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Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, Andreas

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Spatial Justice in a World of Violence

Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos*

Abstract:

Through an analysis of the photography series *Life Day – Fortunes of War* by internationally renowned artist Eric Lesdema, I engage in the generation of three spaces of legality. The first is the continuum of complicity with the ubiquity of violence that exists between all bodies, human and nonhuman. The second is the space created by the act of looking away from violence, a space of potential further complicity with violence, or indeed, as I argue here, of ethical responsibility. The last is a further enclosure within the continuum, which can take either the form of an atmospheric enclosure where violence becomes invisible in its legitimization; or the form of withdrawal from the above atmosphere, offering thus the possibility of the emergence of spatial justice. These three spaces are interfolded and are not characterised by prior moral positioning (they are not good or bad per se) but are characterised ethically by the way they are being animated by other spaces and bodies.

1. We Are All Complicit

(fig. 1 [monkey] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series *Life Day - Fortunes of War*')

Where is the conflict? This is the question Eric Lesdema asks with his photographic series *Life Day - Fortunes of War*.¹ The question is asked obliquely yet relentlessly, haunting the bodies, and the spaces between those bodies. Every single image booms with the question, planting in the viewer the compulsive urge to find the conflict, folded somewhere between the material of the image and the bodies represented in it. We are all captured in this search, in our turn performing what we unconsciously do anyway: we populate space with conflict and its violence, and we position ourselves in relation to it, whether this might be in the deep end or at a distance, taking sides or blocking the conflict from our view. These images render one complicit with the conflict they capture. They set up their temporal and spatial parameters in such a way that they annul any easy hope of escaping violence. They render conflict the main ontological condition of our time, and us complicit with its emergence. This is the reason for which Lesdema's work has stirred so much interest in terms of thinking, observation and analysis.²

Here, I would like to take advantage of my experience of working with Lesdema and employ his *Life Day - Fortunes of War* series, not as illustrative tools but as main focal points, around which to construct and present my arguments concerning issues of spatiotemporal continuum, complicity and responsibility, engineered atmospherics and spatial justice. I

* Professor of Law & Theory and Director of The Westminster Law & Theory Lab at the University of Westminster. The author would like to express his gratitude to Eric Lesdema for his generous permission to use his work for this text, as well as the editors of this volume for their patience.

¹ The series was first presented in 1993 and since then, it has been shown across the world. It has been awarded the UN Nikon International Photography Grand Prix in 1997.

² A volume on this particular work with various contributions, including myself, is forthcoming with Intellect Books, 2017. See also Hall and Sealy (2001) and www.practicevonstroheim.org for Lesdema's work.

would like to focus specifically on the spatiality of the series, and especially the way it captures the distribution of bodies in space. Spatiality is of course important in photography in general,³ but here, at least in my reading, it emerges as the main protagonist claiming the first locus of violence. It would seem that space itself distributes the bodies (human and nonhuman, material and immaterial) in such a way that they turn against each other, or inhabit spaces of earlier or future violence, haunting them in advance of the advent of violence. Space is saturated with a casual, quotidian and for this reason deeply entrenched and invisibilised violence. This, aided by some of the other characteristics of the photographs I will be expanding on below, generates an atmosphere so close and all-comprising, that even the illusion of escape is ingested. This is not to say, however, that Lesdema's spaces are without hope. It is just that whatever hope there is, it does not come from the usual avenues. This is the discussion I reserve for the final section, where spatial justice emerges.

2. Looking Away

(fig 2 [Shopping Trolley] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War')

Despite the title of the series, there is nothing gory, battlefield-like or even palpably aggressive in these photographs. There is, however, a feeling that somewhere next to what we are looking at, something is happening. Perhaps the main feature of the series is that the camera is looking away from any explicit moment of violence. But looking away is usually associated with indifference or fear, and often displacement of responsibility. It can be a way of putting some distance between the beholder and the thing that is proving too difficult to behold. It is often an attempt at interrupting the continuity between what we see and what we feel, inserting a chunk of denial often garnished with well-rehearsed arguments. Looking away is politically suspicious.

