not shared, that the simultaneous reality and its links are not made, not believed in, that no one accompanies you into that place of surprise...

ACT3: BUT I COULD TELL YOU THREE STORIES RIGHT NOW

STORY ONE: A theatre company go on tour. They set up on the edge of town and get on with their daily routines of training and devising physical theatre. Soon people come out of the village to watch them. They say: show us what you do. The theatre company say: sure, if you show us what you do...

STORY TWO: Two people folding a sheet. You can't look at each other. You have to look at the sheet.

STORY THREE: I'm not going to tell you what this class is about. I'm going to sit here in silence. I refuse. I am not going to be the one to start....⁵

AN INTERLUDE

THINK/ THINK: A SCORE

THINK

(1) The Space

THINK (2)

A gathering

THINK (3)

Writing-Drawing

THINK (4)

Translation

THINK (5)

Already existing

THINK (6)

Erasing making

THINK (7)

Gestures

THINK (8)

Simultaneity

THINK (9)

Your body = A4 page

THINK (10)

Press PUBLISH NOW

ACT4: BECAUSE FROM STORIES A STORY IT'S LIKE THAT HERE

I stay outside. People are in pairs in the public areas, folding bed sheets. They read together. They sit in pairs and whisper nonsense into each others ears, run around in circles, fluttering the books as if they are birds. They debate humour in styles (a) funny funny (b) funny peculiar. A small number of paperbacks either take flight on their own - without any assistance from their readers - or catch on fire. Their holders fall to the ground, stunned by the powers of their imaginings, new fluidity between word, idea and the actual that they have found for themselves.... all this... all this.. they had quite forgotten what they came in here to say, liking the faces of the people through the window, but no dogs apart from guide dogs....

... I'm thinking what we can develop out of that Richard Tuttle quote, perhaps some idea of song practice. I don't have a ruler so placement, as with Tuttle, will have to be intuitive, at least initially. Think the stick diagrams of Yona Friedman; the diagram-practice (going far beyond the fluxus charts) of George Macuinias.⁶ I'm thinking of these stick figures and the diagrams' schematic and simultaneous rigor not as ideas moving towards something but as that into which something collapses...

3. THE SOUND EFFECTS SCORE

During the rehearsal in the afternoon the sound artist had turned off the building's heating system.⁷ Its noise interrupted the swirling sound pattern of his sequence of city soundscapes. From Paris to London to Berlin one didn't want to plunge into the Arts Centre heating ducts, mistaking them for Berlin Alexanderplatz. By the time of the concert it was freezing and those who had taken off hats, coats, and scarves upon entering the building soon put them all back on again to listen.

5. SOURCE OF STORIES HAVING LITTLE TO DO WITH MUSIC: (1)Memory of Eugenio Barba writing about Odin Teatret theatre company; (2) A workshop exercise by Gary Stephens; (3) A memory of an essay by Carl Rogers in *On Becoming A Person* on his philosophy of teaching.

6. Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Conversation Series 7: Yona Friedman* (Cologne, Walter König, 2007); Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt Macuinias' *Learning Machines: From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus* (Detroit, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, 2003).

7. Because of the focus on listening this artist will remain anonymous.

12.03 pm

I'm still sat in Cafe Oto in Dalston. Someone is playing Thriller on the piano. Slow and meditative. It occurs to me that Michael Jackson is dead.

12.05 pm

Actually its not Thriller, its Beat It. Michael Jackson is still dead.

Serpentine Pavilion, 2007. A Pauline Oliveros concert. I arrive a minute late, and am told I can't go in because "it's a Deep Listening experience." The security guard says the phrase with a shrug. A small group of us have arrived late and no one leaves.

We all know what's going to happen. Ten minutes in, lots of people are walking out. The security guard turns away from us, has a conversation on his walkie talkie, then says "you can go in. It's ruined, apparently. It's no longer a Deep Listening experience."

I send you quotations when you're depressed although god knows if it helps:

... an outsider here would be a person who had no professional commitment to the technical traditions of art music, who chose to experiment with its very nature or assumed functions, and whose position outside these technical traditions allowed for a certain objectivity about the possibilities. The outsider might or might not be technically trained, would presumably not be naive on his or her own terms, and might or might not use folkloric traditions in order to extend the range of possibilities.⁸

4. CONCLUSIONS

(1) I am not sure I am answering.

