UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS

From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks

Sandra Gonçalves Camacho

Orientadores: Prof.ª Doutora Fernanda Cândida da Mota Alves
Prof. Doutor Jan Baetens

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor no ramo de Estudos de Literatura e Cultura, na especialidade de Estudos Comparatistas

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Trabalho financiado por fundos nacionais através da Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, no âmbito de uma Bolsa Individual de Doutoramento (PD/BD/113723/2015)

2021

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Abstract

From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks, seeks to explore a question first triggered by the viewing of Daniel Blaufuks's *Constellation* series in his exhibition-project, *All the Memory of the World, part one* (2014): might digital databases and image retrieval systems be viewed as developments of archival processes and thinking? Has the touted rupture between analogue and digital occurred, or does archival art live in them both?

With a career that spans several decades, Blaufuks has been deeply engaged with questions surrounding the Holocaust, exile, memory and postmemory. Photography, film and archival material have been the tools chosen for his excavations; nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook the influence of literature in the artist's work. Having begun with the appropriation of physical archival material, such as photographic albums, polaroids or slides, Blaufuks has also employed digital images and image-retrieval systems such as Google Image.

In the view to proceed with an analysis on the crucial argument of this thesis, I have divided it into to three sections. The first, *Daniel Blaufuks: The 'Material' Archive,* as the name indicates, focuses on considerations on the so-called material archive, meaning the analogue archive. *Daniel Blaufuks: Writing with Images,* the second section, is devoted to two thematic components of the artist's oeuvre: memory and literature. Here I equally offer a comparative analysis between Blaufuks and the works of writers Georges Perec and W. G. Sebald. In *Daniel Blaufuks: Traversing the Archive*, the final section, I return to the theoretical frameworks surrounding the archive, yet one founded on 0s and 1s rather than paper and ink.

In writing *From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks*, I strive to illuminate the continuities from analogue to digital archives, and analogue to digital archival art practices. Blaufuks's ease and breadth in the incorporation of a variety of media into his projects stands as an ideal case study for the exploration of the questions I put forward in this thesis.

Keywords: Archival Art, Archives, Databases, Daniel Blaufuks, Image Retrieval, Photography, Memory

Resumo

From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks, explora uma questão desencadeada pela série *Constelações* de Daniel Blaufuks no seu projeto-exposição, *Toda a Memória do Mundo, parte um* (2014): poderão bases de dados e sistemas de recuperação de imagens ser vistos como extensões de processos e de concepções do arquivo? Terá a ruptura entre analógico e digital ocorrido, ou será que a arte arquivística é transversal a ambos?

Com uma carreira que se estende por várias décadas, Blaufuks tem desenvolvido projectos relacionados com questões em torno do Holocausto, exílio, memória e pós-memória. Fotografia, imagem em movimento e material de arquivo são as ferramentas escolhidas pelo artista para as suas escavações; no entanto, é impossível ignorar a influência da literatura na sua obra. Tendo começado com a apropriação de material de arquivo, como álbuns fotográficos, polaroids ou slides, Blaufuks emprega também imagens digitais e motores de busca de imagens como o Google Image nos seus projectos mais recentes.

A fim de prosseguir com uma análise da questão central desta tese, a mesma foi dividida em três secções. A primeira, *Daniel Blaufuks: The 'Material' Archive,* tem como foco considerações sobre o arquivo analógico. Já *Daniel Blaufuks: Writing with Images*, a segunda secção, é dedicada a duas componentes temáticas da obra do artista: memória e literatura. Aqui, procedo igualmente a uma análise comparativa entre Blaufuks e as obras dos escritores Georges Perec e W. G. Sebald. Em *Daniel Blaufuks: Traversing the Archive*, a secção final, regresso às estruturas teóricas associadas ao arquivo, olhando no entanto para um arquivo construído sobre 0s e 1s ao invés de papel e tinta.

Com *From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks*, procuro iluminar continuidades entre arquivos analógicos e digitais, bem como estabelecer paralelos entre o uso de sistemas analógicos e digitais em práticas de arte de arquivo. A facilidade com que Blaufuks integra uma variedade de formatos e média no seu trabalho faz com que o artista seja o estudo de caso ideal para a exploração das questões que apresento nesta tese.

Palavras-chave: Arte de arquivo, Arquivos, Bases de dados, Daniel Blaufuks, Motor de busca, Fotografia, Memória

Acknowledgements

The are a number of people that must be thanked for their guidance and assistance in the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank wholeheartedly my supervisors Prof. Dr. Jan Baetens and Prof. Dr. Fernanda Mota Alves for their knowledge and counsel, for their encouragement of my ideas and for pointing me towards new paths of exploration. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Ângela Fernandes, as the Director of the PhDComp programme for her availability and support, as well as the team at Centro de Estudos Comparatistas. The freedom and aid CEC has provided for developing a number of research projects has been invaluable. Within the research groups I would like to thank especially Filipa Rosário, Ana Bela Morais, Pénélope Patrix, Marta Traquino, Verónica Conte and Vanessa Montessi.

As a PhDComp student I have been fortunate enough to receive a FCT grant that made my work possible. The programme made available a number of research opportunities, nationally and abroad, and provided me the chance to meet an enthusiastic and brilliant group of peers, Amândio Reis, Ana Romão, Elena Cordero, Elisa Scaraggi, Eva Dinis, Igor Furão, José Bértolo, Marisa Mourinha and Pedro Querido. I would also like to thank Amelia Chu (and Onono) and Clarissa Colangelo for their warm welcome in KU Leuven, and Maile Colbert for our lively conversations on work and life (and for braving the Roman Galleries with me).

This thesis would not have been written without the beautiful work of Daniel Blaufuks, it has been over ten years since I first came across *Under Strange Skies* and I continue to be as moved by his projects as I was then.

Lastly, I would like to thank the boundless love and support of my parents.

Introduction

The function of the archive, as of art,

is to hold unlikely things.

Wolfgang Ernst

The archive, how has it come to be? How has the word come to develop from a reference to material remnants or a structure for power, to theoretical notions and concepts, or even as a stand-in for the action of deleting in some digital contexts? Why has it become so pervasive in our cultural and artistic practices?[1]

Between 11 December 2014 and 29 March 2015, the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado – MNAC) in Lisbon, featured a three-floor exhibition-project by Daniel Blaufuks, *All the Memory of the World, part one*. It was an exhibition that arose as part of the artist's PhD thesis, but also as a rethinking and re-formulation of previous works and concerns — some might even call them obsessions. Born in Lisbon in 1963, as a grandson of Jewish-German and Polish refugees in Portugal during World War Two, Blaufuks has been deeply engaged with questions surrounding the Holocaust, exile, memory and postmemory. Photography, film and archival material have been the tools chosen for his excavations; nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook the influence of literature in the artist's work. Having begun with the appropriation of physical archival material, such as photographic albums, polaroids or slides, for sections of *All the*

1 Consider the growing number of publications that have taken place in the last decade alone. To name but a few: Baron, J. (2014) *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. De Kosnik, A. (2016) *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. Downey, A. (2015) *Dissonant Archives: Contemporary Visual Culture and Contested Narratives in the Middle East*. Ernst, W. (2013). *Digital Memory and the Archive*. Giannachi, G. (2016). *Archive Everything: Mapping the Everyday*. van Alphen, E. (2014). *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media*.

Memory of the World, part one Blaufuks employed digital images and image-retrieval systems such as Google Image. Here new questions surfaced, namely the impact of new technologies — particularly that of the Internet — on our reading of an image, artwork or exhibition, on our memory, on our understanding of the archive and of archival art.

There are some that claim that archival art, and its impulse, is founded on materiality, on the wish to take the often fragmentary remnants of memory and history contained within archival documents and connect them in such a way as to retrieve them and make them "physically present." (Foster, 2004: 4) For the process of "connect[ing] what cannot be connected" in archival art, the randomness of the find is given primacy. (Foster, 2004: 21) In this narrow understanding of archival art as analogue-based, in turning to digital archives and databases some of the valued 'randomness' might appear to be lost. However, one should propose, as Catherine Russell does, that few artists "find their source material in accidental or random ways" (2018: 18) be it in their use of analogue or digital archives. Similarly, it has been suggested that, analogue and digital might be viewed as symbionts, in a mutually beneficial relationship. (Hayles, 2007) Taking Blaufuks's oeuvre as a point of departure, this thesis will, at its core, consider how digital databases and image retrieval systems might also be viewed as developments of archival processes and thinking. To do so I will now briefly introduce some questions of the apparent dichotomy of archival and database art.

It is generally understood that archival art stems in part from the advent of photography, but what can be considered to be the origins of database art? (van Alphen, 2014: 19) Are these not rooted in a similar recording mechanism that documents "not only meanings but also noise and the physicality of the world outside our human intentions or signifying structures"? (Parikka & Ernst, 2013: 9) It could be argued that archival art is more interested in the historical qualities of the material, whilst database art is predominantly

captivated with the technology used to produce and process it. However, as I put forward with this thesis, the association between analogue practices and digital ones should not be overlooked. As Abigail De Kosnik has stated, when analysing the similarities in digital collector/pirates and early-twentieth century collectors, there is a shared psychological motivation and behaviour repetition between both. (2012: 523) In a time focused on looking towards the differences — the break — from analogue to digital, it might also be useful to examine the similarities. And so, before delving into the historical frameworks of the archive, one might start by presenting a definition of what is that thing called database.

Databases are collections of data or information that can be grouped together in accordance to specific classification structures. Depending on their size and general availability these groups can be categorised as 'Archives' or 'Collections', in a terminology that mimics that of traditional classification methodologies. To research this data, retrieval systems are employed. The most utilised of these in artistic practices is, arguably, that of the image retrieval. Whilst the most prevalent of these systems is that of the concept-based image retrieval, in which images are searched by keywords and text associated with their metadata. Yet, this associated text continues to be reliant on human input and interaction: in the contributions of users — in the upload of documents for instance —, or in parameters defined by algorithms, written not by machines but by humans. As Christiane Paul rightly puts, one must not ignore the fact that machines think "how we make them think." (2008: 150)

In *All the Memory of the World, part one,* Daniel Blaufuks included a series of image panels, visual maps or "constructions of images with more or less the same meanings, relating to one or various places, memories or rational connections" (Blaufuks, 2014: 213), these were his *Constellations*. It was a sequence that combined many of the artist's previous concerns, establishing links between the texts that so influenced him by Georges Perec (1936-

1982) and W. G. Sebald (1944-2001). Crucially for the argument I seek to present, these panels were constructed by researching a succession of keywords or subjects online, using Google Image, and then collecting the results. As an artist who, whilst maintaining a practice that is unquestionably archival, has employed a variety of media, Blaufuks's approach to image retrieval systems is significant; for if artists such as Blaufuks can present and question memory and 'connect what cannot be connected' by using remnants of physical archives why might they also not achieve this through fragments recovered on online databases, on the Internet? As Sven Spieker has put forward: "While the technical parameters of the (non-analogue) archive changed considerably in the postmodern era, the function of archive-based art as a means to analyze and problematize existing information regimes and their ideologies remains essentially unchanged." (2016: 408.)

Before any considerations might be made on Daniel Blaufuks's art, however, — and on how one might read its evolution and the artist's appropriation of new media and technological tools as a reflection of a continuing line between analogue and digital processes rather than a rupture — it is important to address the questions that have been posed at the beginning of this introduction. As such, I will start by looking at the historical developments of the archive, as well as at the theoretical frameworks that have emerged around it.

The notion of the archive — the archive itself — is not a recent one. For as long as there has been the capacity to fix writing in durable materials, for as long as we have gained the ability to exteriorise memory — individual and collective — through characters, (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993 [1964]) there has been a need to archive; to gather significant documents. In fact, if one considers the hypothesis advanced by Plato in *Phaedrus*, that the very technology of writing implants in men "forgetfulness in their souls" leading them to "cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer

from within themselves, but by means of external marks" (Plato, 1972: 157), archiving becomes key to the retrieval of memory — of the past — at the very moment writing comes into place.[2] Yet, one should not overlook who decides which documents are significant.

According to Luciana Duranti, some of the earliest traces of archives, in a form that included archival description (i.e. indexes), were found in Nuzi (Yorgan Tepe) in Assyria in 1500 BC. (1993: 48) (Fig. 1) These were comprised not of perishable materials but of clay tablets. In ancient Mesopotamia these small slabs, piled on top one another, were compiled by location rather than content. There were indexes, but these — at times inscribed on the edges of the tablets — were only used as a way to "avoid unnecessary shuffling through a pile". (Schellenberg, 2003 [1956]: 65) Also in Classical Antiquity the production of indexes was essentially intended to assist in the location of documents, generally ordered not by the date of their creation but by the date they came to be part of the archive. Up until the eighteenth-century such a system underwent little change: the documents were ordered by entry or acquisition date, and research was made through numerical indexes that offered no more than titles and locations. Nonetheless, a slight shift had already started to occur two centuries before, with the ordering of documents by the date of their creation beginning to gain some pull in the sixteenth-century. From this moment on the archive acquired the function of 'perpetual memory': "Perpetual memory is a juridical concept according to which the documents preserved in an archive are authentic and permanent evidence of past actions."

2 Here one might also look at Sigmund Freud's considerations on memory and writing put forward in his 1925 text, *A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'*: "If I distrust my memory […] I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing. In that case the surface upon which this note is preserved, the pocket-book or sheet of paper, is as it were a materialized portion of my mnemic apparatus, the rest of which I cary about with me invisible. I have only to bear in mind the place where this 'memory' has been deposited and can then 'reproduce' it at any time I like, with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered and so have escaped the possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory." (1959 [1925]: 175)

(Duranti, 1993: 49) It would be through perpetual memory that European Kingdoms would be able to validate their authority and authenticate their power over their dominions.

With the archive firmly established as a means of validation, in the Enlightenment its function as a historical and cultural deposit was sharpened. Thus, the cataloguing of documents became no longer defined by date of creation, rather the focus was now transferred to their contents: "The documents were described item by item, and the most important were abstracted, so that their description often served as a 'surrogate' for the documents themselves." (Duranti, 1993: 50) Document research and retrieval was now made by themed-indexes, it was now made with the help of alphabetically organised index cards that contained entries on multiple texts, and in so doing produced new associations between them.

Up until this point I have described the archive as if it were an independent, almost self-generating, entity, however it is impossible for this 'entity' to exist without the presence of something — in truth, someone — else: an archivist. The origin of the term archive itself rests on the existence of an archivist:

> the meaning of 'archive' […] comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded […] the archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited […]. They have the power to interpret the archives. (Derrida, 1995: 2)

It is this Greek terminology, and later its Latin adaptations — "archivists (*archivista*), or librarians (*bibliothecarius*), or custodians (*custos*), or guardians of the writings (*grammatophylax*), or keepers of the chests (*scrinarius*)" (Bonifacio, 1941 [1632]: 234) — that inscribes from the very beginning, power in the role of the archivist.[3] However, as Derrida points out above, this is a dual power: it is the power of the archivist as a guardian, but it is also the power of the archivist as an interpreter. It is the archivist who has the power of selection; who decides which documents possess value; who devises the appropriate cataloguing methods; who has the power to silence or give voice to certain historical facts; who, from the eighteenth-century onward, has the power to establish and prioritise themes and thematic associations between documents. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot signalled: "The making of archives involves a number of selective operations: selection of procedures — which means at best the differential ranking and, at worst, the exclusion of some producers, some evidence, some themes, some procedures. Power enters here both obviously and surreptitiously." (1995: 53)

Michel Foucault too identified the power of selection as a key archival process:

> The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do

3 In his 1632 treatise on archival management, *De Archivis*, Baldassarre Bonifacio identifies in Biblical references what he sees as the very first archives: "the grandsons of Noah, built twin towers, set one of brick, the other of marble, raising the one against conflagrations, the other against floods. In these were collected whatever they found worthy of record, since from Adam they had learned that the world would be twice destroyed: it would first be drowned in water, and later it would be consumed by fire. And so I believe that these towers were nothing else than archives." (1941 [1632]: 229)

> they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities (2002 [1969]: 145-6)

Additionally, in Foucault one finds already the fragmentary quality of the archive that some would so highly value as a crucial element in archival art (Foster, 2004): “The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it” (Foucault, 2002 [1969]: 147) Thus it might be possible that the archive speaks more clearly to those that are less intricately bound to the material it contains. Time and distance may be necessary to interpret what remains and what is absent from the archive.

To proceed with an examination on the crucial argument of this thesis, *From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks*, I have divided it into to three sections. The first, *Daniel Blaufuks: The ‘Material’ Archive* focuses, as the name indicates, on considerations on the so-called material archive, meaning the analogue archive. The section is itself composed of three chapters. In Chapter 1.1 – ‘Systems of Classification’, I seek to explore the various shapes archival art might take. Following Ernst van Alphen’s proposal that archival art stems in part from the development of photography (2014: 19), I examine the elements that make-up photography: the photographer, the subject and the, sometimes forgotten, machine. Taking some notions from the field of Media Archaeology, I propose that machines, by their technological characteristics and their limitations — the ‘noise’ they might produce — imbue themselves into the photographic image, and in doing so might contribute to the shaping of our very memories.

In continuing with a focus on photography, I then look, in the same chapter, to the challenges posed in the classification of photographs and moving images in archives. I consider how such processes of 'translation' might lead to blind-spots and absences, and how artists have sought to identify and illuminate these issues. It is here that I first address the work of British-artist susan pui san lok (b. 1972), *News* (2005). A work that seeks to read an archive not through the documents it contains, but through its indexes. If examining the power systems inherent to the archive is one form on creating archival art, other artists have turned to it for the sheer pleasure of the find, some seeking to construct their own archives. In analysing such practices, I propose that there is an impulse in archival art towards hoarding, which I name as Bowerbird Impulse. In doing so, I establish associations between this desire and Walter Benjamin's exploration on the collector in "Unpacking my Library" (1999b [1931]). Moreover, I consider how the accumulation of objects might serve as a stabilising force in the face of trauma, by inspecting a project by Chinese-artist, Song Dong (b. 1966), but also by introducing the role of objects in Blaufuks's work.

The relationship between trauma and archival art has often been presented, and it will be in Chapter 1.2 – 'Archive and Trauma', that I too shall offer my contribution to this study. In this chapter, I will briefly present the work of an artist, that in his familial history with the trauma of the Holocaust, might serve to illuminate some of Blaufuks's work, Christian Boltanski (b. 1944). In looking at two of Blaufuks's films — *Under Strange Skies* (2002) and *judenrein* (2018) — the rest of the chapter, will be balanced between Public Archives and Family Archives. If in *Under Strange Skies*, Blaufuks explores trauma through documentary evidence — be it in the use of old family photos, be it in the appropriation of files found in public archives —, in *judenrein* it is through absence that wounds are examined. Moreover,

in utilising a found Super-8 film for the elaboration of this short-film, Blaufuks conveys an epochal signature to the work.

Chapter 1.3 – 'Obsolescence: the nostalgic look' follows this analysis, yet here the focal point will be the artist's enthralment with obsolete media. Taking his 2012 short-film *Fábrica*, as well as briefly addressing Blaufuks's *Carpe Diem* (2010) and *Eden* (2011), I consider how Blaufuks employs medium as an active element in the creation of meaning in his works. In using Super-8 to film factory ruins, Blaufuks is simultaneously instigating nostalgia and exploring obsolete industries through obsolete technologies. In the artist's preference for still-shots, he is also working within a framework he designates as 'expanded photography', a notion I later investigate in relation to photographic sequences in Chapter 3.3 – 'The 'urgent eye' of Instagram'.

If in the first section of this thesis, the medium — photography, film, Super-8 — takes centre-stage, the second — *Daniel Blaufuks: Writing with Images* — is devoted to two thematic strands of the artist's oeuvre: memory and literature. There is a reason behind the association of these two themes under the same section: they are impossible to separate in Blaufuks's works. The authors the artist is continuously drawn to are authors that have systematically written on memory. Moreover, for the two authors that have informed much of Blaufuks's projects — Georges Perec and W. G. Sebald — the memory of traumatic events, particularly that of the Holocaust, is conjured — like pieces of a puzzle — through writing. Thus, with Chapter 2.1 – 'Memory, Text, Image' the theoretical frameworks that will inform the reading of the case studies presented in this second section will be introduced.

Central to the understanding of memory in Daniel Blaufuks's oeuvre, and more broadly in archival art practices, is the notion developed by André Leroi-Gourhan on the exteriorisation of memory: the ability to place our knowledge and memories outside ourselves,

through narrative, through art. (1993 [1964]) As I explore, technology is not only deeply associated with the processes of memory exteriorisation, it is also recurrently called forth as a metaphor for memory. Indeed, one might propose that the archive itself figures as a technology for memory. With the possibility of memory transmission, thinkers such as Marianne Hirsch have put forward the existence of postmemory, a memory that is founded not on lived experience, but that remains in the descendants of those that have gone through traumatic events. (2001) Having moved across these theoretical issues, I then briefly turn my attention to the process of remembering in literature, considering genre as a form of memory. To do so I look at how Blaufuks has employed literary genres in his work, using the diary format in photobooks such as *London Diaries* (1994),and the collected short stories genre in *Collected Short Stories* (2003).

In Chapter 2.2 – 'A Dialogue with Georges Perec', I seek to examine the influence of the OuLiPo-member in a number of Blaufuks's projects. Early on in the chapter I offer a comparative analysis between Perec's novel *La Disparition* (1969) and Blaufuks's film *The Absence* (2009). I do so by illustrating how both works are founded on a process of excision predicated on medium and the codes each format employs: the alphabet in Perec's case and the edit in Blaufuks's. Expanding considerations on excision, I then look at Perec's *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* (1978) and Blaufuks's *A Perfect Day* (2003-2005), examining how each removes an element from what is understood to make a postcard a postcard: Perec the image, Blaufuks the text. Finally, I explore the question of the autobiographical through the works *I Remember* (1978) by Perec and *Now Remember* (2008) by Blaufuks, and analyse how the latter uses iPods as memory capsules, as archives, as much as devices on which to share them.

Chapter 2.3 – 'A Dialogue with W.G. Sebald' looks to another key author in Blaufuks's work, the German-writer W.G. Sebald. I begin by examining *Terezín* (2007-2010), where Blaufuks first reshot a photograph of an unoccupied office space found in Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), later appropriating and tinting the excerpts of the staged-documentary *Terezin: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944), as to mimic some of the book's main-character's actions when encountering the film. Blaufuks returned to this propaganda film in *As if…* (2014), here exploring the contradictions between the factuality one expects from documentary films and the invented reality of fictional productions, something that will be read in the light of Alison Landsberg's notion of prosthetic memory (1995), a notion that works as an expansion of Leroi-Gourhan's exteriorisation of memory, and that will again allow me to introduce the influence of media and technology on memory.

For *Daniel Blaufuks: Traversing the Archive*, the final section, I return to the theoretical frameworks surrounding the archive, yet one founded on 0s and 1s rather than paper and ink. As much as the differences between the analogue and the digital archive have been analysed, with Chapter 3.1 – 'Digital Archives and Databases' I strive to present a reading of similarities; I look to explore how the so-called 'digital turn' might be seen as an enrichment rather than a break. (Duranti, 2001: 49) In analysing databases, I return to considerations on two distinct image-retrieval systems: concept-based and content-based. Here, I propose that categorisations put in place when creating and associating metadata to visual material might be read as a direct descendent of archival procedures. Later in the chapter, I look at how online databases, image retrieval systems, and its queries might be read aesthetically. To do so I take again a work by susan pui san lok, *RoCH (Return of the Condor Heroes) Fans & Legends* (2013-present), and a project by Taryn Simon (b. 1975) and Aaron Swartz (1986-2013), *Image Atlas* (2012-present). Finally, I turn to Google Image — as the most popular

system of its kind in use at present —, drawing a comparative analysis between its mosaic-like, possibly limitless, results and the visual maps created by Aby Warburg (1866-1929) in his, unfinished, *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-9), with a particular focus on how the latter's 'iconology of intervals' might be applied to the reading of the online retrieval system.

In Chapter 3.2 – '*All the Memory of the World, part one*', I return to the project that first inspired this thesis; a project that in the broadness of its scope seems to embody all of the distinct approaches I take in reading Blaufuks's body of work. If, on the one hand, the exhibition-project is a comparative analysis between Georges Perec and W.G. Sebald, it is also an exploration on the compulsion to archive all — the *All the Memory of the World* —, and the impossibility to do so — the *part one*. In dividing the exhibition into three distinct, if interrelated sections, Blaufuks is simultaneously illuminating the hypertextual quality of the archive, in his *Transmission Room*, as well as positioning his *Constellations* as something between an Atlas and a web browser.

This thesis closes, in Chapter 3.3 – 'The 'urgent eye' of Instagram', with an analysis of one of the artist's most recent projects: *Attempting Exhaustion* (2016-present). Although it initially stemmed from Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (1975), Blaufuks nine-year undertaking belongs in this final section as it represents another of the artist's appropriations of new technologies and digital platforms as creative media: in this case Instagram. *Attempting Exhaustion* is a photobook and an exhibition; it is Polaroids, stereoscopic photography and large-scale prints; it is also a digital view — a digital window — into the artist's own home, into the artist's obsession in photographing and re-photographing his kitchen window. In this process of exhaustion, Blaufuks, as Perec, is finding refuge in the stabilising forces of over-description. It is a procedure that other artists have similarly taken, namely Josef Sudek (1896-1976) and André Kertész (1894-1985). Nevertheless, I propose in

this chapter, that Blaufuks's piece is standing not as an example of what the artist names expanded photography, but as a 'photography with time'. An image that in repetition, has time creep in through light. Moving away from Blaufuks in the final section of the chapter, I explore issues of repetition and ephemerality in digital technologies, particularly Instagram. I do so by analysing the work of an artist that equally sought refuge in repetition, shielding himself in the exhaustion of a place: Teju Cole (b. 1975). In exploring online ephemerality, or disappearance, some might propose that digital archives hold no safe ground for long term remembering. However on the flip-side of disappearance is reemergence, and, as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has found, "if things constantly disappear, they also reappear, often to the chagrin of those trying to erase data" (Chun, 2011 [2008]: 198)

In writing *From Analogue to Image Retrieval: Concepts of Archival Art in Daniel Blaufuks*, I strive to illuminate the continuities from analogue to digital archives, and analogue to digital archival art practices. Daniel Blaufuks's ease and breadth in the incorporation of a variety of media into his projects stands as an ideal case study for the exploration of the questions I put forward in this thesis.

Systems of Classification

An archive is simultaneously an authorized place […],

a thing/object […], and a practice.

— Diana Taylor

There are several challenges that might be posed by the archive. For the present thesis, one of the most significant ones, is that of the issues surrounding photographic and moving image archives. In exploring these I will turn to the work of a selection of contemporary artists who will illuminate paths that will later be explored in my reading of Blaufuks's projects. As mentioned in the Introduction, photography is key to archival art, as it is key to the archive itself. I argue that, although the medium has been examined as the result of two elements — the photographer, the photographed — there is a third element that at times has been ignored: the machine. It is with this element that I will be able to connect to an understanding of memory, a subject that will be expanded in Section 2: *Daniel Blaufuks — Writing with Images* of this thesis.

The associations between photography and memory have been broadly examined and disseminated — consider the key texts by Walter Benjamin or Roland Barthes examined below, for instance —, as have those that construct the triad archive / photography / trauma. This has been the lens through which much of archival art has been read; and indeed, whilst presenting some examples of how artists have turned to the archive I too will explore this use in the next chapter — 'Archive and Trauma' — with a close analysis of Blaufuks's *Under Strange Skies* (2002). Other artists suffer from that which I compare to the bowerbird impulse, the urge to collect that Benjamin so clearly expressed in "Unpacking My Library" (1931). Others still, feel the need to classify and catalogue their daily lives, as does Georges

Perec — to be closely examined in Chapter 2.2 – 'A Dialogue with Georges Perec' and Chapter 3.3 – 'The 'urgent eye' of Instagram' —; or, on occasion, they might even produce archives with nothing more than the use of combinatory constraints. Daniel Blaufuks, on the other hand, as the subject of this study, might be said to tick all the boxes. To move seamlessly between categories.

The fixed light of photography

Since 1839[4], the archive has seen in its deposits remnants of a different sort of record, that of the photographic image. Indeed, there have been proposals that photography maintains a relationship to the archive that is impossible to divorce. Ernst van Alphen has put forward that:

> *First, the photographic image itself can be seen as an archival record. Second, in order to restrain the sheer number of photographic images, their ungainly dispersion and the pictorial multiplicity of the photographic image, photography also needs archives.* Archives, in turn, are thoroughly fed by photographs — items that justify the archives' existence and make it visible and meaningful. It is through the ordering, the principles of classification, in other words of archival principles, that the proliferations of photographic images can be held in check. (2014: 21-22. My emphasis.)

4 Although processes of capturing light had been experimented with for close to a century, it was in 1839 that Louis Daguerre (1787-1851), expanding on the work of Nicéphore Niépce (1765-1833), presented on 7 January, at the French Academy of Sciences, a stable photographic process that required only a few minutes to expose, rather than hours, and where the image could be fixed from light deterioration.

Thus, for van Alphen, a photograph may not only be an archival record, it may also exist as an archive in itself for: "[t]he photographic image is a spatial configuration of one moment, a configuration that consists of a great number of details. All these details or elements are stored in the image in order to be ordered or classified, leading to one reading or another". (2014: 21-22)

Photography collects the past. It looks at the present and fixes it; when we return to it, it is no longer the present, and yet it remains. This capacity of photography to transport us through time — even if it is only backwards — has long fascinated writers and artists attempting to recall the past, to make sense of the present or even to anticipate a future. In this, there is a prevalence to imagine the photograph — the image, the past — as something that was witnessed — something that has been taken — by another human: "somebody once lived (both the person who took the photograph and the one who allowed himself to be photographed)." (Santos, 2014: 145) Or as Barthes put it: "in Photography I can never deny that *the thing has been there*" (1993 [1980]: 76. Emphasis in original), nor can one ever deny that *the thing has been seen*. However, there is another presence in photography, there is a third element: the camera — the machine.

Nevertheless, when we do consider this third element, we tend to consider its faults, its limitations, its inability to produce or create original work. We see it as an auxiliary, as a tool; we see it even as a necessary evil (or just an evil — to be avoided even if we do admire its results)[5]. Not always do we consider the contributions of the machine to photography — to

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5 As Charles Baudelaire mentioned in his 1859 essay on photography: "It is time [for photography] to return to its true duty, which is to be the servant of the sciences and arts — but the very humble servant […]. Let it rescue from oblivion those tumbling ruins, those books, prints and manuscripts which time is devouring, precious things whose form is dissolving and which demand a place in the archives of our memory — it will be thanked and applauded. But if it be allowed to encroach upon the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary, upon anything whose value depends solely upon the addition of something of a man's soul, then it will be so much the worse for us!" (1956 [1859]: 232)

the remembering of our past — and when we do, we see it as something neutral; we congratulate ourselves in its advanced abilities, we reject previous limitations in favour of a machine that might bring us closer to a true representation of the real. Yet, is a representation still not just a representation? Perhaps it is here that machines ought to come in. Perhaps it is now, as we are considering representation and reality that we should propose that maybe machines do more to shape our reality (or at least our memory of reality) than we would possibly like to admit. And that they do this not only through their developments towards a seamless representation, but also through their past technical limitations, their inabilities, their flaws.

Wolfgang Ernst has advanced the idea of a "cold mechanical eye" (2013: 46) that, whilst it offers an objective gaze, physically captures what it sees: "Photography brings the past back to the memory not by means of some mnemonic energy but through a physical event: rays of light that once emanated from a real object touch the viewer when he or she regards the picture." (Ernst, 2013: 47) In light of this, we might suggest that photography should not be seen solely as a receptacle, but as an activator — as an inducer — of memory. That it is possible that cameras are not simply capturing a moment that might otherwise be forgotten, rather they might be fixing a representation of a time period, a representation that might later impress itself on our own memory. That perhaps machines are less passive members of memory construction than active constructors of memory. That possibly photography might be seen as an amalgamation of both human and machine vestiges — and that perhaps memories might also be seen as composites, as prosthetic constructions, that may be transmitted and transformed.

Since Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), it has been widely accepted that mechanical reproduction eliminates, through the act

of reproducibility, the ‘aura’ in the work it ‘creates’.[6] Not only that, with a lack of an original — of an ‘authentic’ — the “historical testimony” of the work produced comes under jeopardy. (Benjamin, 1968 [1936]: 221) However, here Benjamin also maintains that: “For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face.” (1968 [1936]: 226) Of course, for Benjamin, early photography refers to daguerrotypy rather than reproducible techniques that existed in the same period (for instance, the Talbotype). This aura seems to only be able to shine through via the little tilting movements needed to read the grey faces in a daguerreotype.[7]

But if we consider this little movement, this cradling of the image in one’s hands, aura might exist even in reproductions or copies. Those small paper images that were, that still are, stuffed into wallets as little tokens of reality, that are taken out — carefully, lovingly — and shown to others that might be interested — or even just feigning interest (for this action does not need much encouragement). Those vast collections of images, chronologically arranged, in the smallish screen of a smartphone — something that is just on the limit of being able to fit in the palm of your hand — that is also tilted this way and that against solar glare, that with a quick movement of a finger slides into something new, and that as rapidly reappears

6 One has to consider, nonetheless, the shifts Benjamin’s concept of *Aura* seems to have undertaken. *See* Miriam Bratu Hansen, “Benjamin’s Aura”, *Critical Inquiry* 34 (Winter 2008). Benjamin’s considerations on photography are especially relevant, as in his later works he seems to discard the presence of aura even in early photography: “If the distinctive feature of the images arising from *mémoire involontaire* is seen in their aura, then photography is decisively implicated in the phenomenon of a ‘decline of the aura.’ What was inevitably felt to be inhuman — one might even say deadly — in daguerreotypy was the (prolonged) looking into the camera, since the camera records our likeness without returning our gaze.” (Benjamin, 2006 [1940]: 338).

7 “Daguerre’s photographs were iodized silver plates exposed in the camera obscura, which had to be turned this way and that until, in the proper light, a pale gray image could be discerned.” (Benjamin, 1999a [1931]: 508).

with a swipe in the opposite direction. In these ways, we find, still, a connection of the image to the hand, and from the hand — from the movement — to the eye.[8]

So what about the loss of the historical testimony one might ask, what about deterioration? Yes, because images deteriorate, they lose what they were supposed to be carrying — what they were supposed to be caring for. Well, firstly, images might be worked, forged, or given biased viewpoints, but even in their manipulated forms they exist as testimonies; they exist as interpretations of truths if not of factual history:

> in Hill's New-Haven fishwife […] there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real (Benjamin, 1999a [1931]: 510)

Or, as Barthes reiterates: "Photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing […] never as to its existence." (1993 [1980]: 87) Secondly, the photographic object is in and of itself a historical object. It suffers physical alterations and mutations with the passing of time; it ages and decomposes, but through this it also determines the period in which it exists.

Since its inception, the format the photographic object has inhabited has seen multiple — quickly succeeding — transformations. Transformations that might be seen as epochal identifiers — as each photographic object carries with it specific technical qualities. Limits of

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8 Perhaps a similar logic might be found in André Leroi-Gourhan's *Gesture and Speech*, in which the hand plays a "part in creating a graphic mode of expression that counterbalanced verbal language. The hand thus became a creator of images […]". (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993 [1964]: 209-210).

representation become intrinsically bound to technological limits; leading one to wonder if the stillness imposed in the photographic image of the nineteenth-century, by the lengthy process that produced it, did not infuse our remembrance of this century with composed serenity, when, in fact, it was brimming with speed and fast-paced changes. Just as we might imagine, the yellowish tone of film used in the 1960-70s — the colour of Super-8 film — might, in the future, contaminate the memory of this period for those who did not live it (and perhaps for even those who did, for memory is a mutable thing). Perhaps in fifty years, or less, people will not be able to imagine this era without the patina of yellow over it — just as we now have difficulty imagining a nineteenth-century in colour — and perhaps this patina will get progressively worse, as pictures begin to age leaving us nothing but faded yellow.

And yet, these same limitations might be seen less as an injury to the way we record historical past (which in any case is always subject to interpretation and transformation)[9] and more as a potential to record what is beyond human perception. It might be something intangible: Benjamin's other "nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye: 'other' above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious." (1999a [1931]: 510) Or something with a less psychoanalytical — or even mystical — connotation: the camera limitations — the machine eye — as a potential to document facts, truths, we could not have intended or have even imagined. As "a prior level on which the past has been recorded." (Parikka & Ernst, 2013: 9)

In the 1980s, a technological approach to media studies emerged through the work of Friedrich Kittler, (1999 [1986]) in which the machines and technology we use were seen as having infused the development of our cultural knowledge. Similarly, in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (2006 [1983]), Vilém Flusser examined the role of the camera in

9 "Memory is always the object of a politics, of a criteriology by which it selects the events to be retained." (Stiegler, 2009a: 9).

shaping the meaning of the resulting image. These readings were continued by several media theorists, including Wolfgang Ernst, who — in a nod to Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002 [1969]) — has been developing the field of media archaeology. Media archaeology might be read, as Siegfried Zielinski has set out, as a "perspective means to dig out secret paths in history, which might help us to find our way into a future." (*apud* Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011: 10) Such is the framework I will follow in this thesis. As a field, media archaeology "is more about how stories are recorded, in what kind of physical media, what kind of processes and durations—and as such, its focus is on the archaeology of the apparatus that conveys the past as fact not just as a story." (Parikka & Ernst, 2013: 7) With this emphasis on the apparatus, the notion of a 'cold' mechanical eye — the eye of the photographic camera — not bound to the subjective interpretation of human vision, emerges.[10] For Ernst, it is the neutrality of the camera eye that grants photography its value as a factual document of the past:

> The secret of photography's reality effect lies in its abolition of the distance between an original and its reproduction. The chemical photons are, in fact, the ectoplastic reflection of a given physical moment; unlike artistic translation, photographic paper registers a genuinely mediatic transfer. (2013: 42)

However, although a shift has been attempted in the reading of the photographic image, from the subjective human to the objective machine, Ernst's "ectoplastic reflection" holds, still, much of Benjamin's aura.

10 "The camera eye displaces subjective vision." (Ernst, 2013: 45).

As we have seen, for Benjamin — and for Barthes — a tiny fragment of 'soul' seems to remain in photography.[11] As long as there is a photograph in existence of a person, of a moment, of an object, that person, moment, object is never truly gone; is never truly dead. But in this proposition there are two elements that had not been taken into account. Firstly, the presence of the machine as third element in the construction of the image — in every photography there is a referent, there is a photographer, and there is a camera — but rather than an impartial machine —the 'cold' gaze Ernst has suggested — a machine that, through its technical limitations, imbues something of itself in the image it is capturing. Secondly, time, not only as a distancing element, as a way to retrospectively (or even posthumously) attribute meaning, but also as a process of deterioration. A process that, as we strive to combat it, might be delayed but that cannot be ceased. With every format transfer, with every shift from analogue to digital, the multiplication of errors — of deterioration — occurs, transmitting the technical limitations of each machine (one might even say their essence) to the image. So, in the end, we must consider that this tiny 'soul' that is left is not merely a remnant of its referent, but an amalgamation of this remnant with the essences of the multiple machines that keep it in existence.

Yet photography is also connected to power: who holds the camera and shoots, who chooses what and who is significant enough to be 'captured', and how are those people beyond the lens portrayed. In 'The Body and the Archive' (1986) — as we shall examine more closely in the following chapter —, Allan Sekula offered a new reading of photography, a reading intricately linked to the relationship between photography and the archive, and the archive and power: who holds the power of selection, who is given access to archival material, who is given the opportunity to interpret the archive.

11 "Images […] are souls, be they of things or people". (Benjamin, 1996 [1926]: 427).

Photographic and moving image archives present particular challenges in their methods of classification. This is a process that involves a degree of translation from visual material to textual indexing. Thus concerns such as the ones expressed by Trouillot (1995: 53) on the silencing associated with archival practices are exacerbated in photographic and moving image archives. Archives that present subjective interpretations — translations — of archivists as objective terms and indexes. For in requiring that research and retrieval of visual material be made by associated text the possibility of the loss of information is heightened.

Reading an Archive through its Index

If it is true that archivists maintain the guardianship as well as the power of interpretation over any archive, some of the barriers imposed by these conditionings might be more easily surmounted by the general public in archives devoted solely to textual documents rather than in those grounded on photography and moving image. As has been mentioned, every archival document is submitted to selection and interpretation processes. There are always choices to be taken. But with visual material these processes are multiplied. To guarantee an effective search and retrieval of documents there is the need to transform image into text. And in the impossibility of registering or describing every second of a film reel, for instance, the archivist selects only certain instants: interpreting — translating — these images. As Martha M. Yee — one of the main researchers in the development of new methods of cataloguing and retrieving moving images at the UCLA Archives — explains in her moving image cataloguing norm guide (2007), there are three essential procedures for the correct register of a moving image document. The first comprises of the transcription of the production details, i.e.: the history of the document. The second involves a written abstraction of the document, as well as the establishing of connections to other documents. The final

procedure consists of normalising terminology: “catalogers [*sic*] will *normalize* the name used for a person, work, or concept by choosing a *preferred* term to be used in the heading fields of bibliographic records”.(Yee, 2007: 4. Emphasis in original) Moreover, for Yee the archivist’s work is at its best when it is invisible for the user. (2007) The archivist’s function as an interpreter — the archivist’s presence even — is masked. And perhaps this absence marks precisely an intensifying of the power of the archivist as an interpreter. For, if as Trouillot has claimed, “We are never as steeped in history as when we pretend not to be.” (1995: xix), it is possible that we are never as steeped in the power of the archivist to interpret our documents, and thus our past, as when we pretend not to see this role.

In defiance of representations of the archive as an objective repository of the past, artists have come to examine the underlying power structure. susan pui san lok (b. 1972)[12] has been one artist that has taken to analyse an archive of moving image not through its deposited material, but through the visible documents that reflect the presence of an archivist: the index cards. For *News* (2005), pui san lok explored the Media Archive for Central England (MACE), composed mostly of independent regional British television shows and news reports from 1956 to 1985, whose twenty-seven thousand reels of film are mostly yet to be catalogued, being that the existing records consisted in its majority of hand-typed index cards organised alphabetically.