Eric Lesdema makes us rethink the act of looking away. He positions it centre-stage in what is otherwise the steep political and ethical curve of his work. The gesture remains that of turning one's vision away from the spectacle. But here it results in a lateral looking that plunges the viewer in a *continuum* between herself and whatever is-not-to-be-seen. Nothing is left out of this continuum. Above all, this is a continuum brimming with responsibility. Looking away in this case is neither indifferent nor complicit; rather it is a way of confirming the need for ethical positions with regards both to what we see and, significantly, to what we do not.

The whole series is without doubt about conflict, depicting the atrocities of violence (in every conceivable form, such as military, capitalist, consumerist, gendered, racialised, and so on) in a deeply affective way. The photographs, however, are characterised by two traits that eschew the relatively narrow confines of the above category (See Fassel 2014). First, as already mentioned, they never focus on the conflict itself. Second, they feel quick, fuzzy, snappy,

³ See for example the editorial 'On Spatiality' and whole issue 5:1, 2012 of *Photographies*.

unstudied, so much so that they presage the era of the quick, contingent spatiality of iPhoneography (this is a 1993 series). These two characteristics construct a new and very difficult language of violence which, additionally, is intensely spatialised in a way unlike the traditional spatiality of war or conflict photography. The photographs tell us this: that violence is *everywhere*, and that even a cursory, haphazard, indeed *peripheral* look reveals this. Lesdema unveils the violence of space at its most ironic: space, he tells us, is inherently violent but its violence is often dissimulated behind sunny posters, colourful packaging, representations rather than substances. Yet, there is something inalienable in our connection to space: we are all bodies vying for the same space, excluding other bodies along the way. We generate space, we are space, and we are constantly on the move, generating more space, but also more conflict with other bodies. The movement captured in the frames is always one of displacement. The camera moves along: it captures the movement of the bodies but also points away from that violence of displacement, towards the new spaces of violence that emerge with every such move.

The photographs stop and look at those peripheral spaces, and challenge us in doing the same. But we are not used to this. We never stop at these peripheries.⁴ We are attracted to the centrality of violence because only in this way can we bracket it and isolate it. Centring in on the violence is our way to treat it as an exception, specific instance, specific geography, at a safe distance from us. We are, however, not allowed to do this here. The Elsewhere is central in the series, while the centre remains decidedly off-focus. Not unlike the Renaissance painting thematic technique of mixing the sublime with the quotidian, where the main story of a crucifixion, a biblical murder or a mythological rape would play second fiddle to the labours of a farmer clearing his stable, Lesdema's imagery veils the sublime spectacle of violence behind the quotidian detail of the seemingly insignificant. But, just like a Renaissance painting, *Life Day - Fortunes of War* opens up the possibility of a ubiquity that transcends habitual spatial boundaries. It shows how all bodies, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, are saturated in and complicit with violence – the violence of renaissance crucifixion becomes that of war permeating all movement and rest, all actuality and virtuality. The unsuspected labours or pilgrims roaming around are not only connected to the violence of the centre but positively instigating it, making violence possible by being present in its periphery. Nicolette Barsdorff-Liebchen (2017) talks about how the oblique is the deterritorialised elsewhere, while the main event of the territory (the "Event") remains "hidden as it is in plain sight". Deleuzoguattarian deterritorialisation is a way of resisting the aggressive seduction of capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari 1988) by breaking down the spatially and temporally fixed corridors of consumerist obsession, and imagining new lines of flight. And while there are lines of flight in Lesdema's work, they are all folded in the quiet persistence of despair that comes with the ubiquity of violence.

For Jan Baetens (2017) the pictures "are not violent because of what they show, but because of what they tell or, more exactly, because of the way they tell us what we should think of what they show." Indeed, their message is delivered with the lateral force of the affect. They often make little sense, they are decontextualised, they feel incomplete, lying unobserved next to the vanishing point of the larger but never to be seen picture, "on the margins of

⁴ Kafka famously said "We photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds." Cited in Barthes (2000, 53).

towns, cities, villages, in back streets, in community halls, in temporary fairs” as Jane Tormey (2017) writes. Yet, they hit the viewer from within, with the uncontrollable force of an affective deluge, where emotions, symbols and senses coningle to engineer an atmosphere of intense discomfort yet seduction (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015). This is the glasshouse of global consumerism. As Gerald Moore (2017) puts it, “this collection is remarkable in its capture of the persistence of advertisements, their lingering trace amidst apocalypse disturbing and reassuring in equal measure.”