8. Dick Higgins, *Modernism Since Postmodernism: Essays on Intermedia* (San Diego, San Diego State University Press, 1997), 78.

(2) A variety of ways.

(3) Words as movement itself.

(4) In the passing.

(5) The musical score.

(6) Sound effects.

(7) Implicitly performance anyway.

(8) Creating several.

(9) At least ten.

I'm reading Dan Graham's ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE, a short essay that first appeared in *Extensions* magazine in 1968.⁹ It takes the lyrics of Lennon and McCartney's song and arranges them spatially over the page, creating a textual music that also expands to include other quotes, ideas and contexts, including astrology, breath, and the court poet Armand David.

I use folkloric traditions, have no professional commitment, and am naive on my own terms. There are elements of Graham's essay that, offering taxonomy and classification of the Beatles song, recall Graham's magazine piece *Schema* (1966), reconfigured with the data of each publication in which it appeared. The cultural reach of the Beatles, however, teases Graham's typographic invocation.

A song practice. I imagine Graham singing the song and, through the focus of himself, the moment, the acts of 'writing,' it acquires all those extra verse and line interpellations. An abundance of forms but held within the experience and idea of *song*, creating a permeable structure hopefully able to accommodate future *song-thought*.

9. Dan Graham, "All You Need Is Love" (1968) in *ROCK/ MUSIC WRITINGS* (New York, Primary Information, 2009), 19-25.

and the pigeons are all talking about going to the moon
they look up at it all night they are unable to sleep
but ask them ask them go ask them why the moon
and they said it is home to a remarkable profusion of
traffic signs yes traffic signs that's what pigeons say
that's why they want to go up to the moon that's why
all day they look for it all night they are wide awake
hoping for a rare glimpse of *ENTRY, NO EXIT* or *SLOW*
caught as the moon turns and the sun beam a lens
bringing the signs to the pigeon's eye and making it
fall over and over still rolling even now there it goes
and this happened why why it was three days ago now

.....
INSTIT
UNION
.....

B M Corser

To be the size of an institution and have no fear. For the myriad works and phrases to be regimented in your honour. For the many and varied efforts of human life to flow freely and easily and in this; to truly possess something. To hold something so that it cannot be taken—so that by its very existence, this object is your belonging.

The sunlight will be so bright that even the grey of metamorphous and igneous rock will be bleached a shining white. The draw of the place that will be built up around you (just stay for a few moments and watch construction begin) will be real and so powerful and subtle that mountain ranges will glide like sliding doors across the plains and come gently to rest at your feet. The very heavens will rotate slowly about the crown of your head and their rain will fall in sheets of liquid silver, cascading in slow motion from the slanted rooves of your ideals.





GENUINE GAMES OF MAKE-BELIEVE: THE FUNCTIONS AND ORIGINS OF EMOTION EXPERIENCED TOWARDS FICTION.

Simon Buckley

Why do we feel what we feel towards vampires, monsters and other such creatures of fiction? Is it possible to feel genuine, rational emotion towards something that we know is a fictional creation and in no way existent in actuality? The paradox of fiction consists of three claims that are jointly inconsistent but individually seem plausible. The claims have been formulated in various ways but it is Tamar Szabo and Karson Kovakovich's recent definition that is most useful for present purposes.¹

The Response Condition (1) holds that we do indeed have genuine and rational emotional responses towards the Fiction F. The Belief Condition (2) holds that we believe that F is purely fictional. Finally, the Coordination Condition (3) holds that it is not possible to have a genuine or rational emotion towards a fiction whilst maintaining belief that F to be purely fictional.

I will begin by outlining the make-believe account of fiction before moving onto Antonio Damasio (1997, 1999) and Paul Harris's (2000) work on simulated emotion and embodied simulation. My goal of this section is to show that the phenomenal experiences we go through when engaging with a fiction are not only genuine but an essential feature of human consciousness.