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12 Born and based in Great Britain to Hong Kong-Chinese parents susan pui san lok’s work has been deeply engaged with questions of identity, displacement, diaspora, translation, and nostalgia. Language and text play an important role in her visual practice, where she engages with re-readings and revaluations of documents and archives. Her projects encompass multiple media, from moving image to postcards, from performance to installation, from text to sound. In introducing herself for the brochure —“Notes to Let You Down” — accompanying her first solo exhibition in 1997 at the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester, pui san lok produced a statement that already pointed to the role of language(s) in her oeuvre: “(I am?) a British (-born-girl-woman-) subject who speaks in a Chinese-inflected-English, an Essex-accented-Cantonese, retrieving occasionally her once-good French, decidedly poor German, and mostly-forgotten Latin; a ghost/bamboo child of Hong Kong emigrants, sister-niece-cousin to close-distant family, granddaughter of a Malaysian-born granddaughter, of a woman unnamed to me, betrothed at three to a boy-husband in South China.” (Smith & pui san lok, 2006: 19)

“ACCENTS/ AERIAL VIEWS / AFRICA & AFRICANS / ALI, Mohammed / AMBASSADORS / AMERICA & AMERICANS […]” it is with these terms, with this mirroring of the MACE indexes that pui san lok begins the 30-postcard book that forms *News*. (Fig. 2) By selecting some of the index cards — headed by themes determined not by the material itself, but by the various archivists that have contributed to its cataloguing — over others the artist assumes the role of the archivist herself. However, as she explains:

> In *News*, I’m interested in the way mechanical and human quirks are evidenced in misaligned letters and cards, misspellings, and handwritten addenda; but any nostalgia provoked by the charm of outdated technologies and outmoded activities is, I hope, tempered by the terminologies and narratives that emerge. (Smith & pui san lok, 2006: 32)

The narrative that one quickly finds to emerge as one delves into pui san lok’s selection of index-cards is one infused by a bias that reflects much of the society in which this particular archive was created. What caught the artist’s attention when examining MACE was:

> the insistent inscription of the ‘foreign’, implicitly, explicitly, or unrelated to the actual news item — an unsurprising preoccupation, of course, that coincides with a period of mass immigration to Britain, and interesting to me as a series of narratives or narrative hints, embedded often tangentially in relation to the news as a formal record or account of the

> one-time new, current, curious, strange, or estranged. (Smith & pui san lok, 2006: 29)

Thus, through her selection, the artist brings forward these inscriptions that make visible the power of selection and interpretation of the archives that Derrida and Trouillot had signalled. She finds these in the emphasised presence of the 'foreigner' in the descriptions made in entries such as those on the Chinese Soccer National Team, recorded when eating in a restaurant under the theme 'INDUSTRY — CATERING'. On the accent placed on an interracial marriage in 1970. On the Vox Pop question put to viewers in February 1966: "Should we have coloured policemen?" (Fig. 3) On the June 1981 report on nurse Tajwinder Kaur, who, as a Sikh woman, lost her job for insisting on wearing trousers with her uniform. Or on the April 1984 interview with Yellowman (Winston Foster) an albino reggae musician.

But the presence of the 'Foreigner' might also be found in absences. In a card on 'BI LINGUAL FAMILY' there is only one entry to be found, dating from 1978: that of the Creek family from Coventry whose children have been taught to speak fluently both English and German. (Fig. 4) If one considers that in the late-1970s Coventry already held one of the largest numbers of Asian immigrants in the UK, one might suppose that more than one of these families was bilingual, and yet no reference is made to this segment of the population. And in this absence, one might consider them to have been silenced.

Yet, there are other ways to approach the archive. Examining the power systems that are inherent to it, bringing to light what stories might have been lost in the gaps, are not the only form of creating archival art. Some artists turn to the archive for the sheer pleasure of the find, others become obsessed in composing their own.

The Bowerbird Impulse: Desire and Hoarding

In the wet forest of eastern Australia, the male Satin Bowerbird is trying to impress. He has constructed, from twigs or sticks, a bower — a structure that almost resembles a stage with open curtains — to be primed and decorated with his unique collection: blue objects.

> Blue flowers, blue shells, the blue feathers of rollers and parakeets. Sometimes they paint the things with blue pigment that they grind up from fruit pulp with their beaks. Nowadays they raid picnic tables up to ten miles away if they see readymade blue decorations. (Rothenberg, 2011: 1-2)

The obvious answer to the question of 'why do bowerbirds exhibit this behaviour?' is: they are trying to seduce a partner. They are attempting to lure the female bowerbird to their bower, so they might then impress her with an elaborate dance, with their bountiful collection. (Fig. 5) So how might the bowerbird fit into a study of archival art? Well, one of the most interesting aspects to the bowerbird is that to achieve their ideal collection they steal from one another. (Rothenberg, 2011: 15) They exhibit a behaviour not that dissimilar to that of the collector brought forward by Walter Benjamin in his essay "Unpacking my Library", using whatever methods might be necessary to acquire a particular object — books, in Benjamin's case —, persisting in the face of adversity.[13] For Benjamin, the collector, there is little that is not justified by the acquisition — or the saving — of the desired book, even calculated forgetting:

13 As Benjamin makes clear,"You have all heard of people whom the loss of their books has turned into invalids, or of those who in order to acquire books become criminals." (1999b [1931]: 487)

> The book borrower of real stature whom we envisage here proves himself an inveterate collector of books not so much by the fervor with which he guards his borrowed treasures and by the deaf ear which he turns to all reminders from the everyday world of legality as by his failure to read these books. (1999b [1931]: 488)

For Benjamin, the true objective of the book collector is not to read every one of his books but to possess it. And to do so, at times, like the bowerbird, he must fight off the competition, even feigning disinterest to ward off the attention of others over the book so lusted for. (Benjamin, 1999b [1931]: 491) Yet, if the bowerbird has a final goal in mind, that of attracting and mating with a female, the collector's objectives tend to not be as straight forward or as easy to grasp. But here too Benjamin offers an explanation, that the true value of the object to the collector lies as much, if not more, on the memories the object triggers: "Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories." (486) It is this association between object and memory that many artists have explored in their own practice. For instance, Song Dong[14], with *Waste Not* (2005), has examined this link.

A room overflowing with over 10.000 worn and torn objects — including broken pens, toys, shoes, plastic bottles, soap, and numerous pieces of fabric —, neatly separated by categories[15], that appear to span decades — fifty in fact —, in its centre the wooden skeleton

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14 Born in Beijing in 1966, Song Dong's family was greatly affected by the Cultural Revolution, with his father being imprisoned for some time. The artist works with a number of media, including installation, video, performance, and sculpture. Familial relationships is one of the artist's principal themes.

15 As Wu Hung, curator of the first iteration of the project at Beijing Tokyo Art Projects in 2005, explains, the objects where grouped according to material and function and labeled as follows: "(1) wooden boards, (2) chairs, (3) blocks of polystyrene, (4) flower pots, (5) pottery jars, (6) bars of soap, (7) basins, (8) medicine, (9) liquor, (10) silverware, (11) kitchen utensils, (12) craft

of a small shed; this is what the viewer faces when seeing *Waste Not*. (Fig. 6) Nevertheless, what one senses is not an overpowering chaos of objects, rather the careful placement and organisation of the items indicate a loving touch. Indeed, this is the touch of the artist's mother, Xiangyuan, the owner of this massive hoard.

Born into a relatively well-off family, Xiangyuan's conditions drastically changed at fifteen years-old with the arrest of her father — condemned as a spy during the 'Eliminating Counter-Revolutionaries' movement in 1953. Frugality and the re-use of every possession came to imbue itself well into her later life, as one encounters in her description of her collection of soap bars:

> I was afraid when my children grew up, they would have to worry about their soap ration every month. I wanted to save the soap until they got married, and pass it on to them. I never thought these bars of soap would become useless, because everyone uses a washing machine now. But I feel reluctant to throw them out, so I have kept them for a few decades now; some of the soap is older than Song Dong. (Xiangyuan *apud* Hung, 2011: 21)

With the death of her husband, Xiangyuan became ever more secluded from the world, relying on the memories her objects provided, afraid of the loss the disposing of them

objects, (13) empty bottles, (14) moon cake boxes, (15) books and magazines, (16) shoe boxes, (17) tools, (18) gardening equipment, (19) a cabinet containing fabric, (20) thermos bottles, (21) plastic bottle caps, (22) fast food containers, (23) shopping bags, (24) string, (25) fragments of cloth, (26) another cabinet containing fabric, (27) tea boxes, (28) yarn, (29) toys, (30) telephones, (31) large and small bottles, (32) knives and scissors, (33) pens and pencils, (34) schoolbags, (35) watches, eyeglasses, (36) an old gramophone, (37) a double bed, (38) clothes, (39) radiators, (40) bedcovers, (41) socks, (42) gloves, (43) a single bed, (44) trunks and suitcases, (45) a wardrobe filled with old clothes, (46) boxes, (47) miscellaneous things, (48) cotton, (49) blankets, (50) an old sofa, (51) bird cages, (52) cardboard boxes, (53) old television sets, and so on." (2011: 26)

might bring. In an attempt to bring his mother back to the outside world, and at the same time to understand her obsessions, and even deal with the loss of his father himself, Song Dong developed *Waste Not:* a space where his mother might share her memories with others. The objects that the artist first saw as trash to be dealt with becoming art, fulfilling the usefulness his mother had always promised: 'Don't throw that away. It can be useful someday.' Whilst the work might be read in the tradition of *objet trouvé*, the goal was certainly more intimate than most of Duchamp's readymades. *Waste Not* was assembled as a response to trauma — the sudden change in economic circumstances, the loss of a loved one. As Matthias Winzen demonstrates:

> collecting has a calming and reconciling power. Thus the basic activities of collecting, saving, and archiving can also be seen as a prepared response to unexpected events, to accidents that create changed situations, to what has never been seen before, to encounters with strange and unique objects or those with no apparent purpose. (1999: 23)

Additionally, these objects became entangled with Xiangyuan's identity.[16] It was her collection, her life and memories. After her death, in 2009, they even became a stand-in for her for her son, who in later exhibitions of the work added to its title, *Dad and Mom, Don't Worry About Us, We Are All Well*.[17]

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16 Another artist that has also explored the association between objects that might appear as garbage to an outsider and personal identity is Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933), with *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away (The Garbage Man)* (c. 1977): "I feel that it is precisely the garbage, that very dirt where important papers and simple scraps are mixed and unsorted, that comprises the genuine and only real fabric of my life, no matter how ridiculous and absurd this may seem from the outside." (2006 [1977]: 34)

However, it is not only trauma or loss that makes one obsessed with objects, as Susan Buck-Morss has explained: “[i]ndustrial societies have made a cult out of objects. We become attached to them, name them, care for them, morn their loss.” (1998: 222) And, arguably, no artist has portrayed the cult of the object as well as Andy Warhol (1928-1987). He too was a collector.

One might know Warhol for his contributions to Pop Art, for the tomato soup cans, the screen prints of stars — Elizabeth Taylor, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, and others — and dictators — Mao — alike, but Warhol was not only fixated in reproducing the pop elements — the consumer culture that so characterised the America he wanted to portray — that surrounded him, he collected them. One might know of the countless wigs he kept, or of his cookie jar collection[18], but perhaps not many are as familiarised with the artist’s possession of a mummified foot. (Weeks, 2000) Indeed, not even the keepers of The Andy Warhol Museum knew they would find such an object amongst the artist’s belongings. It was found in one of his *Time Capsules* (1974-1987).

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17 The accumulation of objects might even serve to maintain the memory of an entire city, as Lista, a character in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated* (2002), attempts to do for the memory of Trachimbrod: “All of the clothing and shoes and pictures made me to reason that there must have been at least one hundred people living in that room. The other room was also very populous. There were many boxes, which were overflowing with items. These had writing on their sides. A white cloth was overwhelming from the box marked WEDDINGS AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS. The box marked PRIVATES: JOURNALS/DIARIES/SKETCHBOOKS/UNDERWEAR was so overfilled that it appeared prepared to rupture. There was another box, marked SILVER/PERFUME/ PINWHEELS, and one marked WATCHES/WINTER, and one marked HYGIENE/SPOOLS/CANDLES, and one marked FIGURINES/SPECTACLES. […] Some of the names I could not reason, like the box marked DARKNESS, or the one with DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN written in pencil on its front. I noticed that there was a box on the top of one of these skyscrapers of boxes that was marked DUST.” (147)

18 Held between 12 February and 25 May 2015 at the Barbican in London, the *Magnificent Obsessions: The Artist as Collector*, featured a selection of objects collected by Andy Warhol, including his cookie jar collection.

With the simple exterior of a cardboard box, of the kind one would use for moving house, the objects inside each of the 600-plus *Time Capsules* are a mismatch of 'stuff' the artist would sweep into them, apparently at random:

> What you should do is get a box for a month, and drop everything in it and at the end of the month lock it up. Then date it and send it over to Jersey. […] I started off myself with trunks and the odd pieces of furniture, but then I went around shopping for something better and now I just drop everything into the same-size brown cardboard boxes that have a color patch on the side for the month of the year. I really hate nostalgia, though, so deep down I hope they all get lost and I never have to look at them again. That's another conflict. I want to throw things right out the window as they're handed to me, but instead I say thank you and drop them into the box-of-the-month. But my other outlook is that I really do want to save things so they can be used again someday. (Warhol, 1975: 145)

But in these haphazard capsules, the artist was doing something more than saving things — or losing things —, he was creating a diary of objects that represented his interests, his work process, the world around him. He was documenting his existence. (Smith, 1998: 279) (Fig. 7) Such is an impulse that many collectors seem to possess; that they might exist through their objects.

In the novel, *Utz* (1988), Bruce Chatwin delved into a character, Kaspar Utz, that could not exist without his Meissen porcelain collection — he could not leave Communist Prague, as that would mean abandoning his porcelain —, as it could not exist without its

collector, to the point that upon Utz's death the collection disappears. As Susan Stewart explained: "The ultimate term in the series that marks the collection is the 'self', the articulation of the collector's own 'identity'." (1992 [1984]: 162) I mention *Utz* here not only because it is one of the better examples to illustrate the link between collection and identity, object and person, it is relevant here because it connects to the main case study of this thesis, it connects to Daniel Blaufuks. As we will see in the coming chapters, Blaufuks tends to assume book titles for his projects or, in *Utz*'s case, exhibitions[19]. Yet, Utz is also significant because it illuminates some of the artist's relationship with objects.

There are several projects by Blaufuks in which one might read the significance of objects. For instance, in *All the Memory of the World, part one* (2014)[20] there is a series of photographs that all share the title *ITS.* (Fig. 8) These are images of everyday objects, isolated over a neutral background: a wristwatch, a wallet, a spoon, a comb, a pipe, a pair of glasses, and so forth. They wear a patina of time, and their title appears cryptic at first glance. In truth, ITS is the acronym for International Tracing Service, an archive of the International Committee of the Red Cross, located in the small German town of Bad Arolsen, that continues to offer survivors and relatives of Holocaust victims the possibility of tracking persons that disappeared during World War Two. This service not only includes name registries of the victims, it also keeps the objects they left behind, in the hope that they might somehow identify their owners. To sever the distance between these broken items and the contemporary viewer, Blaufuks includes one object that might serve to identify himself, and might then in turn serve to position us in his place: he includes a pair of white archival

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19 Held between 22 September and 16 November 2012, *Utz* dealt with issues of photographic reproduction and obsolescence as we will see in Chapter 1.3 – 'Obsolescence: the nostalgic look'.

20 To be analysed as a whole in Chapter 3.2 - '*All the Memory of the World, part one*'.

gloves. Such as the ones one might use when handling these remnants, yet contrasting to these in their pristine condition. (Fig. 9)

Other projects carry a less emotional load, in that the association between the object and owner lack the traumatic aura of *ITS. Album* (2008) too places objects at its centre. It is a compendium of 154 photographs — of objects, of other images, of other photographs —, but here the owner is the artist himself, and the remnants are those of his life. In an attempt to eliminate all three-dimentionality of the featured objects, Blaufuks photographs them on a frontal view over a white background. There is one per page and, with the exception of very few elements where the back of a postcard, slide or Polaroid can found in turning the page, only one view of each is given. In this flattening any interest these items might hold in their material form is lost, they become an image; resonating not by their physical substance but by the message they convey, a content that might paint a picture of its owner.

As a photographer, it is unsurprising that the artist might keep a myriad of film lab envelopes, flattened film-roll boxes, or fragments of 35mm negatives; what one might find more unusual are the typewritten lyrics for ABBA's 'Take a Chance on Me', the restaurant receipts, or the fortune messages that are also a part of *Album*. There are several categories that might be established in a reading of this project: the mementos of travels — to the US, Jerusalem, or Paris—; the sentimental notes — a message on a napkin saying 'I was here at 13,30. Kiss', or a note with 'CALL (when you miss me)' —; the music interests — the song lyrics, the old concert ticket stubs, the cassette tapes —; the youth idols — Che Guevara, Catherine Deneuve, Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* (1942) —; the oddities — the four-leaf clover, the newspaper cut-out on a criminal artist, a mathematical approximations table —; a picture of the artist as a young man — a Photomaton strip of Blaufuks as a child, his head barely reaching the lower end of the frame, or the single frame

of a teenaged Blaufuks experimenting self-portraiture —; the items that are references to other projects — an envelope from Tangier (*My Tangier* (1991)), a bus ticket from Prague to Terezín, (*Terezín* (2007-2010)), a book on Cézanne from the 'Pocket Library of Great Art' series, recreated by the artist in the book *Blaufuks* (2007). (Fig. 10)

Most of these items date between the 1980s and the 2000s, nevertheless, some date as far back as the 1960s — perhaps even further —, these are inherited objects, inherited memories. Who would the artist know from Johannesburg in 1968 — when he was only five years-old — that would send photographs via air mail? Was it a friend of the family? A family member? And the three receipts from the Apolo Restaurant in Funchal in 1980, a place the artist has never visited[21], who brought them? (Fig. 11) Why did he keep them? Perhaps these are items that belong to people that were lost, for as Wu Hung as mentioned: "these many items are not merely specimens, rather they are lives that were lived. The months and years have left us with so many remnants, but these months and years have also taken many things with them." (2011: 22) And in the taking a few elements stand out. A telegram informing the family of Ursel August's death, the artist's grandmother, (maybe that's why on another page there is an envelope of an undelivered telegram. Who would accept telegrams after such news?). A letter from Madame R. Blaufuks in Brussels inquiring on the origins of the artist, for her family, originally from Warsaw, Poland, had been killed in World War Two, and Daniel Blaufuks is the first person she has located since that shares her surname. The cover of the Certificate of Identity for the 'Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees' that his grandparents had to make, in the opposing page a 'Your turn' stub. A reminder of the bureaucratic process, of the time lost, just to keep safe in a harbour at the edge of a Europe at War. A notebook, on its cover written, not by the artist's hand, 'To

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21 As I am from Funchal, in conversations with the artist I have inquired whether he has had the opportunity to visit my hometown. He has not.

remember later'. Yet, the nostalgic — at times sorrowful — feel is interrupted in the end. The final object being an Internal Hard Drive — the Album of a digital age. A pointing forward that Blaufuks will expand in later projects. (Fig. 12)

At times *Album* takes an almost diaristic approach. The dating of many of the items offer a fuller view of the artist's daily life. This diaristic approach will regularly emerge in Blaufuks's work, and it shall be analysed more closely in Chapter 2.1 – 'Memory, text, image' and Chapter 3.3 – 'The 'urgent eye' of Instagram'. Such is a formula frequently used by archival artists, and, as I attempted to make evident, there is a connection between the cross-linking of one's identity and one's remnants, of the remnants of one's life. It is there in Blaufuks's albums, as it is Song Dong's hoard, or Warhol's capsules. Nevertheless, this notion of remnants is one that has been extensively explored in another of the branches one might encounter in archival art, that of its association to trauma. It is this inescapable branch that will be at the centre of the next chapter of this thesis, Chapter 1.2 – 'Archive and Trauma'. And at its core will be the reading of Daniel Blaufuks's multipart project, *Under Strange Skies*.

Archive and Trauma

– A nossa terra sempre é a nossa terra.
– Na recordação sim – redargui, e pensei: «A recordação é a única realidade válida».
— Ilse Losa [22]

In the previous chapter I put forward the notion that archival art is multifaceted, and it is flexible enough to accommodate a variety of practices and approaches. Nevertheless, patterns do emerge within these approaches, and categories might be defined within archival art, as we have seen. A concern that has been prevalent with artists working within the framework of archival art is that of trauma. One possibility as to the why of this prevalence might be that caused by the linking of photography and archives explored in the preceding chapter, especially as a significant part of archival artistic practices rely on photographic and moving image material. As an answer to the follow-up question as to the why would then photography be associated to trauma, we might put forward photography's puncturing condition, as explained by Roland Barthes, to simultaneously present life and death. Lewis Payne, in Alexander Gardner's portrait of him before his execution, is alive, but to us, the viewer, "He is dead and he is going to die. […] *This will be* and *this has been*." (Barthes, 1993 [1980]: 96. Emphasis in original.) Photography might work as a certificate of presence, but it is more than this, it is the "trace of the 'catastrophe' that marks a past occurrence. To dig up the archive then, is to pursue the traces that unveil *what has been*." (Giannachi, 2016: 32. Emphasis in original.) Or as Ulrich Baer has proposed, the instant mechanically recorded by photographs is "not necessarily registered by the subject's own consciousness" at the

22 – Our land is always our land.
– In memory, yes – I said, and thought: «Memory is the only valid reality».

instant of this record, much like traumatic events "exert their troubling grip on memory and on the imagination because they were not consciously experienced at the time of their occurrence". (2002: 8) Thus, although much of photography tends to record the happy moments in life — the celebrations, births, family trips, weddings —, there are multiple layers to a story, to an image. Layers that a number of archival artists working with trauma seek to bring forward.

To illuminate these points I will begin by looking at the work of Christian Boltanski (b.1944), an artist whose practice might be read as closely relating to that of Georges Perec and Daniel Blaufuks. In examining Boltanski's work the issue of the Holocaust will emerge. Indeed, to a number of contemporary artists, but particularly to Blaufuks, the association between trauma and Holocaust is impossible to be disconnected. In this, I will explore, on the one hand, traumatic archival art based on public (or institutional) archives, where the source material the artist works on is either part of the — at times difficult to access — public or official archive, or, after challenging the official narrative, is then engulfed by it. On what one might see as the other side of the spectrum, are projects founded not on public archives, but on family archives. Private archives and memories that nonetheless look to the outside world and to events that there take place.

In creating this distinction between works based on public and works based on family archives I do not mean to imply that there are no crossovers between the two. In fact, Daniel Blaufuks takes to both for his construction of *Under Strange Skies* (2002). It will be this project that will be at the centre of this chapter, alongside a much more recent work by the artist that I will show to function as a counterpoint to the 2002 film: *judenrein* (2018).

Trauma and the Holocaust

Trauma, and how it is expressed or processed, can take a variety of shapes. It has been understood as a deformation of memory born out of an overwhelming event or experience. (Baer, 2002: 8) An experience that being unprocessed at the moment of its occurrence might emerge belatedly and be pushed into a cycle of repetition; insistent and against one's will. (Caruth, 1995: 6) As we have seen with Song Dong's *Waste Not*, there can be something stabilising in collecting the traces of our lives; in preserving something of us outside ourselves. Such an impulse might be activated later in life by events such as economic uncertainty or the death of a loved one, as in the case of Dong's mother, becoming a method of working through traumatic experiences. Other times, one's life itself begins under strenuous circumstances [23], and the wish to collect might stem from the desire to catalogue or even to prove one's existence — even if a fictive one —, as is the case of Christian Boltanski:

> We will never realize quite clearly enough what a shameful thing death is.
> In the end, we never try to fight it head on […].
> That's why – because one of us has to give an example – I decided to harness myself to the project that's been close to my heart for a long time: preserving oneself whole, keeping a trace of all the moments of our lives, all the objects that have surrounded us, everything we've said and what's been said around us, that's my goal. The task is vast, and my means are frail. Why didn't I start before? Almost everything dealing with the period that I first set about saving (6 September 1944 – 24 July 1950) has been

23 Trauma itself might come to define one's understanding of oneself, in what Dominick LaCapra has designated as founding trauma: "traumas that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or a group rather than events that pose the problematic question of identity." (2014: 23)

lost, thrown away, through culpable negligence. It was only with infinite difficulty that I was able to find the few elements that I am presenting here. […]

But the effort still to be made is great, and so many years will be spent searching, studying, classifying, before my life is secured, carefully arranged and labelled in a safe place, secure against theft, fire and nuclear war, from whence it will be possible to take it out and assemble it at any point, and that, being thus assured of never dying, I may, finally rest. [24]

(Boltanski, 1990 [1969])

The text above describes an archive; it was published as part of a booklet — *Recherche et présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance, 1944–1950* — in 1969, by Boltanski, and distributed as mail art by the artist to over one hundred select recipients. The rest of the booklet contained black-and-white photographs: a class photo, young Christian

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24 In this chapter, the English citations of the original French texts, which I include in the footnotes, were translated by me.

"On ne remarquera jamais assez que la mort est une chose honteuse. Finalement nous n'essayons jamais de lutter de front, les médecins, les scientifiques ne font que pactiser avec elle, ils luttent sur des points de détail, la retardent de quelques mois, de quelques années, mais tout cela n'est rien. Ce qu'il faut, c'est s'attaquer au fond du problème par un grand effort collectif où chacun travaillera à sa survie propre et à celle des autres.
Voilà pourquoi, car il est nécessaire qu'un d'entre nous donne l'exemple, j'ai décidé de m'atteler au projet qui me tient à cœur depuis longtemps: se conserver tout entier, garder une trace de tous les instants de notre vie, de tous les objets qui nous ont côtoyés, de tout ce que nous avons dit et de ce qui a été dit autour de nous, voilà mon but. La tâche est immense et mes moyens sont faibles. Que n'ai-je commencé plus tôt? Presque tout ce qui avait trait à la période que je me suis d'abord prescrit de sauver (6 septembre 1944 – 24 juillet 1950) a été perdu, jeté, par une négligence coupable. Ce n'est qu'avec une peine infinie que j'ai pu retrouver les quelques éléments que je présente ici. Prouver leur authenticité, les situer exactement, tout cela n'a été possible que par des questions incessantes et une enquête minutieuse.
Mais l'effort qui reste à accomplir est grand et combien se passera-t-il d'années, occupé à chercher, à étudier, à classer, avant que ma vie soit en sécurité, soigneusement rangée et étiquetée dans un lieu sûr, à l'abri du vol, de l'incendie et de la guerre atomique, d'où il soit possible de la sortir et la reconstituer à tout moment, et que, étant alors assuré de ne pas mourir, je puisse, enfin, me reposer."

playing with cubes, a photograph of said cubes, Christian's childhood bed, a shirt, a lock of hair, a page from his reading book, a composition in the hesitant writing of a child, and a number of family photographs. (Fig. 13) Yet, soon one realises that these children are not the artist, these objects were not his, these traces did not belong to him. In the absence of any effective remnants of his childhood, Boltanski turned to fiction, using photographs of children and objects that might be him, or that might have belonged to him, but are not, did not.

Why might I have turned to this case? With its impossible desire to live by the archiving of oneself, even when nothing remains of what it was that needed to be assembled. I turn to Boltanski — and specifically to this work — because it is born out of trauma: a personal and yet historical one.

Born in 1944 in Paris, Christian Boltanski is the son of a French Christian mother and a Jewish father of Russian origin. With the start of World War Two and consequently with the occupation of France, Boltanski's parents divorced, his father going into hiding under the very floor his family walked on:

> my father very quickly understood that it would get worse and worse for the Jews. One evening, [my parents] pretended to fight horribly, they slammed the door and my mother hid my father under the floor. He stayed a year and a half in a hiding place, between two floors of the house. He came out from time to time — the proof is that they made me! My brother Luc, who is five years older than me, did not know he was there, he thought his father had disappeared and he was very unhappy with this disappearance. While his father lived below him. My mother was able to keep

> the secret thanks to the help of my old brother, Jean-Élie, who was twelve or thirteen years old and who took everything on himself. It was a very heavy thing for a child, constantly having to watch if there was no police…[25] [26] (Boltanski & Grenier, 2007: 13)

This original impact of having been conceived and born into a family carrying such a secret — a family that afterwards became extremely protective of its unit, even avoiding leaving the house alone, with a number of friends that had also gone into hiding or had disappeared in the camps (Boltanski & Grenier, 2007: 16) — could not but weigh down on Boltanski's perception of his childhood. Could not but have an effect on his memories or lack thereof: "It is certain […] that I always remember the shame of being Jewish. […] which was a thing to hide, dangerous and really not good."[27] (Boltanski & Grenier, 2007: 10) Thus, the impulse to retrace his childhood in *Recherche et présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance, 1944–1950,* not through the extraordinary circumstances that it held but through the

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25 "Mes parents ont divorcé, intentionnellement, mais un vrai divorce. Parce que mon père a très vite compris que ça irait de plus en plus mal pour les juifs. Un soir, ils ont fait semblant de s'engueuler horriblement, ils ont fait claquer la porte et ma mère a caché mon père sous le plancher. Il est resté un an et demi dans une cachette, entre deux planchers de la maison. Il sortait de temps en temps — la preuve, c'est qu'ils m'ont fabriqué! Mon frère Luc, qui a cinq ans de plus que moi, ne savait pas qu'il était là, il pensait que son père avait disparu et il était très malheureux de cette disparition. Alors que son père vivait au-dessous de lui. Ma mère a pu garder le secret grâce à l'aide de mon vieux frère, Jean-Élie, qui avait douze ou treize ans et qui a tout pris sur lui. C'était une chose très lourde pour un enfant, de devoir constamment guetter pour s'il n'y avait pas la police..."

26 Richard Hobbs establishes parallels between Christian Boltanski's projects as reflections on the Holocaust, even if through the use of irony and play, and his brother Luc Boltanski's poetry book *Poème* (1993), in which each of the poems is followed by commentaries on the triggering moment of their writing. In this, Luc Boltanski makes explicit the family connection to Judaism, describing his grandfather as a Jew from Odessa, and exploring his ancestry in the poem 'Yom Kippur'. A poem that stemmed from Christian Boltanski's suggestion to visit a synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur, and consequently to Luc's use of a photograph that Christian shared with him of the entrance to a Jewish cemetery in Odessa bearing the inscription "the place of ancestors" as the book cover. (1998: 131-132)

27 "Il est certain […] que je me souviens depuis toujours de la honte d'être juif. […] ce qui était une chose à cacher, dangereuse et vraiment pas bien."

most common elements that might have with those of others (the class pictures, the toys, the shirt), even if false, might be seen as functioning as a reaction to trauma; a reaction to his felt difference, a reaction to History. As the artist claims: “Each artist has a trauma at the origin of his life or his work. This is generally of the order of the psychoanalytic, but in my case, it is also history”.[28] (Boltanski *apud* Furci, 2012: 39) This impulse might be found in another text by the artist balancing on the boundary between reality and imagination: *What they remember* (1990), a compilation of 100 statements on Boltanski as if he were dead and being remembered by others.[29] Number seven states: “He told so many stories about his childhood, so many dubious anecdotes about his family that, as he often said, he no longer knew what was true and what wasn’t, he no longer had any memories of his childhood.” (*apud* Hobbs, 1998: 126) It is possible that this statement might be flipped: he might have had no memories of his childhood, and so he would have to invent one for himself.[30]

Nevertheless, the type of works most closely associated with Boltanski are generally not those based on writing. He is better known for his ‘Monuments’, his large installations in which the walls of the exhibition space are covered in black-and-white photographs — headshots — illuminated individually or by row, at times standing over a closed weathered box —whose items are never to be known to the spectator —, other times close to piles and piles of clothes. In these ‘Monuments’, Boltanski systematically references death, whether it is an outcome of criminal activities where victims and perpetrators mingle in their portraits (*El Caso* (1988)), a representation of the yearly deaths in a single country (*364 Suisses morts*

28 “Chaque artiste a un traumatisme à l’origine de sa vie ou de son travail. C’est en général de l’ordre du psychanalytique, mais dans mon cas, cela relève aussi de l’Histoire.”

29 This piece also draws from a work that will be analysed in Chapter 2.2 – ‘A Dialogue with Georges Perec’, *I Remember* (2014 [1978]).

30 As we shall see in Section 2 — ‘Writing with Images’ of this thesis, Boltanski’s lack of childhood memories in the context of a trauma related to the Holocaust is not unique. In *W, or the Memory of Childhood*, Georges Perec makes a similar claim, as does W. G. Sebald’s character in *Austerlitz*.

(1990)), a return to the theme of lost childhood (*Les Enfants de Dijon* (1986)), or an indirect acknowledgment of the Holocaust (*La Fête du Pourim* (1989)). This latter piece references in its title the Jewish holiday Purim — depicted in the *Book of Esther* —, commemorating the saving of the Jewish people from a plot to annihilate them in the Persian Empire. Using a picture of a young group of students from a Jewish School in Paris dressed up for a Purim celebration in 1939, (Fig. 14) Boltanski enlarged and separated each face, blurring them in the process. (Fig. 15) [31] As Andrea Liss reflects, the 1939 dating of the photograph draws these children "even deeper into the horrific institutionalization of the Nazis' mass death campaigns". (1998: 43)

Public Archives / Family Archives

Expanding on the point above, on the institutionalisation and archival principles employed by the Nazis, where "the victims of the Holocaust were treated impersonally as specimens of a race that first had to be collected and inventoried before they could be used (in the labour camps) or destroyed (in the gas chambers)" (van Alphen, 2007: 369), we find something in the way Boltanski isolates the faces he uses in his 'Monuments' that recalls mug shots. These being the result of the institutionalisation of photography Allan Sekula explores in *The Traffic in Photographs* (1981) and *The Body and the Archive* (1986), with his analysis on Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton's use of photography to identify the criminal body (in the case of the former) and to generate a composite image of types — criminal, racial, ethnic — (in the case of the latter) in the late nineteenth-century. (Fig. 16) A perpetuation of describability as a disciplinary framework in use from the eighteenth-century onwards that Foucault had identified in *Discipline and Punish* (1995 [1975]). This use of photography,

31 As we shall see below, Blaufuks and Gerhard Richter also turn to blurring while representing some of the victims of World War Two.

"essentially produced to be archived [...] unlike other types of identification aimed at public dissemination" (Sousa Dias, 2015: 493), subsequently was expanded to work as an auxiliary of identification in official documents. Thus, these images became the determining force that later assisted the destruction of the people represented in them. Marked with a large red *J*, the passports and identification documents of the Jewish population in World War Two became tools for "visibility, and surveillance, not for life but for the death machine that had already condemned all of those thus marked." (Hirsch, 2001: 27) Documents and images that remain in Public Archives even if the faces they identify have long disappeared; a circumstance explored by Blaufuks in his project *Rejected.*

In the early 2000s, whilst undertaking research for his film *Under Strange Skies*, Blaufuks encountered hundreds of files carrying the letter *J* in the Portuguese Foreign Ministry Archives, pertaining to visa applications from Jewish refugees during World War Two. However, these files belonged not to the people who entered the country but to those who were refused entry, those who were rejected. It is from these files that the photographic series *Rejected* emerged in 2002. This work, composed of 23 photographs, shows a variety of people with nothing more in common than their religious background and their supposed fates. The viewer is, like the artist, unaware of the destiny of the people here represented, yet, considering the fate of millions of others in the same circumstances, it is likely that most, if not all, perished during the war. Drawing from Barthes one might claim that, these faces have their whole future ahead of them and yet they have no future. (Fig. 17)

As in many of Blaufuks's works using archival images, the photographs that form *Rejected* were reshot by the artist. Through this a unique reframing of each of the documents and photographs was accomplished. Although such a method might help create a sense of individuality between the victims some issues arise, for as Susan Sontag states "[i]n deciding

how a picture should look, preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects." (2008 [1977]: 6) As such, in *Rejected* Blaufuks not only presents his interpretation of the individuals — by overlapping some of the images, by photographing one person in close proximity whilst distancing another, by tilting some of the passport photos and keeping others at a straight vertical, or by showing some of the text included in the files —, he also subjects the victims to another sort of rejection by selecting one over another. (Fig. 18) An aspect the artist admits to musing over:

> While I was looking at the photographs of refugees, I felt that anguish of having to choose: you can't use everything and therefore you have to choose, and then, in doing so, I felt rather like those policemen who used to pick people out. But they didn't pick them out by their faces, in fact they based their choice on a system, on a rule, on a law, on absurdities. In photography, it's the opposite to some extent, faces are chosen because there's a certain look or expression in them, but it's always a choice. (Blaufuks, 2008b: 55)

In this we find the artist grappling with a question that will return in *Under Strange Skies*, when he imagines asking of his grandfather "what would have happened if he had not been a Jew, could he have lived in a Nazi Germany, would he have left?" (Blaufuks, 2007). In *Rejected*, we can envisage Blaufuks wondering: 'If I was not a Jew and lived during nazi Germany, would I have participated? Would I have chosen who lives? Who dies?' Because in selecting some faces over others — true, on their looks rather than on a brutal law — the ones that are re-photographed live again, as images, whilst the rejected ones continue to be

entombed: “The photographs have become the only ‘grave’ [they] shall ever have, the only record of their existence, and for many survivors, the only tangible remnants of their past.” (Eliach *apud* Liss, 1998: 36)

The lives of the people Blaufuks here retrieves continually touch on the lives of his family, his grandparents in particular. In rummaging through family archives the artist is able to bring up a view of the outside world. As a grandson of Jewish refugees — exiles that could never really consider their new country as home (“My homeland is where my legs are standing”, claims his grandfather) — Blaufuks’s projects, particularly *Under Strange Skies*, might be read through the lens of postmemory.[32]

Introduced by Marianne Hirsch in her reading of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1992) — a graphic novel depicting Spiegelman’s relationship with his father, a Holocaust survivor, in which the characters take animal form: Jews as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, North-Americans as dogs —, postmemory describes “the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they ‘remember’ only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right.” (Hirsch, 2001: 9) In

32 And indeed it has, consider the doctoral thesis by Ana Margarida Quintais: *A escrita dobra a imagem: Daniel Blaufuks e a construção da pós-memória* (2015), or my own MA dissertation: *Photography, archive, memory: encounters between the private and the collective in the practice of Daniel Blaufuks* (2012). See also Section 2 — ‘Writing with Images’ of this thesis.

Moreover, whilst falling outside the scope of the present thesis, it is also possible to examine *Under Strange Skies* through the lens of autoethnography. Consider Catherine Russell’s analysis of characteristics present in autoethnographic films that easily apply to Blaufuks’s film: “Family histories and political histories unfold as difficult processes of remembering and struggle. Specific, resonant images echo across distances of time and space. […] A prominent theme in contemporary personal cinema is the staging of an encounter with the filmmaker’s parent(s) or grandparent(s) who embody a particular cultural history of displacement or tradition […]. The difference between generations is written across the filmmaker’s own inscription in technology, and thus it is precisely an ethnographic distance between the modern and the premodern that is dramatized in the encounter — through interview or archival memory or both. One often gets the sense that the filmmaker has no memory and is salvaging his or her own past through the recording of family memory.” (1999: 278)

Blaufuks's case the traumatic memory appears to come not from his parents — although, as we will see below, there is a link between *Under Strange Skies* and *judenrein* to his parents — but from the exiled condition of his grandparents. It contaminates his very experience of home[33]:

> Now, I am on this side of the screen, looking at all those photographs and old 8mm reels and I can see all, who have left, one by one, taking a part of me forever.
>
> Strangely enough, in some ways, I became exiled as well.
>
> Where is my home? I don't really know. (Blaufuks, 2007)

As such, Blaufuks assembles a narrative that might illuminate his standing in the country he was born into: Portugal, rather than the Germany and Poland of his ancestors. He collects the fragments of those gone — the letters, the reels, the photographs, the memories of memories of memories (Blaufuks, 2007) — that enable him to construct a narrative that might assist him, and others like him, in the processing of the event, of the trauma. Thus, family archives, more so than public archives, might be seen to operate as the common element in an exceptional situation that permit outsiders to the story, or the community, to access the event, and to draw parallels to their own lives.

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33 And, as we shall consider in the final chapter of this thesis — 'The *urgent eye* of Instagram' —, later manifests in his obsessive photographing of his kitchen window, an attempt to establish a home.

Under Strange Skies / judenrein: A dyptic

Beginning with Portuguese archival news reports from the 1930s showing visits to Lisbon from Naval Officers from both 'new friends' — the Germans — and 'old allies' — the British —, *Under Strange Skies*, the documentary film running 57 minutes [34], shows the conflicting position of the Portuguese Government during World War Two. (Fig. 19) Blaufuks's family was one of the thousands caught up in this duality, explored throughout the film with the use of personal images from family albums, archival images and records of a much larger community.

Mainly composed of images, still or moving, taken between the 1930s and 1970s the artist's presence in the film is constantly brought into view through the reframing and the re-photographing of the material. A presence that is at times even physically visible through the appearance of Blaufuks's hands within the frame. (Fig. 20) A caring gesture, which establishes the connection of the photographic image as object and the hand that cradles it that I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. From images of gravestones of old friends and family members to the photographs taken of files in the Portuguese Foreign Ministry Archive, Blaufuks creates a broad representation of the lives and difficulties that assailed the exiled community.

Combining the images with the artist's voice-over — and that of actor Bruno Ganz in the reading of excerpts from writers retelling their lives at this period, such as Arthur Koestler (1905-1983), Hermann Grab (1903-1949) or Hans Sahl (1902-1993) — the film shows the struggle of refugees, under constant fear that German forces might invade the Iberian Peninsula and destroy one of the last safe havens in Europe. Yet, Blaufuks does not limit himself to the texts of celebrated writers, he also looks to the accounts written by his grandfather. Using

34 Daniel Blaufuks first produced the film version of the project in 2002, publishing it as a photobook in 2007.

not only sections of his grandfather's letters but also private photographs of the time found in his family albums, Blaufuks draws the journey of an exiled family. Emphasising the warm relationship of its members, particularly that of grandfather and grandson, as might be seen in the 8mm recordings of the artist as a young boy accompanied by his grandfather. (Fig. 21)

In *Under Strange Skies*, we follow the journey of a young couple — Ursel and Herbert August — seeking refuge long before many others realise they should have to do the same. From the initial strangeness of arriving on a foreign land, the hope of building a future arrives with the birth of their daughter in the beginning of 1937. But making a living when the language is not one's own proves an arduous task, and even after the couple launches a small production of toy animals — the MUNA company, named after Blaufuks's mother: Manuela — their difficulties remain. As the film progresses the viewer is shown the thousands that join the young couple from 1940-onwards, including Blaufuks's great-uncle, Hans Leinung, and great-grandparents Elsa and Julius Leinung. The unofficially forced move of the Jews to areas outside the Portuguese capital, where their sheer number — and their foreign cosmopolitan notions — would not disrupt the local population, is also displayed in the film. And although, in the wait for an exit from Europe — a wait that might take up to one year — one might sense despair, a feeling of hope is also apparent, particularly in the forming of a community, in the discovery of solace in daily tasks, in the finding of love — as was the case for Blaufuks's great-uncle.