How to choose where to *point* when deterritorialising? The main event, the Grand Reterritorialiser, is convenient in its centrality, soft in its seduction, steadfast in its persuasion. The main event is always obvious. But where is the Elsewhere? Everything that surrounds the main event is potentially elsewhere. All bodies lead to violence. Which one to choose and point at? This is perhaps one of the strongest qualities of the images, as I have already intimated: they appear accidental and of a temporality that merely floats above the event rather than contributing to it. They often include in the frame the movement that the photographer performed in his turning away from the main event. The images pulsate with a movement *away-from* rather than *towards*. This has a terrifying outcome: wherever you point, accidentally, in panic or aversion to the main event of war, everything is saturated with violence. Obliqueness means: the Elsewhere is already here.

Oblique is to space, what anterior is to time. And time is not left out of complicity either. Lesdema has written extensively about his methodology, which he calls the *Ant-Optic* (Lesdema 2015). *Ant-Optic* anticipates the future of conflict by rooting it into the banal everyday, itself always in the forgettable past or the unobservable present. *Ant-Optic* is anterior to the conflict. It is also oblique to it. It looks to the future askance, leaving it outside the frame. The images wallow in distraction, obsession, lethargy – all conditions of forgetting that the future is already here. Anteriority is always obliqueness: there is no other way of looking at the future and not being subsumed to it. For this very reason of anteriority, the future is captured. These photographic images *anticipate*. We do not know what, but it feels inescapable. We do not know when, but it has already begun – or rather, it has always been here. Our complicity with the conflict ensures it. We anticipate future sadness, solitary death, ecological disaster, resource depletion; we anticipate violence, war, conflict; we have always been complicit with the waves of refugees, the unequal power distribution, the unjust emplacement of human and non-human bodies. Future itself is made complicit to the conflict.

There are various modes of future-capturing for photography. One of the most irreverent ones is to challenge the traditional belief, as Jan Baetens (2017) puts it, that photographs are traces of what has already been. Here instead we have the traces of what is to come, a future anterior that never exhausts itself in production but hovers, perennially peripheral, above the present. These traces open up fractally to capture the multiplicity of the future, leaving no space devoid of conflict. The anticipatory gaze unearths the archaeology of the causes of violence in their miniscule details, such as consumerist desire, faint traces of nationalism, landscapes marred by militarised semi-presences, insignia of categorisations and exclusions; its post-facto gaze looks at the ruins of plastic enclosures, melancholy disorder and fake sunbeams that replace the real thing, like some Benjaminian angel of history turning back upon himself. We have the before and the after but never the thing itself. Jane Tormey (2017) compares Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* with *Life Day - Fortunes of War*, resemiologising

the photographic production process. Quoting from Benjamin, Tormey (2017) writes: “in an assemblage of small constituent parts, each ‘individual moment’ has the potential to gather ‘temporal momentum’ in its confrontation with other concepts. In the course of that process a conception of history is *constructed* – it isn’t fixed or conclusive.” Each piece of matter opens fractally, a fan-like gaping awning, funnelling a history yet to happen, reinstating a history that has never stopped happening. The temporal momentum is paralysing in its banality, irresistible in its familiarity, and atrocious in its relentlessly repeated resolution.

3. The Continuum

(fig 3 [Beach] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War')

The immediate effect of this saturation is an all-consuming spatiotemporality: not only normal everyday spaces (in their full banality) are now seen in a light that allows the violence to bubble up; not only are new spaces generated that go beyond the frame of the photograph, anticipating the violence; but, most significantly, these spaces are all joined up: the most compelling space created by the act of looking away is indeed the continuum. This continuum extends between the viewer and the thing not-viewed, the seen and the unseen, as well as the original and the end viewer. Imagine a flat space where violence is both folded in and spread out, clamping up in densities that hide or opening up in piazzas that reveal the mechanics of violence. Imagine trying to look away from the moment of violence, and discovering that there is nowhere to look which would not be replete with the visceral coagulations of this violence.