Having offered an account of why the human organism is predisposed to engage with fiction, I appeal to Johnson and Multhaup's (1992) work on the relationships between memory and emotion. The focus of this section is twofold: why we remember what we remember and how we recall and reconstruct memory.

After establishing the human organism's requisite motivational forces and physiological abilities, I now propose how an agent can construct rational and genuine emotion in response to a fictional entity of which they have no prior knowledge or experience.

A BRIEF TERMINOLOGICAL INTERLUDE:

I take emotion to be a bodily response with distinctive physiological, phenomenological and expressive profiles that serve to focus attention in a given direction. Cognitive contribution will vary proportionally depending upon the complexity of the emotion in question (Levinson 2002).² I will use the term 'actual emotion' as to refer to emotion experienced as a result of real world, real time stimulus. I will use the term 'genuine emotion' to refer to any emotion adhering to the definition above. I use the term 'rational' loosely throughout, meaning only 'not irrational'. If someone experiences a rational genuine emotional response, then they are not unjustified in having that experience.

1. See their forthcoming paper 'Genuine, Rational Fictional Emotions'

2. It should be noted that different emotions require different levels of cognitive complexity. Fear of a loud bang is a far more reaction based emotion than something like guilt, or jealousy which requires cognitive judgments to be made. Some of the more complex emotions will only be obtainable with conscious input.

THE MAKE-BELIEVE ACCOUNT:

Since Kendall Walton introduced the make-believe account there have been several versions of the approach, all varying in their level of altercation. For present purposes all that's required is an outline of the basic tenets of the position.

For Walton, a fiction is a 'prop' which an agent uses in a game of make-believe, analogous to a child playing cops and robbers with a twig shaped gun. An agent experiences a fiction through entering into a state of make-believe which is directed at the fiction. Entry into such a state does not require conscious consent.

I will be adopting and modifying the make-believe model over other rival systems of approach for two central reasons: (i) it is a theory that recognises the value in distinguishing between the internal and external aspects of a fiction³ and (ii) the make believe account 'decreases the distance' (Walton 1978 p23) between an agent and a fiction. For my purposes both these factors are vital in understanding how a genuine emotion can be felt towards a fiction.

So what of emotional responses towards fiction? The make-believe approach holds that the agent herself will be in a phenomenally indistinguishable state of quasi-emotion.⁴ Subsequently the theory holds that it is not possible to feel genuine emotion towards fiction; thus rejecting (1). The reasons for this choice of rejection are twofold. Firstly, for an emotional response to be genuine an agent must have belief in the existence of the object. Secondly, genuine emotion feeds directly into behaviour i.e. if an audience's fear of the green slime was real, they would run away or call the police, however nobody runs away and nobody calls the police, therefore the emotions felt cannot be genuine. It is my aim to show that rejecting (1) is not acceptable and that it is in fact (3) which must be dismissed as incorrect.

FICTION AND FUNCTION:

Simulated emotions are phenomenal emotional experiences that are not directed at a real-time, actual stimulus; rather they are felt as a result of thought and memory. An example would be imaginatively engaging with the potential consequences of various courses of action. The results of such simulations are encoded somatically (they result in bodily changes) thereby activating emotional response mechanisms. These somatic markers help guide future behaviour.⁵

Damasio (2007) demonstrates the significance these physiological somatic markers make via a practical reasoning test with patients suffering from ventromedial prefrontal cortex damage. The test exposes the functional role that phenomenally experienced emotion plays in the human organism. Normal patients begin to exhibit skin conductance responses in the test which lead the subject to believe they have 'a hunch', a low level 'sense' or 'feeling'. With further trials this faint emotional hunch develops into a full conscious awareness

3. See Thomasson, Amie L.(1996) for survey of internal and external aspects of fiction. Walton uses the separation between internal and external elements particularly clearly when discussing the theatre goer experiencing simultaneous and apparently contradictory emotions. He describes the viewer as wanting the heroine to suffer a cruel death as this would make the play a good one, whilst simultaneously feeling pity and sorrow for the heroine. See the closing sections of his *Fearing Fictions* (1978)