There is a moment in *Under Strange Skies*, just before the initial credits, where all that can be seen is an image of graves spreading beyond the frame; it is a photograph of the Jewish cemetery in Lisbon. (Fig. 22) As Blaufuks begins to recollect the people that here lie buried — the friends from the canasta group, people that belonged to the Jewish community and family members — the photograph fades into a grainy, scratched Super-8 film, taken by the

artist's great-uncle in 1968, of the same gravestones. (Fig. 23) There is a sense, in this short moment, that every grave stands in for a friend, for a loved one. The care the artist feels for his grandparents shines through the entirety of the film, as I mentioned he cradles their photographs as if holding something precious, the last link to their lives perhaps. He recalls how he grew up in the same building as his grandparents, how he made the two-floor journey countless times throughout the day, how they shared their daily meals, and how he would never again taste an apple pie as good as his grandmother's. Here we find a departure between *Under Strange Skies* as a film and as a photobook. Whilst for the majority of the time the photobook follows exactly the action and the narration of the film, Blaufuks expanded on the sorrow of losing his grandmother:

> My grandmother was the first one of the group to die and, I guess, the canasta meeting went on without her for some years, until one day there was no one left at the table. And then when she died, one last apple pie was still in the freezer. My grandfather insisted that we should eat it and it was a bitter task — not because of my grandmother's cooking [skills] but because of the fate of having a pie surviving the cook. (2007)

In addition to the images described above, placed throughout the film, and book, the artist includes what are almost abstract shots of light coming in through tree branches. The camera is aimed upwards, but the sound is that of rustling leaves, crunching beneath footsteps. In their spacing they function as breaks in the narrative, as a moment in which one might catch a breath. It is only towards the end of *Under Strange Skies* that we understand their presence: Blaufuks recounts the building of a house in Birre, amongst trees that we see

his grandfather watering. For the artist, it was the place he felt his grandparents came closer to settling roots, and thus now he walks among these trees.

In the 8mm reels the artist appropriates of his childhood, slowing them down, closing in on his young face so that its traces are blurred, the loving presence of the grandparents looking over the play of their grandchildren is always noticeable. Nonetheless, the traumatic experience shines through when the artist creates a barrier, a veil over the event, establishing a distance from it. (Fig. 24) Such is produced in *Under Strange Skies*, by the blurring mentioned above, but also by re-photographing of family album pictures through the protective translucent sheet of paper found in old albums, an actual veil.[35] This might be seen as a way to protect the image from the inquisitive gaze of the camera. Similar methods might be found in other works by artists dealing with traumatic events. For instance, Gerhard Ritcher's (b. 1932) early photo-based paintings too seem to be blurred under a protective layer. *Uncle Rudi* (1965) and *Tante Marianne* (1965), both casualties of World War Two, are enveloped in haziness, their semblances not completely open to public scrutiny.[36] In his recent ten-minute short film *judenrein* (2018) Blaufuks turns away from the physical veil of the album paper, but he nonetheless secures a barrier between traumatic event and representation. Here, however, the distance is established through the selected medium.

Appropriating an amateur film purchased on eBay, in *judenrein* Blaufuks develops a series of propositions / suspicions around the scenes he found. In investigating a reel of unattributed Super-8, the artist grew interested in a disconcerting coincidence. The film begins in what appears to be a road movie, travelling through country roads until the name of a Polish

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35 The glassine paper found in Blaufuks's albums has the characteristic spiderweb pattern found in German-produced albums: *spinnenpapier*.

36 Both *Uncle Rudi* and *Tante Marianne*, represent members of Richter's family that were lost during the war. However while uncle Rudi was killed in combat as part of the German Army, aunt Marianne was murdered by the Nazi regime for being schizophrenic. (*See* Mosynska, 2009).

town is seen, blurredly, on a plaque. (Fig. 25) Blaufuks, the narrator, describes how he slowed the image to be able to read its name: Klimontów, a small village not too far from Warsaw, where his paternal family were from, before World War Two pressed them to leave, settling in Portugal. With the shaky images showing us the exit of the congregation from church, the artist relates to us the history of the town: the construction of the synagogue in the 1860s, the established Jewish community that in 1939 made over half of Klimontów's population, how there were a Jewish school, hospital, hospice, prayer rooms and libraries available. He tells us how in this year the German Army entered the village, and how the rights of the Jews were progressively denied. Finally, in 1942, the German SS and the Polish Police rounded up the remaining Jews, killing the elderly and sick, moving the rest to Treblinka, declaring the town rid of Jews: *judenrein*. Yet the story does not end there, the few survivors that returned after Liberation were killed off, the Jewish properties had passed to their neighbours. In 1946, a pogrom was effected in the vicinities of the town, the Jews killed off by peasants and members of the community. In the Super-8 the anonymous population is silent, staring blankly at the camera — and at the person behind it — or looking away from it. (Fig. 26) In addition to his narration, the artist includes the sound of the projector, in such an aggressive tone that one might take it for the sound of a machine gun. At the moments the movement is slowed-down the sound turns into something approximating a heartbeat. Such is particularly evident towards the end of the filming, where what only remains is the landscape and a hunched over peasant. It is a scenery that might have been seen in any other epoch of the village's existence. (Fig. 27)

If in *Under Strange Skies*, the plight of the Jewish population during World War Two could be found through the presence of documentary evidence — through the archival images and the reports of the artist's grandfather —, in *judenrein* it is found in absence, in the silent

population of Klimontów. I propose that there is a reason for this choice that is defined by something more than the circumstance of finding an amateur film of a town that has lost all its Jews: in these two films are the two parts of Blaufuks's family. *Under Strange Skies* is about his mother's side of the family but there is only a brief mention of his father: Blaufuks tells us that he was also a son of refugees. In fact he is there, in the film, in a family photograph of Blaufuks as a baby being held by his mother with his brother next to him, but he has been cut-out of the image, he is a void. (Fig. 28) Blaufuks's father left his young family early on[37], and thus, as can be observed in *Under Strange Skies*, the artist's grandfather seems to have almost taken over this role. In *judenrein*, Blaufuks tells us that Klimontów is near his ancestors' hometown, the Polish side of the family, the absent father's side. Therefore, this film, with its silences and its voids, might be read as a representation of two traumas, that of the Holocaust and that of the abandoned son.[38]

There are other links that might be established between the two films. *Under Strange Skies* takes its title from Ilse Losa's 1962 novel.[39] In 1948, the protagonist José (Josef) Berger, a German Jewish refugee, has been living in Porto with his Portuguese wife, awaiting the birth of his first child and remembering the not that far away War years. After the War he travels on vacation with his wife to his hometown in Germany, where he finds a disconnect between memories of past events and present attitudes:

37 In his 2019 book, *Não Pai*, Blaufuks examines his father's absence from his life.

38 On the issue of abandoned children, in 2014 Blaufuks developed a project, *Corte*, for the exhibition "Visitação – O Arquivo: Memória e Promessa" (10 July – 2 November 2014) organised by Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa (a Portuguese charity founded in 1498). Working with archival material on children left at the guard of the charity, either because their parents were unable to take care of them or did not want to, Blaufuks photographed the tokens that the families would leave with the children as identifying marks should they come back for them. Many of these tokens consisted of cut playing cards, half coins, or half photographs — most remain in the archives without the parents' half.

39 *Sob Céus Estranhos.*

> Kind, always kind. Where were those who had knocked me down the road and who "couldn't care less" for me? Where were those who drove out my *Good Old Man*? Those who locked him in that sealed train that entered the Rossio station in an unforgettable night? No one seemed to have driven anyone away. Was it then a hideous nightmare that of the Superba [refugee] group, always different, always the same and always on the run, the racing to the consulates for visas, the crowded docks of defamed and humiliated people, the overcrowded boats, the suicides, terror, fear? No one seemed to have murdered anyone. And none of those caring people looked like a child killer. They were sorry, they were sorry, some even cried. But there was not a single one who confessed himself present in the days of the carnage. They were absent, everyone.[40] (Losa, 2000 [1962]: 173. My translation.)

Some of the sentiments Losa's character entertains might be found in Blaufuks's interpretation of the reaction of the people featured in the found Super-8 film that forms *judenrein.* Arguably, in this film, the artist takes one of his most openly political stands, attempting to show how anti-Semitism never really went away, and how the present rise of Populism was all but predictable. The artist speculates that the town's people are hiding a secret, hiding

40 "Amáveis, sempre amáveis. Onde estavam aqueles que me tinha derrubado na estrada e que «se estavam nas tintas» para comigo? Onde estavam os que escorraçaram o meu *Good Old Man*? Os que o encerraram nesse comboio selado que entrou, numa noite inesquecível, na estação do Rossio? Ninguém parecia ter escorraçado ninguém. Fora então um medonho pesadelo o grupo [de refugiados] do Superba, sempre diferente, sempre o mesmo e sempre em fuga, as corridas para os consulados para se obterem vistos, os cais apinhados de gente difamada e humilhada, os barcos superlotados, os suicídios, o terror, o medo? Ninguém parecia ter assassinado ninguém. E nenhuma daquelas pessoas solícitas tinha cara de assassino de crianças. Lamentavam, sentiam muito, algumas até choravam. Mas não se apresentou um único que se confessasse presente nos dias da carnificina. Estiveram ausentes, todos."

their faces from the camera even — as one of the women Blaufuks singles out does when exiting the church, blocking her face with her purse. (Fig. 29) The secret they hide is that many of the members of the town have been complicit in the disappearance of their former Jewish neighbours. That they shield their faces from the guilt they feel. And yet, Blaufuks then contradicts these speculations by presenting the viewer with the information that this Super-8 film was in all probability shot in the 1980s. Even if they had been born already before the war, most of the people in the film would not have been more than children at the time. They would not have been complicit in the disappearance of the Jewish population, at most they would have been complicit of maintaining the silencing of events.

There is in *judenrein* an obvious temporal gap, but there is something else that sits between the moment of trauma and its representation: the medium. The fact that someone would shoot a film in the 1980s in Super-8, particularly silent Super-8. There is a temporality given by this choice. We expect certain technologies to belong to certain periods in history. We expect a particular colour, noise, or texture from representations of the past, and we might be deceived when these are used in representations of a different period. So even if the people we see in this film had no part in the traumatic events that unfolded in Klimontów during World War Two, by being shot in a grainy Super-8 they are pushed back to the late-1960s / early-1970s. To a period much closer to the event, and much farther from its processing in the present.

The impact of the choice of medium is particularly relevant in Blaufuks's projects. The artist explores its effects on the viewer's perception of the works, of the message: something that Marshall McLuhan had long ago remarked when he claimed that " 'the medium is the message' because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action." (1994 [1964]: 9) In the following chapter, I shall turn to these con-

siderations, looking at a number of short-films by the artist, particularly *Fábrica* (2012), where the choice of an obsolete medium — also Super-8 — to represent an abandoned fact-ory affects how the space is perceived, and might, arguably, induce nostalgia.

Obsolescence: the nostalgic look

[O]bsolescence has an aura: the aura of redundancy and failure;

the aura around what has been improved upon.

— Tacita Dean

In 2002, to celebrate its 100th issue, October magazine assembled a questionnaire directed at artists regarding their thoughts on obsolescence and uses of obsolete or outmoded media. One of the questions, “Does obsolescent [media] provide a model for accessing dimensions of memory and/or history for you?” (Baker, 2002: 6) could, arguably, be applied to the practice of Daniel Blaufuks. Moving from this interrogation and from considerations put forward in the previous chapter, on how the choice of medium affects one’s perception of the work and of the period being represented, I will now examine the use Blaufuks makes of obsolete technologies as an instrument in the building of nostalgia — even if he then combines this nostalgia with a critique on our idealisation of the past.

In 2012, as part of the work produced for Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture, Blaufuks developed an exhibition / project titled *Fábrica*. Featuring photographic work, leaflets, remnants of textiles — later a photobook — and a twenty-four minute short film (which will be the focus of this chapter), Blaufuks elaborated a reflection on a declining industry by appropriating archival footage where the former employees of the Vizela River Spinning and Textile Factory take a central role; as well as pictures of the space in its heyday, images of sample pattern folios and footage made by the artist of the factory in its current state of abandonment. This is emphasised by the artist’s choice of filming the abandoned, dust-covered, factory space both in digital and in Super-8 film, a medium that — with its

tonality, format and noise — might be read as a nostalgic trigger in a digital world. Taking as reference Susan Stewart's notion of nostalgia, put forward in *On Longing* (1992 [1984]), as well as Carolyn Steedman's reading of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995) in *Dust* (2001) — where the fever of the title's English translation is taken literally, as a physical malady produced by the dust in the handling of archival material —, I will analyse the nostalgic effect generated by Blaufuks's interlacing of archival images, digital photography and video, and Super-8 film.

To do so I will first turn to the defining elements of obsolescence, its association to modern economics, its artistic impact. I will then look upon the nostalgic dimensions of obsolescence and how these have been seized upon as selling points by the very companies that insist on the ceaseless production of newness. Moreover, I will examine the association between the nostalgia in Blaufuks's *Fábrica*, the representations of factories in early-cinema — such as the Lumière's *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (1895) — and other portrayals of factories in contemporary art — for instance in Tacita Dean's *Kodak* (2006), and in Víctor Erice's *Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal* (2012), which takes place in the same factory of Blaufuks's film.

Obsolescence: the life / death / life cycle

Daniel Blaufuks has continuously explored a variety of formats and media in his practice. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the artist has both created his own images and appropriated existing material, in the latter visibly reframing or reworking the pictures. Never shying away from recent technologies, and indeed — as we shall see in Section 3 of this thesis — adopting them in a number of projects, Blaufuks has nevertheless frequently turned to outmoded or obsolete formats. What I will point to below is how the artist has consciously

employed the medium as an active element in the creation of meaning in his works. In *Fábrica* (2013), but also, as we will see, in *Carpe Diem* (2010) and *Eden* (2011), this use is particularly visible.

Fábrica opens, silently, with the following quote by W. H. Auden:

> "One cannot walk
> through an
> assembly factory
> and not feel that one
> is in hell."

The soft sound of wind rustling through leaves accompanies the opening shot of the exterior of the Vizela River Spinning and Textile Factory — established in 1845 and closed in 2002 —, however such is abruptly interrupted by the ringing once used to call workers to their posts and a cut to a black and white photograph of a worker manoeuvring levers. Images of immobilised clocks follow, pressing further the significance of time: time as key in factory work, but also time as the element that marks the distance between the building's past and its present. The striking disparity of the opening sequence is repeated throughout the film; Blaufuks punctuates it with the hellish sounds of factory work: the rattling, rumbling and hissing of the working machines clashing with the quiet sounds of the derelict space, highlighting the oppressiveness of this mechanical world. The film is composed of contrasts — in the sound, in the images, in the medium —, an accumulation of strata that needs to be excavated so that the past of this factory might be exposed. Yet, I would argue, there is also the presence of nostalgia here.

As a non-narrative work, *Fábrica* might be read as one of Blaufuks's more 'experi-

mental' documentary films, more so in the use of Super-8 film at a digital time. Although Super-8 is not the only format the artist employs in *Fábrica* — in addition to the archival images he appropriates Blaufuks also intersperses the film with some digital shots — it is visually dominant. Not just because it might figure as an oddity to audiences unaccustomed to the medium — Super-8 has been out of popular use since the widespread of video in the 1980s —, but also because it seems to have expired, or at least made to look so.[41] It is grainy and dark, the reds are highly saturated, and the whites are never truly white. (Fig. 30) There are scratches and countless light leaks. (Fig. 31) Like the factory, the film seems to have aged, or, as Jeffrey Schnapp put it in his documentary film on Harvard University's Library storage facility, *Cold Storage* (2015), to have been "overwritten by time". What might have been viewed as technical errors had the technology used not been obsolete — or had been applied to something other than artistic work — here become aesthetic qualities or even, as Rosalind Krauss has considered, when reading Walter Benjamin, the possibility of a recovery of aura:

> Benjamin believed that at the birth of a given social form or technological process the utopian dimension was present and, furthermore, that it is precisely at the moment of the obsolescence of that technology that it once more releases this dimension, like the last gleam of a dying star. For obsolescence, the very law of commodity production, both frees the outmoded object from the grip of utility and reveals the hollow promise of that law. (2000: 41)

41 It could be argued, however, that some audiences — particularly younger ones — might not be able to identify the medium as Super-8. They will of course recognise that it looks like 'something old', but might assume that its qualities have been digitally produced. Notwithstanding, there is something to be said on the replication of the material characteristics through digital means, not necessarily as a copy or imitation, but as forms of "rethinking and re-evaluations of ideas, […] functions and uses." (Codell & Hughes, 2018: 3) Perhaps in this light, even a digitally produced 'Super-8' could possibly become an inducer of the nostalgia I examine below.

The unofficial law Krauss mentions here is one that had been introduced in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century. With the rise of industrially produced commodities obsolescence too became commonplace. Nevertheless, there are distinct forms obsolescence might take. As Giles Slade observes: “The earliest phase of product obsolescence […] is called *technological obsolescence*, or obsolescence due to technological innovation.” (2006: 4. Emphasis in original) The second phase might be called “*psychological*, *progressive*, or *dynamic obsolescence* […] the mechanism of changing product style as a way to manipulate consumers into repetitive buying.” (Slade, 2006: 5. Emphasis in original) This second phase, pertaining to psychological obsolescence “was a strategy designed to put the consumer into a state of anxiety based on the belief that whatever is old is undesirable, dysfunctional, and embarrassing, compared with what is new.” (Slade, 2006: 50) The most recent phase, ‘planned obsolescence’, began during the Depression Era when manufacturers sought to “artificially limit the durability of a manufactured good in order to stimulate repetitive consumption.” (Slade, 2006: 5) It is this third phase that inspired a pamphlet by Bernard London, in 1932, ‘Ending the Depression through Planned Obsolescence’, where the solution to stimulate the Depression Era economy was simple: assign expiration dates to everything. A car would have an expiration date of five years, a building, 25 years. After which they would become ‘legally dead’. For London, “Product mortality [was] the key to economic stability.” (Brown, 2015: 23)[42]

As odd as it might seem to talk about objects as dead or alive, our consumer driven economy *is* founded on obsolescence, nowhere more evident than with technology. What not

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42 Giles Slade notes that, curiously, in the very year of London’s pamphlet Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) was also being published. Here too obsolescence was one of the key tenets of the dystopian future: “Ending is better than mending, ending is better than mending, ending is better…” (Huxley, 2007 [1932]: 42)

so long ago was considered cutting edge, might now be quickly discarded.[43] But perhaps, on looking at obsolescence one might consider the beauty of knowing that what one holds might in all probability become obsolete in the future, or perhaps has already become so in some other part of the world. As Babette B. Tischleder and Sarah Wasserman remind us, obsolescence is site-specific. (2015: 9) Products circulate and are replaced at different speeds, something that might look old for some might still feel new for others. Nonetheless, when they do become obsolete, they continue to have something to offer. It might be Benjamin's recovered aura, but principally they "become an index of an understanding of the world lost to us." (Douglas & Thater, 1998: 9) They hold the traces of past epochs, reminding us of what once was, and, like the ruin in eighteenth-century Europe, they have the potential to become inducers of nostalgia. (Boym, 2001: 11)[44] Arguably, it is generally through artistic practices that the specificities of each medium, including their 'faults', shine as active elements of production, but the nostalgic qualities they hold might not only engender their very return as commodities to new generations 'rediscovering' them, they have also systematically been utilised as marketing tools.[45]

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43 Although one might propose that environmental concerns have abated a commodity-driven production and provided a refocus on consumption reduction, reuse and recycle, there continues to be a push, particularly in technology, towards innovation and programmed annual launching of new products. Take for instance, Apple's highly anticipated annual Worldwide Developers Conference.

44 Yet as Svetlana Boym also points out: "[…] the value of the ruin itself changes through history. In the baroque age the ruins of antiquity were often used didactically, conveying to the beholder 'the contrast between ancient greatness and present degradation.' Romantic ruins radiated melancholy, mirroring the shattered soul of the poet and longing for harmonic wholeness. As for the modern ruins, they are reminders of the war and the cities' recent violent past, pointing at coexistence of different dimensions and historical times in the city. The ruin is not merely something that reminds us of the past; it is also a reminder of the future, when our present becomes history." (2001: 79)

45 As Polaroid Originals, a Dutch company founded in 2008 and initially named Impossible Project, has recently endeavoured by first purchasing the production equipment of a former Polaroid factory in Enschede, Netherlands, and in 2017 acquiring the Polaroid brand and intellectual property. Arguably, the return to Polaroid by new generations has been assisted by the popularity of series taking place in the 1980s such as *Stranger Things* (2016-), with Polaroid Originals even

Nostalgic Dimensions

A darkened conference room, a slide show, the article to be sold positioned at the centre of the table, representatives of the company that produced it waiting to be convinced by a marketing team. It is the apex of the season one finale of *Mad Men* (2007-2015), a television show devoted to the world of advertising in New York of the 1960s, the product to be pitched on: Kodak's new slide projector. The main character, Don Draper, offers a speech that moves members of his own team to tears. The stirring argument: nostalgia.

> Teddy told me that in Greek, nostalgia literally means the pain from an old wound. It's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone. This device isn't a space ship. It's a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called the Wheel. It's called the Carousel. It lets us travel the way a child travels. Around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved. (Weiner & Veith, 2007)

I turn to this illustration not just because it refers to Kodak — the company that produced Super-8 film, a medium that has been selected by a number of artists, including Blaufuks —, but because it is exemplary of the tactics Kodak regularly employed, so much so that a work of fiction would use it as representative in an idealised advertising-world pitch.

In the marketing of their products Kodak exploited consumer sentimentality. Most

producing a special edition camera and film based on the show. Additionally, the appeal of the retro object in a digital world might also be explained by an interest in the worn, as Susan Stewart remarks: "The acute sensation of the object — its perception by hand taking precedence over its perception by eye — promises, and yet does not keep the promise of, reunion. Perhaps our preference for instant brown-toning of photographs, distressed antiques, and prefaded blue jeans relates to this suffusion of the worn." (1992 [1984]: 139)

cameras were sold as memory creators, more so than memory holders. (Fig. 32) But in order to sell memories Kodak needed to create an urgency, the urgency that they might disappear. As Diana Taylor has reasoned:

> In order to sell memory as a commodity, Kodak also actively promoted nostalgia as an epistemic lens — the urgency of the photo rests on our knowing that the photographed object / subject will be lost, that the present vanishes, and that these happy moments are bound to end. The nostalgia is built into the technology itself. (2010: 4)

But I argue that nostalgia is built into the technology itself not just by the urgency-induced photographing of moments or events as memories, nostalgia is built into the technology through the latter's very technical characteristics. It is the fact that images are not solely constructed by the photographer or filmmaker's selection but also by the materials being used; by the technological developments available at the time; by the priorities defined by the *companies* that develop these materials — for instance, Kodak colour is not the same as Fuji colour —, that then — decades later — allow us to associate them with a particular period.[46] As Blaufuks himself noted, "a found image comes to you with its own memory. The Image is not just about the subject depicted but also about its technology: black and white, sepia, traces of wear… It comes back with a material memory." (2014: 203) We identify Super-8 film by its format, by its grain, by its not so great image quality, by its yellowish tone, and we

46 As Grahame Weinbren notes:"[Photography] is never an unbiased portrait of nature-in-the-raw. The colors are preselected by Kodak, Agfa, or Fuji, and the lens distortions (or lack thereof) are produced by Zeiss — while the photographer crops reality to an arbitrary stoppage of the border, to say nothing of the power relations between photographer and subject, which form the underbelly of every photograph." (2007: 80)

associate it to the late-1960s and 1970s. And then feel nostalgic for it. Because, for the most part, people did use this material to capture their happy moments. And so the medium became associated to an idyllic past. As Susan Stewart has written, nostalgia is a desire, it is a longing for the past. Yet, the past nostalgia seeks:

> has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to replace itself as a felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, and yet longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. (1992 [1984]: 23)

The felt lack Stewart expresses appears to have taken possession of a number of artists, perhaps few as actively invested in a continuance of analogue film as Tacita Dean (b.1965)[47]. A Berlin-based British-artist, Dean has worked with a number of media, including found photographs and postcards, collages, chalkboard drawings, and the double sprocket 16mm film developed by Kodak. It was the demise of the double sprocket 16mm that inspired Dean to produce *Kodak* (2006), a 44 minute film partially shot with the medium whose obsolescence it was representing: “The idea of the film was to use its obsolete stock on itself.” (Dean & Gronlund, 2006) Upon learning about the cease of production of her preferred film in Chalon-sur-Saône Kodak’s factory in France, Dean sought to gain access to the few working stations the factory still held. The film begins in black-and-white, the humming of

47 And perhaps few have been as vocal as well. In 2011, Dean published a manifesto in *The Guardian* newspaper, ‘Save celluloid, for art’s sake’, pushing for the reversal of the end of 16mm printing by Deluxe, as well as the active participation of the British Film Institute (BFI) in the institution of a “specialist laboratory for conservation-quality 16mm and 35mm prints.”

the machines — recorded in digital rather than analogue format — already being heard. (Fig. 33) Operators in sterile white jumpsuits go about their work before the focus turns to the plastic glistening of rolling film. Here *Kodak* turns to colour, an aspect Dean emphasises by closing in — through static shots — on the different shades reflected from the light bouncing off the film, and by the move from one stage of production to another (Fig. 34) — each lighted differently:

> From a viscous blue to an evanescent transparency, the manufacture of film is a journey of sublime beauty, and one I would never have known were it not for its incipient obsolescence. Film is drawn as a line in end-less circuits around this immense factory, pulled at great speed up and down and across rollers, outlining and defining a building and a process of immeasurable sophistication and scientific splendour. The lights were turned on the day we filmed there: *blanc*, as they said, illuminating their internal world as it is never normally seen. (Dean, 2006: 8-9)

At first, the factory seems to be working regularly, there are no indications that it was on a path to closer — or demolishment, as it was in December 2007 —, it is only towards the very end of the film that an oddity appears: abandoned office chairs in an empty warehouse section. From then on, Dean moves to spaces that already look to be on a path to decay. Dusty film rolls accumulate on top of one another, as do files, the offices sit empty, and the machines have stopped turning. The floors of the final spaces are covered in litter, baskets turned over, film scraps accumulating in its corners. (Fig. 35) This is how (the) film ends, in ruins. As Erika Balsom has explained, in *Kodak* "the history of cinema as art and industry is

held up as one of ruination. […] The technology of preservation is now in need of preservation itself. In Dean's employment of 16 mm, a ruined medium serves as medium for examining ruins rather than constructing a collection safe from the degradation inherent in time." (2013: 96)

As we have seen, the association between nostalgia and ruin is deeply set, Andreas Huyssen noted that "[i]n the body of the ruin the past is both present in its residues and yet no longer accessible, making the ruin an especially powerful trigger for nostalgia" (2006: 7), and in a highly industrial world, an interest by contemporary artists in the industrial ruin is perceptible.[48] One might turn to Bernd and Hilla Becher[49] with their photographing of industrial remnants as 'anonymous sculptures' following a strict set of rules[50]. These artists sought to bring attention to what had been a largely unnoticed — aesthetically at least — form of architecture. Although their work might be comparable to ethnographic practices — in the collecting and cataloguing of building typologies —, in photographing obsolete structures nostalgia continued to be present. As Susan Lange proposed: "Compared with ostentatious official architecture, [industrial] edifices were somewhat unspectacular and primarily determined by

48 Indeed, the 'poetics of ruins' has long been established as a pictorial and cultural tradition that Denis Diderot saw as key in emphasising the passage of time and the transient quality of human life: "The ideas that ruins awake in me are important. Everything is obliterated, all perishes, all passes. There is nothing but the world that remains. Time, is all that remains." (2011 [1767]: 96)

49 Bernd (1931-2007) and Hilla Becher (1934-2015), were German artists whose work on photography and teaching, on what became known as the Düsseldorf School, influenced a number of photographers and artists including: Candida Höfer (b.1944), Thomas Struth (b. 1954), Andreas Gursky (b.1955) and Thomas Ruff (b.1958).

50 No matter the function of the building it was generally photographed frontally. The artists would only photograph on days with overcast — with no individual cloud formations — so as to not have sharp light contrasts and shadows, giving their work a uniform spectrum of grey. They used a large Plaubel Peco 13×18 cm camera, which permitted large negatives and highly defined images. The building was always in focus while the surrounding area and background were blurred, calling attention to the architecture. Human presence was avoided and the buildings occupied the same space within the frame. While exhibiting their work the photographs would mostly be organised in series of 6 to 24, with each individual picture being either 30×40 cm, 50×60 cm, or their horizontal equivalent (40×30 cm, 60×50 cm).

their function; yet they are not only testaments to technical and economic achievements but also reveal key aspects of the zeitgeist of an entire epoch.” (2006: 10) In being built as direct responses to the needs of the machines employed in each production, the factories themselves were susceptible to become obsolete as technologies evolved or changed. The factory itself was a machine, every component working towards a goal.

Super-8 Ruins

In presenting Tacita Dean’s *Kodak* or the Bechers’ ‘anonymous sculptures’, one might easily establish parallels with Blaufuks’s choice of filming the derelict textile factory as part of a broader motif present in contemporary art.[51] However, one must not overlook the presence of the factory in the beginning of cinema itself. On 22 March 1895, Louis Lumière unveiled to an invited audience to the Society for the Encouragement of National Industry a number of projected photographic plates and a ‘moving view’. (Aumont, 1996: 416) This view was none other than *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (*Sortie d’usine*). (Fig. 36) Although considered as the first real precursor to cinema, there are in fact three very similar but different versions, each lasting 46 seconds — the time 17 meters of film projected at a speed of 16 frames per second would take to be viewed. In each, the crowd of workers press forward as they exit, an excitingly jumping dog joining them, as well as a horse-drawn carriage in two of the versions. They are examples of the mass of people factories would employ, the masses that no longer gather in Blaufuks’s *Fábrica.*

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: “Does obsolescent

51 For further considerations on recent projects and films on factories see Jennifer Peterson, “Workers Leaving the Factory: Witnessing Industry in the Digital Age” In C. Vernallis, A. Herzog, & J. Richardson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Image in Digital Media* (2013); Brian R. Jacobson, “Found Memories of Film History: Industry in a Post-industrial Worlds, Cinema in a Post-filmic Age” In P. Flaig & K. Groo (Eds.), *New Silent Cinema* (2016); and Harun Farocki, “Workers Leaving the Factory” In T. Elsaesser (Ed.), *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines* (2004).

[media] provide a model for accessing dimensions of memory and/or history for you?", I believe that in using not only the archival photographs Blaufuks so often employs in his works but also the obsolete Super-8 film, the artist is attempting to access a memory of the factory space. It serves to emphasise what else has turned obsolete: the machines, the workers. As Joel Burges notes, in rendering a view of what has come before, obsolete media "persists as a reminder that life was once different, even that life might have turned out differently." (2010: 201)

So often the objects Blaufuks encounters seem to have just frozen in time. Like an abandoned cup, or the multiple clocks, that might or might not be working. (Fig. 37) He moves from space to space, reviewing all of the factory, surveying it. The film is mostly composed by static shots, or the closest attempt one might have at a static shot when using a handheld camera, and in this holding on the image time appears to slow down. One is given time to witness the tiny rippling water drops make on a puddle in the middle of the factory floor, or examine the way sunlight enters through the office windows. Additionally, in using these extended views the discrepancy between the archival photographs of the factory in its prime and what the artist captured in 2012 becomes striking. Like Tacita Dean, Blaufuks often employs the static shot, but if for the British artist this choice is mainly so that it might allow "the space and time for whatever to happen" (Dean *apud* Iversen, 2012: 817), for the Portuguese artist it serves as a continuance of his practice as a photographer; film for him is nothing if not an extended photograph:

> What I like to find in cinema are examples of what I imagine I practice, which is an idea of expanded photography. What I cannot express through photography, becomes something that I must tell in another way; as a

> book with a series of photographs, maybe accompanied by text, or not, or as a cinematic object, that in reality, for me is nothing but a photograph. An extended photograph, like a painting might be a sculpture, or a sculpture a painting. There are artists that work with film objects that I would have no problem in placing in the field of photography. (Blaufuks & Mendonça, 2018b. My translation)[52]

There are countless projects that might serve to illustrate Blaufuks's understanding of expanded photography, not all of them elaborated as films — and as we will see with *Attempting Exhaustion* in the final chapter of this thesis, Blaufuks's expanded photography might also lean towards a 'photography with time'—, but there are two works that I would like to examine before continuing the analysis of *Fábrica*, both predating it: *Carpe Diem* (2010) and *Eden* (2011). I turn to these films not just because they feature extended statics shots, but also because the subject matter in both is buildings in decay and in both Blaufuks chose to use — if not in its entirety at least partially — Super-8 film. Thus these films might serve to illuminate Blaufuks's choice of medium in capturing the abandoned factory.

Let us begin by considering *Eden* (2011). The 67-minute film, takes place in the island of São Vicente, Cape Verde, and looks to the vibrant cinephile culture the island experienced in the mid-twentieth-century. Such liveliness was due to the presence of two cinemas, Parque Miramar, established in 1954, and the older Eden Park, first opened in 1922. It is from this latter space that the film takes its name. Constructed around a series of interviews, *Eden,*

52 "O que gosto de encontrar no cinema são exemplos daquilo que imagino que pratico que é uma ideia de fotografia expandida. O que não posso contar em fotografia, passa a ser algo que eu tenho de contar com outro meio, ou um livro com uma série de fotografias, possivelmente ou não acompanhada por texto, ou um objecto cinematográfico, mas que, na realidade, para mim não passa de uma fotografia. Uma fotografia esticada, como uma pintura pode ser uma escultura, uma escultura pode ser uma pintura. Há artistas que trabalham com objectos filmográficos que eu não teria qualquer dúvida em colocá-los no campo da fotografia."

arguably, functions as an archive in itself, for not only does it assemble oral testimonies of the community's cinema-going experience, it collects the photographic remnants of three missing local productions — *The Secret of a Guilty Heart* (1955), and the westerns *The Avenging Trooper* and *The Masked Rider* (dates unknown) by Henrique Pereira — piecing the narratives together from the memories of spectators. (Fig. 38) Although cinema played a vital role in the Cape Verdean cultural scene, Eden Park was closed in 2006 [53]. (Arenas, 2011: 131) It is to this gutted cinema hall that Blaufuks turns his camera time and again. The film is not shot entirely in Super-8, the interviews for instance are in digital, but the graininess of the medium is explored in the shooting of the cityscape — as an added patina of time to the storefronts, or as an accent on the warm tonality of the Cape Verdean beach (Fig. 39) — and in the dusty interiors of Eden Park. Like it would be in *Fábrica*, in *Eden* the filming of decay in Super-8 serves to provoke or accentuate the nostalgia associated to ruination. (Fig. 40) Selecting obsolete edifices as a subject matter is a choice Blaufuks makes consciously: "When I photograph it is also about the beauty in decay because there is, in fact, a beauty in decay and I'm not sure, up to which point, in the moment we live, of progress, when most construction and architecture is low cost, decay isn't more interesting and beautiful than its opposite." (Blaufuks & Dias, 2018. My translation)[54]

Carpe Diem (2010), a 30-minute short, too documents a building well past its prime. As part of the curatorial project Carpe Diem – Art and Research (a platform established by Brazilian-curator Paulo Reis (1960-2011)) Blaufuks presented *The Memory of the memory*[55], a project composed of two works: a series of photographs, *The Memory of Others*, and the

53 As of 2019 it remains closed, although it is presently under construction so that it might, once again, be used as a cinema.

54 "Quando fotografo é também sobre a beleza na decadência porque há, de facto, uma beleza na decadência e não sei até que ponto, no momento em que vivemos de progresso, em que a maior parte da construção e da arquitectura é low cost, a decadência não é mais interessante e bonita que a cadência."

film *Carpe Diem.* Shot fully in Super-8, the film is a mapping of the old building that sheltered the curatorial platform between 2009-2017: the Pombal Palace. Located in the centre of Lisbon, in Rua do Século, the palace has harboured a number of notable residents, not least Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo (1699-1782), Marquis of Pombal. Constructed by his grandfather in the sixteenth-century, it was here the Marquis took residency until the 1755 earthquake. It continued to belong to the family until 1859, after which it housed successively, and amongst others, the German League, the Spanish Embassy and Casa Madeira. In the first half of the twentieth-century, it was rented to the prominent composer and musicologist Luís de Freitas Branco (1890-1955), who died in the palace. It is from this information that Blaufuks chose to include a number of piano preludes by Freitas Branco in the short film, conjuring the composer through his music. Nonetheless, Blaufuks also allowed direct sound to seep through, establishing a 'conversation' between the palace's 'memory' and its present. One might hear the sounds of building works from the streets, people talking and walking on the creaky floor, airplanes flying overhead, the garden peacocks screaming, or a key quietly turning. As in *Eden* or in *Fábrica*, the Super-8 has been distressed — with light leaks and flickers — mirroring the decaying edifice with cracked marbles and water stains. (Fig. 41) Blaufuks's camera nears towards a stain left by the spillover of a drinking glass — a trace(ing) of a previous inhabitant. Yet the principle element in *Carpe Diem* is sunlight: how it falls inside the building, how it moves as it is reflected from a window, or how it appears and disappears with the opening and closing of the window blinds. Such is a light that moves the artist to mark his presence by the shadow of his slowly raising hand; an ephemeral imprint on the wall. Another memory to be added to the Pombal Palace. (Fig. 42)

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55 Daniel Blaufuks's contribution was part of the platform's forth cycle. It took place from 27 March to 29 May 2010, and also included the works of artists Ângela Ferreira (b. 1958), Álvaro Negro (b. 1973), Catarina Leitão (b. 1970) and Javier Peñafiel (b.1964).

What is clear from these works is that Blaufuks explores the medium to its limits; the artist does not attempt to soften its technical faults, rather he amplifies them. The distressed film, with its dust-like graininess, adds to the textures of dust and crumbling in each of the buildings observed. It is dust that Carolyn Steedman too was fascinated by.

In a conscious misreading of Derrida's *Archive Fever*, Steedman chose to focus not on the power structure inherent to the archive that the French philosopher brought to the fore with his considerations of the archive as the residence of the *archons* — the guardians and interpreters of documents —, nor on his view of the "desire to archive as a desire to find, or locate, or possess [the] moment of origin" (2001: 3) that allows him to establish parallels to Freud's notion of the death drive. On the contrary, Steedman chose to identify the physical ailment of the historian lost in the archives; the delirium of knowing that there are just too many documents, too many details, that the stories of these people will never be made justice by the hours you spend rummaging through them, by breathing in the dusty remnants of lives lived. Something Jules Michelet (1798-1874) — a French historian whose *magnum opus* was the nineteen-volume *Histoire de France* (1893-1898) — had postulated when he claimed: "I breathed in *their* dust." (*apud* Steedman, 2001: 17. My emphasis)[56] Here lies the archive fever. And it is this condition that I believe Blaufuks too suffers from.

Let us return to *Fábrica*; there is a shot — one of the few travelling shots included — towards the end of the film, over an archival photograph that features a large group of people, factory workers one assumes, gathered together for a meal: a celebration perhaps? Some of them stare directly at the camera, all of them quite sternly so. (Fig. 43) Blaufuks travels along the first row of tables, backwards and forwards, not really focusing on any one face, which

56 Michelet also found himself 'haunted' by the voices of the past: "Out of the lonely galleries of archives through which I roamed for twenty years, out of the silence of the abyss, I could nevertheless hear a murmur." (Michelet *apud* Ernst, 2015: 25)

causes them to blur into one another, augmenting a spectral quality in them. These are the faces of the people the artist has tried to conjure throughout the film, mostly through sound.

If the references I make on conjuring ghosts and spectres might seem excessive one might do well to be reminded of Guglielmo Marconi's proposition that "all sounds that have ever occurred are still vibrating, however faintly, somewhere in the universe" (Neset, 2013: 19). Thus, it is possible that Blaufuks's added sounds in *Fábrica* — as opposed to the direct sound in *Carpe Diem* —, the typewriters, the doors creaking, the steps, even a sneeze (although the sneeze might also refer to the current dusty remains of the factory, and to the archivist's fever), work as a kind of reverberation of past sounds. Of something distant, yet not that much.

As was mentioned, Blaufuks developed *Fábrica* as part of Guimarães 2012 European Capital of Culture, but the artist's film was not the only work commissioned for the event that took place in the Vizela River Spinning and Textile Factory. Indeed, Blaufuks's choice of location came in part from his knowledge that one of the filmmakers he most admired, Víctor Erice (b. 1940), was developing a 36-minute piece on the factory: *Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal* (2012). The Spanish filmmaker's short was created as part of a larger 89-minute episodic film — *Historic Center* (2012) —, whose common thread between sequences was an exploration of memory taking as a stage the ancient Portuguese city, Guimarães. The film included three other segments by Portuguese-filmmakers Manoel de Oliveira (1908-2015) and Pedro Costa (b. 1958), and Finnish-filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki (b. 1957).

Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal takes its name from the common designation the factory is now known as, 'Factory of broken windows', but although Erice's film too opens with a static shot of the crumbling building interiors his attention swiftly moves to

the same group photograph Blaufuks's camera travelled over. (Fig. 44) *Broken Windows* is composed by a series of testimonies by former workers that take place in the factory canteen shown in the photograph. What might distinguish Erice's film from other testimony based documentaries is its framing of these as if they were screen tests. In the first half of the film, the workers recount their harsh lives, from the little time they had to breastfeed their infants during breaks, to their injuries by the machines — cut fingers, hearing losses —, to their crushed dreams of studying or travelling. (Fig. 45) These are people who, with their family members, had been a part of the factory work force for generations, now feeling abandoned by its closure. The second part of *Broken Windows* puts these same workers in front of the archival photograph, none of them recognising any of the people there pictured — "They're people from a different time. None of them will be alive now." They try to uncover the emotions behind these anonymous faces; most agree, it must have been a harsher time, the poverty would have had been deeply felt, yet sadness and dignity would have coexisted. Erice's film ends with two distinctly different testimonies: that of an actor portraying the son of the factory owner in Ernesto da Silva's (1868-1903) play *The Capital* (1895), and an accordion player, the child and grandchild of former workers, the first of his family to get a higher education. (Fig. 46) It is with the latter's playing that Erice's camera sweeps across the old photograph, much like that of Blaufuks. These are the same faces, the same ghosts, but conjured differently.