On the continuum, the eye travels fast and far, unable to arrive at any imaginary outside that would entertain the idea of non-violence. The continuum is the flat ontology of the indistinguishability between the human and the nonhuman, the animate and the inanimate, the material and the abstract (Bennett 2010): all contained here, whether this is Spinoza’s Nature (Spinoza 2000), Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), or the flat ontology of new materialism (Bryant 2011). Looking away initiates this continuum and paradoxically, leaves nothing out. Yet, its all-inclusive brutality is countered by its ethical positioning: I want to suggest a continuum built on the urge for seeing and respecting difference; on the necessity to show and view and feel without the risk of being co-opted; and even on a sort of manic courage that is often the result of a revolutionary force.

This is why this continuum is not some cosy flatness of togetherness or of democratic processes and other antidotes. The continuum established here is of a brutal hyperconnectivity, full of ruptures, of high velocity and also high inequality. The stronger, more powerful bodies pull this continuum down, a body weight crunching the plane, making it fold and unfold in undulating configurations determined by the bodies themselves. We are in the presence of corporations, the 1%, the holders of legitimated violence such as the state, the police, the army, the jovial nationalism, the suburban whiteness: all strong bodies that push the one end of the continuum down in an infernal seesaw that makes the lighter bodies

the obvious externalities of the move. This might be a flat continuum, but it is also tilted, unequal, biased.

This tilted continuum is also relentless. Not just because it precludes any space of rest, having us sliding constantly on the unequal distribution of power and desire; but also, and perhaps more cruelly, because it plays with our illusions. Where is the violence in a supermarket shelf, an amusement parlour, or innocuous military paraphernalia? There is no violence here, just some innocent horseplay and perhaps some sort of desire to do this, buy that, try the other. The illusion comes crashing down however, as soon as one sees that one does not see: outside the frame but seeping in through every pore of the animate and inanimate bodies captured by the lens, violence is raging, conflict is the order of the day, ruptures of any illusion one might have had indelibly cracking the surface. The wonder of the continuum is that what-is-not-to-be-seen is part of the affective constitution of what is seen. The illusion is the possibility of looking away and avoiding what-is-not-to-be-seen. The end of the illusion is the realisation that, wherever one turns, there is a continuum of violence; and that we, the viewers, the readers, the frames, the bodies in the frame, the bodies outside the frame, the objects and surfaces passing through the frame, are all complicit with the emergence of violence. There is no outside to the continuum.

4. Atmospheric Capturing

(fig 4 [sun] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War')

There is a sense of plastic in the air, a taste of metal on the tongue, the smell of something burnt a bit further down, a harsh and slimy tactility on the surfaces. The series *Life Day - Fortunes of War* is permeated by a specific atmosphere. By 'atmosphere' here I do not only mean the usual vernacular understanding of the term. That too, since atmosphere has to do with a phenomenological apperception of surrounding conditions – what Gernot Böhme (1995, 34, own translation) calls “the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived.” We are used to thinking of atmospheres as architectural or design constructions, often in confined interiors, that communicate specific affects, whether pleasing or displeasing. Or we think of atmosphere in its grand geological emanation as the protective mantle around the earth. Lesdema's series, however, questions these understandings and offers in their stead an engineered, air-conditioned atmosphere that claims an ontological status.

The atmosphere captured by the photographer and in which I am interested here is one of affective circulation between bodies, human and nonhuman. But not the free-flowing openness of affect. Rather, the atmosphere I would like to focus on is the engineered one. On a first level, the photographer is not a passive receiver of this atmosphere. Rather, he *engineers* the atmosphere through the photographs in order to create a bubble of violent continuum, in which even moments of seeming harmless carelessness and everyday happiness are conditioned by the atmospheric affects. Everything in the engineered atmosphere of Lesdema is tainted by an excess of violence.