4. See Walton (1978)

5. See Szabo and Kovakovich (forthcoming) and Damasio (1998)

of the reasons for their decisions. The patients with damage to their prefrontal cortex exhibit no such skin conductance in anticipation of their selections and fail to establish a successful pattern of practical reasoning. This remains the case even when the patients are verbally able to articulate the conceptual failings of their decision making. This is evidence of the physiological preceding and guiding the cognitive stage of emotive response.⁶

Szabo and Kovakovich conclude from such findings that it is clear that simulated emotions are a fundamental feature of our cognitive abilities. Furthermore they point out that given the role simulated emotions seem to be playing in practical reasoning and future planning, it would be in the direct interest of the organism for any simulated emotion to be as closely related to the actual emotion as possible.

Assuming Damasio is correct, simulated emotions produce bodily changes in much the same way as actual emotions i.e. we initially interpret all cognitive and sensory input as indicative of the presence of the ordinary source of phenomena. Szabo and Kovakovich suggest a difference in processing as an answer to why actual emotion leads to action and simulated emotion does not. Once again I agree with this conclusion. It therefore does not seem to hold - like Walton's claim requires - that simulated and actual emotions have different motivational structures, despite their differing outcomes.

Whilst discussing emotion in abstract art Levinson (2006) calls upon the two tandem processes running in the generation of any emotion, the sensory unmediated route and perceptual-imaginative route. It is the latter, cognitively mediated⁷ route which is pertinent for present purposes. The point I wish to make is that all emotional occurrences begin their manifestation in the same way, as a product of these tandem processes. The similarity of actual and simulated emotion is sufficient grounds for considering simulated emotions as genuine and not rejecting (1). To entertain the alternative is to propose the human organism only has genuine emotional experiences in real-time and directed at actual objects.⁸

Simulated emotions are *prima facie* very similar to the emotions we feel when encountering a fiction. Szabo and Kovakovich hold that if it can be established that simulated emotions are genuine and rational, then it can be only be (3) which can be legitimately rejected. I am inclined to agree with their assessment. They discuss simulated emotions ultimately as training tools, providing practice and preparing an organism cognitively and physiologically for their real-time deployment. I see entering into a game of make-believe with a fiction as a directly analogous pursuit.

Something must briefly be said about mirror neurons, embodied simulation and social cognition. Adolphs et al. (2002, 2003) conducted trials on brain damage patients to investigate the relationship between emotion and action. The study showed that patients who had suffered damage to the sensory-motor cortices were significantly worse at recognising human facial emotions. Adolphs concluded that the sensory-motor system appears to be critical for the recognition of emotions by others, as the sensory-motor system appears to support the reconstruction of what it would feel like to be in a particular emotion, by means

6. This process almost instantly becomes a two way feedback loop, both stages determining and being determined by each other, in a dynamic system. See 'non-computational theories of cognition' Van Gelder (2006)

7. It is worth clarifying that cognitively mediated does not mean conscious action, most of this cognition will be below the conscious threshold of the agent.

8. How counter-intuitive this is can be isolated by thinking of a sad memory for long enough, then asking yourself if your grief is genuine. However as Peter Caruthers (2005) so often points out: we must always be thorough in our cross examination when using intuition as a motivational force in belief formation.

of simulating the related body state.

This is further evidence showing that phenomenal emotion is deeply integrated into the biology of the human organism, not in any way epiphenomenal like some make-believe accounts can encourage.⁹ The extent to which this is applicable to emotional experience felt toward fiction will vary heavily upon the medium of the fiction. An obvious example could be seeing an onstage actor have his arm broken resulting in an unconscious auto-trigger action simulation in the perceiver.¹⁰

IMPLICIT MEMORY:

Why do we remember some things and not others? We remember emotional events and their hormonal constructions as they are heightened states of awareness.¹¹ A heightened state of awareness - be it positive or negative - occurs in circumstances that are in some way significant for the agent, thus there is value in retaining memory of such states as recall will allow reflection of the event. This process of encoding and recalling ultimately allows an agent to be better prepared for a similar occurrence in the future.