One aspect that we never find in *Fábrica*, the film, but that was key in the exhibition and later the photobook, is the list of the 'Worker's Obligations', from 1845. A dictatorial rule of the factory space that would later be mirrored by that of the country. One of the most authoritarian ones, rule ten, states that: "Workers are forbidden to quarrel and even to talk with each other, except to discuss matters concerning their work." So one might suppose that

there was a reason for these faces to look as grim as they do. As Blaufuks points out: "It must have been a dreadful place with all the textiles rattling at high speed, the quick pace, the illiterate workers, who came from poor villages in the surroundings. We shouldn't miss it too much. Hell dismantled." (2013)[57] Yet, as we've seen, nostalgia is idyllic, and so we might still miss what could have been.

In *Fábrica*, Blaufuks highlights what is left behind. The passage of time is evident, both in the repeated showing of clocks and in the very medium chosen. It is also present in the artist's decision to mostly use static shots, which emphasise the eeriness of the empty space, contrasting with the highly active sounds that form the background of the archival images. Svetlana Boym proposes that "both technology and nostalgia are about mediation. As a disease of displacement, nostalgia was connected to passages, transits and means of communication. Nostalgia — like memory — depends on mnemonic devices." (2001: 346) Thus being, in using Super-8, an obsolete medium, Blaufuks establishes a link to an obsolete industry, and an obsolete way of life.

The conception of the power of the medium — of the technology — in the articulation and conveyance of the 'message' was famously put forward by Marshall McLuhan (1994 [1964]). Nevertheless, one might look to a previous example expounded by Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) on these considerations. With his sight deteriorating, Nietzsche turned to one of the very first typewriters — Malling Hansen's *Writing Ball* — in 1882; the machine offered him another chance at writing, but, as Friedrich Kittler explained, it "changed from arguments to aphorisms, from thoughts to puns, from rhetoric to telegram style." (1999

57 In looking at the notion of replication in the nineteenth-century, Julie Codell and Linda K. Hughes propose that industrial workers themselves might have been read by the factory owners as a kind of replicant: "as Marx noted, workers suffered alienation from their own humanity when forced by industrial production to work by repetitive actions to make things they could not enjoy and under horrific working conditions beyond their control. Workers appeared to their employers as a kind of replicant, replications of one another, often reduced to body parts, 'hands' who carried out factory work, and thus commodities themselves." (2018: 7)

[1986]: 203) Such changes led the philosopher himself to propose that: “Our writing tools are also working on our thoughts” (Nietzsche *apud* Kittler, 1999 [1986]: 200) As I have put forward, the medium one selects has effects not only on the resulting work but also on the thought process behind its production, as well as on the perception the viewer then has of the work. One might expand this to consider that the choice of medium might then also affect our memory of the work. It is through this notion that I will analyse a segment of Blaufuks’s art that is dedicated to literature and memory. It is not that both these themes do not permeate the entirety of the artist’s oeuvre, but in considering the influence of writers such as Georges Perec and W. G. Sebald in Blaufuks we will be able to explore the impact of literature as a medium *for* memory.

Memory, Text, Image

Archives deal with disappearances; they attempt to exorcise our fear of loss by amassing memory.

— Wolfgang Ernst

Having examined archival notions, artistic practices that incorporate, analyse or generate archives, and introduced considerations on the role of the medium in the construction of meaning in Section 1 of this thesis, I now turn to an element that is ever present in the work of Daniel Blaufuks and whose divorce from the archive might seem impossible: memory.

As a feature characterised by its plasticity, transmission and capacity of implantation and reimplantation, memory, nonetheless, figures as a cornerstone for our identity. From our fuzzy childhood days to just this morning, memory anchors and equips each of us with the foundations for life and living, as individuals and as a society. Memory "creates the chain of tradition which transmits an event from generation to generation." (Benjamin, 2002 [1936]: 154) Culture itself might be understood as a form of memory, as Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspenskij proposed in defining culture as the "nonhereditary memory of the community." (*apud* Tamm, 2019: 6) Yet determining the exact location of memory, creating a stable, agreed-upon definition, has seemed to evade us. We understand memory because we understand the process of remembering: as what we do when we call back to something, or when an image, sound, smell or taste carries something to us, in the present. Memory is that to which we turn to when we try to remember. It is personal but it might be collective[58]. As Walter Benjamin explained in 'Excavation and Memory' (1932), "memory is not an instrument for exploring

58 The notion of collective memory was first introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) and *La Mémoire collective* (1950).

the past, but rather a medium. It is the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried.” (Benjamin, 1999c [1932]: 576) Nevertheless, memory is not only a medium for experiencing, it hinges on medium itself for its construction. Memory, particularly collective memory, is founded on its exteriorisation; it is how it is transmitted. It is this capacity — as we will see below in looking at Leroi-Gourhan — that afforded the very evolution of humankind.

In the three chapters that follow and that compose Section 2 – ‘Daniel Blaufuks: Writing with Images’, I will examine notions of memory and its presence in the artist’s work. This first chapter will begin by addressing the framework introduced and defined by André Leroi-Gourhan on the exteriorisation of memory, considering also the issue of forgetting, and the paradoxical role of archives as deposits of what we seek to remember and yet, knowing it safe outside ourselves, are likely to forget. In looking at this exteriorisation I will continue the chapter by examining the forms of transmission memory might bear. Having previously presented the notion of postmemory by Marianne Hirsch, I will here look closer at this concept, examining South African artist Terry Kurgan’s (b. 1958) project *Everyone is Present* (2018). Having moved across these theoretical issues, I will briefly turn my attention to the process of remembering in literature; particularly in the works that might have impacted Blaufuks’s projects, those of the writers I will examine in the following two chapters: 2.2 – ‘A Dialogue with Georges Perec’ and 2.3 – ‘A Dialogue with W.G.Sebald’. But before doing so I will finalise the present chapter by looking to how Blaufuks has utilised images in composing his own examples of literary genres: diaries, and collected short stories.

Lest We Forget: the exteriorisation of memory

I look at my late-grandmother's recipe and pattern books and I am carried back to her presence, not because some smell or taste has triggered a Proustian involuntary memory[59], but because of her terrible spelling. She hardly learnt to read and write in Portuguese — leaving school at only a third grade level —, and in moving to and living in South Africa for much of her adult life she spoke and wrote in a strange mix that was neither Portuguese nor English. In reading 'banilha' (a cross between vanilla and baunilha) or 'cor de brico' (for a brick coloured sweater) I can hear my grandmother's voice, the mistakes she made on paper mirroring her strange accent and jumbled sentences. (Fig. 47) Her writing works as something connected to a very personal memory, yet it might also be viewed as an exteriorisation of the peculiar inflections of language that a broader community carried: that of the Portuguese — particularly Madeiran — migrants to South Africa in the mid-twentieth-century. With the passing years, with the older generation dying out and the new generations being solely native English speakers, these unique inflections will likely begin to exist exclusively in old notebooks, yet it is because they have been exteriorised into text that perhaps they might survive as memory in the future.

It has been suggested by André Leroi-Gourhan that the evolution of modern man has been made possible only through exteriorisation, particularly through our capacity to exteriorise our knowledge — our memories — through narrative:

> The whole of our evolution has been oriented toward placing outside ourselves what in the rest of the animal world is achieved inside by species adaptation. The most striking material fact is certainly the 'freeing' of

59 For considerations on involuntary memory see Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, New York: Zone Books (1991 [1896]).

> tools, but the fundamental fact is really the freeing of the word and our unique ability to transfer our memory to a social organism outside ourselves. (1993 [1964]: 235)

In this exteriorisation, space is released from our minds (much like the transferring of data from a computer to an external drive), allowing for the development of re-interpretation and creativity. Moreover, the French-anthropologist established that five periods might be observed in the exteriorisation and later transmission of memory: "that of oral transmission, that of written transmission using tables or an index, that of simple index cards, that of mechanography, and that of electronic serial transmission." (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993 [1964]: 258) Such a paradigm allows for the possibility of technological influences in memory; a possibility that Leroi-Gourhan takes to its extreme — considering the existing technology in 1964 — through his interest in punched-card indexes as memory-collecting machines "endowed with the ability — not present in the human brain — of correlating every recollection with all others". (1993 [1964]: 264) For the anthropologist, the expansion of memory exteriorisation and technological developments were deeply intertwined. Oral transmission was so embedded in the forming and transforming of memory in early societies, that "collective memory would not have broken out of its traditional cycle at the birth of writing except in order to deal with matters that in a nascent social system were felt to be of an exceptional kind." (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993 [1964]: 260) Thus, it would be only with the emergence of metallurgy and urban trade that writing would begin to be employed as record keeping[60]: "accounts, records of debts owed to gods or to others, series of dynasties, oracular pronouncements, lists of penalties". (Leroi-Gourhan, 1993 [1964]: 259) Indeed, technology might not only be seen as af-

60 As was mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis.

fecting forms of remembering, it has been consistently called forth as metaphors for memory: Freud and the *Mystic Writing-Pad* (1925), Barthes and photography (1980), Landsberg and film (1995), Manovich and databases (2001), Ernst and algorithms (2018).

Moreover, since Classical civilisations, there has been a wish to construct a universal memory machine (Yates, 1999 [1966]: 209). Of course, here 'machine' holds its original Greek signification of an artificial means or contrivance — not necessarily through a mechanical or even exterior apparatus — for doing a thing. As Frances Yates examined in *The Art of Memory* (1966), one might differentiate between natural memory — that which is innate, requiring little effort, but whose capacity varies from one person to the next — and artificial memory — that which has to be learnt and practiced upon.[61] It is towards the advancement of the latter that a number of mnemotechnics — techniques to remember — where developed, not least the memory palace, first described by Cicero in his *De oratore* (1967 [55BC]). Here in seeking to commit something to memory — a political speech, perhaps — one would imagine a familiar location: the path one takes everyday, a temple whose corridors and columns one might move through even with one's eyes closed, or a simple room. After creating an image of this place in one's mind it would be possible to populate it with objects or characters — surrogates for broad ideas or even specific words — that might be called forth when needed for remembering. As Yates explains, such a technique was invaluable in the ancient world for:

61 Somewhat in line with the five periods Leroi-Gourhan had defined for memory exteriorisation and transmission, in *Acting Out* (2009) Bernard Stiegler defines three form for memory retention, as Abigail De Kosnik explains: "For Stiegler, human memory consists of three forms of retention: primary retention, which belongs 'to the present of perception,' that is, listening to a melody and remembering each note as it passes, so that one can link the stream of notes together and make sense of the tune; secondary retention, which Stiegler calls 'the *past* of my consciousness,' by which one remembers the melody heard the day before and is able to 'hear [it] again *in imagination* by the play of memory'; and tertiary retention, 'a prosthesis of exteriorized memory' (54), which can produce 'the identical repetition of the same temporal object' and exists in the forms of recording technologies such as 'phonograms, ... films, and radio and television broadcasts' (54)." (2016: 298)

> devoid of printing, without paper for note-taking or on which to type lectures, the trained memory was of vital importance. And the ancient memories were trained by an art which reflected the art and architecture of the ancient world, which could depend on faculties of intense visual memorisation which we have lost. (1999 [1966]: 4)

Nevertheless, memory techniques that hinged on graphic notation were soon sought after and developed: through systems of paper wheels that might produce knowledge by means of endless combinations of symbolic alphabets— Ramon Llull (1232-1316) — or by a never realised universal storage and retrieval system in the shape of a theatre — Giulio Camillo (1480-1544). With the maturing of writing as a technology for memory archival systems were put into place — as we have seen in the beginning of this thesis —, moreover many of these documents became stand-ins for juridical memory — the 'perpetual memory' that was also previously addressed. New technologies that might function as memory traces or even memory proxies — such as photography, sound recording, or film — too have seen the archive as their repository, and thus we might propose that the archive itself might be viewed as a technology for memory; one on which we have come to rely on. As Pierre Nora noted:

> Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs — hence the obsession with the

> archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past. (1989: 13)

This capacity of the archive to hold documents that might establish a lasting memory and yet which we do not feel the immediate need to remember, might appear paradoxical, however remembering vastly depends on forgetting. As Aleida Assmann has proposed, the archive might be described as “a space that is located on the border between forgetting and remembering”, storing “materials in the intermediary state of ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’”. (2008: 103). In fact, in *Canon and Archive*, Assmann distinguishes between two processes of cultural memory. One geared towards a strategy of investing particular elements of the past with “existential meaning and framing it with an aura”: the canon. (Assmann, 2008: 102) The other, the archive, which functions as “the reference memory of a society”. Creating a “meta-memory, a second-order memory that preserves what has been forgotten. The archive is a kind of ‘lost-and-found office’ for what is no longer needed or immediately understood.” (Assmann, 2008: 106)

It is not unfrequent to hear news reports of people with memory capacities well above average, there are even competitions with sizeable monetary awards for those capable of distinguishing themselves as Memory Champions.[62] However, a seemingly infinite memory can hold a variety of issues. In the 1920s, the Russian-neuropsychologist Alexander Luria (1902-1977) first came into contact with the man he would come to name S. in his case study, *The Mind of a Mnemonist* (1968): Solomon Shereshevsky. Along with hypermnesia, Luria discovered in Shereshevsky a strong version of synaesthesia, a trait that contributed in no small

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62 First founded in 1991 by Tony Buzan and Raymind Keene, the *World Memory Championships* take place yearly with the participation of contestants from a wide number of countries. See: http://www.worldmemorychampionships.com/

part to his capacity to fix and retrieve information from his mind since a very early age. Words would quickly turn into images, numbers would be transformed into characters: "Take the number 1. This is a proud, well-built man; […] 7 a man with a mustache; 8 a very stout woman — a sack within a sack. As for the number 87, what I see is a fat woman and a man twirling his mustache." (Luria, 1968: 31) Shereshevsky also called on techniques such as the memory palace, placing images and objects on a street inside his mind where he would then take a 'mental walk'. Nonetheless, such techniques presented its own issues, such as the placement of the image of an egg against a white background or of a word in a location that was too dark, making them impossible to retrieve.

One might suppose that such a capacity to remember might have led Shereshevsky to achieve success, but Luria uncovered something beyond this assumption. He found that Shereshevsky was but "a Jewish boy who, having failed as a musician and as a journalist, had become a mnemonist, met with many prominent people, yet remained a somewhat anchorless person, living with the expectation that at any moment something particularly fine was to come his way." (Luria, 1968) Shereshevsky's memory was often a hindrance more than an asset. He had difficulties associating similar names or even nicknames with people, just as he had trouble remembering faces: his synaesthesia triggered distinct images for Mary and its nickname Masha, thus, to him, these could never refer to the same person. (Luria, 1968: 91) Poetry was impossible for him to discern, each word would call forth an entire scene. And forgetting was the greatest difficulty of all:

> During the early stages, [Shereshevsky's] attempts to work out a technique of forgetting were of an extremely simple nature. Why, he reasoned, couldn't he use some external means to help him forget —

> write down what he no longer wished to remember. This may strike others as odd, but it was a natural enough conclusion for S. 'People jot things down so they'll remember them,' he said. 'This seemed ridiculous to me, so I decided to tackle the problem my own way.' As he saw it, once he had written a thing down, he would have no need to remember it; but if he were without means of writing it down, he'd commit it to memory. (Luria, 1968: 69-70)

Even though this technique proved unsuccessful for Shereshevsky in his quest to forget[63], the external recording of memory and its subsequent amassing might be viewed as an enactment of forgetting. Forgetting not necessarily because these memory documents stop existing but simply because boundless, and systemless, accumulation inhibits one's capacity to retrieve them. As another mnemonist — although a fictional one —, Jorge Luis Borges's Ireneo Funes, proclaims: "'*I, myself, alone, have more memories than all mankind since the world began*,' he said to me.[…] '*My memory, sir, is like a garbage heap*.'" (Borges, 1999b [1942]: Epub. Emphasis in original) All is stored in his mind, and yet the ability to exist outside the past or the present, to imagine and look towards a future is hindered. As one lives, one "accumulates more and more memories, with the past slowly acquiring more weight than the future". (Manovich, 2001: 325) So in order to have a functional memory, one that allows for an exchange between past, present and future, and that enables "the possibility of cultural

63 As Umberto Eco observed in 'An Ars Oblivionalis? Forget It!' (1988), forcing oneself to forget mostly turns out to be an impossibility. So too does Thomas Docherty assert the contamination between memory and forgetting: "To 'forget' something is, paradoxically, also to be aware that there still exists, within one's memory, the forgotten entity. That is to say, if something is forgotten, it must also be remembered that it is forgotten; and a vague shadow must hover, like a penumbra, at the edge of one's consciousness. Otherwise, the thing would not be 'forgotten' but would rather not exist at all within consciousness. There is an element of memory within forgetting; and equally, a necessary element of memory in forgetting." (2017: 52)

change” (Assmann *apud* Erll, 2011: 36), it becomes necessary to shed the excess of accumulated memories.

In examining the notion of excess, present capacities of data collection and aggregation might come to mind. The anxieties around the impact of digital media on memory seem to follow much of Plato’s admonishments against writing.[64] In comparing the role of digital and analogue archives in memory, we might put forward the hypothesis that the mnemonic qualities in analogue archives might be more directed towards the construction of a repository of collective memory. Even documents that refer to an individual, by their simple grouping to similar documents, serve to construct a broader overview of a period, event, or location. In digital archives the same might happen — consider the use of Big Data for instance —, but one might also find personal databases, made and stored in personal devices. The question might then be how representative of the individual that created, amassed and stored these documents, texts, images, and even apps, might be? How closely can these databases be to an actual memory? Might they supplement individual memory or might they even take over it? In other words, might in the future one remember solely what has been registered and stored? Might one even be given ‘new’ memories, as Hal Foster found:

> Along with the old fear of the machine become human, we confront a new concern about the opposite. Recently my phone notified me ‘You have a new memory,’ and retrieved a photo from its files that it, not I, summoned up: a photo-memory that I did not remember at all. For a moment I became its replicant. (2018: 45)

64 As Andreas Huyssen notes: “The amnesia reproach is invariably couched in a critique of the media, while it is precisely these media — from print and television to CD-Roms and the Internet — that make ever more memory available to us day by day.” (2003: 17)

As speculative as the questions posed above might seem, the issue of implanted memories through mass media has been closely examined by Alison Landsberg (1995, 2004), and it will be key for my reading of Daniel Blaufuks's film *As if…* (2014) in Chapter 2.3 – 'A Dialogue with W. G. Sebald'. Yet, before those considerations I must turn my attention to memory transmission.

<u>Forms of Transmission</u>

As we have seen, memory transmission may take a variety of shapes. It might live in the oral telling and retelling of stories and myths. It might be retrieved through written documents — institutional records, letters, diaries, or even literature — or through yellowed images in a family album. It might be communicated by mass media, or it might be passed down through generations. Putting aside disputes on whether postmemory might be classified as memory in its own right or if instead it might be defined as a trans-generational transmission of memory (van Alphen, 2006), the "[l]oss of family, home, a feeling of belonging and safety in the world 'bleed' from one generation to the next" (Hirsch, 2013: 212), as do the memories of these displacements.

Postmemory, the notion first introduced by Marianne Hirsch, is not the same as memory. It might travel down from one generation to the next but this process may lead to different effects. It is possible that the strength of these memories is maintained, and sometimes even augmented, in the following generation, however, memories are not stagnant, they change and alter through time, and the further away the memory is from its originating moment the more likely it will be infused with some degree of imagination. For each time a memory is activated:

> an innovative process of reconstruction, reinterpretation, and reevaluation is carried out, during which [it] gains a new meaning, even though it might only be minimally altered. It is this new meaning that we envision the next time we remember, that is, when we again reinterpret and modify the 'memory' in a new context and under altered circumstances, which once more will leave their mark on it, and so on […] (Brockmeier, 2010: 25)

Thus, after a time, it might be difficult to be able to distinguish between the factual elements and the fictional aspects of a memory. However, this enmeshing does not mean the memory is not deeply felt; indeed, in postmemory the role of affect is profound. As Hirsch explains: "the index of postmemory (as opposed to memory) is the performative index, shaped more and more by affect, need, and desire as time and distance attenuate the links to authenticity and 'truth'." (2012: 48) As we have seen with Blaufuks's *Under Strange Skies*, the central point around which every aspect of the film revolves is the artist's relationship with his grandparents. It is through affect, through the emotional connection that is held, that Blaufuks is able to establish a connection to his family's memories and, by appropriating them, communicate them to others.

In another of his projects, *ZEPPELIN 1936 – 1994 – 2012,* included in the exhibition *Utz* (2012), Blaufuks explores the paradoxical fragility and strength these memories might hold. (Fig. 48) He draws a direct line between his grandfather's photography and his own:

> In 1936, shortly before leaving Germany, my grandfather Herbert August

> photographed the Zeppelin images here shown, alongside the polaroids I did for a never finished project with Robert Wilson in 1994. Finally, in 2012, I bought the stereo reproductions, took two last images, that ultimately gave form to this photograph-object, this photographic spaceship between past and future, between magical voyage and its utilization during both wars, between me and my grandfather, a symbol of transmission and memory, both always floating, as well." (Blaufuks, 2012)

Similarly, other artists have developed projects that might also be read under the lens of postmemory, for instance South African artist Terry Kurgan's[65] project *Everyone is Present* (2018). As in Blaufuks's case, Kurgan's maternal grandparents were forced to flee their country — in their case Poland — with the outset of World War Two. Like Ursel and Herbert August in Lisbon, Tusia and Jasek Kallir established a new life in Cape Town, first as refugees and later as citizens. In the book *Everyone is Present,* Kurgan maps the arduous journey her grandparents — and her 'little mother', as she repeatedly refers to — took from Bielsko to Cape Town by way of Bucharest, Istanbul, Ankara, Aleppo, Baghdad, Basra, Muscat, Karachi, Bombay and Mombassa, between September 1939 and April 1941. It was the family photos taken by her grandfather, Jasek Kallir, as well as his meticulous diary entries that drove Kurgan to further excavate her family's past. Nonetheless, it was also the knowledge of her grandmother's multiple infidelities and coldness towards her daughters, that led the artist to choose to base her project on close readings of her family photographs; deconstructing them, trying to uncover the meaning behind a look or a pose. Central to this

65 Based in Johannesburg, South Africa, Terry Kurgan works with a variety of media, including writing, photography, or drawing, and has developed a number of participatory art projects. Previously to *Everyone if Present* (2018), she published the books *Johannesburg Circa Now* (2005), co-edited with Jo Ractliffe, and *Hotel Yeoville* (2013).

are the photographs taken during the frequent family holidays to the mountain resort in the south of Poland: Zakopane. The artist looks at an outdoors photograph that includes a woman — her grandmother —, a child — her 'little mother'—, and a man — Doctor Lax, her grandmother's lover. (Fig. 49) She imagines she herself might sit outdoors with the people in this picture:

> I long to be able to sit inside this photograph. There's the most perfect un-occupied space on that white painted bench on the terraced path just above them. It looks so comfortable and inviting in the soft summer sun. I would sit there very quietly and not draw any attention to myself. (2018: 15)

Kurgan wishes to step into the photograph, to join her family members just before the moment they were forced to flee, so that the memories formed that day might become her own; but later she comes to realise that these memories — this process of postmemory — are already within her as "the dead in our families are embedded in our innermost selves, and […] they return to haunt us […]." (Kurgan, 2018: 257) The longing she feels for her past, even one she did not live through, mirrors some of her grandfather's writing aboard the ship to Bombay. He writes:

> I am suspended without work or occupation or any use to the world. Even if pleasant or nice, and in spite of my fascination with this curious world and its exotic fragrances and sights, I feel an astonishing, complicated grief. Longing for something that has not yet been, a feeling that is always

inside me, and also a longing for that which was... (Kurgan, 2018: 182. Ellipsis in original)

The artist yearns not only to uncover 'that which was' but to take place in it; she travels to Zakopane, to the very spot her family used to vacation. However, what she is able to feel is not a connection to the past of her displaced family — not a feeling of returning to —, but a feeling of her own displacement in this place:

> As I carefully sweep the elegant reception rooms of the hotel with my camera, one more time, frame by frame, just before we are about to leave […], still looking for a molecule of air they might have breathed, a flake of skin, an eyelash, I suddenly notice my own reflection in the mirror, looking through my camera lens, and it drives home the point of the complete impossibility of a very particular kind of retrieval. (2018: 266)

She does not locate the traces her ancestors might have left behind — as tenuous as she imagines them to be —, instead she embodies the sense of removal they would come to feel in relation to Poland. Their loss of a sense of belonging 'bleeding' into her. (Hirsch, 2013: 212)

Kurgan further explores this when she turns to Google Street View to locate her grandparents' house: number 10, Ulica Teodora Sixta, Bielsko. The artist looks at a photograph her grandfather took from the apartment window to the street below on 1 September 1939, the day of the German invasion of Poland. His wife and children having already fled, Jasek collects the rest of their documents — leaving written instructions for their neighbour

to water their plants — and, in the midst of far-off bombing sounding, he turns his camera to the emptied street, where just two men stand, smoking and gazing up at him. (Fig. 50) Curious to see what might still stand of the street in the present, Kurgan inputs the address into Google and finds herself looking at the same buildings. (Fig. 51) They are still there, as is the apartment block. But however much she attempts to zoom in or to shift her position to get a clearer view of its door — her grandparents' old door —, she is blocked by the limitations of Google Street View and its automated camera:

> I turn left again at the next corner and imagine my grandfather walking here. Would this street remember him? The tread of his foot, or the unique way that his — almost always brown — leather shoes creaked? While my grandfather's 1939 street view is ghostly in its black-and-white evocation of a history long past, of the erasure that took place, in a time just beyond when his camera was angled there, it is the automated, random, disinterested lens of Google's digital eye that entrenches my sense of the removal of all traces and history of the individual living subjects that once existed here. (Kurgan, 2018: 106)

Through its seemingly disinterested point of view — with its 360º composition created by a 'cold' roving mechanical eye (Ernst, 2013) — Google Street View, heightens the awareness of the excision of a whole people and history from the town of Bielsko. It comes to function, for Kurgan but also for other artists, as a canvas onto which memories and histories might be allocated.[66]

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66 Indeed, it might be only through the safe distance of the computer screen that some traumatic memories might be recalled and examined. As Canadian-filmmaker Sofia Bohdanowicz (b.1985)

One key component in Terry Kurgan's project is the diaries of her grandfather. More than anything else, Jasek's writing is what grounds Kurgan to her family's escape. It was at this moment that Jasek became a prolific diary keeper, noting not only every daily task or bureaucratic detail he might have had to contend with, but also hopes and disappointments. After finding safety in South Africa these accounts became ever more sporadic, ending in November 1957. However, had he had the chance he might have turned his pages into something of a literary text: "I have stopped writing in my diary. After all, who will read it and who might be interested in it? Perhaps when I'm old […] I will dedicate myself to literary work, and then I will use my diary as the basis for some book, though not a very interesting one." (Kurgan, 2018: 277)

The fact that Jasek might have composed a book out of his personal diaries calls to mind the work of several writers working with 'fictions of memory': particularly the two authors that will be analysed in regards to Blaufuks's work — Perec and Sebald —, and Blaufuks himself. In regards to fictions of memory, Birgit Neumann defines them as characteristically "presented by a reminiscing narrator or figure who looks back on his or her past, trying to impose meaning on the surfacing memories from a present point of view." (2008: 335) These are the characteristics of Perec's *W or the Memory of Childhood* (2011 [1975]) and Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), the texts that would inform Blaufuks's project *All the*

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has done with her very short four-minute film, *Where* (2018). In this piece, Bohdanowicz explores the painful memories of an abusive relationship by shooting with a black and white 16mm film usually used as sound stock (and developed with a plant-mixture of echinacea and comfrey) Google Maps and Street View through her own computer screen. The silent film is broken by intertitles that begin with 'This is where...', locating the artist's memories of her relationship in the city space. The viewer is shown a street corner and the information that follows is 'This is where we met.' Later on another street: 'This is where we had our first date' The information seems innocuous, just another love story, however the intertitles quickly change to convey much darker information: 'This is where you said I could never see my friends again, 'This is where I lived with you a year after that', 'This is where I left you', 'This is where you followed me'.

Memory of the World, part one (2014), to be analysed in depth in Section 3 – 'Daniel Blaufuks: Traversing the Archive'.

Arguably, for many authors writing functions both as a method for registering memories as well as a way to reinterpret them; to transform them in such a manner that they may be recognised as *truth if not fact*. For some authors writing, photographing, registering, listing, exhausting a theme or location, becomes compulsive, and might even function as a record of existence. For Georges Perec, one of the multiple operations writing possessed was that of an anchor to a past he was taught to forget (Bellos, 2010: chapter 7. Kindle book)[67]. In *Species of Spaces* Perec writes:

> My spaces are fragile: time is going to wear them away, to destroy them. Nothing will any longer resemble what was, my memories will betray me, oblivion will infiltrate my memory. […] To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs. (2008d: 91-92)

Blaufuks has followed some of this impulse to record, or register, something so that it might survive, so that it might escape from the void. Arguably, this was one of the roles of *Under Strange Skies*, that its existence might seize his grandparents and their journey from oblivion. Nevertheless, as Ana Quintais has suggested, in its book form *Under Strange Skies*

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67 "[…] before Jojo [Georges Perec] went to board at Collège Turenne, someone – perhaps his uncle – found a way to make him understand what he must not ever reveal. Georges Perec had no memory of this, because the means he had to use to follow the injunction was – to forget. The injunction, however it was put, must have had the force of a command: You must forget..." (Bellos, 2010: chapter 7. Kindle book)

might also evoke a Jewish tradition, that of the *yizker bikher* — the books of memory. These books were:

> written or arranged by survivors in exile as a way to resist oblivion and as a means of transmitting the culture and tradition the Nazis tried to destroy. [They are] books that function as *lieux de mémoire* and as acts of testimony, public acts of mourning, collective forms of Kaddish as they evoke and attempt to re-create a life that existed before its destruction. These books are also *lieux* where descendants can find a lost origin, where they can learn about places and people important to their family's life and history who have disappeared.[68] (Quintais, 2015: 76. My translation)

In the end, these books function not merely as traces from the past but as the past itself. It is in reconstituting them, in collecting and arranging them, that the past is itself reconstructed. Memory, much like evolution, comes down to survival. What is lost ends up being forgotten. Thus transmission becomes key to memory's endurance.

Working principally with images rather than text, Blaufuks nevertheless calls back to genres that might be connected to acts of memory such as diaries or travelogues; however he also turns to the short story collection format used by authors he much admired, such as Jorge

68 "[*Sob Céus Estranhos*] um meio de fazer lembrar, e que evocará outra tradição judaica — os *yizker bikher* — os livros de memória […] que eram escritos ou preparados pelos sobrevivntes no exílio com o fim de resistirem ao esquecimento e servirem de meio de transmissão da cultura e tradições que os nazis tentaram destruir. [S]ão livros que constituem sítios de memória e actos de testemunho, actos públicos de luto, formas colectivas de *Kaddish*, uma vez que evocam e tentam re-criar uma vida que existiu antes da sua destruição. Estes livros constituem também *sítios* onde os descendentes podem encontrar uma origem perdida, onde podem conhecer os lugares e as pessoas que desapareceram e que foram importantes para a vida e história da sua família […]."

Luis Borges. Indeed, the notion of genre itself might be associated to forms of memory transmission. As Astrid Erll acknowledges: "Genres are conventionalized formats we use to encode events and experience; and repertoires of genre conventions are themselves contents of memory." (2011: 147-148) In their norms, genres provide familiar frameworks; ways of structuring and containing our exteriorised memories and knowledge.

Writing with Images

As has been made clear by the multiple references to literary texts throughout the analysis of Daniel Blaufuks's oeuvre in this thesis, the artist has borrowed not only genre conventions for some his projects, but also the very titles of texts he admires, or wishes to question. A quick survey might show for instance that, as previously mentioned, *Under Strange Skies* (2007) was borrowed from Isle Losa *Sob Céus Estranhos* (1962); that Blaufuks's film *The Absence* (2009) — an appropriation of Jean-Luc Godard's *À Bout de Souffle* (1960) in which the main character, played by Jean-Paul Belmondo has been removed from the film — draws on *La Disparition* (1969) by Perec; that the iPod project *Now remember* (2008) takes its title also from a work by Perec, *Je me souviens* (1978), which in turn was borrowed from Joe Brainard's *I remember* (1975)[69]; whilst the exhibition / project *Utz* (2012) has the title of Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1988); *This Business of Living* (2015) was taken from Cesare Pavese's *Il mestiere di vivere: Diario 1935–1950* (1961); and that a short film of a book being burnt was named *Mein Kampf* (2005) after Hitler's book title (1925). An exhaustive analysis of all of these works is beyond the scope of this thesis, so for now I will turn to Blaufuks's use of the diary genre in *London Diaries* (1994).

69 A close reading of these two projects, *Now remember* (2008) and *The Absence* (2009), will be made in the following chapter.

Early in his career as a photographer Blaufuks undertook a program at the Royal College of Art, London, in 1993. Stemming from this experience was the publication of one of his first photobooks: *London Diaries*. There are a number of catalysts for the starting of a diary, some come out of an urgent need to register the troubling present — as was the case of Kurgan's and Blaufuks's own grandfathers —, others spark from the passage of childhood to teenage-hood or adulthood — as illustrated by Queen Victoria initiating her 69-year long diary keeping at age 13, or, tragically and linked to the previous examples occurring during World War Two, Anne Frank beginning to write also as she had turned 13 —, others still come out of a simple "submission to the prevalent itch to record […]." (Matthews, 1977: 295)

Although not necessarily written on each and everyday, the diary format implies some regularity in annotating. Combined with this characteristic, what might assist in defining the genre of diary is its writer's drive to write for no one but themselves. The main feature of the diary is that "it is essentially an outcome of the writer's own interests and that it usually goes on only so long as he finds the process of annotating his life interesting." (Matthews, 1977: 287) The impetus to elaborate his *London Diarie*s, stemmed in part from Blaufuks's move to a new city and the adjustments to a different language. Unlike most of the writing included in other of his photobooks, the artist includes one sole sentence in Portuguese in the whole of the diary, its opening line: "os ingleses fumam cachimbo" ("the English smoke pipes"). For the rest of the text the reader is given the chance to follow the artist's path in perfecting his English-language skills, from the words crossed over or inserted as afterthoughts, to the not uncommon misspellings, the book is open for scrutiny. Such sense originates also from the fact that the book is a facsimile of Blaufuks's actual diary, pencil smudges and all. Polaroid copies are glued to pages, text crammed around them, at times illegible. There are notes on

the artist's first room in London, on his move to a different apartment and the Turkish girl he shares it with but does not know anything about save for a photograph she keeps of her parents and grandparents. There are descriptions of trips with friends, books read, films and exhibitions seen — such as an exhibition on the Portuguese 'Discoveries' that lacks in critical reflection but is abundant in food and champagne. There are thoughts on the ways the 'student crit' classes are held at the Royal College of Art, collected quotes from Derek Jarman and André Kertész, and musings on photography: under a self-portrait, Blaufuks wonders how could Stieglitz like Georgia O'Keefe's [*sic*] work (Fig. 52), or, a few pages later, why photographs should not need to be accompanied with large explanations as some of his colleagues choose to do:

> Brains before eyes, instead of the other way around. Pictures should be visual and, if possible, set the viewers brain in motion afterwards. The photographer's thought should not be on top of the images, seducing you to think how great they could be, if all his/her thoughts were really in them, communicating over to you. […] After all, you are not supposed to have sex with your brains but with your body. And so it should be with visual pleasure. (Blaufuks, 1994)

The topics shift and jump quickly and, apparently, randomly, following the interest of the artist for any specific theme at the time of writing. The repeated complaints about the English weather might be a common theme with a number of any other diary keepers, but the text is deeply personal.[70] One might read between its pages memories that will be found again

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70 Whilst it is deeply personal, Blaufuks's writing summons the style of a number of other artists working with text and photography. There are echoes that might be found in the work of French-

in other projects. Such as the memory of the death of Blaufuks's grandmother and her remaining pie in *Under Strange Skies*, or the reflections on unopened letters that emerge from his collected items for *Album* (2008):

> I received a letter in the mail. And, instead of opening it right away, I kept it longer and longer in my inner pocket, like burning to be read, and I delayed the moment once and again, feeling that the anticipation was more beautiful than the actual reading. Once I took it out and opened the envelop, read the beginning of it, how my name was spelled, and this only made my anxiety grow, so I enjoyed this feeling and returned it to my pocket where it still is. (Blaufuks, 1994)

And towards the end of the diary, opposite two polaroids in blue tones of an envelope and industrial chimneys:

> "some letters should never be opened…" (Blaufuks, 1994) (Fig. 53)

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artist Sophie Calle (b.1953), who like Blaufuks has been influenced by Georges Perec. In the *Address Book* (1983), in finding a lost address book, Calle photocopied its pages in order to create a portrait of the owner by interviewing his contacts. One might read in this find, and in the way the artist described it, a foreboding of Blaufuks's encounter with a set of photographs of headstones that came to form *Memento Mori* (2008) — later adapted to book form as *Cadernos Blaufuks 2* (2011). In the *Address Book* Calle claims, "I have found an address book on the Rue des Martyrs. I decided to photocopy the contents before sending it back anonymously to its owner (…). I will contact the people whose names are noted down. […] I'll ask them to tell me about the owner of the address book, whose name I'll only reveal in person, if they agree to meet me." (2012 [1983]: n.p.) Whilst Blaufuks similarly remarks on the findings of his images, "In the winter of 2006, for reasons which I do not care to explain, I walked into a telephone booth, near the church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. Inside, next to the telephone directory, I found a brown envelope, containing these photographs. The envelope had neither sender nor addressee." (2011: n.p.)

There is a storyteller creeping out of Blaufuks's projects, there is a love of books and writing that cannot be denied. And if in *London Diaries* the artist exposed much more of his writing than is usual,[71] for his 2003 photobook, *Collected Short Stories*, Blaufuks sought to reach towards the editorial standards given to literary 'Classic Authors' by mimicking a Penguin paperback. (Blaufuks & Coignet, 2014: 199) [72]

> Affairs, obsessions, ardours, fantasy, myth, legend and dream, fear, pity and violence – this magnificent collection of stories illuminates all corners of the human experience.
>
> Previously unpublished these thirty-one stories reveal Daniel Blaufuks in a range of contrasting moods, sometimes cynical and witty, sometimes searching and philosophical. [73]

71 As Blaufuks explained in conversation with Sérgio Mah, "I'm a restrained, private person. My most intimate work was *London Diaries* […] I wrote the diary for myself and never thought it could be published as such. I began the diary to have a reason to photograph and, as I grouped the images inside the book, I realised I had images, or sets of images, that needed text to accompany them, and so writing became increasingly important." (Blaufuks & Mah *apud* Quintais, 2015: 9. My translation) "Sou uma pessoa contida, privada. O meu trabalho mais íntimo foi o *London Diaries* […]. Fui fazendo o diário para mim e nunca pensei que poderia vir a ser publicado enquanto tal. Eu comecei o diário para ter uma razão para fotografar e, depois ao agrupar as imagens dentro do livro, apercebi-me que tinha imagens, ou conjuntos de imagens, que precisavam de texto para as acompanhar, e assim a escrita foi tendo uma importância cada vez maior."

72 In *Blaufuks, A14 Pocket Library* (2007) the artist similarly mimicked the *Abrams Art Paperbacks*, a series of monographs dedicated to artists such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Braque, Cézanne, amongst others: "my secret plan was to go to a second-hand bookseller with *Blaufuks, A14 Pocket Library*, place it among the other books of the collection and wait for customers to discover it." (Blaufuks & Coignet, 2014: 198) Besides being 'published' by Penguin and Abrams, Blaufuks also inserted himself into Gallimard by using their famous collection of detective and mystery books, *Collection Série Noire*, as inspiration for *Works on Memory* (2012) and *All the Memory of the World, part one* (2014).

73 Blaufuks's commitment to the mimicking of Penguin Paperbacks led him not only to include a similar logo (an oval frame with an airplane, rather than a penguin), but also to add the recommended price in euros, pounds and dollars; a list of available titles by the same author divided into: Novels (Books), Stories (Catalogues), Fiction (Film), Essays (Video), Autobiography (Solo Shows), Letters (Group Shows), Plays (Set Designs), Travel (Unpublished Diaries); as well as a subverted version of the reproduction rights: *Except in Cuba, this book is*

As any self-respecting Penguin Classic Paperback publicist will know, a book that is expected to do well in sales is in dire need of aggrandising back notes on the author. However, the ones quoted above are not of the publisher's doing, rather they have been written by the author himself. Starting with *The End of Something* the overarching themes of this collection are: beginnings and endings; arrivals and departures; loneliness and the unsatisfactory pursuit of the next country, of the next city, the pursuit of the *Dream of a Strange Land.* [74] Some of the chosen titles for the 'stories are humorous — in *Banal Story* a couple stares vacantly at books (Fig. 54) —, most are a cheeky reference to other authors — literary or musical.[75] As Ana Quintais identified, *The Scene of a Stratagem*, *A Scientific and Literary Friendship* and *The Apartment Building (Project for a Novel),* all share titles with texts included in Georges Perec's Penguin Short Story Collection *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (1997). (Quintais, 2015: 136) However, these thirty-one stories are formed not by text in its most elementary conception, but by photographic diptychs headed by their title, they are "a kind of *snapshot prose*, a speech based on visual fragments that give indication of private stories on their way to become public." (Mah, 2008: 140)

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sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

74 This mood of consistent travelling is particularly conveyed by the titles and their sequence: *The End Of Something*, *A Sense of Reality*, *New York*, *An Unfinished Story*, *In Another Country*, *Alexandra Leaving*, *You Said Something*, *Tonight We Fly*, *A Drive in the Country*, *The End of the Party*, *A Scientific and Literary Friendship, The Route to Leh, A Day Saved, Banal Story, The Blue Film, A Distant Episode, Travelling Light*, *September Story*, *You are not I*, *Dinner at the Motel*, *The Apartment Building (Project for a Novel)*, *One Day*, *A Mobile Home*, *Berlin*, *My Side of the Matter*, *The Scene of a Stratagem*, *One Sunday Afternoon*, *The Circle of Reason*, *The Spanish Waitress*, *It Will Happen*, *Dream of a Strange Land*.

75 Amongst others, Blaufuks includes the titles of works by Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway, Georges Perec, O. Henry, Paul Bowles, and songs by Leonard Cohen, PJ Harvey, The Divine Comedy.