This atmosphere defies traditional phenomenological approaches because it renders the viewer obsolete. No longer at a distance, or even immersed in it, the viewer *is* it. The ontological atmosphere bubbles up on the continuum between seer and seen, as well as seen and not-to-be-seen. A veritable offspring of the indistinguishability between the various bodies, an atmosphere goes on regardless of who casts their eyes on it. It defies phenomenology because it *is* fully present, regardless of how it is perceived. Its presence unfolds in the haphazard, casual, unobservable, irrelevant, seemingly trivial nature of the photographs: the captured event would be meaningless even if you were there to watch it. It only works because it is placed *within* an atmosphere of pure ontology, in its turn affected by the fractal shards of ontological continuum.

The photographs serve a function of capturing affective circulation, in the sense of trying to freeze it as an epistemological snapshot. Yet here we are characterised by the sheer impossibility of even moderate affective containment. Affects always exceed the bodies of their emergence (Deleuze and Guattari 1988), filling up those interspherical spaces where nothing remains, except for affective radiation emanating from the floating bodies. An ontological atmosphere is the excess of affect that keeps bodies together, through and against each other. Atmosphere slides amongst the various bodies that circulate in it and freezes them like a sticky, gooey substance – the affective excess at work. There is no atmosphere without bodies, and there are no bodies deprived of affects.

Still, excess does not have to be fiery or indeed excessive in its expression. There are no explosions in these photographs. The crowds are subdued. The laughs are soft. The shops are quiet. If the main event is bombastic in its destruction, here we are in a space of minor politics of dissidence – a politics of quiet persistence and muffled despair. This is not the politics of revolutionary bravado and fanfare but of *stasis*, revolt and pause at the same time, small waves coming from the margins, glimmers of hope that they might flow into each other and cause a bigger wave. Even so, the images never show the horizon as the better world elsewhere. Any hope is contained within: “there is another world, but it is in this one.” (Attributed to Paul Eluard, see Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013) Reality does not change, but the frame does. Several frames are characterised by an artifice, luminous and moribund like the sun, packaged brightly, painted badly, pasted unconvincingly. It is not the sun. It is a representation. But it is the only gift that the photographer can offer. Let us sing with Zarathustra then: “There is no outside! But we forget this... How lovely it is that we forget!” (Nietzsche 2005, 175)

The series is a manifesto against another quiet force: that of capitalism, with its slowly percolating effect of mutilated desire. With this we reach the deeper level of engineered atmosphere, which the photographer can only fleetingly capture with the photographs and the way in which, in his turn, he engineers their atmosphere. One of the most prominent tools of capitalist atmospheric engineering is advertising. Just as various brand products are placed “accidentally” in films and television, capturing the viewer in their peripheral radiance, in the same way advertising becomes here the stronghold of the location of violence. Perversely, advertising makes us feel comfortable. In a confusing world, where ungraspable narratives are replete with discomfort, a can of Coke operates like the cubists’ inclusion of a naturalistic nail in an otherwise cubist painting: something to hook on. Its effect is so absolute as it is quietly subdermal. Gerald Moore (2017) writes on this: “when we are programmed to fall in

love on Impulse and collapse in ecstasy before a vision of Diet Coke, is it surprising that the demands made on desire—and our failure to meet them—leave us cognitively off kilter, affectively overwhelmed?”

Other spaces bloom, inhabited by other bodies, all seemingly innocent, quotidian skins that wear their racism lightly, their anti-foreigner stance humorously, their pro-intervention ideas liberally. None of them is apparently connected to the violent event, yet they are all steeped in the folds of the atmosphere, contributing to its targeted engineering, serving the conative perpetuation of the atmosphere. There are countless bodies here, both human and non-human, trapped in their own desire (for more atmosphere) and illusionary satisfaction (by the atmospheric offerings). Not easily dismissible as frivolous or inanely enslaved to desires, these bodies are real humans exhibiting their vulnerability and real objects donning their fragility, looking to sate their desire to carry on being in misjudged ways: in supermarkets, in narcosexual stupor, in isolating collectivities – and always in quiet despair.