Explicit memory is the conscious, intentional recollection of a previous episode. Implicit memory is memory without conscious awareness and can be described as 'a change in behaviour that is attributable to some prior episode of experience but cannot be accounted for by explicit memory' (Johnson and Multhaup 1992 p46). Accessibility to both these categories increases through a congruence between an agent's mood state at encoding and retrieval. Research also shows the mood of an agent at the time of encoding or retrieval facilitates the retrieval of affectively congruent material as well.

Human memory is constructed in such a way to allow phenomenally experienced emotion significant influence over what is recorded and recalled and when these respective processes occur. The nature of the roles played by emotion in memory suggests further that simulated emotion is an essential facility within the human organism's cognitive repertoire. The tacit import of fragments from memory will involve the import of their somatic markers, bringing to the agent a rehearsed physiological experience. I will now discuss how this can be constructed around a fictional entity.

CONSTRUCTING AND DIRECTING EMOTION:

I opened this paper with the question of how it might be possible to experience fear towards a fictional character such as a vampire. Vampires are fictional constructs that are palpably not of our world; no vampires exist within our space-time, of this I am relatively sure.

It is impossible to import any first hand experiential memories of actual vampires as they do not exist. What we can do is construct the fictional vampire from the composite parts

9. The make-believe theory seems to presuppose a higher-order approach to consciousness. Damasio's findings particularly are now, more than ever, discrediting higher-order theories in favour of phenomenological and first-order representationalist approaches to understanding human consciousness. For further information see my forthcoming paper 'Embodied Simulation and Consciousness: The Impact of Mirror Neurons on Higher-Order Theories of Consciousness'.

10. I will leave this point here as it seems that further elaboration would require specific consideration of medium. This is not something I can adequately address in this paper.

11. Johnson and Multhaup (1992)

that make up such a character from fragments within our world and that do have emotional schemas attached. Vampires have fang like teeth, a bit like snakes or sharks and subsequently the human organism is innately programmed to be wary of such teeth as they pose a physical threat. Vampires drink human blood; once again this triggers some relatively base responses within an agent which will be mapped onto the fiction. This process will continue and change depending on how the fiction leads the characters construction.

Through this largely tacit import of associations using primarily implicit memory the agent will amalgamate and construct the fictional character of the vampire. The range of the imported emotional schemas will vary substantially depending upon an agent's personal and cultural positioning within the world. Certain imports will be relatively well formed and some will be highly complex assemblies of memory particles.¹² How an agent responds to a stimulus will be a deeply subjective process.¹³

In the case of a vampire, we do in fact have real world experience of such creatures, through our inter-fictional knowledge of genre and convention. It is therefore highly likely that during the process of tacit construction an agent will draw upon their previous knowledge of vampires in horror based fictions. This kind of genre based carry over will also affect the imagery and fictional schemas not specified by the fiction. For example, in the vampire fiction F, it may not state anywhere specifically that the vampire is adverse to garlic, however this would be a plausible import towards the construction of her character.¹⁴ So it seems perfectly possible to experience genuine, rational emotion towards a fictional entity of which one has no direct experience or knowledge.

CONCLUSION:

I have offered an explanation as to why we so readily engage with simulated emotions and how entering such states of make-believe with fiction provides an agent with the opportunity for emotional and physiological rehearsal. The assimilated fragments of recalled emotion - in their wide range of resolution - will provide the material with which to construct and understand the fictional entity F, towards which the agent will subsequently experience genuine, rational emotional response. Collectively considered, it seems the only viable condition to reject is (3).¹⁵

The account I have offered endorses a phenomenological understanding of phenomenal consciousness, embodied and embedded in the biology of the human agent. Phenomenally

12. It should be noted that different emotions require different levels of cognitive complexity. Fear of a loud bang is a far more reaction based emotion than something like guilt, or jealousy which requires cognitive judgments to be made. Some of the more complex emotions will only be obtainable with conscious input.

13. To illustrate my point I will use the example of a coffin. A coffin will bring general associative imports regarding death, funerals and burial to a western audience, but will be quite different for a culture that only cremate their dead and will have subsequently been unlikely to have ever seen a dead relative lying in one. The process of associative and emotional import will range from this kind of culturally shared tradition, right down to deeply subjective individual idiosyncrasies. For example, if an agent, when very young, somehow got trapped in a coffin by an older sibling, causing a powerful emotive link to be built between fear and coffin.