The comparison between the puncture of photography — Barthes's *punctum* — and that of the short story is something that has been previously put forth. Argentine-writer Julio Cortázar (1914-1984), for instance, argued that the short story writer's technique, much like that of the photographer, depends on "cutting a fragment of reality, setting certain boundaries, but in such a way that this cut acts as an explosion that opens wide a much broader reality, like a dynamic vision that spiritually transcends the field covered by the camera." (Cortázar *apud* Bell, 2014: 442. My translation)[76] The compression of the written story into a few pages — a few lines even — offers a snapshot of life much like what might be regarded as "one of the more stimulating qualities of photography … [the] ability to casually gather odd elements that trigger unforeseen experiences and senses". (Mah, 2008: 140) This capacity to puncture similarly works like memories, that emerge like a flash to fade away or to haunt a little longer. One might examine the short writings of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), with their unexpected turns and incongruousnesses that come from the retelling of a tale that has been told before by another; transmissions of memories and dreams.

Blaufuks briefly addresses Borges in his exhibition *Sobre o Infinito* (2004) in which he included a mirrored mechanism 'objecto para ver fotografias' ('object to see photographs') based on his reading of *The Aleph* (1949): "Similarly to the Aleph this is an object to see images that contains all images, continuously, infinitely."[77] (Quintais, 2015: 100. My translation.) The *Aleph,* or *Alef* א, is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, yet Blaufuks also included a second Hebrew letter in this exhibition, the letter *Chai* חי, which stands for life. (Fig. 55) Perhaps such might be seen as a counterpoint to another tale by Borges, one

76 "recortar un fragmento de la realidad, fijándolo determinados límites, pero de manera tal que ese recorte actúe como una explosión que abre de par en par una realidad mucho más amplia, como una visión dinámica que transciende espiritualmente el campo abarcado por la cámara."

77 "À semelhança do Aleph este é um objecto para ver imagem que conterá todas as imagens, continuamente, infinitamente."

included on his text on the *Kabbalah* (1980). Here, after creating a golem by inscribing the word *EMET* (truth) on its forehead, the rabbi becomes wary of the creature, asking it to bend over. As it does so, the rabbi "erases the aleph or first letter of *EMET*. This leaves *MET* (death). The golem turns to dust." (Borges, 1984 [1980]: 83) In this the aleph is the key to giving life (חי), in other uses, namely by another of Blaufuks's key authors, Georges Perec, it becomes enmeshed with a tale of death. In *La Disparition* (2016 [1969]), Perec looks to Borges, the very first reference appearing early on in the text with Anton Vowl and his sudden obsession with a spot on his rug: the Alpha. It is this author, Perec, and the impact he has had on a number of projects by Daniel Blaufuks that I will now turn my attention to.

A Dialogue with Georges Perec

I was seized by the beauty of this conception — so primary, in a way, or in any case so evident that we forget it constantly — that all our thoughts are made with just twenty-six letters and the game of their permutations, which is, in truth, infinite.

— Michelle Grangaud

A prodigious list-maker, a crossword lover, an explorer of language and puns that bore a broken memory of childhood, Georges Perec has vastly influenced contemporary artists,[78] not least Daniel Blaufuks. Born in Paris on 7 March 1936 [79], Perec was the son of Jewish Polish immigrants, Cécile and Izie Perec (or Cyrla Szulewicz and Isek Perek). His father, having enlisted in the French foreign legion in September 1939, just a few weeks after the invasion of Poland, died of battle wounds in June 1940, his regiment having unsuccessfully tried to stop the march of German armies towards Paris. As Jews in occupied France the rest of Perec's family quickly saw their rights curtailed; some members of the family had managed to leave the country by then, whilst others, such as Perec's aunt Esther and her husband David Bienenfeld, had found refuge in the Alpine town of Villard-de-Lans. For a time, young Perec continued to live with his mother and grandparents in Paris, but

78 In 'Georges Perec's Enduring Presence in the Visual Arts' (2017) Mireille Ribière analyses a number of contemporary artists, from multiple nationalities, directly engaged with the French-author's writing. Among them are the Brazilian artist Daniel de Paula (b.1987), the Belgian Christl Lidl (b.1970), the Spanish Ignasi Aballí (b.1958) and the French Anne Deguelle (b. 1943), Christian Boltanski (b.1944), and Sophie Calle. See also Forsdick *et al.* (2019) *Georges Perec's Geographies: Material, Performative and Textual Spaces.*

79 Georges Perec first became known as a writer with the publication of his first (published) novel *Les Choses: Une histoire des années soixante* (1965) for which he won the Prix Renaudot. In 1978, Perec also won the Prix Médicis for his 600-page novel *La vie mode d'emploi* (1978). Perec died of lung cancer in 1982.

towards the end of 1941 Cécile was able to place her son on a French Red Cross convoy to join Esther and David in the French Alps: it would be the last time Perec would see his mother, a memory that would later recur in his semi-autobiographical novel *W or the Memory of Childhood* (1975). In January 1943, Cécile was arrested in a raid, taken to a holding camp in Drancy and from there sent to Auschwitz, where she disappeared. What was left to Perec of his parents was two certificates — one of his father's death and the other his mother's *acte de disparition* (or 'certificate of disappearance') — and his name.

As both Perec and his biographer, David Bellos, explain, the name Peretz is of biblical origin. As members of the Peretz clan settled across various countries, the spelling of their name took on multiple shapes and meanings:

> In Hebrew it means 'hole', in Russian it means 'pepper', in Hungarian (in Budapest, to be more precise) it is the word used for what in French we call 'pretzel' ('pretzel' or 'bretzel' is in fact merely a diminutive form (Beretzele) of Beretz, and Beretz, like Baruch or Barek, is formed from the same root as Peretz […]. The Peretzes like to think they are descended from Spanish Jews exiled by the Inquisition (the Perez are thought to be Marranos, or converted Jews who stayed in Spain), whose migrations can be traced to Provence (Peiresc), then to the Papal States, and finally to central Europe, principally Poland and secondarily Romania and Bulgaria. (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 35)

As to the transformation of Peretz to Perec, the writer clarifies that "[a]n official hearing in Russian and writing in Polish, it has been explained to me, will hear Peretz and

write Perec." (2011 [1975]: 35) At times these changes in spelling were due to mishearing, poor writing and reading skills, or also purposeful alteration as part of discriminatory actions; other times they might stem from the request of the name holders themselves, as a way to establish a place outside of their jewish origins, as Daniel Blaufuks encountered when searching for his own surname. As mentioned previously[80], Blaufuks's relationship with his father, and thus the Blaufuks side of the family, was one grounded on absence and abandonment. Like Perec, Blaufuks was left with very little of his father other than his name. So he searched for other Blaufuks in the world, finding some in his travels, receiving letters from others — such as the letter by Madame R. Blaufuks from Brussels the artist used in *Album* (2008)[81] — and finally looking them up in the archives:

> I do not have objects from the Blaufuks nor photographs from the Blaufuks, and my father was untouchable and inaccessible […]. In the end, he vanished, like so many Blaufuks before us, as several pages of testimony in the Yad Vashem[82] demonstrate […]. The list is long, even though I restricted it to the Warsaw Blaufuks with this exact spelling, because there are many variants of my surname, that served to, in a rather vain attempt, hide the jewish origins of their bearers.
>
> BLAUFUKS
>
> BLAUFUCHS
>
> BLAUFUX

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80 See Chapter 1.2 – Archive and Trauma.

81 See Chapter 1.1 – Systems of Classification.

82 Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, contains a vast database of over 4 million names and biographical details of Holocaust victims.

BLAUFEUX

BLAUFUCKS

BLAUFÜCK and so on.

(Blaufuks, 2019. My translation)[83]

Perhaps one might propose that, in the absence of fathers, the names both Perec and Blaufuks identified as those of their ancestors were the ones of the writers and artists whose work they collected, quoted and transformed; amongst them Adolfo Bioy-Casares (1914-1999), Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Marcel Proust (1871-1922) and Jorge Luis Borges. The latter of which was himself an enthusiast of rewriting the works of previous authors, later dismissing his early stories as "the irresponsible sport of a shy sort of man who could not bring himself to write short stories, and so amused himself by changing and distorting (sometimes without aesthetic justification) the stories of other men." (Borges *apud* Walsh, 2010: 4) It will be by an approach initiated in the previous chapter in relating one of the best-known works by Perec, *La Disparition* (1969), to some of Borges's short stories, that I will begin to examine the impact of the French-writer's oeuvre in Daniel Blaufuks. Furthermore, in considering absence, I will analyse how Blaufuks constructed his short film *The Absence* (2009) by manipulating the masterwork of Jean-Luc Godard (b. 1930), *À bout de souffle*

83 "Não tenho objectos dos Blaufuks nem fotografias dos Blaufuks, e o meu pai era intocável e inacessível […]. No fim, esfumou-se, como tantos Blaufuks antes de nós, como várias páginas de testemunho do arquivo do Yad Vashem demonstram […]. [A] lista é longa, mesmo se a restringi aos Blaufuks de Varsóvia com o nome escrito exactamente assim, porque existiam muitas variações do meu apelido, que serviam para, numa tentaviva assaz vã, esconder as origens judaicas dos seus portadores.
BLAUFUKS
BLAUFUCHS
BLAUFUX
BLAUFEUX
BLAUFUCKS
BLAUFÜCK e por aí fora."

(1960), drawing inspiration from the constraining processes utilised by Perec in *La Disparition*. Thus, I will explain how both works are erected through a process of excision predicated on medium and the codes each format relies on: the edit in one instance, the alphabet in the other.

I will continue to examine Perec's and Blaufuks's authorial relationship by looking at two other projects based on the language of medium, in this case the medium of the postcard. In comparing Perec's *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* (1978) to Blaufuks's *A Perfect Day* (2003-2005), I will consider how each removes an element from what is understood to make a postcard a postcard — Perec the image, Blaufuks the text — and how that impacts the reading of each project. Moreover, in looking at Perec's process in elaborating *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* through the use of combinatory constraints, one might recognise the possibility of archival creation with nothing more than these tools. A process that will open considerations to be examined in 'Section 3 – Traversing the Archive' of this thesis in respect to digital archives. Finally, in the present chapter, I will look at the question of the autobiographical through the works *I Remember* (1978) by Perec and *Now Remember* (2008) by Blaufuks, and analyse how the latter uses iPods as memory capsules as much as devices on which to share them.

Processes of Excision

Although Georges Perec became one of the most visible elements of the group he was not one of the initial members of OuLiPo — Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (Workshop for Potential Literature). Indeed, the work-group that was so enthralled by the potentiality of constrains and mathematical possibilities was founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau (1903-1976) and François Le Lionnais (1901-1984), and was open to new members through invite

only. It would be solely in 1967 that Perec would be asked to join. Nevertheless, the French-author quickly took to a number of the constrains elaborated by the OuLiPo, not least the lipogram, in which a letter is omitted — at its most successful when the reader is none the wiser of its disappearance. It is this disappearance, this act of *disparition*, that became the title of one of the principal works by an Oulipian author, *La Disparition* (translated as *A Void* in English). In the text, Perec excises a letter: the letter 'e', the most commonly used in the French language. Not only that, the entire book is structured around a reflection of this process of excision. Formally, *La Disparition* is composed of 26 chapters, or so it might seem, in fact, whilst the chapters are numbered up to 26 (the number of letters in the alphabet), chapter 5 (the position of the letter 'e') is missing. Indeed a number of elements in the fifth position are absent: "Perec mentions a hospital ward with twenty-six beds, all of them occupied with the exception of one; a collection of twenty-six in-folio volumes where the fifth volume is missing; a horse race with twenty-six entrants, one being scratched; and twenty-six boxes, with the fifth being absent." (Motte, 2004: 65-66)

If in its form *La Disparition* is already a feat in itself, the vertiginous sense of unease and fracture experienced by the characters is heightened through their awareness of a missing element in their surroundings. It is this missing piece that becomes the obsession triggering the tale of Anton Vowl (or Voyl in the original French) and his companions:

> Staring at his rug in this way starts grating on Vowl, who, a victim of optical illusions, of sly tricks that his imagination is playing on him, starts to fancy that a focal point is at long last within his grasp, though just as it's about to solidify it sinks again into a void. […] It's almost as though, intrinsic to his rug, to its vitals, in a way, is a solitary strand looping

> around a vanishing point — Alpha, you might call it — as though, acting as a mirror to all unity and harmony, such a point might grant him a synoptic vision of cosmic infinity, a protological point of origin gradually maturing into a global panorama, an abysmal chasm discharging X-rays […] which Vowl cannot stop tracing, as grimly and untiringly as a convict pacing back and forth along his prison wall, pacing, pacing, pacing, without any notion of scaling it… (Perec, 2008a [1969]: 6)

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the alpha Perec takes hold of in *La Disparition* is none other than a variant of Borges's aleph. As in many of Perec's texts, a number of citations, acknowledged or not, of other authors are easily identified. In *La Disparition*, for instance, with only a superficial reading, one can recognise elements of Charles Baudelaire's (1821-1867) poem *Recueillement* (1861), Adolfo Bioy Casares's novel *The Invention of Morel* (1940), and a number of Borges's stories. In the section quoted above there are distinct elements pulled directly from *The Aleph* (1945): "The Aleph was probably two or three centimeters in diameter, but universal space was contained inside it, with no diminution in size. Each thing (the glass surface of a mirror, let us say) was infinite things, because I could clearly see it from every point in the cosmos." (Borges, 2000b: 129-30) Moreover, the notion of the aleph put forward by Borges itself might be identified in Perec's operation on the alphabet. In *Species of Spaces* (1974), Perec ponders: "Is the aleph, that place in Borges from which the entire world is visible simultaneously, anything other than an alphabet?" (Perec, 2008d: 13) For it is with these 26 letters that all the words contained in most Latin-based languages are composed, to remove one would mean a dismembering of that language: "The mutilation of language is the figure for the mutilation of life that that

language tells, or rather conceals, or rather tells through concealing." (Martín Ruiz, 2012: 840) It is an exploration of the medium by the excision of that which shapes it: the letters of the alphabet.

The aleph itself is at times represented as a single letter, in French taking the shape of 'e'. Additionally, it has been put forward that in French 'e' is pronounced as 'eux' — which stands for 'them'. Thus, it has been suggested that the missing 'e' in *La Disparition* might stand in for all the people whose final record is simply an *acte de disparition* — like Perec's mother, and the other victims of the Holocaust.[84] As David Bellos notes, in the golem tale, as the Rabbi erases the aleph he is erasing the 'e', making the golem turn to dust: "What has disappeared, then, from *La Disparition*? *E* has. 'They' have — those who have the Golem to protect them no longer." (2010: chap. 40. Kindle book) In this mutilation of language lies a silent loss, one the writer only hints at. He does not only not depict his loss, as Pablo Martín Ruiz shows, Perec "even resorts to a new, mutilated language in order not to recount it." (2012: 840) However, the aleph/alpha is not the only reference to a tale by Borges. Martín Ruiz proposes that are two others: *The Zahir* (1949) and *Deutsches Requiem* (1946). (2012: 838)

The first of these is easily identified, the cursed element that suggests the death of each character in *La Disparition* is named the zahir. Perec writes: "In Masulipatam […] Zahir was a jaguar; in Java, in a Surakarta hospital, it was an albino fakir at whom that city's population had had fun casting rocks; […] in Bahia Bianca it was a tiny notch on a coin." (2008a [1969]: 122) Following Borges's description: "In Buenos Aires the Zahir is a

84 *"W or The Memory of Childhood* has a dedication printed on the page: *To E*, without the full stop one might expect after an initial letter. One day when Ela called at Rue Linné to take him out for dinner, Perec asked his sister-cousin what she thought of the dedication. She asked hesitantly whether she would be right to take it as a homage to her mother Esther – and to herself, Ela? Georges's eye twinkled affirmatively. Then he added: *My parents, too*. Ela raised an eyebrow, quizzically. *Pour eux*, Perec explained. *Pour e-u-x*."(Bellos, 2010: chap. 53. Kindle book)

common twenty-centavo coin into which a razor or letter opener has scratched in the letters *N T* and the number 2 […]. In Gujarat, at the end of the eighteenth century, the Zahir was a tiger; in Java it was a blind man in the Surakarta mosque, stoned by the faithful […]" (Borges, 2000e [1949]: 79) Furthermore, in the original French there is a direct reference to the name Borges that has been lost in the English translation: "à Bahia Bianca, un coin d'un sou où s'abîma, dit-on, Borgias." (Perec, 2016 [1969]: 139) Perec continues his description of the object that lead to Vowl's descent into madness: "who looks upon a Zahir will not again know Nirvana, blissful oblivion, and will turn into a haggard raving lunatic." (Perec, 2008a [1969]: 123) Corresponding to Borges's pronouncement on the drop into insanity that the zahir provided; "the masses use the word [zahir] for 'beings or things which have the terrible power to be unforgettable, and whose image eventually drives people mad.'" (Borges, 2000e [1949]: 85) Nevertheless, *The Zahir* was not the sole story that Borges wrote that played with this notion of the obsessive focus leading to madness, *Deutsches Requiem* had already planted that seed in 1946.

In this tale, Otto Dietrich zur Linde, after facing trial and conviction of crimes against humanity as a commander of a Nazi concentration camp, awaits his death. In these moments he recounts some of what has passed, and how he had devised a simple, yet effective, torture method:

> I had realized many years before I met David Jerusalem that everything in the world can be a seed of a possible hell; a face, a word, a compass, an advertisement for cigarettes — anything can drive a person insane if that person cannot manage to put it out of his mind. […] I decided to apply this principle to the disciplinary regimen of our house, and … In late 1942,

Jerusalem went insane; on March 1, 1943, he succeeded in killing himself.

(Borges, 2000a [1946]: 66. Ellipsis in original)

Again, I return to the echoes Perec utilised in evoking Vowl's escalating obsession with a point in his rug: "Vowl cannot stop tracing, as grimly and untiringly as a convict pacing back and forth along his prison wall, pacing, pacing, pacing, without any notion of scaling it…" (Perec, 2008a [1969]: 6) Here we find the same madness that stems from the cruelty applied in the concentration camp Borges describes — David Jerusalem standing in for the Jewish victims. However, in addition to the two Borges stories Martín Ruiz rightly suggests are contained within *La Disparition* besides *The Aleph*, I propose that in the excision of the 'e' we might read another: *The Witness* (1960).

Barely two pages long, *The Witness* speaks of the death of the last Saxon eyewitness to the pagan rites erased from England with the establishment of Christianity. He does nothing, he simply dies; and with his death gone is a world of experience and knowledge: "Things, events, that occupy space yet come to an end when someone dies may make us stop in wonder — and yet one thing, or an infinite number of things, dies with every man's or woman's death […]. What will die with me the day I die?" (Borges, 2000d [1960]: 161) I believe this disappearance, this death, might be found in the disappearance of the 'e' in language. How many countless words go missing when there is no 'e' to be found? What

language remains when one of its elements is taken away?[85] This is a question that might be found also in Daniel Blaufuks's *The Absence* (2009), itself inspired by Perec's text.

From the moment the opening credits are shown, the reworking of Jean-Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960) in Blaufuks's *The Absence* becomes evident. "CE FILM EST DÉDIÉ A LA MONOGRAM PICTURES" has transformed into "C FILM ST D DI A LA MONOGRAM PICTUR S". (Fig. 56) Like in *La Disparition* the 'e' has gone missing, *A BOUT DE SOUFFLE* has turned into *A BOUT D SOUFFL* and the title Blaufuks has given to this project — *The Absence* — has suffered a mutilation: *L ABS NC*. (Fig. 57) Yet this is not the only excision Godard's film has been submitted to in Blaufuks's hands. Should one not be familiarised with the 1960s French film, perhaps it might take a few instants before the augmented disjointedness of the film becomes apparent. What causes this disjointedness? Not just Godard's editing technique; not just the jump cuts — the abrupt transitions between film sequences that break continuity, establishing the illusion of a faster pace, yet simultaneously bring the viewer's attention to film as film, as a medium — that came to mark *À bout de souffle* as one of the first, and most influential, examples of French New Wave film. There is something else that appears to be absent from a traditionally continuous edit: Jean-Paul Belmondo's character is missing, and not just from the hands of the Police.

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85 The same question might be posed in reading another of Perec's works: *Life a User's Manual* (1978). In one of the chapters following the inhabitants of an apartment bloc in Rue Simon-Crubellier, Paris, Perec tells of Cinoc, a 'word-killer' for Larousse dictionaries. Cinoc's job is to eliminate obsolete words to make room for new ones, in doing so "[w]hen he retired in nineteen sixty-five, after fifty-three years of scrupulous service, he had disposed of hundreds and thousands of tools, techniques, customs, beliefs, sayings, dishes, games, nicknames, weights and measures; he had wiped dozens of islands, hundreds of cities and rivers, and thousands of townships off the map; he had returned to taxonomic anonymity hundreds of varieties of cattle, species of birds, insects, and snakes, rather special sorts of fish, kinds of crustaceans, slightly dissimilar plants and particular breeds of vegetables and fruit; and cohorts of geographers, missionaries, entomologists, Church Fathers, men of letters, generals, Gods & Demons had been swept by his hand into eternal obscurity." (Perec, 2008c [1978]: 288) Yet Cinoc redeems his 'killing' by collecting the words in a dictionary of forgotten words, a compendium that soon will be impossible to read. (Perec, 2008c [1978]: 290)

In the first ten minutes of Godard's *À bout de souffle,* Michel Poiccard (Belmondo) has already stolen an American car, killed a police officer, and made his way to Paris to collect money from another small-time crook. With a cigarette constantly dangling from his lips, which he systematically rubs his thumb across, and a hat tipped to one side, Michel emulates Humphrey Bogart, or to be more exact the characters Bogart has played in American Noir films. He meets his American lover, Patricia (Jean Seberg) and attempts to convince her to escape with him to Italy. In the end, she betrays him to the police, he is shot and dies a prolonged, and exaggerated, death. In eliminating Michel, Blaufuks turns an 87-minute film into a, just over, 20-minute short. Patricia, with her short hair and striped clothes, fills the screen time, often looking at or talking to someone just outside the frame. It is this process of looking just outside the frame that Blaufuks disrupts with his new edit; he disrupts the process of suture.

Developed by Jacques-Alain Miller as an intervention in Lacan's 24 February 1965 seminar 'Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis', the notion of suture was first applied to film by Jean-Pierre Oudart in his seminal essay *Cinema and Suture* (1969). According to Miller, "[s]uture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse." (2007) In film, suture is what allows spectators to suspend their disbelief and become absorbed by the film as a realistic and believable depiction. For Oudart, suture is founded in the shot / reverse-shot model; the first shot might feature a character looking or speaking to an unknown, what is designated as an 'Absent One', breaking the viewer's immersion in the film — 'Who is at the other side of the gaze?' — the second shot, corresponding to what is being looked at or addressed, sutures this rupture and answers the question. In eliminating Belmondo's character, Blaufuks is interrupting this moment of suture. Thus *The Absence* becomes permanently fixed on the 'Absent One', that which is the unknown to the viewer, just like *La*

Disparition revolves around the missing 'e'.[86] Taking suture as one of the key tenets of film editing one might understand Blaufuks's selection of Godard's film for appropriation: the artist is highlighting the manipulation of the medium that Godard had initiated in the French New Wave, just as Perec had pushed the boundaries of text and writing with his projects. In removing fundamental elements for the construction of their respective medium of choice, Perec and Blaufuks elaborate a process of "mutilation of language" (Martín Ruiz, 2012: 840) that might be read as a reflection of the vertiginous narratives they try to convey. Perec with the swift descent into madness his characters suffer, Blaufuks with the removal of a character that, in living as an imitation of Humphrey Bogart, seems to have no essence of his own. If the elimination of one single element might produce such an exploration of form and content in medium, what might the result be when one half of the format is removed? Such is a question that might emerge from the reading of Perec's *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* (1978) and Blaufuks's *A Perfect Day* (2003-2005).

Postcards of *A Perfect Day*

A tropical scenery with white sands and palm trees, a snowy landscape perfect for skiing, the bright lights of a big city, any of these images — at times paired to 'Wish you were here' in flashy lettering — call forth the stereotypical notion of what makes a postcard. They can be gathered as tokens or souvenirs of personal trips and vacations, kept in old shoe boxes and forgotten, or can even turn into collectors' items having never been sent out at the time of their publishing. Nevertheless, it is this ability to be sent, to convey a message to

86 In another of Blaufuks's projects, this time a book, *Não Pai* (2019), about the non-presence of his father in his life, the artist poses the question: "Might an absence be more present than a presence?" Such sentiment might already be read in *The Absence* and also in Perec's *La Disparition.*

another person from a distance, that is at the root of the postcard. It is a personal message being shared, yet it is open for all to see.

As an official postal device, the postcard emerged circa 1870, in Prussia, as an inexpensive way for soldiers fighting in the Franco-Prussian War to send messages home.[87] Although these early postcards did not contain images, drawings and printed illustrations were soon added, growing in popularity in the 1880s. It was at the turn of the decade, with the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 in Paris and the *Chicago World's Fair* in 1893, that the picture postcard — now featuring photographic images — truly established itself. With this, the postcard became a dual element medium: an image and a written text.[88] As Jacques Derrida noted, in postcards "one does not know what is in front or what is in back, here or there, near or far, […] recto or verso. Nor what is the most important, the picture or the text, and in the text, the message or the caption, or the address." (1987 [1980]: 13) So in divorcing these elements, how might a postcard be read as a postcard?

In 1978, Georges Perec developed *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* (*Deux Cent Quarante-Trois Cartes Postales en Coulers Veritables*), first published by Jacques Vallet and posthumously included in *L'Infra-Ordinaire* (1989)[89]. Dedicated to his friend and fellow-Oulipian, Italo Calvino, the set of postcard messages, rather than being pulled from genuine postcards or being unruly creations, were elaborated through the use of combinatory constraints Perec had been refining whilst writing his masterwork, *Life: A*

87 For a detailed analysis on the development of the postcard see Siegert, Bernhard. (1999). *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*.

88 In truth, there are number of elements that might be considered in examining the postcard as a medium — the image, the address, the stamp, the message (that might be subdivided into the greetings and the signing off), or the signature — but these require an in depth analysis that falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

89 In looking at Blaufuks's *Attempting Exhaustion* (2016) in relation to Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (2010 [1975]) in Chapter 3.3 – The 'urgent' eye of Instagram, I will return to the poetics of the infra-ordinary, that which lies below the exceptional, the extraordinary, but instead is banal, daily, or background noise. (Perec, 2008b [1973]: 209-10)

User's Manual (*La Vie mode d'emploi*) (1978).[90] Each of Perec's postcards was composed by five elements: location, activity, entertainment, special mentions, farewells. For each, Perec chose to include three possibilities: location (city, region, hotel), activity (watching the weather, siesta, tanning), entertainment (eating, going to the beach, relaxing), special mentions (sunburn, leisure, making friends), farewell (kisses and hugs, promise to return soon, greetings). (Bonch-Osmolovskaya, 2018: 254) It was the arranging and rearranging of the sequences and of the multiple options, that produced the 243 (3^5) possible combinations. He further constrained the process by creating a 9×9 grid where each house would stand for the name of a particular location. A chess knight would move throughout the board, never stepping on the same house twice, and the name to be included in each message would thus be determined.[91]

Although based on strategies developed by the OuLiPo, this process of selection and constraint also drew parallels to early postcards. In the 1870s, Leipzig book dealers, Friedlein and Pardubitz, proposed the creation of a 'Universal Correspondence Card', that would contain a predetermined, standardised set of 28 messages to be selected from:

> Every single one of these cards, which were indeed truly 'universal,' thus represented a consummate occasion register. The purpose of this register, however, was not to give guidance in writing, as had been the case for the Baroque *artes dictaminis,* but to make writing unnecessary. Opposites such as the receipt of a document and its absence, arrival and departure, birth

90 It has been put forward that Perec's project might be seen as a "combinatorial answer to Italo Calvino's descriptions of the invisible cities." (Bonch-Osmolovskaya, 2018: 254)

91 Perec had famously used this process, the Knight's Tour, in the construction of *Life: A User's Manual*. This time using a 10×10 grid. *See* Bellos (2010) and Hayles and Montfort (2012). For a complete description of all the constraints employed in *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour, see* Bonch-Osmolovskaya (2018).

> and death came together on the card as it is possible to do only in language. The universal postcard referred to a given fact of life only on the condition of its contingency: things might just as well have been different. In a discursive order such as this one, where things were expressed by placing legally permissible 'check marks' by the appropriate number, congratulating someone on a wedding meant no more than not sending 'condolences on a sorrowful occasion.' (Siegert, 1999: 156)

In a sense, the 'Universal Correspondence Card' would have existed as an archive of, almost, every possible activity and occasion in life.

Having considered in previous chapters the physical aspect of the archive — of its documents, of the very building it is housed at, of the people that select and catalogue each record —, one would be remiss not to consider the possibility of archival creation with nothing more than the use of combinatory constraints. Indeed, in looking back to the power of archives presented in Chapter 1.1, one key notion is that proposed by Michel Foucault that "[t]he archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events." (2002 [1969]: 145) This being so, an archive might exist beyond a corporeal form, resting rather in organisational and selective procedures. In fact, separated from a classificatory system, an accumulation of documents remains as nothing more than accumulation. Accordingly, in Perec's *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour,* the productive potential of combinatory constraints can be equated to an archival system.[92] Similarly, as we will see in Chapter 3.1 – 'Digital Archives and Databases',

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92 Here one might also consider the fact that Perec had ample experience in institutional archives and archival systems, having worked for 17 years (1961-1978) as a *documentaliste* (or scientific archivist) in a neurophysiology research laboratory, where he developed his own cataloguing and retrieval system — Peekaboo. Some have claimed that this knowledge, and ease of use, of systems

this notion might be applied to one's understanding of algorithms themselves as archives. Moreover, in establishing categories within the five distinct elements composing his messages, Perec mirrors the thematic divisions that might have come into play in the organisation of a 'material' archive; a system Blaufuks employs, as we will see below, in his own cataloguing of postcards.

The processes Perec engaged with might be viewed as archives in potency, but, returning to the question of medium in Perec's *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour*, might a postcard be understood as a postcard solely by its five-element message?

> We're camping near Ajaccio. Lovely weather. We eat well. I've got sunburnt. Fondest love.
>
> We're at the Hôtel Alcazar. Getting a tan. Really nice! We've made loads of friends. Back on the 7th.
>
> We're sailing off L'Ile-Rousse. Getting ourselves a tan. Food admirable. I've gone and got sunburnt! Love etc.
>
> We've just done Dahomey. Superb nights. Fantastic swimming. Excursions on camel-back. Will be in Paris on the 15th.
>
> (Perec, 2008e [1978]: 222)

In examining the first four 'postcards' by Perec quoted above, we encounter what Jan-Ola Östman defined as the "rhetorical structure" of the postcard. (2004: 433) Whilst analysing postcards sent to work colleagues in Finish offices, Östman identified seven

may partly have stemmed from the loss of his mother to the system put in place by the Nazis: "Perec's use of his own textual systems to ease the writing process, and his knowledge of the systemic ideology of the Nazis which resulted in his mother's deportation, leads him to the insight that systems, though often passing unnoticed, play a vital role in life, as in writing — either helping or harming us." (Boyle, 2007: 67)

recurring components in the messages: “These elements occur in a particular order, but none of them are obligatory. The elements are, in this particular order: date and place, greeting and vocative, reference to the picture, weather and circumstances, foreign language, reference to the workplace, greeting and leave-taking.” (2004: 433) What emerges from this is that, although in simplified form, Perec maintained the postcard’s rhetorical structure, down to the distinct order of its components.[93] Moreover, as David Prochaska found in studying the history of Hawaiian postcards, “[o]ne of the most striking characteristics of messages is how often they have nothing to do with the postcard image.” (2010: 115) More than being a textual illustration, or even supplement, of the image, the postcard text follows its own distinct and identifiable code. It can convey emotions and sensations that an image alone cannot; it might even be understood as a postcard in and of itself. Used in tandem, though, image and text, forming a three-dimensional object, might impart a sense of connection, “sharing presence as well as feeling absence (of a friend).” (Crouch, 2012: 330) Yet, there is another consideration to be made in looking at the message of a postcard, one that might be found in the brief examples above by Perec: it invariably describes scenes of a perfect day.

Taking as a cue *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour,* Blaufuks devised his own postcard project; one with several iterations and formats, but with the constant that each stood for an ideal day. *A Perfect Day* (2003-2005), might be based on Perec’s work, yet it also borrows its title — and soundtrack in the video and slide projection versions of the project — from Lou Reed’s song *Perfect Day* (1972). Using an array of postcard pictures, in brilliant colour, found in flea-markets, Blaufuks first presented the work in Location One, New York, in 2003, as part of an artist residency. The images showed

93 Whilst Perec’s postcard messages contain each of the established components, one should consider that no names of the addressees have been included, they are missing from the message. Thus, the theme of absence continues. One could propose that in Blaufuks the missing ‘you’ similarly occurs as there exists no single recipient to a slide-show, an exhibition, or a film.

saturated blue skies, with perfectly fluffy white clouds, over the crystal waters of swimming pools and beaches. Included, were pictures of architectural landmarks, such as the Parthenon, towering hotels, or Alpine mountains peppered with skiers. (Fig. 58) If one ever thought a vacation in one of these places might be dreary, the vivid Kodachrome-like colours in vogue in the mid-20th century did all they could to dispel such notions. As Paul Simon sang in 1973, Kodachromes: “They give us those nice bright colors/ They give us the greens of summers/ Makes you think all the world’s a sunny day, oh yeah.”

Blaufuks’s selection not only followed the cheerfulness conveyed in the messages developed by Perec, it also followed the codes of representation in photographic postcards. As a tourist item, the role of the postcard image was to “best summariz[e] the essential features of a place or [to be the] most comprehensive [view] of a place and through either of these approaches best communicat[e] the experience of it.” (Van Laar, 2010: 195)[94] Furthermore, by purchasing and sending a postcard a tourist “marked or commemorated his or her presence at that place. The sender also asserted his or her position as someone with the money and leisure time to travel.” (DeRoo, 2010: 89) Postcards were to display the very best possible version of a place or location, creating an idealised memory of a moment.

With *A Perfect Day*, Blaufuks sought to disrupt such a reading. He first coupled Perec’s text to manifestly unrelated images: “We’re at the Hotel Beau-Rivage. Lovely weather. We go to the beach. I’ve been playing boules. It all comes to an end on Tuesday, alas.” is linked to a picture of white mountains, whilst “The latest from Bastia: relaxation Corsican-style, the good life. Friends galore. Hugs and kisses all round.” sits over a photo of skyscrapers. (Fig. 59) Next, he created a slide-show / video series of the postcard images catalogued under titles such as ‘Swimming Pools’, ‘Hotels’, ‘Mountains’, ‘Beach’. Each

94 In ‘Views of the Ordinary and Other Scenic Disappointments’, Van Laar also offers a perspective on ‘disappointing’ postcard images.

sequence would follow one another to create a 40-minute loop. For the course of these 40 minutes, Lou Reed would ceaselessly sing a single verse from *Perfect Day.* By never moving from Reed's opening pronouncement of "Just a perfect day", Blaufuks enhanced the monotony of the images: blue sky, after blue sky. (Fig. 60) After all, an endless perfect day might turn out to be quite boring. (Blaufuks, 2003b) Although in this, the written component of a postcard was apparently missing — and the recognition of the images as postcards was achieved mostly through the Kodachrome tonality — the emphasis on the lyrics 'just a perfect day' conveyed the sentiment of most postcard messages.

Continuing the *A Perfect Day* project, in 2008 Blaufuks developed the 27-minute short film *A Perfect Day in Wannsee.* Divided into two main 'movements', the film's 16:9 aspect ratio summons the postcard format. Such is underscored by the prominent colour contrasts of the shots, and even the grainy quality of analogue film. Blaufuks begins by turning his camera onto the Wannsee lake, in a steady shot that lasts just over 10 minutes, the sandy white beach at a distance. Sail boats cut through the placid waters, the occasional jet ski or tourist boat breaking the monotony of a sunny summer day at the beach. Birds chirp, and people speak from afar. (Fig. 61) The artist then moves his camera to the opposite side of the lake, a reverse shot to the first. He is now located at the edge of the sand; people languorously moving across it onto the water, some resting in shaded deck chairs. The green park can be seen on the horizon. (Fig. 62) Again this still-shot lasts over 10 minutes, the sky turns dark and the people begin to pack up as a warning of the beach closure comes over loudspeakers. (Fig. 63) It is only now, in the final minute of the film, that Blaufuks zooms in on a lone sail boat near the park area. It slowly crosses in front of the Wannsee Villa, and only now does the viewer realise it was from this location that the artist had been shooting his first sequence. (Fig. 64)

Blaufuks was inspired to create this film from the recollection of a memory belonging to a young American Jew that whilst in Berlin was invited by his German friends to spend a day at the beach, the beach, he came to realise later, was Wannsee, the place the plans to kill some of his ancestors were developed. For it was from this villa that, in 1942, a meeting of government officials and SS leaders of Nazi Germany took place to discuss the Jewish question and develop the Final Solution. (Roseman, 2002). *A Perfect Day* points to what might be hidden behind a postcard-perfect image, sun and sunburns might be only some of the memories associated to them, perfect days might hold darker elements.

In a project Blaufuks created on the same year as this film, 2008, the artist was again inspired by Perec; a project that, like the recounting of his American friend at Wannsee, was based on memory collecting.

I Remember / Now Remember

What might one remember if one were to hold an iPod in one's hand whilst the stranger on the screen voiced their memories directly into one's ear? How might the medium in which their testimonies are presented affect the experience of these memories? In 2008, Blaufuks turned to iPods as an immersive media for his project *Now Remember*. Inspired by Perec's *Je me souviens* (1978), the artist recorded the testimonies of five individuals asked to recall as many memories as possible within 15 minutes. Yet, the temporal constraint was not the only one they were instructed to follow, like Perec's autobiography — and artist and writer Joe Brainard's (1942-1994) before him —, each statement should begin with 'I remember…'.

In 1969, at 27-years-old and already with a number of exhibitions, stage designs, album covers, and poetry books behind him, Brainard had begun an autobiographical project

that would span five years and inspire a number of artists and writers, not least Georges Perec. The premise was simple: write down the first memory that comes to mind when thinking 'I remember…". *I Remember* was first published in 1970, quickly selling out its run of 700 copies, and prompting two subsequent volumes, *More I Remember* (1972) and *More I Remember More* (1973), and a special illustrated publication for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, *I Remember Christmas* (1973). In 1975 the texts of these publications were revised, added to, and published in their final form.

Brainard's memories encompassed mundane aspects, such as "I remember taking out the garbage." (2017 [1975]: 50); dreams and experiences: "I remember a dream I have had often of being able to fly. (Without an airplane.)" (5), "I remember wishing I knew then what I know now." (42); cultural references: "I remember James Dean and his red nylon jacket." (35); but also explicit sexual experiences and bodily functions: "I remember my first erections. I thought I had some terrible disease or something" (4), "I remember farts that smell like old eggs" (41). Many of these memories might, arguably, be shared by a number of people, but in conjunction with each other, and with memories that could have only belonged to Brainard — "I remember an algebra teacher who very generously passed me. His name was Mr. Byrd. I think he truly understood that algebra, for me, was totally out of the question, so he pretty much ignored me. (In a nice way.) He died the next year of cancer" (2017 [1975]: 135) —, they work to form a detailed image of the artist.

The ease of use of the 'I remember…' constraint promotes what might become a limitless memory stream, each illuminating an aspect of one's experiences and personality. Furthermore, both in Brainard and, as we will see below, in some of the participants in Blaufuks's project, the act of enumeration might push forward memories that might have not been shared otherwise: "I remember taking an I.Q. test and coming out below average. (I've

never told anybody that before).” (Brainard, 2017 [1975]: 65) Indeed, as Perec himself discussed in *Penser/Classer,* “[t]here are two contradictory temptations in any act of enumeration: the first is to cover EVERYTHING, the second is to leave something out all the same.” (2009 [1982]: 131. Emphasis in original) Brainard’s *I Remember,* with its various sequels and expansions, might be placed in the category of listing all; even brief comments that might flash into his mind: “(I’ve never told anybody that before).” And whilst in *I Remember* the fragmentary quality of the text, both in the sense of the shortness of the paragraphs — as memory fragments — as in the lack of a chronological continuity, might work to “convey the sense of the self as a complex constellation, mosaic or patchwork, irreducible to being enclosed in the neat parameters of a story” (Drąg, 2019: 227-8), the very act of enumeration might be understood to be “the intrinsic mark of our need to name and to collect without which the world (‘life’) would be unmappable […].” (Perec, 2009 [1982]: 131) Perhaps it was through this possibility of mapping his gap-ridden memory, that Perec, having claimed to possess no childhood memories in *W, or the Memory of Childhood* (2011 [1975]: 6), became entranced with the potentiality of the ‘I remember…’ device.