Once again, there is a looking-away at work. The atmosphere circles the event of violence, both temporally and spatially, without ever touching upon it. Temporally, as I have shown above, it anticipates the advent and at the same time mourns the aftermath of violence, while eschewing the actual event. Spatially, the violent event is brought to the fore by the continuum. This is significant for the following reason: in the core of the atmosphere there is a withdrawal. Violence has withdrawn, sucked in by its own gravitational pull, yet juddering the whole continuum up like a cosmic dervish skirt fissured around a whirling body of ecstatic implosion. Violence is connected, web-like, radiating an excess of affect on all the bodies that populate the continuum, while itself progressively withdrawing. In the core of the ontological atmosphere of violence, there is a withdrawal that informs everything around it.⁵

The feat of the series *Life Day - Fortunes of War* is that it manages to focus on this very movement of withdrawal, spatially and temporally mapping the departing scent of violence without ever focusing on it. Rather, it traces violence as it appears in the bodies of its withdrawal, namely the bodies that are left behind or hanging around at the scene of the future crime in anticipation. It is rare to find such a consistent depiction of withdrawal in its full ontology of a violence that never goes away, however much it withdraws. Withdrawal is not disappearance, but all-emanating, all-thematizing ontological presence. The melancholy of this mapping is evident: the continuum is soaked in a violence that can never be dealt with directly because it is always already elsewhere.

We are complicit with this atmosphere, not because we look at its depiction through the photographs, but because the photographs ontologically include us in the atmosphere, before we even get the opportunity for phenomenological immersion. We are already in there, one of these bodies that walk or stand or play or lie down, interacting with the objects seemingly randomly spread around. We identify with them, egging them to carry on what they are doing, hoping that something will be revealed. This is perhaps our greatest complicity: that we try to give meaning to the meaninglessness of violence. But isn't this to be expected? We are enveloped in a vast glasshouse of excess, atmospherically conditioned to live side by side with violence and not even bat an eyelid. Lesdema's atmospherics are

⁵ On withdrawal, see Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2016).

irresistible because they do not allow for a space of resistance. They take away from us the past and the future, the away and the elsewhere, and return it to us bathed in casual violence, with ourselves in its centre.

5. Spatial Justice: Closed for Judging

(fig 5 [closed for judging] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War')

The continuum of violence is inescapable. Apart from the complicity with anonymous material (Negarestani 2008), so guilt-ridden and so absolute as to become the unobserved day in the life of anyone; apart from the inescapability of violence and conflict, mushrooming everywhere like damp covering every surface of every body that has been captured in the picture; apart even from the inescapability of atmospherics, so refreshingly asphyxiating, so castrating yet so desirable: apart from all these, there is the grand inescapability of the world as captured by Lesdema – a world with no other world, no better world outside, no easy illusion, not even a promise of change. Space contorts bodies in forced but compulsive postures, late mannerists of late capitalism, interacting without connecting with other bodies and objects, devoid of community. Likewise, bodies force space in niches of violence, making it co-extensive with their struggle to maintain the atmosphere of compulsion. The bodies draw violence from the space around them: the space is not only a receptacle for but also a storage of violence. Piled up, folded in, spread through, violence has a deleterious effect on space, and the space of the bodies that move in it. Violence is inscribed on bodies and spaces like dams on the skin of the earth. The history of violence is spatial, marked on the anthropocenic layers of our behaviour, anticipating our actions and demise.

The atmosphere is engineered to feel that everything that exists or could exist is contained irredeemably in here, inescapably violent, relentlessly continuous. The whole continuum is enclosed within this atmosphere. Yet, there might be a way of counteracting, resisting, going against, breaking the atmosphere and withdrawing from it. The way out comes from within: every continuum is ruptured. Since the continuum has no outside (“there is no edge! We can’t jump out of the universe” (Morton 2013, 17)), ruptures are ontologically included in the continuum in the form of folds (that is, connections), invisibilisations, withdrawals, atmospheric enclosures that rupture the continuum. Ruptures contribute to the continuity of the continuum by allowing it to gain momentum and carry on spreading spatially and temporally. Their necessity is as overwhelming as their constitutive presence: the continuum is too much. No outside means a vast inside that cannot be understood, handled, manipulated. This inside is untenable for humans and nonhumans alike. The continuum must be ruptured in order to make it liveable, bearable. And so we do: we split it into rooms, property, territories, packs, relations, time. We split it into human and nonhuman, races and genders, spaces of withdrawal and those of visibilisation. These are Spinozan fictions, extensions of imagination that are necessary for understanding (Spinoza 2009). We dissimulate the continuum. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd (1999, 34) refer to it as “the capacity to feign.” So we construct material and immaterial boundaries that separate bodies from each other, we elevate skin into a severing screen, we exclude future generations from our present