14. Fictions also generate their own internal associative and emotional values: Intra-fictional carry over. To stick with the coffin example, it could be that in the fiction F, the coffin is always preceded by a high pitched violin noise. Thus the occurrence of the violin will generate emotional markers associated with the coffin.

15. There are interesting examples of when (2) has been violated. Think of the child who gets scared of an adult horror film and genuinely believes ghosts to be hiding in her wardrobe. In this instance the child is not yet well practised enough in recognising and distinguishing internal and external realities.

experienced emotion is understood as a function within the human organism and engaging with fiction provides this critical human function with space to refine and explore itself. It is therefore my opinion that the human organism is predisposed to engage in any activity which allows such development. Within games of make-believe we call upon memory to bring genuine, rational emotion towards externally non-existent, never before seen fictional creations. Walton often cites examples involving children playing in games of make-believe - apparently observed from watching his own children play as they grew up - and it is here that his account nicely captures how the fictions that we engage with as adults are mere continuations of the games played in youth, just as important and hopefully just as fun. To quote Semir Zeki (2009) '*art is not a luxury for the brain, it is a necessity*'.

BEGINNING/BECOMING

Fiona Fullam

The word 'beginning' implies that something comes after, a middle or an end perhaps. Locating the birth or beginning of a work/text/idea may not however be as straightforward as it initially appears. What does 'beginning' imply about what went before? Work often springs from other work; texts are written as 'replies' to or a development of another text; ideas form from any number of factors, which eventually coalesce into something coherent. Ideas/concepts circulate, develop, mutate, metamorphose, and originality in the true sense of the word, may not even be possible. Recently in the art world several trends have become established, which appear to support this theory.

Using the past to pierce the present is now becoming a familiar way of making new work, while simultaneously emerging in the curatorial, in the making of large-scale exhibitions. The Sydney Biennale 2008, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, which was titled *Revolutions – Forms That Turn*, included many historical works. These were framed in new contexts with contemporary works and were therefore allowed to 'speak' to each other, arguably creating new meanings and significance. The revolving of these works in the same space, past and present, may serve to emphasise that works are not discrete, original or complete in their own right. They need to be 'read' and can be read at different times by different people in different contexts. It follows that the more contexts one can create, the more readings that are brought into being, the more meaning is generated. The present does not start anew at every instant, rather it is a continuation of the past, the meeting point of past and future. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev stated subsequently that one can 'use the historical to de-historicise all work'.¹

Sarah Pierce explores the notion of looking to the past to form associations in the present in 'A Politics of Interpretation', where she cites Charles Esche, who 'evokes what he identifies as an increasing "permissiveness", even promiscuity, in art's ability to take on activities that fall out of other categories, "a movement that runs counter to the increasing specialisation of society in other fields"'.² She goes on to say that 'Permissiveness is a position. Through permissiveness the subjects of cultural history, philosophy and language emerge as open-ended energies, where established methods of representation collapse in favour of more experimental conditions. Permissiveness includes revisiting the past, but in ways that resist reclaiming historic movements in order to secure "currency" in the present. Instead we can call upon the past as a means of "cutting-through" the present by disrupting recurrent claims on aesthetics and collective representation, and by restaging defining experiments through their defining politics'.³ Artistic re-enactments, which are becoming increasingly prevalent, could reasonably be seen to constitute an example of this idea in practice. Pierce herself recently performed a piece of work, which had the effect of piercing the present with the past in a very clever way. This performance, enacted by herself and Kevin Atherton at