Brainard’s project was first introduced to Perec by fellow-Oulipian Harry Mathews (1930-2017), to whom Perec dedicated his version of *I Remember: Je me souviens* (1978). Acknowledging Brainard’s source, Perec nevertheless did not share with the American author his emphasis on memories based on bodily functions or sex.[95] Perec’s collection of 479 statements — plus an empty 480, as we will see below — presented memories in an objective, almost dispassionate, format, focusing on cultural and pop references rather than

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95 Although he does share some memories with Brainard. Whilst the American writes “I remember the day John Kennedy was shot.” (Brainard, 2017 [1975]: 5), Perec states “265. I remember Lee Harvey Oswald.” (2014 [1978]: 64). Similarly, Brainard recalls “I remember ‘How Much Is That Doggie in The Window?’” (2017 [1975]: 10), whilst Perec mentions “424. I remember: ‘How much is that doggy in the window / The one with the waggedy tail.’” (2014 [1978]: 88)

on direct mentions to himself: “98. I remember that Shirley MacLaine made her debut in Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry.*” (Perec, 2014 [1978]: 40), “152. I remember that Warren Beatty is the younger brother of Shirley MacLaine.” (47); or “157. I remember that Darry Cowl’s real name is André Darrigaud. / 158. And that reminds me of the cyclist André Darrigade.” (48); or even “244. I remember that Stendhal liked spinach.” (61)[96] Although, as Claire Boyle has put forward, the absence of context and visible connections between most statements “means that any understanding the reader is able to reach will not be as a result of the author’s assistance, but will depend on the reader sharing the memory with the writer.” (2007: 88), readers familiarised with Perec’s biography and work will still be able to capture something of the author in these recollections. For instance, having read *W, or the Memory of Childhood* [97], and knowing that Perec trained as a parachute trooper in 1958, the memory “33. I remember scarves made out of parachute silk.” (Perec, 2014 [1978]: 30) gains a particular weight, especially when combined with “393. I remember when I broke my arm and had the plaster cast signed by the whole class.” (83), as both point to a memory that recurs and is revised throughout *W*; the memory of the last time young Perec saw his mother:

> The only surviving memory of my mother is of the day she took me to the Gare de Lyon, which is where I left for Villard-de-Lans in a Red Cross convoy: though I have no broken bones, I wear my arm in a sling. My mother buys me a comic entitled *Charlie and the Parachute:* on the

96 In this, as much as Perec is indebted to Brainard, he also exhibits a strong connection to Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* (1957). In his collection of short-essays originally written between 1954 and 1956 for *Les Lettres Nouvelles*, Barthes sought to examine myth as a “system of communication”, as “a message”. (Barthes, 2009 [1957]: 131) To do so, Barthes looked to mass media, to pop culture and advertising: humorously deconstructing the symbolic language of cleanlinesses and purity used in the promotion of soap-powders and detergents, or looking at the new Citroën as the “equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals”. (Barthes, 2009 [1957]: 101)

97 To be further examined in Chapter 3.2 – *All the Memory of the World, part one*.

illustrated cover, the parachute's rigging lines are nothing other than Charlie's trousers' braces. (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 26)

However, Perec later acknowledges — with the help of his aunt's own memories — that he simply did not have his arm, broken or otherwise, in a sling: "my aunt is quite definite: I did not have my arm in a sling; there was no reason at all for me to have my arm in a sling." (2011 [1975]: 55) Like the inaccurate memory of the sling, Perec's recollection of carrying a comic featuring Charlie Chaplin in a parachute on the cover would have been impossible. As David Bellos explains, in 1941, when Perec was placed onto the train, Chaplin's mockery of Hitler in *The Great Dictator* (1940) would have meant that all images of the comedian would have been banned from occupied France. (Bellos, 2010: chapter 6. Kindle book) Thus, this crucial memory of last seeing his mother would have been, in fact, a composite of later experiences: his career as a parachuter, a later broken arm with a plaster cast signed by the whole class.

As previously mentioned, whilst living with his aunt and uncle in Villard-de-Lans between 1941-1945, Perec was instructed to forget, to leave all memories of his childhood, and his jewishness, behind. (Bellos, 2010: chapter 7. Kindle book) Such a command meant that later, in combing his memory for his work, Perec came across two distinct periods: those occurring after the war — from which *Je me souviens* was drawn from —, and those before the war, fractured and unreliable: "When I evoke memories from before the war, they refer for me to a period belonging to the realm of myth: this explains how a memory can be 'objectively' false […]." (Perec, 2014 [1978]: 97) As we will see in the next chapter, memory's plasticity means that it might be infused by other's recollections or even by exterior details — such as in the case of prosthetic memory, as formulated by Alison

Landsberg (1995, 2004). It might also be triggered by the remembrances of others. In *Je me souviens*, Perec included a final entry, an empty "480. I remember…", and a number of blank pages. This worked as an invitation to readers, who, inspired by the work — and possibly having found they held some memories in common with Perec —, might expand the list and insert something of themselves into the text. Blaufuks took up the challenge in *Now Remember* (2008), but rather than present his own memories, as Brainard and Perec, the artist chose to invite five other people to tell theirs.

Sitting alone in front of a camera, Heather, Irene, Nadia, Scott, and Thomas spent 15 minutes each probing their memories. These ranged from a routine "I remember yesterday morning" by Heather, to Thomas's loving recollection "I remember my very first memory, which is of my grandmother's very white arms and her white blouse as she leaned over to touch me and pick me up", and even to the harrowing, "I remember a single drop of blood on the couch on the day that my friend Ray shot himself in the head" by Scott. But they also included reflections on memory and forgetfulness by Nadia that are worth quoting in extension:

> I remember, but sometimes
> I don't remember.
> In that case
> I forget
> but I try to remember.
> Remembering is important.
> I remember when I was little,
> I remember
> I remember

I remember when I was, I was twenty-one,

I like to remember that time.

I had a good time.

I remember also when I was thirty, forty, fifty, sixty,

Oh my God!

Seventy. […]

I remember…

I’m glad I remember.

It’s nice to remember. […]

I remember.

What do I remember?

I remember what I have to do tomorrow.

Tomorrow will be Tuesday.

I remember I have to…

What do I have to do?

See… sometimes I don’t remember.

Sometimes not remembering is not as bad.

Old people worry because

they don’t remember.

But sometimes it’s good not to remember,

to forget.

In meditation you’re not supposed to be remembering anything.

It’s supposed to be a blank.

I never could do that, I remember that. […]

> Fifteen minutes is a long time.
>
> How much can you remember in fifteen minutes? (Blaufuks & Gould, 2008: 77-80) (Fig. 65)

Nadia also elaborates on the engagement people feel in remembering together: "[r]emembering is strange… you can remember the same thing that other people remember. And you can also remember different things. That's why people who live through the same experience have fun remembering together. Because you get enlightened by other people's memories." (Blaufuks & Gould, 2008:79) A point also made by Perec in regards to *Je me souviens*. For the French writer, the 'I remember' constraint elicited a kind of sympathy, a "[s]ympathy between people who remember that some years ago when you took the underground in Paris they do [*sic*] a hole in your ticket." (Perec & Mortley, 2009 [1981]: 100)

Whilst the choice to select others to present their memories might point to Blaufuks's attempt to remove himself from the exercise, such might never have been a possibility due to two factors: on the one hand it was the artist who picked the speakers, they are already familiar, if not intimately connected, to him, on the other hand some appear to be contributing to a process of 'remembering together', even if Blaufuks is not in the room. Irene, a musician, recalls Paul Bowles (1910-1999):

> I remember playing music for Paul Bowles, and what he said when I played these pieces for him. […]

> I remember how I looked forward to seeing him everyday when I was in Tangier for my visit. For my yearly visits. And I had this feeling of anticipation walking from my little *pénsion* to his apartment. […]
>
> And I remember thinking that in the end he looked at me with real affection and was sad to see me go at the end. Because we had had daily visits for several weeks. […]
>
> And I remember wondering after each visit if it was the last time I was going to see him, because I only came once a year. (2008) [98]

Irene's memories establish parallels to Blaufuks's own experience with Bowles as he was producing one of his first photobooks, *My Tangier* (1991). He writes:

> I flew down to Tangier to meet Paul Bowles. I had been fascinated by his books, but, more than that, by his life. A composer and a writer, a traveller in his time, a searcher. What I found in his house was, above all, serenity. Lazy afternoons spent around the fire-place, interrupted only by a few everyday visitors and calm rides to the market. Still, this [*sic*] were not peaceful times. […] Every afternoon I crossed Place Koweit to reach Bowles house and each time I found him more worried than before, awaiting the news we would bring from the outside. He has no television and I never saw him listening to the radio. And, of course, he has no telephone. (Blaufuks & Bowles, 1991: 7)

98 With the exception of Nadia's testimony, all excerpts have been transcribed, and edited for clarity, by me.

Irene's and Blaufuks's memories supplement each other to present a picture of Paul Bowles, of his life and personality. In these two depictions they might "get enlightened by other people's memories" (Nadia, 2008), and discover details unknown to them. Blaufuks's attempt at creating an intimate 'remembering together' is further augmented by his choice in medium. Rather than projecting the recordings sequentially in a gallery space, where viewers would experience the work collectively, or choose to show each video in an individual screen with headphones, where spectators would continue to have little agency over their viewing, Blaufuks elected to turn to iPods. In *Now Remember*[99], each iPod contained the testimonies as five separate files, and could be turned on or off at the push of a button. (Fig. 66) One could rewind, change tracks, or skip ahead, but there was an additional trait to experiencing the project through an iPod: it is small enough to fit in one's hand and the sound is deployed via headphones directly into one's ears.

There are a number of contemporary artists that have turned to sound works resorting to technologies such as Walkmans or iPods, perhaps more famously Canadian artist Janet Cardiff (b. 1957) and her partner George Bures Miller (b. 1960). Cardiff's audio-walks make use of the portability of these technologies to guide participants around a space — *Villa Medici Walk* (1998), *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012) — or even a city — *Walk Münster* (1997), *Night Walk for Edinburgh* (2019) —, evoking memories associated to each location, and creating tales that the participants might partake. Yet, making use of headphones, these projects also present a distinct form of experiencing.

In analysing the historical development of modern listening, from stethoscopes to headphones, Charles Stankievech maintains that Lacan's notion of *l'extimité* — a neologism based on the merging of exterior and intimacy — "could be used to describe the general

99 *Now Remember* was presented in Blaufuks's exhibition *O Arquivo (The Archive)*, held at Galeria Vera Cortês from 11 January to 23 February 2008, and featured 6 iPods.

experience of listening with headphones". (2007: 59) Placed into one's ears an exterior voice might now be directly projected into the intimate space of one's head. For, "[h]earing does not offer a meta-position; there is no place where I am not simultaneous with the heard. However far its source, the sound sits in my ear. I cannot hear it if I am not immersed in its auditory object, which is not its source but sound as sound itself" (Voegelin, 2010: xii). Listening is always preconditioned by presence; to experience sound, "distance is not an option […] joint time is demanded as the circumstance of experience" (Voegelin, 2010: 48). Time and place must be shared with the object even if it is "by insisting on the presence of its past" (Voegelin, 2010: 158).

Like Brainard above, some of the speakers in Blaufuks's project, in the act of talking alone directly into a camera, divulged details about themselves they might not have predicted they would do. Heather, for instance, offered a number of side remarks in regards to her own memories:

> I remember dreaming. (That was stupid. Sorry. Erase that.)
>
> I remember driving to Amsterdam with someone covered in Diesel Fuel.
>
> (It's true.)
>
> I remember little else about Amsterdam.
>
> I remember getting pregnant.
>
> I remember getting an abortion. ([inaudible] a confessional, just being alone here, so no one is ever going to see this again.) (2008)

This experience of the project as a confessional, to be shared privately, is enhanced in the immersive qualities of Blaufuks's chosen medium. In its use of headphones, and in the cradling of the iPod, with its minute screen, the making public of the memories of these five

individuals returns into something experienced by oneself, as if they were meant solely for one's ears. Furthermore, in containing all of the testimonies, and allowing for transitions between them by the user, the iPod operates as a capsule of memories as much as a device on which to share them: “they are archives as well as players.” (Collins, 2013: 655) However, the iPod, in its material characteristics, also contributes to the construction of memories.

As I addressed in chapter 1.3, media can provide paths to access specific dimensions of memory. (Baker, 2002: 6) Obsolete media in particular might conjure associations to nostalgia. Although iPod technology — in its click wheel iteration — might at first not appear to belong in the category of obsolete technology — after all it was first launched in 2001 — it has been officially named as such by its producer, Apple.[100] So what might happen when the medium in which these memories are held becomes obsolete? The videos remain, one might still access them by requesting the artist, but they are low-resolution M4V files, made to be seen in smaller screens rather than projected. In losing the iPod, the physicality of the device associated to the project fades. The satisfying feeling of the click wheel under one's thumb vanishes.[101] Some might be given partial access to the work, but only those still in possession of a player are able to experience it fully. Thus the experience of *Now Remember* becomes in itself a memory. The iPod that held these ‘I remember’ might then serve as a “mediated memory object” (Dijck, 2007: 17. Kindle book), imparting some of the bodily sensations it provokes to one's recollection of the memories of these 5 individuals.

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100 In deciding which products are able to access technical support, Apple has created two designations: Vintage and Obsolete products. Vintage products are items that have not been sold for more than 5 and less than 7 years. Obsolete products are those that have been discontinued more than 7 years ago. The iPods Blaufuks used in *Now Remember* (2008) were a 2007 version, placing them well beyond the 7-year mark.

101 The iPod's click wheel has garnered somewhat of a cult following, *See:* Gartenberg, 2018 and Kurchak, 2019.

Yet, there are more ways to reshape one's memory through media. Some have proposed that memories might even be implanted, that they might come from mass media. Towards the end of her 15 minutes Heather appears to lose patience with the project, and begins recalling memories that in all likelihood are born out of films and books:

> I remember fighting in ancient wars.
>
> I remember poisoning a monk.
>
> I remember burying the body in the wall.
>
> I remember where most of the bodies are.
>
> I remember squeezing the widow for any information she could offer.
>
> I remember looking for survivors.
>
> I remember running for my life.

In her playfulness, Heather nonetheless points to an aspect that will now be analysed in regards to Blaufuks's film *As if*... (2014), a work influenced by W.G. Sebald, that of a memory imbued with mass media details: prosthetic memory.

A Dialogue with W.G. Sebald

Before you a life is surging, a life deprived of words and shorn of the living spectrum of colors — the grey, the soundless, the bleak and dismal life. It is terrifying to see, but it is the movement of shadows, only of shadows...

— Maxim Gorky[102]

Can a city first constructed as a fortress, then transformed into a prison and then a concentration camp ever truly shed its ghosts? Can it ever assume a living not anchored on the past? And might fictional representations of such a past become as enmeshed in reality as to become a new form of memory? A prosthetic memory?

In the summer of 2014, in the process of making the film *As if...* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks visited Terezín in the Czech Republic. The city looked empty, desolate, as if its inhabitants had been slowly abandoning it; a disconcerting fact given that this was the city previously known as Theresienstadt, a city-camp occupied by Nazi-Germany in 1938. Interweaving images recorded on this trip with excerpts of a Nazi propaganda film, newsreels, and popular television and cinematic depictions of Theresienstadt, *As if...* is an examination on the perception of truth and on the construction of memory. First exhibited in *All the Memory of the World, part one* — to be examined in Chapter 3.2 —, the film follows Blaufuks's previous research into the camp: first through the photograph of an unoccupied office space found in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), then through his own reshooting of the image, and appropriation of the remaining excerpts of the fabricated Nazi propaganda film in

102 Maxim Gorky on the Lumière films in 1896.

Terezín (2007). Through the slowing-down of these few surviving minutes Blaufuks reclaimed, in this earlier film, the intended duration of the Nazi's pseudo-documentary, emphasising the staged quality of the original, focusing on what truth might still be read in the prolonged portraits of its reluctant participants. In *As if…,* time continues to be a key concern of the artist; spanning four hours and forty-three minutes in its first iteration the film has since been extended. If, on the one hand, this temporal extension might transmit the endless quality of memory production, on the other hand, it might similarly be connected to concepts of expanded cinema. Additionally, with its interlacing of documentary and fictional films — particularly of Hollywood productions — *As if…* might be examined through the lens of Alison Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory". As has been put forward in previous chapters, the process of exteriorization of memory through technological means has been a foundational element in the development of modern man. Thus, in the following pages, I will be considering how mass media might contribute to the reformulation, or even construction of memory, particularly in the absence of first-hand experience. Furthermore, as with the previous chapter, dedicated to the relationship between a number of Blaufuks's projects and Georges Perec's writing, I will explore the influence of W. G. Sebald — particularly his final work, *Austerlitz* — on the artist.

Remembering a fabricated city

First constructed as a fortress in the late-eighteenth-century, Theresienstadt was a utilitarian place, with "no concession to beauty, no redeeming features […], nothing pleased or soothed the eye. It was a drab and ugly town, where no butterflies lived nor birds sung." (Schiff, 2012: 5) Capable of housing up to 11,000 men during wartime, in the nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century a smaller fortress nearby served as a "notorious,

infamous prison, reserved for those who presented grave threats to society" (Schiff, 2012: 161). It became known for having housed Gavrilo Princip, the young anarchist who murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, a killing that, arguably, initiated the outbreak of World War I. In 1938, Nazi-Germany occupied the fortresses, turning the largest into a concentration camp in 1942: "The camp, which the Nazis also described as a 'paradise ghetto' […] was intended as a place where they could send wealthy or prominent Jews, particularly those they felt it would be more difficult to make disappear" (Prager, 2008: 179). Close to 150,000 Jews passed through Theresienstadt during the war, and at its peak over 50,000 people were held at the camp. Of these, only 17,247 survived.

In October 1943, Hitler ordered the arrest and deportation of all Danish Jews from Denmark. In a daring effort, the Danish Resistance Movement, with the support of the general population, were able to evacuate the majority of Jews, with only some 450 being captured, all of whom were sent to Theresienstadt. Immediately after the capture, the Danish government sought to examine the living conditions in the camp. With added pressure from the International Red Cross, they were granted permission to do so, but not before the Spring of 1944. During those months, the Nazis undertook a beautification campaign, which included deporting thousands of prisoners to Auschwitz to make the camp look less overcrowded and, according to survivor Vera Schiff, the naming of the camp streets that had, until then, only been identified by numbers and letters (2012: 12). Moreover, as the "Town Beautification" programme advanced, the SS:

> ordered the Jewish prisoners to paint the housefronts, clean the streets, dig flower beds, erect a play-ground for children in the park and a music pavilion on the square, fill the store windows, refurbish the ghetto café and

> the ghetto bank, and transform the former Sokolovna gymnasium into a community centre with a stage, prayer hall, library and verandas. The embellishment project went on for months. (Margry, 1992: 146)

On 23 June 1944, the International Committee of the Red Cross arrived for the visit. The examiners were led on a tour of the camp by Nazi Officials and ultimately, based on a visit that lasted only between six and eight hours, the conditions of the camp were deemed humane. And whilst Maurice Rossel, the Swiss representative in the Committee, later contended that "he could not have been expected to see beyond what the Nazis intended him to see" (Prager, 2008: 187), survivors argued that the Committee "only saw what the Nazis showed and presented them" (Caro *apud* Prager, 2008: 188) and looked for nothing more. The success of the visit prompted the development of a staged documentary film: *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (*Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet*, Kurt Gerron under supervision of Hans Günther and Karl Rahm, 1944), also known as *The Führer Gives the Jews a City*, of which only excerpts survive. The film, directed by Kurt Gerron — a prominent Jewish filmmaker and actor best known for his role in *The Blue Angel* (*Der blaue Engel*, Josef von Sternberg, 1930) — and featuring the detainees as cast and crewmembers, showed the model-life led by those in the camp. It presented clean spaces, abundant meals, a range of cultural activities and happy families. However, the family members were not related, the shop windows only displayed the clothes taken from the inmates, and the members of the string orchestra had to hide their bare feet behind flower arrangements. It was the culmination of a performance best described in a cabaret song written by Leo Strauss at the camp itself, a song the title of which — *Als ob*, in German — is evoked in Blaufuks's film, *As if…*:

> I know a lovely little town
> This town is really spiff
> The name I can’t quite place for now
> I’ll call the town ‘as if’
>
> This town is not for everyone
> This town’s a special place
> You’ve got to be a member
> Of a special ‘as if’ race
>
> The townsfolk are quite normal there
> As if in life, forsooth!
> They greet all rumours from outside
> As if they were the truth
>
> […]
>
> They bear their burden with a smile
> As if they knew no sorrow
> And talk of future happiness
> As if it were … tomorrow
> (Kift, 1998: 158-60)

As Blaufuks reflects, “the most symbolic image in the staged film is the one of the people around a table: a false family at a false meal in a false dining-room in a false house in a false city in a false country in a false documentary made by a false film crew” (2008b: 29). (Fig. 67) The artist appropriates the remaining excerpts of this film in *As if...*, interweaving them with the images recorded on his 2014 trip to the town, as well as newsreels and popular television and cinematic depictions of the city-camp, namely: *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, Alfréd Radok, 1950), *Transport from Paradise* (*Transport z ráje*, Zbyněk Brynych, 1963),

Holocaust (Marvin J. Chomsky, 1978), *War and Remembrance* (Dan Curtis, 1988) and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Mark Herman, 2008).

In viewing the film, one first encounters Terezín in the same way the artist did — from the inside of a bus looking out onto the grey, rainy and mostly deserted road, until a plaque announcing the arrival at the city is met. (Fig. 68) Immediately, Blaufuks cuts to a short excerpt from the propaganda film summarising the history of the fortress. Suddenly, the film turns back to 2014; the images show the rest of the way into Terezín and then a shot of an audio guide display. A hand presses the keys and a disembodied voice continues to tell the story of the city, this time focusing on what the propaganda film left out: the brutal presence of the Nazis. The steady shots of the architecture work to familiarise one with the space, with a city perfectly organised as a strict geometrical grid — motionless. A view of a sunny pinnacle of the town briefly overlaps with black and white footage of a fluttering SS flag (Fig. 69). The empty embankments with overgrown weeds contrast with the images of the resting Jewish prisoners, play-acting leisure. (Figs. 70 & 71) Later, through the excerpts of the openly fictional depictions of Theresienstadt, the realization that this was not the last time the city was used as a stage surfaces: the town's worn and torn streets and buildings being clearly visible in Radok's 1950 dramatisation.

It is in these juxtapositions of fact and fiction that *As if...* might be read as a meditation on the understanding of truth and on the construction of memory. A construction that in Blaufuks's film can be associated to the very procedure of cinematically representing a space "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself": a "*lieu de mémoire*" (Nora, 1989: 7). It is the construction element present in memory that I argue is as informed by historical facts as by fictional accounts in a process Alison Landsberg coined as "prosthetic memory" (1995).

Inspired by sci-fi films *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) and *Total Recall* (Paul

Verhoeven, 1990), Landsberg's definition of prosthetic memories refers to those "memories which do not come from a person's lived experience in any strict sense. These are implanted memories" (1995: 176). It is a process founded on the notions proposed by Leroi-Gourhan of an exteriorization of memory[103], but in Landsberg what actually enables this process is mass media. Not only that, it is technology that then permits its widespread implantation, as argued by Roberta Pearson: "as more and more people go on-line, computer mediated communication may play a large role in the construction of 'prosthetic memories'. The interactive nature of the Internet results in the same users simultaneously constructing 'prosthetic memories' for others while downloading 'prosthetic memories' constructed by others" (2014: 48). The fact that others might so influence the process of the construction of our memories raises several issues: what happens when images are fabricated or when we lack the images that document a crucial moment in our history? As Carolin Duttlinger has proposed:

> photography becomes crucial for an engagement with repressed traumatic experiences not because it records what is normally excluded from consciousness but because it provides a substitute for these experiences and facilitates the viewer's retrospective, imaginary engagement with incidents which were never experienced, witnessed or photographed in the first place. (2004: 163)

There are few pictures of the functioning camps and ghettos in which the Jewish captives were imprisoned during World War II, as most photographs were taken by the Soviet

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103 As was examined in Chapter 2.1.

Union and US armies during the process of liberating the camps. Film allows for the overcoming of such limitations by providing images to shape a historical memory. For many the first contact with the Holocaust has been through fiction, thus it can be argued that these films, television series and narratives become the means by which one's understanding of the event is first conditioned.

With the creation of ever more films, television series and novels around the Holocaust, much of our understanding of the event has become infused with fictional details, boosted and proliferated by ensuing media productions that are re-used and amplified in subsequent films, series and novels. Indeed, media might be seen to "supplement human memory, adding to and replacing the capacity for humans to remember in the face of their organic limitations." (Garde-Hansen et al. 2009: 11) In this, mass media becomes a means by which a memory of events is expanded; it turns into a technology of memory. Anxieties around the veracity of a memory infused with fictional accounts might surface, nonetheless it is important to recall that memory, in its malleability, has been fed on tales long before mass media, and that fiction, as we will see below, might open paths to truth. Indeed, it was through fiction, through W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), that Daniel Blaufuks first began his research into Theresienstadt.

Austerlitz / Terezín

In Sebald's final novel, the reader is taken on a journey that spans several decades, with various accounts retold by a central character whose name is never known. The narrator describes his encounters with Jacques Austerlitz, an academic drawn to the architectural evolution within Europe, an evolution that, for him, stops short of World War II. Through a lengthy narrative, the reader realises the importance of this fact, for Austerlitz had been sent

to England in 1939 in a *kindertransport*, at the age of four-and-a-half. Many decades later, after a nervous breakdown, Austerlitz begins to research his past, only to find that his mother, a Czech Opera singer of Jewish descent, had been deported to Theresienstadt, where she disappeared. This finding leads Austerlitz on a search of the events that occurred in the camp and on a reflection on the extermination of the Jewish population in Europe. Much as in the rest of Sebald's oeuvre, the text in *Austerlitz* is interspersed with black-and-white photographs that play a key role in the character's search for his past. As James Wood points out, an "effort of retrieval can be felt whenever we stare at one of Sebald's dusky, uncaptioned photographs" (2017: n.p.), an effort that mimics that of Austerlitz in retrieving the lost memories of his past. A number of these pictures pertain to Austerlitz's visit to Terezín, having supposedly been taken by Sebald's fictional character.

It was through these images that Blaufuks first began his research into the camp, as a picture of an unoccupied office space in Theresienstadt that he found in Sebald's book became fixed to his mind:

> Instead of a photograph depicting an office, a reading room or a mail-room, to my eye, the image seemed akin to a stage design for an unfinished play. The room seemed too perfect to be real and the straight line of the hands of the clock only reinforced my impression.
> I now imagined a character like Melville's Bartleby to step back in at any moment and repeat his monologue *I would rather not...* (Blaufuks, 2010: n.p.) (Fig. 72)

At the same time, the artist came across a set of diaries, written between 1926-1930,

of a young Jewish man in Berlin: Ernst K. In searching for further details on the youth he found that in 1942, now a full-grown man, K. was taken with his mother to Theresienstadt and "[o]nce again; I was reminded of the image in the book and I imagined his name typed on one of the endless files in that room." (Blaufuks, 2010: n.p.) Blaufuks decided to visit Terezín, to know the camp K. had been sent to, but principally to find the office in the photograph and reshoot it.

In his first visit to this Czech city, Blaufuks turned his camera towards the small fortress, the bleak and torturous prison where so many had died. The rooms were left with rusty doors and peeling paint in what looked like a conscious depiction of decay. The staged quality of the town palpable in the discovery of the room inside the small fortress:

> Above the entrance door outside it is aptly designated as a *Geschäftszimmer*, literally a business room. The furniture had been changed since the image was taken and there was no small desk. I cannot remember seeing the clock on the wall either.
> Now there was only a larger table in the middle of the room with a chair behind it. With the clock or perhaps due to the fact that I was seeing it in colour for the first time, the urgency of the room seemed to have disappeared as well. […]
> The door, leading to another office room and from there on to the courtyard, was still open in exactly the same position as in the Sebald image. As I tried to go into the room I was unable: a modern glass door inside the open original doorway prevented anyone from passing through. (Blaufuks, 2010: n.p.) (Fig. 73)

At the same time, his research into the camp led the artist to find the same excerpts of *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944) Sebald had described. With these documents in hand Blaufuks created *Terezín* (2010), a project that included a photobook — with the photographs he took during his visit, pages of Ernst K.'s diaries, and stills from the propaganda film — and a 90-minute film: *Theresienstadt* (2007). This piece is an appropriation of what remains of the staged 1944 film, the footage of which is slowed-down and tinted red (Fig. 74)— in part, like the colour one would see in a photographic darkroom,[104] but possibly also as a hint to the work of Joseph Cornell (1903-1972), as we will see below. In slowing these images, Blaufuks replicates Sebald's description of Austerlitz's search for his mother in the fabricated film, in which the character slows down the film's excerpts by four times, and by doing so Blaufuks also reclaims the intended duration of the Nazi's pseudo-documentary in its entirety. Blaufuks notes:

> The fact that I slowed the speed of the film of Theresienstadt meant that it went back to its original length. It is thought that the film was originally meant to last about ninety minutes. At the end of the war, the film disappeared and only later were some excerpts found […]. It was these bits that I worked on, and I reduced them to a speed that was four times slower, making it much more slow-moving. And so, in this way, we have returned to the ninety minutes that the Germans wanted the film to last, and which,

104 The development process of analogue photography also arises in Sebald's text: "In my photographic work I was always especially entranced, said Austerlitz, by the moment when the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long." (2001: 109)

according to them, would be the amount of time needed for you to get caught up in the lie that those images portray. With this process, a certain truth has been re-established from that lie and that intention of theirs. (2008b: 57)

Yet, this extending of the images in time did more than move closer to the intended duration of the original film, it brought up the details Sebald so aptly described in *Austerlitz*:

> The men and women employed in the workshop now looked as if they were toiling in their sleep, so long did it take them to draw needle and thread through the air as they stitched, so heavily did their eyelids sink, so slowly did their lips move as they looked wearily up at the camera. […] Strangest of all, however […], was the transformation of sounds in this slow-motion version. […] the merry polka by some Austrian operetta composer on the soundtrack of the Berlin copy had become a funeral march dragging along at a grotesquely sluggish pace […]. (Sebald, 2001: 345-8)

In slowing down the images, elements previously unperceived to the naked eye became visible. Elements captured only by the 'eye' of the camera.[105] As Walter Benjamin had advanced in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), "photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow

105 In *The Birth of Kino-Eye* (1924), Dziga Vertov had defined the notion of kino-eye (the camera-eye) as "that which the eye doesn't see […] as the possibility of making the invisible visible, the unclear clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt, the acted nonacted; making falsehood into truth." (1984 [1924]: 41)

motion, can capture images which escape natural vision." (1968 [1936]: 220) Such argument calls forth something of the "cold mechanical eye" Ernst would later present. (2013: 46) As I argued in Chapter 1.1, a camera does not simply capture a moment, it fixes an image containing more details than those intended by the camera operator — including the technical details specific to that camera and to the techniques used —, that might later be themselves imprinted into our own memory.

Nevertheless, in extending the remnants of *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* to create his film *Theresienstadt*, Blaufuks is also working within a broader artistic framework, that of expanded cinema. In *As if...,* the positioning of the work within the lines of expanded cinema is equally clear, not least due to the sheer duration of the film. In 2014, when it was first presented as part of the *All the Memory of the World, part one* exhibition, *As if...* stood at four hours and thirty-five minutes having been slightly extended in 2015 and 2016.[106]

Expanded cinema first emerged as an artistic practice in the 1970s, as conceptualised by Gene Youngblood in his 1970 book *Expanded Cinema*. Such terminology is less centred on classifying a specific artistic genre as it is in encompassing a variety of cinematic interpretations. Nonetheless, as Karen Mirza points out, here the corporeal interaction of the viewer with the work is key: "expanded cinema […] explores and allows different kinds of performative action or ways of engaging with the body,." (Mirza & Butler, 2011: 258) This engagement is not just predicated on the movement necessary to interpret works featuring multiple screens — as many expanded cinema pieces utilise —, or by the breaking-out of the cinema theatre onto the streets — as others do —, it is also the request made on the viewer's time. And whilst Blaufuks's *As if...* came close to being a five-hour film, others have pushed

106 My examination of the film has been primarily on the 2015 version, spanning four hours and forty-three minutes, to which I was given access by the artist.

the temporal extension to an even wider limit: take for instance Douglas Gordon seminal *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) or Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010).[107] In the impossibility — or at least impracticality — of watching these films in their entirety in a single session with fixed viewing schedules, the film loop has been employed as a device in their exhibition in gallery or museum spaces. As such, the "respective beginning and end" of the work might be seen as being set by the spectator rather than by the artist, "simply by [their] entering the story at a certain point and departing at another." (Dressler, 2008: 24) Furthermore, as a piece based on appropriation and reworking of found material, *As if…*falls into a long tradition of montage, one that Catherine Russell has titled archiveology. (2018) Whilst, in her proposal, Russell establishes parallels between the "practice of remixing, recycling, and reconfiguring the image bank" (2018: 11) that shapes archiveology and the act of compiling citations in Walter Benjamin's unfinished work *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), Blaufuks's films are more closely related to a project that was being developed at much the same time as Benjamin's, and that Russell identifies as a precursor to archiveology: Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936).

Known for his cabinet of curiosities collages — composed of appropriated images and objects — the reclusive North-American-artist Cornell was drawn to similar themes and techniques as his contemporaries, the surrealists. Although he never saw himself as a surrealist, he infused much of his creations with a dreamlike quality, not least one of his first experiments with film, *Rose Hobart.* (Fig. 75) Taking a 16mm copy of the 1931 B-film *East of Borneo* (George Melford), Cornell cut and remixed the exotic jungle-themed adventure so as to focus the attention on the leading lady, Rose Hobart. In *East of Borneo*, Hobart played

107 Both these works have the running time of 24 hours: Gordon slowed-down Alfred Hitchcock's P*sycho* (1960), whilst Marclay composed a montage of appropriated film clips showcasing hours and minutes, so that the viewing time would match that being presented on screen.

the jilted wife in search of her husband in inhospitable jungles only to find he has become the personal physician of an extravagant and despotic prince, who in turn manifests romantic intentions towards her. With an androgynous beauty, Hobart's character — Linda Randolph — alternates between strength and vulnerability. Cornell captures the actress' expressiveness by isolating and combining, through montage, scenes in which the character takes a principal role. In doing so the original film is edited down from 77 minutes to around 19 minutes. In addition to this, in first presenting the piece at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York, in December 1936, Cornell projected the film — originally set at 24 frames per second — at the lower rate of 16 frames per second. (Solomon, 2015 [1997]: chap. 5. Epub) This lower rate projection worked to extend the duration of the character's movements, who at times appeared as if to be walking through water. Such an impression was augmented by Cornell's choice to project the film through blue tinted glass. It is these two elements, the slower speed and the tinting, that I find to be recognisable in Blaufuks's *Theresienstadt.* As much as this is a work based on Sebald, it is also a piece that follows in the tradition of experimental film and later expanded cinema by using its devices.[108]

Nonetheless, the extended duration one might find both in *Theresienstadt* and in *As if…*, might hark back to something in Sebald's writing. There is a moment in *Austerlitz*, where the eponymous character turns his attention to H. G. Adler's in-depth analysis of the development and living conditions of the city-camp in *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: The Face of a Coerced Community* (1955), the influx of information leading him to enter a vertiginous account of the camp's organisation and the preparations surrounding the Red Cross Committee visit. Sebald conveys this vertigo by composing a sentence spanning 12 pages [109]:

108 If one considers Blaufuks's *The Absence* (2009), analysed in the previous chapter, it is possible that the excision of Jean-Paul Belmondo works as a reversal of Cornell's film, where only the main character remains.

109 I am basing this length by the 2002 Penguin Books paperback translation of *Austerlitz*.

> […] the commission of two Danes and one Swiss official, having been guided, in conformity with a precise plan and timetable drawn up by the Kommandant's office, through the streets and over the spotless pavements, scrubbed with soap early that morning, could see for themselves the friendly, happy folk who had been spared the horrors of war and were looking out of the windows, could see how smartly they were all dressed, how well the few sick people were cared for, how they were given proper meals served on plates […] (2001: 341)

Although length in itself does not necessarily work to slow one's reading — at times long sentences might be solely independent units stringed together by commas, as paratactical enumeration —, the meandering style of Sebald's writing might condition its reading to a slower pace, lest one become lost in it. Whilst it is true that Sebald's structuring of his long sentence, as an uninterrupted flow of information, might be considered a possibly endless listing of events, it resembles less a coherent string of elements, where one item follows the next, than a branching out of information, where the reader moves forward only to return to previous details in the following lines. In constructing *As if…*, Blaufuks employs a similar technique, moving between his own images of the city and the excerpts he appropriates to create a stilted, slowed-down, progress. Blaufuks further mirrors the words and images of *Austerlitz* in the shooting and framing of Terezín.

As if…, in part, documents Blaufuks's return to and interaction with Terezín in 2014. The film transports one onto the town's empty streets. (Fig. 76) Such emptiness, particularly when contrasted with excerpts of the staged film, is stressed by the stillness of the shots, by

the prolonged views of the city's architecture, by its photographic framing. This framing might be seen as unsurprising when one comes to the realisation that some shots are reshootings of Sebald's photographs. (Figs. 77 & 78) It is as if the only way the artist could understand Terezín was through Sebald, through Austerlitz's fictional journey. This is especially evident in the careful filming of the shop windows, the closed city gates and most doorways, which are described in *Austerlitz* as follows:

> What I found most uncanny of all […] were the gates and doorways of Terezín, all of them, as I thought I sensed, obstructing access to a darkness never yet penetrated, a darkness in which I thought, said Austerlitz, there was no more movement at all apart from the whitewash peeling off the walls and the spiders spinning their threads, scuttling on crooked legs across the floorboards, or hanging expectantly in their webs. (Sebald, 2001: 267-272)

The stillness in *As if…* is, nonetheless, broken at various times by the inclusion of the appropriated footage. This break is usually abrupt, but is at times preceded by the sounds of steps, voices or train engines taken from the film's soundtrack, a spectral soundscape that recalls the ghosts of those who have passed through Theresienstadt.[110] This effect, once again, is described in *Austerlitz*:

110 If one considers Guglielmo Marconi's proposition that "all sounds that have ever occurred are still vibrating, however faintly, somewhere in the universe" (Neset, 2013: 19), one might imagine that the sounds of the disappeared inhabitants of the city-camp might remain, however faintly.

> I had just been reading […] a note on one of the display panels, to the effect that in the middle of December 1942 […] some sixty thousand people were shut up together in the ghetto, a built-up area of one square kilometre at the most, and a little later, when I was out in the deserted town square again, it suddenly seemed to me, with the greatest clarity, that they had never been taken away after all, but were still living crammed into those buildings and basements and attics, as if they were incessantly going up and down the stairs, looking out of the windows, moving in vast numbers through the streets and alleys, and even, a silent assembly, filling the entire space occupied by the air, hatched with grey as it was by the fine rain. (Sebald, 2001: 281)

In hinting at the permanence of the past in the present, Blaufuks aims to prevent the apparent peacefulness of the city to be taken for granted. There are times when one forgets that the people in the propaganda film were playing a part; occasionally the staged documentary may serve the Nazis' purpose of deceiving the viewer. In order to counteract this mirage, Blaufuks juxtaposes such images with those of the aforementioned feature films, whose re-enactments take side with the victims and offer an account closer to the truth. Additionally, as the film progresses and the shifts between excerpts acquire a faster pace, we recognise repeated actions and images, for instance, in the various representations of women scrubbing the sidewalks the morning before the arrival of the Red Cross examiners — an image Sebald also included in his long sentence. (Figs. 79, 80 & 81)

It could be argued that these re-enactments have given rise to images that currently belong to a collective memory, a memory that many will hold, not from lived experience, but

because of the exposure to it provided by mass media. A memory that has thus been implanted: a prosthetic memory. This is a form of memory that, according to Landsberg, "emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. [And][i]n this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history" (2004: 2).

The fictional representations in *As if…* might be seen to bring the victims' experience closer to contemporary viewers, but they might also work as a jolt of energy in otherwise lengthy still shots of a deserted city. Moreover, this contrast serves to emphasise the absence of the victims and their physical and symbolical disappearance. There is a scene close to the 15-minute mark of the film that begins with a shot of what looks like a peaceful — if abandoned — field. The sun is shining, birds are chirping, and a soft breeze is gently stirring the grass. The stillness of the shot is accentuated by the presence of several weathered concrete posts evenly distributed across an invisible line. There are no barriers connecting them, the space left between them can be easily crossed; they more quickly resemble totem poles — or vestiges of lost civilisations — than what they actually are, namely, remnants of a barbed-wire. The shot moves to a close-up of the last rusty wires still attached to the tops of the posts, the darkness of their grey — of what they stood for — contrasting with the bright blue sky. (Fig. 82) Suddenly a drum begins playing the sound of a marching tune, and the shot turns into a black-and-white sequence from Radok's film. The image is that of a pool of water reflecting the barbed-wires that existed at the perimeter of Theresienstadt — as is confirmed in the following shot when a plate bearing the town's name is shown. (Fig. 83) Continuing the marching tune, a tracking shot shows the fortress walls as seen from the outside, vigils standing at their posts looking down, and the city gate — a larger stone arch

flanked by two smaller doors, one of which is bricked-up. On the right, there are SS men leading a group of people into the gate at a slow processional pace, whilst a number of men and women carrying coffins exit the gate on the left. (Fig. 84) As the music drones on, Blaufuks returns to the present day, to that same gate — the same bricked wall. There is only one person now, a woman taking her dog for a walk. (Fig. 85) The intercutting of this scene provides contrasting realities — or at the very least representations of realities — taking place at the same location. In the city, the landscape is the same. The concrete posts are no longer in use, but have now become part of the scenery. At the same time "natural and artificial", "simple and ambiguous", they function as memory triggers (Nora, 1989: 18). Blaufuks exploits this when he lapses between present and past, he edits the scene so that it might look as if the memories of the past are being summoned by the landscape and architecture. And just as one is confronted with images that will lead to the atrocities that took place, he cuts back to the present, back to the safety of an impassive gate on a sunny day.

Blaufuks's use of the abandoned landscape echoes that of Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah*, which had already inspired his 2008 project *Memory Landscapes (Shoah)*. This work consists of thirty slides disposed on top of a light-box that shows landscapes taken from Lanzmann's documentary. (Fig. 86) Unlike most films on the subject, *Shoah* was made without resorting to archival images. Rather, it relied solely on interviews and shots of the camps in the late-1970s. The survivors' testimonies served to give an emotional and in-depth view of the events and traumas inflicted. By not identifying the source of the images, Blaufuks removes — at least initially — the connotations with the Holocaust that these landscapes might bring up. However, this decision only gives them more poignancy once one realises their source: for these images represent the landscapes the victims would have seen and walked on, landscapes that for many would have been their last. Furthermore, the way in which they are presented

— as slides on top of a light-box rather than as large-scale projections or photographs — contributes to strengthen their meaning, as Blaufuks explains:

> Since they are images taken from a film, I wanted to maintain its initial connection to light [...]. In it there is no sequence, as there is in the film [...] but a whole that is immediately absorbed in by the gaze of the spectator. These are landscapes, traversed by light, that we have to lean over, in a position of study or even prayer [...].They exist by themselves, small, full of a memory that we can only guess; an object of light, which accentuates and recalls its strangeness in relation to all other landscapes photographed by travellers and tourists.[111]

The miniaturisation of images originally made to be projected on a movie theatre as part of the film *Shoah,* creates an intimacy with these landscapes in the spectator. In Blaufuks's version, one struggles to comprehend the details of the images and yet their minute size leads to an intense scrutiny of their almost undecipherable details.