actions, we put distance between us and the effects of intrahuman, planetary, affective violence, we cover it up with our hind legs, hastily, patchily, unconvincingly. This is often adequate. We take recourse to what Teresa Brennan (2004) calls the foundational fantasy of the difference between the self and the environment, or what Timothy Morton (2013) calls the rift between ontology and epistemology. In this way we carry on with the world, “forever taking leave.” (Rilke 1995, 381) This means only one thing: that there is no difference between illusion and necessity. All ruptures are necessary, all ruptures are illusionary. Neither inherently good, nor bad, ruptures are necessary illusions. We need to pause and rest. It is too fast and fiery out there, in the thick traffic of the continuum. Ruptures are boundaries, borders, property walls, locks and fences. But they are also blankets, gatherings, privacy, oblivion, imagination.

Lesdema’s continuum, so brimful with violence, is in its turn ruptured by an endless series of further enclosures, all fractally reproducing the inescapability of the larger atmosphere. In the photograph introducing this section, the camera points to a white barrier stick. The stick is reminiscent of a solitary cemetery cross because of the sign that has been stuck across it. The sign reads “Closed for Judging”. We are left outside looking in, separated by the prohibitive sign and barrier. On the other side, a handful of people are stooping over some ballot papers or such, we assume. We are on the other side of judging and its atmospherics of enclosure and control. Withdrawing from the atmosphere is a movement that allows a momentary rupture: during the length of a retained, withdrawn breath, the importance of air becomes asphyxiating. While difficult to withdraw from earth’s atmosphere,⁶ it is only marginally less difficult to withdraw from an engineered atmosphere. We are all part of its emergence. We perpetuate it with our positioning, political choices, legal embodiments, body functions. Bodies *desire* atmosphere. Withdrawing from an atmosphere is a withdrawal from the desire of the body itself. Removing the body from the atmosphere is not enough. Atmospheres are preconscious, affective events that cannot be fought headlong because there is nowhere from where to fight them. “We are always inside an object.” (Morton 2013, 17) One needs to remove one’s body from the body of its desire. A political withdrawal is always self-withdrawal from the regimes of violent judging.

In this space where we stand, we are still neither outside, nor self-withdrawn. But at least we have withdrawn from that space of judgement where violence takes place in the form of binaries, exclusions, rejections, theological extractions and demonic excursions. Deleuze (1997) talks about the difference between judgment on the one hand, theologically formed, raining upon bodies with the weight of eternal debt for existence; and a justice negotiated between the bodies themselves, without recourse to higher levels, but rather steeped in the continuum. Deleuze (1997, 127-8) writes: “there exists a justice that is opposed to all judgment, according to which bodies are marked by each other, and the debt is inscribed directly on the body following the finite blocks that circulate in a territory.” We are still complicit with it (there is no space free from violence, and the violence of judgment more specifically) but we are at least hiding behind the impossibility of reaching across by claiming the force of the movement of withdrawal: how to move beyond death, marked by the solitary white cross “closed for judging”? We are fortunate to be allowed to linger here. In this brief,

⁶ Although see Negarestani (2008) on how we are moving underneath the surface of the earth in a cthuloid movement of the war against the sun; and Colebrook (2014), on the death of the posthuman as the ultimate withdrawal from the atmosphere.

almost benevolent rupture, Lesdema has placed himself (and us with him, sharing his gaze) at a distance from the atmospherics of violence. He has managed to capture this distance, however short-lived, minor or desperate. This is the space of spatial justice. *Spatial justice emerges from a movement of withdrawal from the atmosphere*. We are moving towards a new space, on the other side of judging: no longer a space of theologically conditioned atmosphere that comes imposed from above in theological awe and magnificence, backs turned to us and intent on regulating the infinite process of judging; but a space of a humble, everyday, quiet justice that circulates amongst bodies unobservable. We allow ourselves to claim the movement of withdrawal and indeed of looking-away as our just emplacement.