FOUR Gallery in Dublin⁴, incorporated an earlier work by Atherton. The original work was shown at the Serpentine Gallery in 1978 and consisted of two videos of Atherton at either end of the gallery. The two Athertons were having a conversation with each other, asking questions about art, challenging each other's answers and juxtaposing ideas about theatre, performance and video. At FOUR, one of these videos of Atherton was projected onto the wall of the space, while Pierce and Atherton sat in front and to each side. All three (including the 1978 projection of Atherton) were wearing jeans and a black top. The projected Kevin Atherton proceeded to ask questions, which the present day Atherton and Pierce answered, asking questions in return. Many of the issues raised by the '78 Atherton are still relevant today. The work was humorous, the '78 Atherton being quite belligerent at times, and as Atherton and Pierce's shadows fell onto the wall, it was easy to forget that the person in the centre was speaking thirty years ago and in a different country. Somehow the audience accepted that he was talking directly to them. This work, which used the past to 'cut through' the present in a new and original way, was a thought-provoking piece. The work asked questions of itself, but also of the space and time it found itself in, and explored how practices can communicate over a temporal zone. Did the '78 Atherton ever imagine, that he would interview himself thirty years into his future?

At the 53rd Venice Biennale this year, Ming Wong, who represented Singapore, used the history of the Singapore cinema of the 1950s and '60s to explore the formation of identity, and by 'mediating the way past and present histories intersect' created work 'where both archival and re-invented materials, real and fictional processes, contest one another'.⁵ Ming Wong takes three slightly different approaches to three separate films (one of the three pieces draws on a compendium of works), re-enacting lines from these films spoken by actors. The first work shows two identical videos of a meeting between a mother and her daughter. In the original (*Imitation of Life* 1959 by Douglas Sirk) the mother is black, but her daughter was 'white' enough to be accepted as such. In Ming Wong's re-enactment, both mother and daughter are played by several Singapore actors. These actors are all male, dressed as women, and continuously change during the piece. Each character is played therefore by several different actors, raising questions of race, gender and identity, which are as relevant now as they were in 1959. In the second work, there are three screens playing what appear initially to be three identical videos. The actors do not change during this piece, however there are subtle differences between the three films, which become more apparent as you watch. Slightly different outcomes to the various actions gradually cause the three films to become increasingly out of synch with each other. Wong appears to be playing with notions of cause and effect and with temporality: how does each action affect the future; does each present depend on its precise past to exist; are all possible futures possible. The third room has small videos of two actors playing different roles, male and female, and these repeat lines from an old film, each time with different intonation and expression. They also speak each other's lines. Wong is playing with the minutiae of the past, testing outcomes and challenging perceptions of identity. Wong does this, as Sarah Pierce writes above, crucially through the defining politics of the work itself, and in so doing, aligns past and present in a relevant global context.

1. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev speaking at Curatorial Session, organised by MAVIS, which took place at Project Arts Centre in Dublin on 2nd May 2009. See www.projectartscentre.ie See also www.mavis.ie/curatorialsessionreader09.pdf

2. Sarah Pierce, 'A Politics of Interpretation', in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007), 162

3. Sarah Pierce, 'A Politics of Interpretation', in Paul O'Neill (ed.), *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007), 163

4. This piece was performed by Sarah Pierce and Kevin Atherton at Four Gallery in Dublin on 30th January 2009. The original work by Kevin Atherton was shown at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 1978. See www.fourdublin.com

5. Tang Fu Kuen, Catalogue Essay (and curator of the Singapore Pavillion), *Making Worlds - Participating Countries – CollateralEvents* (Venice: Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia, 2009), 144

There is an clear engagement with the past in the above examples, however images, words, text, all have connotations, all have a history which cannot easily be severed, if at all. Therefore a growth or emergence, which may appear to begin in the present, inevitably draws on the past, whether intentionally or not. There are cycles, beginnings and ends of a sort, but none is discrete, none is unrelated to what went before. The emergence of a visual culture, where strands of art theory, critical theory and philosophy, among others, have given rise to a discourse, which allows us to acknowledge and gain insight into how we inhabit culture, enables us to see this more clearly. Art writing or criticism is sometimes condemned for closing down one's reading of a work, for imprinting another's reading of a work upon one's own. There is a friction between the 'intention' of a work or text versus the understanding or 'reading' of it. Does art writing or criticism enlarge or diminish this gap of intent versus understanding? Certainly it may alter what is visible about that of which it speaks, but it draws too upon the past: image, work, text, theory, philosophy, language, and therefore may give rise to new ways of seeing or understanding, and in so doing make new forms of practice possible. The past consequently makes possible a present or future. Not a beginning then, rather a becoming.

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