The small-scale of *Memory Landscapes (Shoah*) contrasts with the artist's preference in presenting *As if...* in a large exhibition room. This request stems from Blaufuks's wish that every detail might be seen by the spectator, beginning with the artist's own reflection on a supermarket window, a reflection that mirrors Sebald's own in his photograph of an ivory-coloured porcelain figurine representing the following scene:

> a hero on horseback turning to look back, as his steed rears up on its

111 Email interview with Daniel Blaufuks, August 6, 2012.

> hindquarters, in order to raise up with his outstretched left arm an innocent girl already bereft of her last hope, and to save her from a cruel fate not revealed to the observer. (2001: 276) (Fig. 87 & 88[112])

In this description of an otherwise innocuous porcelain figurine, put in the mouth of Austerlitz by Sebald, one might assume that such a cruel unrevealed fate stands in for the fate of Theresienstadt's inmates — a fate concealed in the staged-documentary and then revealed in later accounts and their successive fictional re-enactments.

As if... ends with a final sequence that combines multiple film and television representations of the transport of Jewish prisoners from Theresienstadt by train. (Fig. 89) The last three shots, however, were filmed by Blaufuks, and show the landscape from the inside of a rapidly moving train. (Fig. 90) Such editing leads to the perception that one is witnessing the leaving of Terezín, just as at the beginning of the film the city was introduced by the arrival of the bus. The sounds of the train were not, however, recorded at the same time as the images, but seem to come from the films or television series. In combining these materials Blaufuks attempts to exemplify how easily factual documents and fictional accounts can be intermingled, as there are no longer any trains travelling to and from Terezín. This final train journey might instead be read as a phantom memory that the victims would have left behind. (Fig. 91)

Yet, there is something to be said on the process of appropriation itself. There is an archival quality in plucking images from their original and reassembling them. In a way, it is a process that allows for *As if...* to become an archive of collected views of Theresienstadt in the period of its occupation by the Nazis, even if these views are at times fictional. As

112 Blaufuks also came across the porcelain-figure, including it in the film.

mentioned above, this is a practice that falls within the notion of archiveology; recycling and combining found footage to create meaning. It is, as Russell emphasises, “a mode of creative practice that draws on the techniques of storing and accessing”. (2018: 7) Although there are those that argue that it is the ‘randomness of the find’ aspect of appropriating material that is key in archival art (Foster, 2004: 21), and that something of this randomness is lost in resorting to digital technologies, the truth is that:

> few filmmakers are finding their source material in accidental or random ways, but they are actively searching for it in material and digital archives, which is to say that their films are researched. The film fragments that are recycled are not found in the garbage or the flea market (or not only found there) but also come from eBay and from official state-funded archives. (Russell, 2018: 18)

This process of collecting and accessing found material is key for a number of Blaufuks’s pieces, not least the one I will turn my attention to in the following Section: *All the Memory of the World, part one.* Here, not only does Blaufuks expand his dialogue with Perec and Sebald, he elaborates a project grounded on the find through digital retrieval systems such as Google. An undertaking that enables me to point towards the continuities, rather than the ruptures, between analogue and digital archival processes and thinking.

Digital Archives and Databases

The Internet is, in many ways, only comparable to the Borgesian idea of the endless library, in this case library of images as well, always growing, but also forever incomplete.

— Daniel Blaufuks

Looking at analogue archives several considerations emerge. Amongst them one finds questions on the power of selection and interpretation archives — and archivists — possess. One observes in them the dual role as a repository of memory — an exteriorised memory — that, nonetheless, in its apparent safekeeping, allows for forgetting. One detects the limits of classification imposed on the archived material; limits that, nevertheless, in addition to the information contained in the documents themselves, might provide a reading of the period in which the material was organised and indexed. But in the transition to digital archives and online databases might one find similar — if not equivalent — notions? Might we put forward the view that online databases and image retrieval systems might be seen as developments of archival processes and thinking? For, if one follows the notions advanced by Bolter and Grusin (2000) on remediation, might not "the *raison d'être* of every medium, […] always already [be] a concept of memory: the memorialisation of an older medium by digital media." (Garde-Hansen, et al., 2009: 14)

Bearing these questions in mind, it is important to note that, although archives that hold physical documents are themselves in a process of transition towards digital interfaces with the general public (Ramsay, 2018), here I will be considering solely archives founded on

digital material[113] and accessed online. These are archives composed by data, and as such I will begin this chapter by looking into how online databases might be defined.[114] Having previously examined how technological limitations might infuse the documents produced with easily datable quirks and characteristics that, much as in analogue archival processes, then inform our understanding of the period in which they were created and/or digitised, even contributing to the construction of a specific cultural memory of these moments, I will now reflect upon two distinct image-retrieval systems: concept-based and content-based. Here, I will explore how categorisations put in place when creating and associating metadata to visual material might be read as a direct descendent of archival procedures. Finally, in the view to use the notions here under examination to the analysis of Daniel Blaufuks's work, I will consider how online databases, image retrieval systems, and its queries might be read aesthetically. Consequently, I will look particularly to Google Image — as the most popular system of its kind in use at present —, drawing a comparative analysis between its mosaic-like, possibly limitless, results and the visual maps created by Aby Warburg (1866-1929) in his, unfinished, *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-9), with a particular focus on how the latter's 'iconology of intervals' might be applied to the reading of the online retrieval system.

Following these considerations I will turn my attention, in the following chapters, to a project fundamental to the central argument of this thesis, that digital archives — and therefore art based on these systems — possess much of the foundational procedures of their analogue counterparts rather than establishing a rupture with them: *All the Memory of the World,*

113 It is also important to note that digital representations of physical material existing in analogue archives — for instance, photographic reproductions of documents — are digital compositions. As such, they might come to make part, as digital material, of a digital archive.

114 Despite the fact that digital archives and databases are not equivalent — databases can draw from materials existing in multiple archives —, they have come to be used interchangeably. As such, although my focus will mostly be turned to the notion of the database, I will occasionally use the term digital archive.

part one. In reading this piece I will bring forth a number of points made throughout previous chapters, returning to Blaufuks's relationship with Sebald and Perec. The latter of which also being key to the final chapter, dedicated to Blaufuks's use of Instagram as an artistic medium. But first I turn my attention to databases.

Databases

What are databases? From their very name one might easily define them as collections of data. However, a database is not simply a storage system for data, in order for it to be considered a database a structure must exist, much like the classificatory systems of analogue archives, an organisational model must be in use. This model might take multiple forms, "hierarchical, network, relational, and object-oriented" (Manovich, 2001: 218), but it must permit an easy search and retrieval. Databases need not be digital, just as data might take a variety of shapes, physical or otherwise. Some have encountered databases in reading Dziga Vertov's film montage (Manovich, 2001), others have experienced them in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (Folsom, 2007).[115] At its core, a database is composed of smaller elements, related to one another, that can be read, associated, found, in numerous ways. A computer database allows "one to quickly access, sort, and reorganize millions of records; it can contain different media types, and it assumes multiple indexing of data, since each record besides the data itself contains a number of fields with user-defined values." (Manovich, 2001: 214) Such indicates that in databases the role of the user is not solely to interpret, to read, the data, in searching and retrieving the user is also creating a new level of data. It is, as I will expand below, a productive search.

115 Folsom has also remarked on how photography itself might be a database technology: "[Photography] was the first technology that suggested database: early commentators were struck by its relentless appetite for details, for every speck that appeared in the field of vision." (Folsom, 2007: 1575)

Nevertheless, before any user might come into contact with a database, there are several steps in its establishing. First data must be collected and assembled, then it must be sorted and filtered, "so that some of the data is shown, some omitted. Sorting determines the sequence of presentation, while filtering gives rules for admission into the set presented." (Weinbren, 2007: 71) Much like analogue archives, there is here a process of selection, and with it the prospect of the "differential ranking" Trouillot had advised against. (1995: 53) And whilst some might argue that digital archives and databases lack materiality, lack a domicile, Christiane Paul reminds us that for software to work there must be hardware, there must be a 'housing' of data "in its respective container […] for retrieving, filtering, and changing it." (2007: 96) Furthermore, it is true that touching zeroes and ones might figure as impossible, and one might never suffer from the dusty respiratory fever one encounters in shifting decades-old documents (Steedman, 2001), but who amongst us has not experienced the gripping fever of jumping from one hyperlink to the next, of following the non-linear paths of the database? And for those that claim that aura has faded in a digital world, I would put forward that, on the contrary, much of digital technology is restoring aura. First by stimulating nostalgia through the use of certain applications and filters as in Instagram, secondly by preserving metadata, for as Boris Groys has explained: "Digital archiving […] ignores the object and preserves the aura. The object itself is absent. What remains is its metadata — the information about the here and now of its original inscription into the material flow […]. Digital metadata creates an aura without an object." (Groys, 2016: 18. Epub)

The possibility digital interfaces allow for quickly acquiring the documents one desires with a click on a touchpad finds its echoes with the imaginings and plans of information and memory machines, most notably Vannevar Bush's Memex. Manifesting his project in the

article “As We May Think” in 1945 [116], Bush suggested an apparatus that at first sight might seem like a regular office desk. However, within this desk was a mechanism that would be able to aggregate all the books and documents their user might desire. Such was done by compressing these documents into microfilm pages, calling them forth via a system of levers and keys onto two screens embedded into the desk. (Fig. 92) For Bush, the crucial element was the existence of the two screens, for it would be through them that associative ideas would be established: “[t]he process of tying two items together is the important thing.” (Bush, 1996 [1945]: 44) This associative process brought a documentation system closer to the very operation of the human mind, capable with “one item in its grasp” to instantly snap “to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain.” (Bush, 1996 [1945]: 43) Here would lie the power of the database, in the “possibility of establishing multiple connections between different sets of data” (Paul, 2008: 178), whilst erecting “no physical barriers between categories of information” (De Kosnik, 2016: 66). Such ease in developing thought association in using the Memex was, in part, afforded by the swiftness of document retrieval. True, Bush was employing analogue materials in his plans — microfilm, pencils, levers, a sort of dry photography he imagined might come to pass — but in linking documents into ‘trails’ that were given prominence according to the user’s engagement with them, fading into the background for lack of use, he was predicting something close to machine learning, and to the search engines now employed. He found in this system not a move away from human thought processes, on the contrary, for Bush this mechanical apparatus was closer to our minds than any previous archival procedure:

116 First published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Bush returned to the Memex in “Memex Revisited” in his 1967 book *Science Is Not Enough*.

> Our ineptitude in getting at the record is largely caused by the artificiality of systems of indexing. When data of any sort are placed in storage, they are filed alphabetically or numerically, and information is found (when it is) by tracing it down from subclass to subclass. […] one has to have rules as to which path will locate it, and the rules are cumbersome. Having found one item, moreover, one has to emerge from the system and re-enter on a new path. (Bush, 1996 [1945]: 43)

Here, one could contend that the often trumpeted rupture between analogue and digital archives was already to be found, the digital demonstrating its superiority. But then again, for all that is said about the cumbersome nature of alphabetised indices, in the seventeenth-century, Baldassarre Bonifacio saw in them something of the 'rush of data' expressed by Bush for his Memex, and by present users for our databases: "Adapting to each set of materials its own indices, whatsoever will be needed we will have before our eyes immediately, without bother, so that it will seem rather to have rushed into our hands by design, than to have fallen there by chance." (Bonifacio, 1941 [1632]: 236)

What I would like to argue is that, although differences can be clearly observed between analogue and digital systems, perhaps one should not hasten to declare a rupture. There are inherited processes and continuing paths to be found. In turning to proposals by media archeologists, particularly Wolfgang Ernst, one finds parallels alongside transformations. For Ernst, the greatest shift from the analogue to the digital archive is the transition from an alphabetical approach to documents — or even memory — to a mathematical one. At the same time, and building on Foucault's notions on the archive (2002 [1969]: 145), Ernst defends that the *arché* might be seen, not as an edifice or house but as the 'bones' — the epi-

stemological structure — of an archive. In case of the digital archive, these ‘bones’ are then the code, the algorithm. It is here, rather than in the files themselves, that Ernst finds the archive:

> While the traditional function of the archive is to document an event that took place at one time and one place, the emphasis in the digital archive shifts to re-generation, (co-)produced by the online users for their own needs. There is still an archive, in Immanuel Kant’s and Michel Foucault’s sense: the condition for the possibility of the memory performance to take place at all. The real multi-media archive is the *arché* of its source codes, but in a different form of existence: algorithmic dynamics instead of documentary stills. (Ernst, 2018: 148)

In this proposal of the algorithm as archive, one might find similarities with Perec’s archives constructed out of combinatory constraints examined in Chapter 2.2, an archive that lives off productive potentiality. As mentioned above, the database thrives in the productive potential of the search. If analogue archives depend on taxonomies, digital ones hinge on what Willemien Sanders and Mariana Salgado have named folksonomies. (2017) These are “classification data generated by users” (Sanders & Salgado, 2017: 69), i.e.: tagging. Whilst “user-generated tags allow for more flexibility and can quicker express changes in popular discourses” (Sanders & Salgado, 2017: 70), they can also be messy, prone to mistakes and differing “in their level of description, in accuracy and consistency.” (Sanders & Salgado, 2017: 71) It is in tagging that one finds a direct level of user data production, a voluntary one. Yet, there are other levels of data production, many that remain obscured from the user. To

examine how these might impact artistic creation let us consider image searches, and the two systems used to retrieve them.

Retrieval Systems

It begins with an empty box, the user types in their query — their search for a page, information, image — and in turn receives the results; lined-up, organised according to that enigmatic element: the algorithm. On its daily use one might not ponder much on the artistic possibilities of these results. The search engine is a tool, and in searching for images, for instance, one might not even think twice about the order in which these are displayed, or about the patterns and connections they form. Still, in considering the Internet and the use we give it some questions might be raised as to our understanding of what poses as an aesthetic object. In *The Language of New Media* (2001), Lev Manovich, whilst assessing this very role of the Internet, advances the following: "Is it necessary for the concept of the aesthetic to assume representation? Does art necessarily involve a finite object? Can telecommunication between users by itself be the subject of an aesthetic? Similarly, can the user's search for information be understood aesthetically?" (163-4) It is this final point that is central for the understanding of how search engines might turn out to be key not only to the creation of an artwork, but in becoming an artwork in themselves. It is the communication with the computer, with the algorithm, that yields a result that might be read aesthetically: an aesthetics of query.

Let us first consider how online data are retrieved, particularly how online images are searched for. There are distinct retrieval systems that might be employed: content-based and concept-based. The most prevalent of image retrieval systems is that of concept-based, in which images are searched not by their visual characteristics (colour, outline, texture) but — much as in the case of analogue photographic and moving image archives — by associated

text, i.e.: metadata. It is this textual information that will be examined by the search engine's algorithm to produce the results for the user's query. The processing speed at which this is done being so swift as to appear instantaneous, when in fact, in relation to Google for example, the search algorithm examines hundreds of signals for every query. (Gillespie, 2014: 175)

If in the case of analogue archives the associated text originates from the verbal description of the image by the archivists — a process that involves a degree of translation from visual material to text and that might permit the introduction of subjective interpretations or even silencing of events in the archive —, in digital archives and online databases the metadata originates from a number of sources: including the machines that first produced the image, information allocated to the image upon its upload, or user tagging. Here, with the contribution of machines to the inscription of metadata, one might be led to believe that the challenges present in cataloguing visual material in analogue archives — in the possibility of subjective interpretation due to models originally developed for indexing text or due to the reliance on archivists to establish and prioritise themes and thematic associations between documents — might be surpassed by the, apparent, objectivity of the machine. Yet, it is not only in the tagging of images that this associated text continues to be reliant on human input and interaction, the machine's parameters, and the search algorithms themselves, are written and defined by humans. In this, Christiane Paul's notion that machines think "how we make them think" might be put forward. (2008: 150) On the other hand, the possibility of retrieving images based solely on their visual characteristics — that which is called content-based retrieval —, solely on their smallest unit — the pixel — might appear to offer the objectivity lacking in concept-based image retrieval. However, one should consider more than what knowledge is gained or lost in translating images to text or in

transferring documents to digital formats, one should consider technological limitations. As mentioned, machine thinking depends on human programming, and so some of human subjectivity, some biases and predispositions, some blind spots, might become imbued in the technology. (Roth, 2009) Nonetheless, these limits might be explored artistically.

In 1990, David Rokeby (b.1960) began developing his piece *The Giver of Names* (1991-present). It was one of the earliest examples of how machine learning might be implemented in reading images so that an artwork might be created. The installation consisted of an empty pedestal where visitors were able to position one or more of the available items in the room, to be captured on camera and analysed by a computer system. (Fig. 91) The system then attempted to verbally describe — to name — the object according to its visual components. Whilst doing so, the various levels of image processing were projected onto a screen above the pedestal. Simultaneously, a knowledge-base of 100.000 words and ideas aggregated by the artist would be 'stimulated'[117] appearing in a computer screen nearby. The computer system then selected the words and ideas that most 'stimulated' it to elaborate a complete sentence, following the grammatical rules of the English language. Finally, a stilted computer voice would announce this sentence. If, on the one hand, Rokeby's piece sought to explore "the various levels of perception that allows us to arrive at interpretations and creates an anatomy of meaning as defined by associative processes" (Paul, 2008: 150), on the other, it was also a play on biblical pronouncements. The disembodied voice would express sentences such as: "To that devotion, the steadfastly orange yellow bomb flogged this syphilitic randy plenitude." Or: "By the timely day, the holy castle of the vermillion floc is unceasingly split by the breathtaking pistol under which the enlightenment does harm". (Fig. 92) It was a process of naming of an all-seeing computerised 'Giver of

117 For a detailed description of the project see: http://www.davidrokeby.com/gon.html

Names'. Other projects have not sought to present such analogies, rather their focus has been on the ethical repercussions of broad reaching data sets.

To understand how such artistic projects develop it is important to first understand data sets. As mentioned in relation to Rokeby's piece, *Giver of Names* was grounded on machine learning, this process of learning was first instigated by the use of data sets. These are online collections of data — images, in the works I will be considering — that are first aggregated, described, and classified by humans with a number of tags: "A training image is not just an image — it's an image that is coupled with a label." (Paglen & Pardo, 2019: 36). These can vary from basic and objective groupings (such as 'bicycle', 'house', 'cat'), to more abstract terminology (for instance 'lazy', 'obscurantist', 'anomaly'). Data sets might be proprietary, such as those utilised by Facebook or Google [118], or they might be open, available to whomever seeks to develop machine learning systems. One of the principal data sets is one first developed between 2009 and 2011 by professors at Princeton and Stanford Universities: ImageNet. Containing over 14 million images, the system itself was created using questionable methods. The professors behind ImageNet began by taking a vast number of words and concepts and then scraping[119] the internet for any image that might illustrate these terms, regardless of where the images had been originally posted. Such led to private images from social networking sites being copied and gathered in ImageNet without permission from the posters. Furthermore, as North-American artist Trevor Paglen (b.1974) came to understand,

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118 In the case of Google its data set came under scrutiny in 2015, when the company launched its application Google Photos. The purpose of the app was to examine the user's photo gallery creating diverse categories in order to assist in grouping and searching similar images. Almost immediately users encountered 'bugs' in system — larger dogs being classified as horses, abstract paintings identified as faces —, but it was only when an African-American couple saw their selfies tagged under 'gorillas' that questions of representation within the data set used emerged. (Kasperkevic, 2015)

119 Web scraping is a process typically done using bots that move through the World Wide Web gathering and copying data that fit their established parameters into databases or spreadsheets.

the data set had not been updated since 2011, freezing it in time, and augmenting its propensity for outmoded "relational subjectivities." (Paglen & Pardo, 2019: 41) It was by further excavating ImageNet that Paglen developed an artistic project in 2019.

Commissioned by the Barbican, in London, for its Curve Gallery, Trevor Paglen's *From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels)*[120] consisted of thousands of printed images found in ImageNet. These were placed on the black curved gallery wall, grouped around the words and expressions under which they were labelled in the data set. Paglen began the display with images under the more 'objective' labels one might find in ImageNet: 'Apple', 'Apple Tree', 'Fruit', or 'Orchard Apple Tree'. (Fig. 93) Beginning with a single image of an apple, the image set quickly grew to cover the height of the gallery. As one moved through the space the labels around which images where grouped changed from 'Valley', 'Honeycomb', 'Sun', to more relative nouns such as 'Investor', 'Entrepreneur', 'Programmer', to the subjective labelling of 'Moneygrubber', 'Creep', or 'Anomaly'. In exposing the classificatory systems of online images, Paglen's project also drew associations to the taxonomies in play in the criminal archives developed by Alphonse Bertillon and Francis Galton in the nineteenth-century[121]. Digital archives might be touted as an open realm for producers/creators rather than a domicile of archons, yet, much as in analogue archives, power lies with those who develop and implement processes of classification and selection.

Nevertheless, in his piece Paglen was doing more than offer a criticism on the taxonomies of metadata, in printing and individually pinning each image on the wall rather than

120 The exhibition was held from 26 September 2019 to 16 February 2020. At the same time Paglen made available online his collaboration with artificial intelligence researcher Kate Crawford: *ImageNet Roulette* (2019). Although it is no longer available online, the work drew from the labelling established by ImageNet to classify any portrait a user might like to upload. In testing the system myself I received the innocuous, if puzzling, labelling of 'psycholinguist'. Others encountered more problematic classifications. (Wong, 2019)

121 See Chapters 1.1 – 'Systems of Classification' and 1.2 – 'Archive and Trauma' of this thesis.

use projections or screens he was delving into an older process of montage. (Fig. 94) A process that might hark back to Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, as will be seen below. However, in exhibiting printed images in *From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels)*, Paglen performs something that neither Warburg nor online databases do, he freezes the results in time and subverts one of the central features of the system: "As soon as new information enters a networked database, the structure of the database can reorganize itself […]." (Brouwer & Mulder, 2003: 5)

Some have argued that one of the key aspects of digital archives is that it is performed (Espenschied & Corcoran, 2016: 216), that it is re-activated with each search, and that each moment of re-activation contributes to its own function as an archive. Furthermore, "[t]he more often an image is viewed, the more often it makes the top of search results." (Laric *apud* Halter, 2016: 43) And, as in prosthetic memory, "[a]n image viewed often enough becomes part of the collective memory." (Laric *apud* Halter, 2016: 43) It will be this re-activation that I will now examine in two artistic projects, one of which by an artist I first presented whilst considering the silences in the archive, an artist that navigates both analogue and digital archives: susan pui san lok.

<u>Query aesthetics</u>

It starts with looking back, it starts with a return. susan pui san lok's *RoCH (Return of the Condor Heroes) Fans & Legends* (2013-present) began with a wish of the London-born artist to look back at her Chinese ancestry; to relate to a culture that, simultaneously, was and was not her own. To make this return she took not to history books, or to unpractised traditions and customs, but instead looked to what had always connected her — and the

Chinese diaspora — to their past and to each other: the television adaptations of Jin Yong's (*aka* Louis Cha[122]) *wuxia* [123].

Taking to Google Image to construct partial views of a continuously expanding visual archive that nonetheless remains dependent on text for the retrieval of its images, in developing *RoCH* pui san lok sought to engage with Yong's 1961 novel *Return of Condor Heroes*, the second instalment of *The Condor Trilogy.*[124] First published in Hong Kong in serialised form between 1957 and 1963, Yong's trilogy found widespread popularity both in Asia and with the Asian diaspora, having been translated from Cantonese into multiple languages, including Mandarin (in traditional and simplified characters), Vietnamese, Indonesian, or, more recently, English. Such wide acceptance led to numerous film and television adaptations of the works, with well over 90 titles having been catalogued by pui san lok in her ongoing-project (pui san lok, 2014), yet few gained more popularity than the 1983 Hong Kong-produced television series starring Andy Lau and Idy Chan, *Return of the Condor Heroes*. It was through this series that pui san lok and her family maintained a bond with a mythical China:

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122 Born in Haining, Zhejiang, to a family of scholars, Louis Cha (1924-2018) initiated his career as a journalist in 1945 for *Dongnan ribao* in Hangzhou. During his first decade in Hong Kong, Cha also collaborated in film reviews and editorials, screenplay writing, and film direction.

123 The simplest translation of *wuxia* – with *wu* denoting martial or military energies, and *xia* meaning a heroic or chivalrous individual – is as a genre of literature that primarily focuses on the tales of martial art heroes in ancient China (to whom the closest Western approximation would be that of the 'errant knight'). Having begun in literature, *wuxia* came nonetheless to encapsulate, from the early-twentieth-century, film and television genres.

124 Many *wuxia* novels are set at periods when China is under attack, or at risk of being occupied, by foreign powers. *The Condor Trilogy*, for instance, begins during the Jurchen Invasion of China (around 1127 AD) and the establishment of the Jin Empire. It continues, through the sequels, to the Mongol Invasion of early 1200s and the foundation, and subsequent fall, of the Yuan Dynasty (c.1271 AD — c.1368 AD). *Return of the Condor Heroes* became particularly popular as it depicts a forbidden love story between two member of distinct martial art sects.

> *The Condor Trilogy* arrived at our doorstep […] Bootleg videos in plastic bags, delivered to our home, via a local network of first generation Chinese immigrants who maintained regular connections with Hong Kong. So these videos were being flown or shipped over weekly and we would get our weekly fixes of the latest popular Hong Kong drama. (Animate Projects, 2015)

More than being informed by these videos for her project, pui san lok was drawn to the fan community that had developed around Yong's novels and adaptations. A community that had expanded exponentially with the advent of online forums.[125] Exhibited between 24 January and 9 February 2013 at Hanmi Gallery, London, as part of *The Global Archive* exhibition curated by Marquard Smith, in collaboration with Emma Brasó and Nina Privedi, *RoCH*'s first version featured multiple elements.[126] On entering the large fourth-floor of the gallery the viewer would find a television set playing excerpts from the 1983 adaptation subtitled with fan translations. The book's title in its multiple translations — *Shén Diāo Xiá Lü / San4 Diu1 Haap6 Leoi5 / San Diu Hap Lui / Sun Diu Hap Lui / Sin Tiauw Hiap Lui / Shin Chou Kyou Ryo / Shin Cho Kyo Ryo / Thàn Diêu Hiêp Lu / Kembalinya Sang Pendakar Rajawali / Divine Eagle, Gallant Knight / The Legendary Couple / Return of The Condor Heroes* — had been written on a wall. Colourful origami condors were placed in a circle on the floor, and a wing of a condor had been drawn in black marker on the window. But,

125 One of the most popular, English-language online forums for the discussion of Jin Yong's novels is spcnet.tv. The website is dedicated to the review of Asian drama (particularly film and television series) and has over 60.000 active members, 770.000 posts, and 16.000 threads.

126 Since this first exhibition, elements of the project have been published in the *Journal of Visual Culture*. (lok, 2013) The project has also been developed into *RoCH Fans & Legends* for an exhibition at Derby QUAD (Derby, UK) (19 September – 15 November 2015).

arguably, the most remarkable element one would find would be the Google Image search results printouts covering the walls of the gallery space. (Fig. 95)

Taking into account the technological limitations of Google Image — in the association of specific images to terms only used in certain languages, for instance — pui san lok used the various titles of the book and its adaptations as search queries, printing the first page of the results obtained on 11 January 2013. In the printout of a search using the English translation one would find, for the most part, stills from the 2006 Chinese television adaptation, as well as photographs of the cast, in and out of costume. (Fig. 96) In the printouts in which the Romanised Cantonese title was searched, *Sun Diu Hap Lui*, images of the 1983 adaptation, produced in Hong Kong, prevailed. The Malay version, *Sin Tiauw Hiap Lui*, on the other hand, showed a greater variety of results, including stills from both adaptations mentioned above, as well as book covers, posters, and even photographs of the author himself. By covering the gallery walls with rows upon rows of minuscule images, pui san lok displayed the distinct retrieval possibilities for the same reference — Jin Yong's novel — in just one day. What one found was that in this small cross-section of *RoCH* one could already discover an endless and mutable online archive, constructed by its users and contributors. Indeed, in *RoCH* one might even put forward that pui san lok was highlighting the users of search engines themselves as creators of digital archives, for as Rudi Laermans and Pascal Gielen have stated:

> [t]he hallmark of every search engine is […] that it actively produces an always particular digital archive with every new user-command. More particularly, *the search engine is an unstable performative memory* that does not represent in a metonymic or meaningful way the traces of a given and

> stabilised past but constructs information in the present by recounting bits and bytes. [W]ith every new search, new information is produced; a new archive is momentarily generated. (2007: parags. 25-6. Emphasis in original)

Nonetheless, pui san lok's project, much like that of Trevor Paglen, presented a frozen view of this transient archive. The viewer was confronted with the results the artist herself received upon inputting her queries rather than actively participating in the creation of the aesthetic object. In Taryn Simon (b.1975) and Aaron Swartz's (1986-2013) *Image Atlas* (2012-present)[127] such participation from the visitor — to the exhibition or to the website — would be required.

Known for producing mainly photographic and text-based work, Taryn Simon's projects have tended to look at the space between both of these elements, considering issues of translation, as well as "map[ping] or visualiz[ing] hidden networks." (Cornell, 2012) *Image Atlas* follows these concerns by exploring how supposedly:

> neutral tools, like Facebook and Google and so on, claim to present an almost unmediated view of the world all through statistics and algorithms and analyses, [when] in fact these are programmed and programming us. We wanted to find a way to visualize that, to expose some of the value judgments that get made. (Simon & Swartz, 2012: 2)

The project was developed for the third edition of *Seven on Seven*, 2012, a conference

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127 *See:* www.imageatlas.org

first organised by Rhizome — an organisation dedicated to digital art — in 2010, in which seven invited artists are paired with seven technologists. Having been selected by the then-director of Rhizome, Lauren Cornell, the works were produced in the span of 12 hours, being then presented at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York on 14 April 2012. The piece has since been displayed in a number of exhibitions, most recently in *Electronic Superhighway (2016-1966)* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London (29 January – 15 May 2016), and at the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT), Lisbon (08 November 2017 – 19 March 2018), however one of the most significant characteristics of the work is the possibility for users to access and interact with it from their own personal computer, as they would with any other search engine. Indeed, with the exception of the presence of a few unusual elements, the project might very well stand in for any other image-based online retrieval system.

Upon entering the website, the user is greeted with a black page; an empty search box sits on the upper left-hand corner, and two buttons present us with organising options seldom seen in search engines: 'Sort the results alphabetically' and 'Sort the results by GDP'. The latter of these options might seem particularly odd, until one realises this project is an Atlas, and as an Atlas it "is a visual form of knowledge, a knowledgeable form of seeing." (Didi-Huberman, 2018 [2011]: 3) It functions as an aggregate of representations for each country. But rather than identifying countries by its geography, location or borders, the *Image Atlas* maps the visual representations of concepts and keywords of each country, offering us their visual index at that given time. Additionally, an 'Atlas Selection' button, allows the users to select the countries they are interested in finding results from. Here, 20 countries — including the USA., UK, Syria, India, Afghanistan, North Korea, Germany, France, China, and Brazil

— have been marked as the default selection.[128] The query can be made in any language, as every word or phrase gets translated into the dominant language of each of the countries. It is these translated terms that are then "entered into the most frequently used local search engine of each country (some [of them] government sponsored). The top image results from these local engines appear in clickable form. The viewer can navigate to the local Web site from which the image came." (Cornell, 2012) The thumbnails of the first six results for each of the countries appear listed, organised according to the previously defined sorting selection, ready to be compared and contrasted. However, the process of automatic translation poses the possibility of mistranslation, and thus the results might become idiosyncratic.

In simple queries as 'Man', 'Woman', 'Child', or 'House', for instance, the results are much the same: a few stock images, similarly ordered across each country.[129] It is in more abstract concepts, or in terms that might be translated in more than one way, that differences begin to show. Some of them might be innocuous, and even comical, as the results for 'Food': hamburgers and pizzas as the top results for the UK and the US, vegetables and fruit as the results for France, Germany and Russia. The results for 'Bush' too can be translated to mean one of the former North-American Presidents, a shrub or a socket (*Buchse*) in Germany. (Fig. 97) 'Country' might be interpreted as a sovereign state or as a bucolic landscape. 'Queen' might refer to the rock band or to a monarch. In other queries, results reflecting "popular consciousness, global events, economic fluctuations, belief, and the influx of new images and expressions" come to the fore. (Cornell, 2012) Women with children might be the predominant results for 'Mother' in most countries, but in English-speaking nations stills and publicity shots of Darren Aronofsky's 2017 film, *Mother!*, prevail. Similarly, 'Lawyer'

128 The complete list of countries marked as 'Default Countries' is as follows: Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Iran, Israel, New Zealand, North Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.

129 The analysis of *Image Atlas* made on this chapter is based on results obtained on 18 May 2018.

produces a number of stock images and stills from legal dramas (not to mention the translation to *avocat* in French that results in images of avocados), but the top result for the US is an image of Aaron Schlossberg, a New York lawyer caught on camera delivering an anti-Latino tirade on 15 May 2018. (Roberts, 2018) (Fig. 98) Other queries point to geopolitical concerns, in countries as the US, Germany or China, 'America' produces images related to the United States (map, flag, Statue of Liberty, and, strangely, in the case of China, Britney Spears), for France or Brazil images of the American Continent take over, particularly that of Latin America for the results of the latter.

Even with their transience or with the occasional oddness produced by mistranslation most of these results might seem predictable. Yet, one might consider the possibility of indeterminacy, the chance that not every result is "completely determined by us or by system designers." (Manovich, 2018: 482) Perhaps it is in these unintended results that true communication with the machine — rather than with the humans that created it, with the users that have influenced the results' relevance or even with ourselves, through a feedback loop that presents only the results we expect to find — might arise. Nevertheless, in *Image Atlas*, the user's role is central to the creation of the artwork. The project appears as if it is infinite — the user can keep inputting new queries, creating new searches, obtaining new results. Such follows much of the practices one might have when using a search engine during one's daily lives. The internet appears to provide an endless scroll, ever more images, ever new possibilities for results. Still the two artworks that have just been presented have somehow contained some of this boundlessness: pui san lok by printing her results, by fixing a moment in time, Simon and Swartz by allowing the viewer to interact with the piece. For although the user can continue to put forward new queries, as Sean Cubitt has stated, "[b]y

interacting, the viewer selects what *not* to see as much as what to see." (2016: 275. Emphasis in original) The viewer creates the boundaries of the work.

But is this different than a user operating a search engine as a tool on their everyday life? How do these results achieve an aesthetic value? It is true that in Manovich's questions presented earlier in this chapter a re-evaluation as to what poses as an aesthetic object was requested, but might any search for information, any telecommunication between users, be the subject of an aesthetic? In the two projects here analysed the artwork is the search, it is the terms — the keywords —, the queries, that are inputted, however, its "aesthetic meaning [is formed from] the relationships that are generated by the particular processes and organizational structures" found in these works. (Barker, 2012: 168)[130] By themselves, search engine results do not stand as aesthetic objects; it is through the reading of them as part of a broader, mutable, archive such as that created by pui san lok in *RoCH*, or through the visualisation of hidden networks, processes of translation, and the space between text and image exposed in Simon and Swartz's *Image Atlas*, that their aesthetic value surfaces. Such considerations will also be in play as I turn my attention to Daniel Blaufuks's *All the Memory of the World, part one*, particularly his *Constellations*. However, before I do so in the next chapter, I would like to introduce a project that not only directly influenced Blaufuks's *Constellations*, as we will see, but that I wish to examine in relation to Google Image search results: Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas.*

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130 One should consider also projects that contain no images, even if they derive from their search. In creating *SEARCH* (2012) for dOCUMENTA 13, Norwegian-artist Matias Faldbakken (b.1973) "went into the log of his different hard drives and extracted parts of his Google search histories. The search phrases are printed chronologically according to when they were typed into the search box. […] The texts are to a large part based on image searches. In many respects they show the verbal foundation for the artist's image production: they are partly his notes, partly his research" (Christov-Bakargiev, 2012: 266)

The Google 'Mnemosyne Atlas'

Begun in 1927 and left unfinished by his death in 1929, Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* consisted of 63 black cloth panels, onto which the art historian would compulsively arrange and rearrange numerous photographs of historical artworks — from multiple epochs and locations —, maps, contemporary newspaper cuttings, and other images. At times also referred to as constellations (Johnson, 2012: 12), these panels would then be re-photographed, placing each of the images there contained — be it a painting of Judith holding the head of Holofernes, a woman-golfer, or stamps — on the same plane. (Fig. 99) As António Guerreiro explained:

> The *Atlas* [w]as a mnemotechnic device. And thus, as a mnemonic device [it allowed] the spatial presentation of temporality. That, which would otherwise be unrepresentable other than through narrative form —entailing a temporal linearity […] is now expressed in spatial simultaneity. The *Atlas* [became] the conversion of temporal linearity into spatiality. (2015)

In the methods chosen for its production, the atlas became an extension of Warburg's mind, a reflection of his thought process: "The method of pinning photographs to a canvas presented an easy way of marshaling the material and reshuffling it in ever new combinations, just as Warburg had been used to re-arranging his index cards and his books whenever another theme became dominant in his mind." (Gombrich, 1986: 284) Born to a wealthy family of German-Jewish Bankers in Hamburg, Warburg began his career as an art historian through the study of Renaissance art, producing a dissertation, published in 1893, on Botticelli's paintings *The Birth of Venus* (c.1486) and *Spring* (c.1482). However, in his work,

Warburg showed less interest on the individual value of one image, than on what he had identified as the “iconology of the intervals.” (Gombrich, 1986: 253) An iconology, as Philippe-Alain Michaud has described it, “based not on the meaning of the figures [...] but on the interrelationships between the figures in their complex autonomous arrangement.” (2004: 252) Movement — motion — was key in Warburg’s thought. Be it the fluid movement of the fabric dressing the ever-elusive *Nympha*, be it the Hopi serpent dance in Arizona, with whom Warburg spent some time on his visit to the US in 1896. Movement also meant a constant re-assessment, a constant readdressing of themes and associations. Warburg’s library of almost 70.000 volumes contained more than tools for research: “[a]ssembled and grouped” these books “expressed the thought of mankind in its constant and in its changing aspects.” (Saxl, *apud* Gombrich, 1986: 327) The *Mnemosyne Atlas* too featured movement: it rounded “off another thought on movement, in which reproduction of changes in position and the expressive deployment of figures in space give rise to the observation of reappearances, or in other words, movements in time.” (Michaud, 2000: 19)

Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* was to be “a history of art without words.” (Michaud, 2000: 18) Opening with three panels noting the “relationship between man and cosmos, from astrological superstition to the technological conquest of the heavens” (ClassicA, 2012), the Atlas was to be organised by themes, ranging from ‘Astrology and Mythology’ to ‘The Classical Tradition Today’.[131] With its focus on cross-linking and intervals, Warburg’s panels

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131 Although Aby Warburg left several notes on his diaries, as the *Mnemosyne* Atlas was left unfinished it is probable that its panels would have suffered alterations, including those of theme. As such the theme division (or pathways) presented in this chapter follows the one established by *Centro studi classicA — IUAV* (the Centre for classical studies at the Iuav University of Venice). Twelve themed sections are proposed in addition to an introductory group and a closing group: α. Coordinates of Memory

I. Astrology and Mythology

II. Archaeological Models

might be seen as a network, in which each work pinned was not only connected to the moment it was produced, to its artistic ancestry and to its potential successors, but also to its neighbouring images, be it high art or mass culture. I do not claim that there is a direct correspondence between Warburg's panels and the mosaic-like results of Google Image, however I believe that it might prove productive to examine their structures comparatively.[132] Let us then analyse two points: the question of the interval and the issue of movement.

As was mentioned, a Google Images[133] search begins with one typing in their query on the search box. There is here a belief that in doing so one is accessing a direct path to the internet, however the truth is that: "[w]hen using a search engine like Google, you are actually not searching the net, you are searching documents that have been *crawled*, that is compressed, and prefixed in the Google repository by docID, length, and URL, before being indexed […] and archived in virtual barrels." (Jakobsen, 2010: 140) Therefore, rather than a vast sea of knowledge Google more closely resembles the "index of a book". (Google, 2020a)

III. Migrations of the Ancient Gods

IV. Vehicles of Tradition

V. Irruption of Antiquity

VI. Dionysiac Formulae of Emotions

VII. Nike and Fortuna

VIII. From the Muses to Manet

IX. Dürer: the Gods go North

X. The Age of Neptune

XI. 'Art Officiel' and the Baroque

XII. Re-emergence of Antiquity

ω. The Classical Tradition Today

132 In so doing I will be looking at the 2020 version of Google Image search.

133 Although in 2011 Google Images added a 'Search by Image' function — where users could upload an image to locate similar ones, operating as content-based retrieval —, its usage has not eclipsed the popularity of the platform's query based (concept-based) retrieval option.

Once image results appear, they are initially organised in rows by ‘relevance’ over a white background. It is only through this positioning that their level of ‘relevance’ is manifested as they remain similarly sized. If this has been the basic display for Google Images for much of the system’s life, in recent years users have found that in selecting an image a side panel emerges. It is here that a closer parallel to Warburg’s intervals might be drawn. If in the main display images are organised according to some algorithmic order of importance, in this side panel, over a black background, related images, in differentiating sizes, appear with the main image the user has selected sitting prominently above the others. Furthermore, rather than the infinite scroll one might find in the first display, in the side panel a limited amount of images are made available. It is true that many times these are simple variations, in different tones or resolutions, but there are also moments in which the relational power of the interval might emerge. Let us take as an example an image search on Aby Warburg himself.[134]

In examining the first two rows one finds mainly photographs of various panels of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, with only a photograph of Warburg in his melancholic pose and a photograph of his Hamburg library as exceptions. It is as if the work stands in for the man. (Fig. 100) However, as one moves down the results more portraits of Warburg emerge, some with his assistants. In selecting a photograph of Warburg with Gertrude Bing and Franz Alber, the side panel brings forth a much more diverse view of Warburg. From the *Atlas*, to his voyage to Arizona, to his relationship as supplicant to his banker brothers, to the recent exhibition of a reconstruction of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* in Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.[135] (Fig. 101) In their interrelationships, these images offer a cross-section of

134 It is nevertheless important to note that results are variable and that there is a degree of user customization by the algorithm. Thus this analysis will be based on the results I obtained on 10 October 2020.

135 Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic a virtual tour of the exhibition has been made available online. Visitors to the website are given to opportunity to navigate Warburg’s panels but also to connect, via hyperlinks, to a number of the original prints the art-historian selected. See: https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/aby-warburgs-bilderatlas-mnemosyne-virtual-exhibition?