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Fig. 1 [monkey] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series *Life Day - Fortunes of War*'

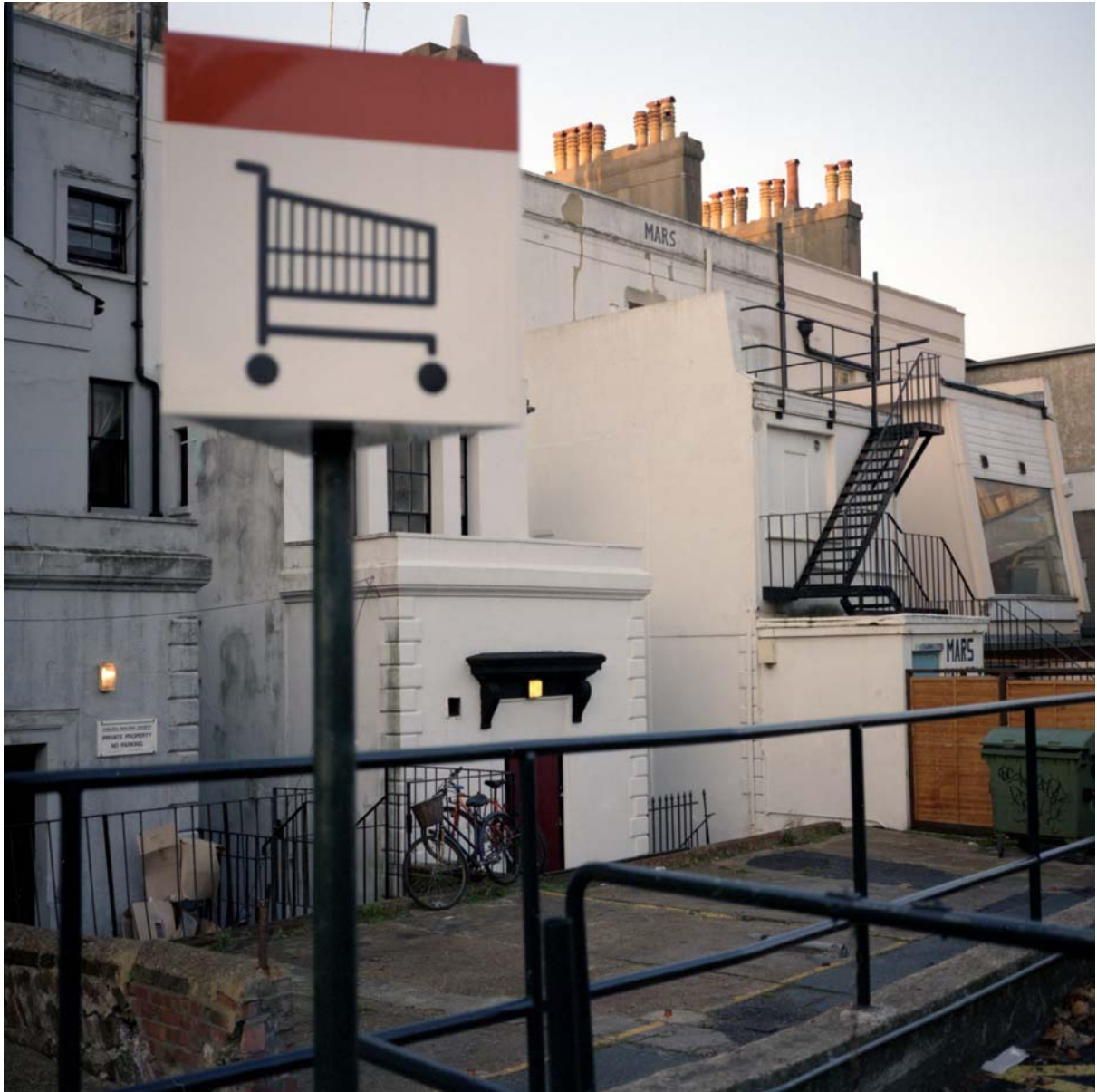


Fig 2 [Shopping Trolley] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War'



Fig 3 [Beach] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War'



Fig 4 [sun] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War'



Fig 5 [closed for judging] Eric Lesdema, 'Untitled, c-type from the series Life Day - Fortunes of War'