Warburg's life, much as his panels might offer a cross-section of representations of the Nymph. (Fig. 102) Similarly, the black background mirrors that of the cloth onto which Warburg pinned his images; these are black zones, black intervals, that might, as Philippe-Alain Michaud claims, provide an association with cinematic montage. (2004)

Let us now return to movement. It is in this that such a comparison between Warburg's *Atlas* and Google Image might present differing approaches. Arguably, Google's final objective is to contain, classify and organise everything. Such is openly pointed to in their very statement on Google Books — their massive effort to create a vast online library by digitising every book —, "we're not done — not until all of the books in the world can be found by everyone, everywhere, at any time they need them." (Google, 2020b) However, as more and more documents are created, as more and more images are shared, this effort seems to be in line to never be completed. One might also argue that the role of the algorithm is to constantly learn from its mistakes; such is true, the algorithm aims towards an optimal, fixed form. But even whilst it does so, moving towards presenting users with personalised results predicated on the knowledge it has gained on them, the database from which it draws its answers is forever incomplete, as Blaufuks also acknowledges in the epigraph I included in the present chapter. (Blaufuks, 2014: 211) Warburg, on the other hand began his *Atlas* from a limited, if vast, number of images; what turned out to never be fixed, never definite, were the number of possible links and associations between them. Thus, in this the parallels between Warburg's *Atlas* — a limited collection of images with boundless links — and Google Image — a limitless database with an ever more optimised algorithm leaning towards ever more stabilised results — seem to diverge. Nonetheless, I would argue that these two systems are not simply diverging paths, rather they might be seen as two sides of the same coin.

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As explained, for now, results provided by search engines vary, as more people access a particular image in regards to a specific query Google's algorithm boosts the image to the top rows. As it becomes less 'relevant' (due to decreased popularity, for instance) it drops.[136] One might propose that in this movement, in this mutability there are some analogies to be drawn to Gombrich's proposal, whilst looking at Warburg's practice, that there are strong images and weaker images, the strong ones surviving over time and overcoming the weaker ones. (2001: 40). Perhaps, as was pointed out above, "[a]n image viewed often enough becomes part of the collective memory." (Laric *apud* Halter, 2016: 43) Perhaps images survive through their repeated reactivation (Didi-Huberman, 2017 [2002]) even when this reactivation is a digital one. It will be, in part, these processes of reactivation that one will find in Daniel Blaufuks's *Constellations*. In returning to Perec and Sebald, the artist is also proceeding with an excavation on the memory of the Holocaust. He is turning to images that might have survived "*of a population of ghosts.*" (Didi-Huberman, 2017 [2002]: 20. Emphasis in original.) Moreover, I will continue to examine Warburg and his influence on Blaufuks, standing as someone between a collector who fails to define his collection and an archivist whose archive is bound to recurring themes.

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136 One must note that Google's algorithm is periodically revised, and that in this process results might also change position or even disappear.

All the Memory of the World, part one

He wanted, so he said, to sort the labels into order, but it was very difficult: of course, there was chronological order, but he found it poor, even poorer than alphabetical order. He had tried by continents, then by country, but that didn't satisfy him. What he would have liked would be to link each label to the next, but each time in respect of something else

— Georges Perec

"They could be called albums, archives, maps, and atlas, […] visual thesauri, scrapbooks, journals, puzzles, of which Perec was so fond of, libraries, compendiums, constellations, almanacs, labyrinths, reflections, or montages." (Blaufuks, 2014: 213) Such were the terms Daniel Blaufuks chose to describe part of his 2014 exhibition, *All the Memory of the World, part one,* finally settling on *Constellations*. Hundreds of small images — taken by the artist, captured from film, retrieved from Google — were combined and re-combined in a series of panels. Each of these could be seen as an individual visual map, as an individual story, others might bleed into one another, images repeating, and expandable.

When Blaufuks chose this format, the image constellation, it was not solely for its malleability, not solely for its possibility of representing the infinite quality of the archive he is so drawn to. There is here a reference to Aby Warburg's incomplete and yet seminal work, *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Nonetheless, a different consideration might be put forward, one that might contemplate the possibility that the constellation format might be shaped, not just by the artist, but also by the technology used to create it, by, as Beatriz Colomina has suggested,

a machine that “brings you information in much the same way as your mind gets it — in fragments and glimpses — sometimes relating to the same idea or incident.” (2001: 20) And also, perhaps, as Roberta Pearson indicates, by the users that feed the technology. (2014: 48)

As part of a larger work, it is important to position Blaufuks’s *Constellations* in relation to the *All the Memory of the World, part one* work and exhibition. As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the exhibition arose as part of Blaufuks’s PhD project. Spanning three floors of the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado – MNAC), Lisbon, it was structured into distinct, if interrelated groupings, plus the room where *As If…* was being projected. On the first floor one encountered a series of panels with text, whilst the second floor was dedicated to the *Transmission Room,* and the third one to the *Constellations* series.

An archivist at heart, Blaufuks has named the chief difference between a collection and an archive, for him: “An archive is not a collection, because a collector chooses and an archivist has no possible choice.” (2008b: 27) This notion of an unrestrained urge to archive surfaces on the very title of the artist’s exhibition: *All the Memory of the World, part one.* And although the first section of the title is a play on Alain Resnais’s (1922-2014) documentary of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris – *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956) — the second section — *part one* — signals, not only, the impossibility of gathering all the memory of the world, but also, of retrieving it. It points to Derrida’s proposal — his *mal d’archive* — that the impulse to archive is intrinsically connected to Freud’s concept of the death drive. (Derrida, 1995: 12) For the compulsion to archive everything leads only to the self-destruction of the archive as a depository of memories, transforming it rather in a repository of forgetfulness. Thus, in a play of words, Blaufuks provides us with an exhibition that points to its boundaries as a closed work — limited by that which is contained within part one —

whilst also presenting the possibility of an ever-expanding project. As the artist argues, in this show: “To understand something you have to know everything.” (Blaufuks, 2015b)

As was previously stated, literature figures as an instrumental stimulus in Blaufuks’s oeuvre. It is Blaufuks the reader that will prompt Blaufuks the author. Georges Perec and W.G. Sebald have been continuously called forth by the artist, and, arguably, the Chiado exhibition was in its essence a comparative analysis of two texts — centred on questions of memory or lack there of — by these authors: Perec’s semi-autobiographical *W, or the Memory of Childhood* (1975), and Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001). It is with these texts and their interrelations that I will begin this chapter, turning next to the *Transmission Room* and its association to Warburg’s library, on the one hand, and hypertext, on the other. Finally, I will examine the third level of the exhibition and its key component, the *Constellations.*

<u>No childhood memories</u>

“I have no childhood memories”, it is with this text, the first in a set of nine word panels plus one image, that Blaufuks chose to open *All the Memory of the World, part one*. (Fig. 103) It is not in reference to the artist himself, he has kept his childhood memories, rather it is the opening line of the autobiographical section of Perec’s *W, or the Memory of Childhood*: “‘I have no childhood memories’: I made this assertion with confidence, with almost a kind of defiance. It was nobody’s business to press me on this question.” (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 6)[137] In *W*, two tales are presented in alternating chapters: one of Perec’s attempt at piecing together his childhood, and his mother’s disappearance, from memory fragments

137 Raymond Federman (1928-2009) too wrote about his lack of childhood memories when in his final novel *Shhh: The Story of a Childhood* (2010) he attempted to reconstruct the first 13 years of his life, before the moment his mother pushed him into a closet — a moment that he had previously explored in his key text *The Voice in the Closet* (1979) — as the collaborationist French police raided their house in 1942, deporting his family to Auschwitz: “What I’m writing is pure fiction, because, you see, I’ve forgotten my entire childhood. It has been blocked in me. So I’ve to reinvent it, reconstruct it.” (Federman, 2010: 52. Epub.)

that may or may not be real; the other a story of two Gaspar Winklers, a deaf-mute boy lost in a shipwreck near Tierra del Fuego and a deserter who unknowingly took his name. This name is one Perec returns to time and again in his work, perhaps most famously as the puzzle-maker in *Life a User's Manual* (1978)[138]. As this novel begins Winckler has died, he was the neighbour and employee of the wealthy eccentric Bartlebooth, a man that devoted much of his adult life to an impossible project. Bartlebooth first spends 10 years learning to paint watercolours with Valène, another occupant of the apartment block at 11 Rue Simon-Crubellier, next he travels the world for 20 years, painting a new watercolour at each of the 500 ports he passes. Subsequently, Winckler is charged with transforming these into puzzles, to be re-assembled by Bartlebooth for another 20 years and finally be shipped to their port of origin and there be destroyed. However, having lost his sight, and with the progressive difficulty Winckler imposed on each puzzle, Bartlebooth dies before the completion of his project. He dies on 23 June 1975, at eight o'clock in the evening[139], with the final piece of the puzzle he was working on in his hand:

> On the tablecloth, somewhere in the crepuscular sky of the four hundred and thirty-ninth puzzle, the black hole of the sole piece not yet filled in has the almost perfect shape of an X. But the ironical thing, which could have

138 It was with *Life a User's Manual* that Perec won the Prix Médicis in 1978. The novel follows the lives of the inhabitants of the apartment block at 11 Rue Simon-Crubellier, and it is structured around the Knight's Tour constraint. Gaspar Winckler is also the name of Perec's protagonist in *Le Condottière* — written in the 1960s but lost for decades before it was found and published in 2012 — a tale about an art forger. In the publication *All the Memory of the World, part one*, Blaufuks also appropriates the Winckler name. As in *Works on Memory* (2012), the exhibition book is graphically based on Gallimard's detective series *Série Noire*. To replace the Gallimard name from the front cover Blaufuks turns to 'Winckler'.

139 It is as Bartlebooth's death unfolds that one realises that each chapter in *Life a User's Manual* takes place at the same instant.

> been foreseen long ago, is that the piece the dead man holds between his fingers is shaped like a W. (Perec, 2008c [1978]: 497)

The letter *W* has seemed to hold influence over Perec, it is not only the initial for Winckler, but also the name of the island where the second story in *W, or the Memory of Childhood* takes place. It is an island near Tierra del Fuego, where the child-Winckler disappeared, a land where, as a nameless narrator reports, 'Athletes' are forced to compete in a kind of Olympic Games for the entertainment of the 'Masters'. It is a dystopic tale, yet soon one comes to realise that the island is in fact a stand-in for Auschwitz:

> If you just look at the Athletes, if you just look: in their striped gear they look like caricatures of turn-of-the-century sportsmen […], if you just look and see these Athletes of skin and bone, ashen-faced, their backs permanently bent, their skulls bald and shiny, their eyes full of panic, and their sores suppurating, if you see all these indelible marks of humiliation without end, of boundless terror, all of it evidence, administered every hour, every day, every instant, of conscious, organized, structured oppression; if you just look and see the workings of this huge machine, each cog of which contributes with implacable efficiency to the systematic annihilation of men, then it should come as no great surprise that the performances put up are utterly mediocre […]. (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 161)

Blaufuks, in his word panels calls back to these two moments: the missing puzzle piece and the broken Athletes. He takes a quote from Perec's *Un homme qui dort* (*A Man*

Asleep, 1967) — itself a book made out of quotes — and places it at the end of his 10 panels "Tu préfères être la pièce manquante du puzzle."[140] Thus, between having no childhood memories and wishing to be the missing piece of the puzzle, stand the commands heard in Perec's novel but also associated with 'life' at a death camp: "Raus! Raus! Schnell! Schnell!"[141] Similarly, Blaufuks offers the directives "Entwesungs Übersiedlung"[142] and "Bier. Gemütlichkeit. Konzentrationslager"[143]. Yet, there is here also an image panel featuring the letter *M* drawn on a hand and its mirroring on a horizontal axis to create the letter *W*. This graphic element will recur in a panel not included in this sequence but featured in Blaufuks's publication on *All the Memory of the World, part one* (2014), a panel influenced by Perec's clarification on the significance of the letter W in his life. (Fig. 104) A letter that in French might be read as a play on "double life": *double v(ie)*.

> My memory is not a memory of the scene, but a memory of the word, only a memory of the letter that has turned into a word, of that noun which is unique in the language in being made of a single letter, unique also in being the only one to have the same shape as the thing it refers to […], but it is also the sign of a word deleted […], the sign of the mathematical unknown, and, finally, the starting point for a geometrical fantasy, whose basic figure is the double V, and whose complex convolutions trace out the major symbols of the story of my childhood: two Vs joined tip to tip make the shape of an X; by extending the branches of the X by perpendicular

140 "You'd rather be the missing piece of the puzzle."

141 "Out! Out! Fast! Fast!"

142 "Resettlement."

143 "Beer. Comfort. Concentration camp."

> segments of equal length, you obtain a swastika (卐), which itself can be easily decomposed, by a rotation of 90 degrees of one of its ϟ segments on its lower arm, into the sign ϟϟ; placing two pairs of Vs head to tail produces a figure (XX) whose branches only need to be joined horizontally to make a star of David (✡). In the same line of thinking, I remember being struck by the fact that Charlie Chaplin, in *The Great Dictator,* replaced the swastika with a figure that was identical, in terms of its segments, having the shape of a pair of overlapping Xs (ẍ). (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 77)

As was seen in Chapter 2.2 – 'A Dialogue with Georges Perec', Perec's memories can be, deliberately or not, faulty; and Chaplin seems to figure in a few of his earlier ones. If one examines Chaplin's symbol in *The Great Dictator* one finds it is in fact not the shape of overlapping Xs, rather it features two vertically arranged Xs. Similarly, as was also previously mentioned, Perec's recurring memory of being given a Charlie Chaplin comic as he is placed in the train leaving Gare de Lyon has proved impossible. However, it is a memory that also emerges in the mind of another child that has no memories, this time a fictional one: Sebald's Jacques Austerlitz.

> Sometimes it seemed as if the veil would part; I thought, for one fleeting instant, that I could feel the touch of Agáta's shoulder or see the picture on the front of the Charlie Chaplin comic which Vera had bought me for the journey […]. (Sebald, 2001: 308)

> My mother took me to the Gare de Lyon. I was six. She entrusted me to a Red Cross convoy leaving for Grenoble, in the free zone. She bought me a magazine, an issue of *Charlie,* with a cover showing Charlie Chaplin, with his walking stick, his hat, his shoes and his little moustache, doing a parachute jump. The parachute is attached to Charlie by his trouser braces. (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 54)

Blaufuks, too, takes inspiration on the *Charlie* comic to construct a piece featured in the second floor, in the *Transmission Room*. (Fig. 105) Still, before considering this section of the project, I turn to another recurring false memory in Perec that is replicated in Sebald, that of the broken arm on the sling. Whilst 'remembering' Charlie suspended by his parachute, Perec keeps going back to an image of himself with an arm suspended, supported by a sling: "A triple theme runs through this memory: parachute, sling, truss: it suggests suspension, support, almost artificial limbs." (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 55) Yet, as his Aunt Esther repeatedly tells him, he had no broken arm, no need to wear such a sling. Nonetheless, Perec proceeds to connect this image with a later memory of his childhood, another moment where there might have been a need for a sling, it is only in meeting a friend from this era that he finally realises that such an accident indeed did happened, just not to him:

> The thing happened, a little later or a little earlier, and I was not its heroic victim but just a witness. As in the case of my arm-in-a-sling at the Gare de Lyon, I can see perfectly well what it was that these easily mendable fractures, which could be remedied simply by keeping them still for a stretch, were meant to stand in for, although today it seems to me that the

> metaphor will not serve as a way of describing what had been broken — and what it was surely pointless hoping to contain within the guise of an imaginary limb. (Perec, 2011 [1975]: 80)

In encountering a photograph of himself as a child dressed as a pageboy, Austerlitz, too, finds the positioning of his arm to bring forth images of a suspended limb:

> I have studied the photograph many times since, the bare, level field where I am standing, […] the blurred, dark area above the horizon, the boy's curly hair, spectrally light around the outline of his head, the cape over his arm which appears to be held at an angle or, as I once thought, said Austerlitz, might have been broken or in a splint […]. (Sebald, 2001: 259-60)

These orphan boys — real and imaginary — with their lost childhood, their lack of memories, their trauma, are connected through their train voyage, their imaginary arm in a sling, their *Charlie* comic. Much as Blaufuks, Sebald has proven to be a reader of Perec.[144] In arranging his words panels, Blaufuks not only includes his references to Perec, he also brings his reading of *Austerlitz* into play with the words "Theresienstadt / Theresienbad", "Auschowitz / Auschwitz" and "Austerlitz / Auschwitz". If for the artist, "[t]he writings of W. G. Sebald and of Georges Perec, with their constant use of links between adjacent subjects, remind me of the ways of the Internet, because you can quickly get lost in them as

144 In his posthumous book, *Campo Santo* (2003), Sebald writes about reading Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood*: "The story of the shipwrecked sailor Charles Milward immediately reminded me of Georges Perec's autobiographical study *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* ("W, or the Memory of Childhood"), a work full of the most terrible and painful sensations and phantom anxieties, which begins with the account of a mentally sick boy called Gaspard Winckler […]. The Gaspard Winckler story is itself the paradigm of a destroyed childhood, and not for nothing does the similarity of name conjure up the unfortunate Kaspar Hauser." (2005 [2003]: 131. Epub)

well" (Blaufuks, 2014: 212), then his own work might be read under a similar lens: as an assemblage of linked subjects that might lead one astray. To counteract such possibility for disorientation, Blaufuks installed in the second floor of the Museum his *Transmission Room*, an element that lay between a personal library and a networked 'brain'.

Transmission Room and Hypertext

Placed in the middle of the gallery space, a long table held a variety of books. (Fig. 106) They ranged from copies of the key works by Perec and Sebald for the exhibition, to fiction by other authors — Adolfo Bioy Casares, André Breton (1896-1966) —, to theoretical analyses on Warburg or Sebald, to German Lexicon Encyclopedias or artistic projects by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) or Gerhard Ritcher.[145] Whilst in the first floor text prevailed, in ascending to the second space, the *Transmission Room*, text and image merged. But this fusion was not between Blaufuks's photography and Blaufuks's word panels, it was a fusion between his photography and his research. Additionally, in his book selection, Blaufuks was also presenting a lineage of works combining photography and text, books that he carried over into his own projects. The *Transmission Room* served as the 'brain' of the exhibition; with the texts the artist consulted, with the texts one would need if one was to comprehend at least a fraction of all that was referenced and all that was left unsaid in the works themselves. It became the key for reading between the lines.

145 Some of the books include: Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood* (1975), Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Adolfo Bioy Casares' *The Invention of Morel* (1940), André Breton's *Nadja* (1928), Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* (1955), Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (2007), Philippe-Alain Michaud's *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (2004), Georges Didi-Huberman *Images in Spite of All* (2008), Christel Dillbohner (ed.) *Searching for Sebald: Photography After W. G. Sebald* (2007).

Each element in the *Transmission Room* linked to that which was held outside it.[146] Not only that, the placing of the books together, promoting the discovery of interrelationships, called back to Warburg's notion of the 'rules of good neighbourhood' (Guerreiro, 2018: 53) in developing his library. Like his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Warburg's Library was permanently undergoing changes, as new books arrived, as new thoughts and interests emerged. Rather than keep the distinct disciplinary divisions of 'traditional' libraries, in *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*'s "rhizome-like space, which by 1929 contained sixty-five thousand volumes, art history as an academic discipline underwent an ordeal of regulated disorientation: everywhere that there existed *frontiers* between disciplines, the library sought to establish *links*." (Didi-Huberman, 2017 [2002]: 21. Emphasis in original.) To process these links Warburg utilised a complex system of index cards, that Markus Krajewski has likened to Warburg's externalised memory. (2017: 99)[147] In creating these

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146 Other exhibitions also featured spaces that provided links to works outside that enclosure, some even more geographically dispersed. In dOCUMENTA 13 (2012), a gathering of apparently disparate works and artists curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, there too was a 'brain', in this case *The Brain*. In an exhibition central to the contemporary art world, the 2012 edition had no specified theme, no specified concept, and, unlike previous editions, 20% of the works created by its 194 participating artists were presented, not in Kassel, but in Kabul. Organised years in advance, the works were commissioned to the artists, and as a trigger, or as inspiration, two elements were distributed: a Klein bottle and a sentence: "'The dance was very frenetic, lively, rattling, clanging, rolling, contorted and lasting for along time'. There is […] a secret behind this sentence. It is simply the description, [of] the Bamboula dance. Danced by the slaves in New Orleans and rendered illegal after the Haitian Revolution […]. However, the Bambule was also the term used for the 'bad-girl' in Breitenau […] a place where 'bad-girls', pregnant women, women who talked back to their dads […] were interned after World War Two outside of Kassel." (Christov-Bakargiev, 2013) These two triggers, with their hidden meanings, resulted in an interlinking of individual artworks derived from a core. *The Brain* in the exhibition replicated much of this union of disparate fragments: photographs of Lee Miller taking a bath in Hitler's bathtub in Munich on the day he committed suicide; small figurines, the Bactrian Princesses, from northern Afghanistan and dated around 2500-1500 B.C.; still-life paintings by Giorgio Morandi and the painted bottles the artist used as models: "Every thing in *The Brain* connected to something outside of *The Brain*, as far Kabul." (Christov-Bakargiev, 2013)]

147 In 2017, Blaufuks elaborated two photographic panels (*Zettelkästen I* and *Zettelkästen II*) composed of 49 pictures (arranged in a 7×7 grid) taken of Warburg's index boxes. Some elements exhibited the closed boxes, others focused on the indexing notations, others, still, looked at a specific document or image found amongst the files.

cards, Warburg was following a process of archivization, yet, in doing so, he was also translating "both texts and images into alphanumerical notations — like in digital space — which then allow for hypermedia-like links of visual and verbal information […]." (Ernst & Farocki, 2004: 267) Here, in examining not only Warburg's index cards and library but also Blaufuks's *Transmission Room* —with their rhizomatic structure, always pointing elsewhere — it is possible one might encounter something of Theodor Holm Nelson's proposition on hypertext.

In 1965, Nelson introduced two terms that have come to play a significant role in contemporary approaches to text and media, 'hypertext' and 'hypermedia'. By hypertext Nelson meant: "a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented in paper." (1965: 96) Hypermedia followed the same principal of an interconnected, non-linear, and expandable system, encompassing a range of media, from video and film, to photography, or audio. In the potentially limitless expandability of interrelationships — "[s]uch a system could grow indefinitely, gradually including more and more of the world's […] knowledge." (1965: 96) — Nelson's system resembled Warburg's Library and Atlas. Furthermore, hypertext was also a non-hierarchical system where, as René Audet has argued, "the sequence of reading and exploring [was] left for the reader to decide." (2014: 38)

Nevertheless, one might argue that a starting point, a core, is needed for initiating most explorations, and in considering the *All the Memory of the World, part one* exhibition one wonders if it might indeed be seen through the lens of hypertext. I would contend that Blaufuks's *Transmission Room* might very well serve as a core, as a jumping ground, for a hypertextual reading of the exhibition. Every image used, captured, manipulated has its origin in the references placed in this room; thus, should one looking at *The Departures (of G.*

Perec and J. Austerlitz) constellation be interested in the written descriptions of such departures one would have the opportunity to do so in the *Transmission Room*. Similarly, a reader of Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood* having encountered the phrase "I remember the photographs of the walls of the gas chambers showing scratchmarks made by the victims' fingernails," (2011 [1975]: 158) would, arguably, experience *The Victims' Fingernails* differently. (Fig. 107)

Aesthetically beautiful yet horrifying in what it represents, *The Victims' Fingernails* could be seen to summon what Stephen Greenblatt has coined as *resonance* and *wonder*:

> By *resonance* I mean the power of the […] object to reach beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand. By *wonder* I mean the power of the […] object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention. (Greenblatt, 1991: 42)

Upon first encountering this piece, one is greeted with what appears to be a cluster of overlapping rectangular photographs of a dark wall. Ranging from red to green, and featuring a variety of greys and browns in between, these photographs appear almost as colour blocks of an abstract expressionist painting, blotches and stains on the wall functioning as brushstrokes. It elicits the wonder Greenblatt mentions. Yet, moving closer to the *Constellation*, the blotches turn into scratches, and the stains are those of damaged concrete. These are photographs taken inside a gas chamber, they are photographs of the horrified description Perec makes in *W*. Perhaps in this realisation one could find resonance, but in

considering Greenblatt's definition it is possible resonance might also be found elsewhere. The photographs that compose this panel where not taken by the artist, instead these are images Blaufuks found online, images taken by tourists visiting concentration camps. It is here that resonance surfaces, in evoking "the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which [the object] has emerged". (Greenblatt, 1991: 42) The dynamic cultural forces of the panel are in these repeating positions, in these repeated views, examples of a kind of touristification of trauma. Results of a trip to be posted and shared online. In reconstructing some of the gas chamber's interior structure by appropriating these images — found through Google —, Blaufuks is on the one hand continuing a tradition of montage, but, on the other, he is also producing a view that could just as well be positioned on a Google View of the space.

As mentioned, this piece, with its title, is directly associated to Perec's text, yet it is also related to images that both Perec and Blaufuks certainly saw: Alain Resnais documentary-short on Auschwitz, *Nuit et Brouillard* (1956). The gas chamber interior, with its scratched ceiling and walls being used as a shot in the film. If Resnais's *Toute la mémoire du monde* — examining the workings of the French Bibliothèque Nationale whilst following an imaginary book as if a prisoner to be classified and incarcerated — offered a title to Blaufuks's exhibition, *Nuit et Brouillard* was found not only in a *Constellation*, but also in the photographic works present in the *Transmission Room*. In considering Blaufuks's relationship with objects in Chapter 1.1 – 'Systems of Classification', I examined a series that the artist presents in this room, *ITS*. It is a photographic sequence of lost items that remain at the care of the International Tracing Service, International Committee of the Red Cross, standing in for their owners, the victims of the Holocaust. These images placed in the *Transmission Room* exemplify the hypertextual potential of this section of *All the Memory of the World, part one*, as Blaufuks returns to them in a *Constellation*. (Fig. 108) A panel that not only

takes the *ITS* sequence but also incorporates stills from *Nuit et Brouillard*. At the same time, Blaufuks takes as a title for this piece one of the final sentences in Perec's *W* (2011 [1975]: 162), a sentence that is clearly related to writer's viewing of the Resnais documentary: *… piles of gold teeth, rings and spectacles, clothes in heaps, dusty card indexes, and stocks of poor-quality soap…* As an artist permanently in dialogue with a number of writers and filmmakers, in his *Constellations* Blaufuks takes advantage of his chosen medium and process to layer and intersect the references that have guided his work.

<u>Constellations</u>

There are different tiers of information and interlinking that one might gather in *All the Memory of the World, part one*. The experience for one unaware of Blaufuks's previous works will be different to that of one familiarised with projects such as *Terezín* (2007). Nevertheless, even here, layers of information will escape unless one is also aware of the multiple references Blaufuks conjures. These constellations, these tableaux, are, as Blaufuks describes it, "constructions of images with more or less the same meanings, relating to one or various places, memories or rational connections […]". (2014: 213) Some are direct visual translations of Sebald's and Perec's books: one panel might contain overlapping images that represent whole sections of the novel, as *Austerlitz IV (pages 201 to 300)*[148] does; a second might be a sequence of photographs of runners — the positioning of the images simulating their movement — standing in for the dystopian world of *W*; another still might offer a survey of train station architecture — much in line with Austerlitz's research. (Fig. 109 &

148 It is during these pages that Austerlitz makes his visit to Theresienstadt, as such Blaufuks has included not only some stills of the propaganda film, but also images of the city-camp streets, the plans of the fortification and Sebald's photographs included in his book, not least the photograph of the ivory-coloured porcelain statuette of the horse rider and girl. During his own visit to Terezín, Blaufuks came across this piece, having purchased it, the artist then re-photograph it and placed both the statuette as object and as image in the *Transmission Room*.

110) Like Warburg, in assembling images at the same plane, rather than as a sequence of projected stills or as single panels, Blaufuks is constructing meaning beyond what each picture might convey individually. For the artist, photography "is a construction of alphabets, but if I link one, two, three, four, five photographs I am building a product, a sentence or a music sheet completely different from what I might make with a succession of images."[149] (Blaufuks & Mendonça, 2018a: n.p. My translation.)

In most panels one might, with more or less effort, discern their internal logic, particularly when associated to each of their titles. For other *Constellations* it is only by Blaufuks's guiding hand that the connection between Georges Rodenbach's (1855-1898) *Bruges-la-Morte* (1892) and the television series *Lost* (2004-2010) might be established.[150] (Fig. 111) In this panel, titled *All the Memory of the World I*, Blaufuks begins with Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte* — one of the first works of fiction to combine text and photography —, in which the main character, a widower, becomes obsessed with a dancer that bears a likeness to his dead wife. Such a plot is thought to have influenced *D'entre les morts* (1954) by Boileau-Narcejac (Pierre Boileau (1906-1989) and Pierre Ayraud, *aka* Thomas Narcejac (1908-1998)), a crime novel that was adapted by Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) as *Vertigo* (1958). *Vertigo* also being the title of one of Sebald's books. Blaufuks then links *Vertigo* to Chris Marker's (1921-2012) *La Jetée* — Marker who had worked with Alain Resnais, whose films *Toute la Mémoire du Monde* and *Nuit et Brouillard* are also referenced in the constellation— in which, much like in Hitchcock's film, the two main characters look at the temporal line in a cut tree trunk. *La Jetée* begins with the sentence, "Ceci est l'histoire

149 "[A fotografia é] uma construção de alfabetos, mas se eu juntar uma, duas, três, quatro, cinco fotografias estou a construir um produto, uma frase ou uma pauta completamente diferente do que podia fazer com imagens uma atrás da outra."

150 The artist has made available online a guided tour of the exhibition where he addresses some of the *Constellations*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNLvkCwixBs&feature=youtu.be

d'un homme marqué par une image d'enfance"[151], which Blaufuks associates to Perec's *W, or the Memory of Childhood*. Who also wrote *La Disparition* (1969), in which Anton Vowl "thinks of a book that was bought by him in his youth", a book by Bioy, "an account of an amazing, astonishing and also alarming calamity in which an outcast, a runaway pariah is caught up." (Perec, 2008a [1969]: 17). The Bioy here referenced is Adolfo Bioy Casares, and the astonishing account of an outcast living on a desert island is his book: *La invención de Morel* (1940). From the tale of a man living on a deserted — yet occupied by spectres — island, Blaufuks establishes the connection to *Myst* (1993), a video game that gives players the possibility of solving puzzles to travel around the island of Myst. And finally Blaufuks arrives at *Lost*, the television drama where survivors from an airplane crash are stranded in a mysterious island.

This panel, in taking the exhibition's name, summons an array of images that form Blaufuks's practice. It is a panel that might be read in line with Warburg's *Atlas*, as a mapping of themes and gestures. However, it might also function as a visualisation of Blaufuks's work 'table', of his online searches, the overlapping images simulating web browser windows open at the same time. Although the artist does use some photographs he has taken himself, the majority of images appropriated originate in Google searches, as such, in this process and particularly in this panel, Blaufuks's *Constellations* hold something of a 'pro surfer' quality. The 'pro surfer' aesthetic revolves around copy-and-paste and web-based appropriation that engages in "an enterprise distinct from the mere appropriation of found photography. They present us with constellations of uncannily decisive moments, images made perfect by their imperfections, images that together create portraits of the web, diaristic photo essays on the part of the surfer, and images that certainly add up to something greater that the sum of their

151 "This is a story of man marked by an image of his childhood."

parts.” (Olson, 2015: 164) Whilst it is true that Blaufuks’s aim is not to create a diaristic cross-section of the internet — rather he had previously claimed to be more concerned in his work in creating a certain flux of images that might move towards a “kind of cinematic prose” (Blaufuks, 2012: 25) —, I would argue that one should not ignore the medium the artist has selected to process his search. Not looking for images in analogue archives, as he has done in the past, but, much as the previously examined work of susan pui san lok, *RoCH*, by expanding his practice into online databases.

Taking into account the fact that Blaufuks utilises the same technology as pui san lok, one should consider that many of the limitations and characteristics the British-artist found in *RoCH* might also emerge in the *Constellations*. Images retrieved have had to be associated to text, different paths and results might have been found in using different terminologies or even languages, new constellation systems could have emerged. Thus it is not inconceivable that the creation of the *Constellations* was, at least partially, influenced by the technology used. Additionally, one must not exclude the input given by the users who have provided the images by uploading them, and by, through repeated searches, defining their relevance and thus their position in the results. As Georges Didi-Huberman proposes in relation to Warburg’s Atlas, in these panels “each of the configurations obtained [are] always subject to *permutation*.” (2017 [2002]: 301)

Blaufuks has suggested that the internet has contributed to:

> an urgent need to create an endless and immediate archive of all that is irretrievable and all that will be irretrievable, a ‘mal d’archive’, as Derrida referred to, an *Archive Fever*, although I would rather translate the French

'mal' as evil, since remembering, storing, cataloguing and, most of all, photographing everything can probably only end badly. (2014: 184)

However, in examining Blaufuks's panels one finds that the artist has nevertheless drawn parallels between analogue and digital archives, connections rather than breaks. As I have continuously asserted digital archives and online databases continue to follow procedures from analogue ones. As such, as much as there might be a fear of being overwhelmed by images — and 'artificial' digital images at that —, one must keep in mind that similar anxieties have emerged with each new development in technology.[152] I propose that Blaufuks is drawing parallels between this two systems, not only in this positioning of the *Constellations* as something between an Atlas and a web browser, but in the choice the artist makes in representing the archive itself.

In his panel *Archiv*, rather than turn to a composite of archival images, as he has done in previous projects, Blaufuks highlights the architecture of the archive. (Fig. 112) He collects around 40 images, of varying scale, of the shelves in an archive, the underground sections most users do not have direct access to. With their one-point perspective, focused on a vanishing point on the horizon line, the photographs selected give the impression of endless spaces, with rows upon rows of binders and records stacked next to one another. It is a sterilised view of an archive, playing not on the image of a dusty disordered interior, of undiscovered documents lost between piles, but on its system of classification. There is something in these images of the representations one finds of server rooms in data centres.

152 Indeed, in the nervousness around the doctoring of digital photography many have neglected to consider the previous manipulation of analogue photographic processes: "The process of digitizing the light that comes through the lens is no more or less artificial than the chemical process of traditional photography. It is a purely cultural decision to claim that darkening the color values of a digitized image by algorithm is an alteration of the truth of the image, whereas keeping an analog negative longer in the developing bath is not." (Bolter & Grusin, 2000: 110)

Server rooms maintain continuously operating computers in climate control environments. Much as paper, or film, need steady temperatures and humidity levels, there are optimal conditions under which data must be processed by servers. They do not hold 'material' documents, but they are solid and physical. Data, the internet, does not live in clouds, it lies in these devises: "the Internet is […] material through and through. Its hardware and software are subject to aging and to the power of entropy." (Groys, 2016: 23. Epub) In displaying photographs of the archive that so closely relate to pictures of data centres, Blaufuks creates a bridge between analogue archives and their digital counterparts.

There is yet another way to read the archive in Blaufuks's work. In taking the artist's earlier claim, that "[a]n archive is not a collection, because a collector chooses and an archivist has no possible choice" (Blaufuks, 2008b: 27), instead of neatly separating these two original concepts — or placing the collection within the archive — one might subvert it. In the previous chapter, I analysed how Warburg and Google Image might be read as two sides of the same coin. Warburg as a collector that with vast, but limited, materials obsessively explored the potentially endless permutations and interlinking in his Atlas — a collector that had no choice. Google Images as a limitless database that in using ever more optimised algorithms provided contained selections of results — the algorithm as an archivist that makes choices for its users. In examining Blaufuks as an archivist, what one finds is that, like an optimised algorithm, his archive remains bound to recurring themes. Similarly, in considering Blaufuks as a collector, he, like Warburg, fails to define his collection, constructing numerous permutations of the same material in his *Constellations*. Thus, one could propose that, Blaufuks operates a deconstruction of the archive and collection dichotomy. Not by creating an anarchive or anti-collection, but by moving the archive towards a kind of meta-collection: his *part one* in *All the Memory of the World*.

Blaufuks's *Constellations* might be seen through several lenses. As part of a larger project they become panels in which multiple references and readings combine; examining the interplay between fiction and reality, exploring questions of memory — based on lived experience, 'inherited' from a traumatic pasts, implanted through the mediation of mass culture —, and reflecting on questions on the archive. They hark back to Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* — a "definite" atlas with no "definite" version. (Withers, 2000: 53) —, but in doing so they also offer the chance to reconsider the distinction between collection and archive. As formations derived from a technology that is based on machine learning, with all the constrains and possibilities such implies, they might also expand the boundaries of authorship, echoing the associations established by a human brain and the connections made by a machine constructed to mimic it.

Google Image is not the only digital technology Blaufuks employed in creating his more recent projects. The artist has also turned to, as we will see in the next chapter, social media, specifically Instagram. With more than one account, it is in 'Urgent Eye' that a project that continues Blaufuks's dialogue with Perec has grown, and where his diaristic practice has endured.

The 'urgent eye' of Instagram

You must either live in the most photographable way possible, or else

consider photographing every moment of your life.

The first course leads to stupidity; the second to madness.

— Italo Calvino

There are many ways to catalogue one's life, some keep diaries and journals, others look to keep tokens of the places and events they have passed through, others still photograph or write down every single detail of what they see. In 1989, Georges Perec's posthumous collection, *L'Infra-ordinaire*, came to print. It gathered a selection of eight texts the author had previously published — between 1973 and 1981 — in magazines and periodicals. These texts held in common Perec's urge to catalogue some of his life through the exhaustive description of "what happens when nothing happens" (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 3): "How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infraordinary, the background noise, the habitual?" (Perec, 2008b [1973]: 210)[153] If, as was examined in Chapters 1.1 and 1.2, an impulse to hoard might erupt following a traumatic instant, the accumulation of objects offering some semblance of comfort, it is possible that recording in minute detail what one observes might have an equally stabilising effect.

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153 Although a number of Perec's works might fit under the umbrella of the infra-ordinary — including *Les Choses. Une histoire des années 60* (1965), *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien* (1975), or "Notes concernant les objects qui sont sur ma table de travail" (1976) — the texts published in *L'Infra-ordinaire* were: "Approches de quoi?" (1973), "La rue Vilin" (1977), "Deux cent quarante-trois cartes postales en couleurs véritables" (1978), "Tout autour de Beaubourg" (1981), "Promenades dans Londres" (1981), "Le Saint des Saints" (1981), "Tentative d'inventaire des aliments liquides et solides que j'ai ingurgités au cours de l'année mil neuf cent soixante-quatorze" (1981), "Still life / Style leaf" (1981).

Amongst the texts included in *L'Infra-ordinaire* was a collection of six descriptions Perec did of the street where he was born, and where his mother ran a hairdresser's, Rue Vilin.[154] Written between 27 February 1969 and 27 September 1975 it was part of a long-standing project — *Lieux* — that Perec never finished:

> I have selected twelve places in Paris — streets, squares, and crossroads connected to important events or moments in my existence. Each month, I describe two of these places: one in situ (in a café or in the street itself), relating 'what I can see' in the most neutral manner possible, listing the shops, architectural details, microevents […]; the second I write anywhere (at home, in a café, in the office), describing the place from memory, evoking the memories that are connected to it, the people I knew there, and so on. Each text […], once completed, is put away in an envelope that I seal with a wax seal. After one year I will have described twelve places twice over, once in memory mode, once in situ in real descriptive mode. I shall begin over again in the same manner each year for twelve years. (Perec *apud* Bellos, 2010: chapter 42. Kindle book)

If there was something of his interest for Oulipian constraints in the shape this project was to take, arguably, in mapping-out these locations, from micro-events and from memory, Perec was grounding himself in the safety of over-description, of knowing all there was to know about places that had previously been lost to him: "Space is a doubt: I have constantly

154 Blaufuks directly referenced Perec's mapping of this street in two of his *Constellations*: *Rue Vilin I* and *Rue Vilin II*.

to mark it, to designate it. It's never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it." (Perec, 2008d [1974]: 91)

In early 2013, Blaufuks began posting views of his kitchen window on Instagram. It was a subject the artist had been tackling in his photographic work since 2009 and that continues to be explored almost obsessively. Blaufuks too found that in 'describing' a place methodically — through photography in his case — he was counteracting a sense of drifting, of loss:

> It is no accident that we are talking about displacement and exile and I have been photographing the same window for years. Maybe for me it is important, because it is going against all that sense of where my work comes from. So, I put myself in a position where I say: 'maybe I'm exiled before this window'.[155] (Blaufuks & Mendonça, 2018b: n.p. My translation)

At the moment,[156] Blaufuks's main Instagram account 'Urgent Eye'[157] — in a nod to both the instant quality of Instagram as well as to previous works by the artist featuring Polaroid photography — stands at over 1.500 posts. Within the various posts — including individual pieces, promotion of events and projects, political posts, people interacting with his

155 "Não é por acaso que estamos a falar de deslocação e exílio e eu estou há anos a fotografar a mesma janela. Se calhar para mim é importante, porque é ir contra todo esse sentido de onde vem o meu trabalho. Portanto, coloco-me numa posição em que digo: 'se calhar, eu estou exilado perante esta janela'."

156 This analysis is based on results obtained in November 2020.

157 During the COVID-19 pandemic confinement period Blaufuks created two other Instagram accounts. *blaufuks_daily* began in 19 March, as shall be briefly examined in the Conclusion of this thesis. The second account Blaufuks set about was *lisboa_cliche* (28 March – 29 October), where the artist revisited black-and-white photographs he had taken of Lisbon as he was starting his career in the late-1980s – early-1990s.

work, posts related to celebratory dates (the Portuguese 25 April Revolution, Valentine's Day, Hanukkah, or New Year's) — a set of over 300 posts feature his window. These belong to what has become the *Attempting Exhaustion* (2016-present) project. It is a work inspired by Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* (2010 [1975]) (*Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*) and thus it maintains some of the artist's dialogue with the writer. However, it is also a piece grounded on a new platform, Instagram, an online social networking app that nonetheless has been inspired by analogue media.

In the following pages I will begin by returning to Perec, examining his impulse to register micro-events in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*. I will then turn my attention to Blaufuks's *Attempting Exhaustion,* examining the piece within a practice of 'photography with time' and relating it to the works of two other artists that have used repetition in photography to anchor themselves to a space. In looking at repetition to the point of exhaustion in Blaufuks, I will consider another of his projects, *Original Copy* (2019). Finally, I will move away from Blaufuks to consider the roles of repetition and ephemerality in the Internet, taking Teju Cole's (b. 1975) Instagram presence as a case study.

What happens when nothing happens

What is life if not a series of micro-events? Sitting in a number of cafés in Place Saint-Sulpice for three days — between 18 and 20 October 1974 — Perec turned his attention to the life passing through the square. His intention was to describe "what happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars, and clouds." (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 3) He catalogued the movement of people (what they wore, how they walked, the greeting of passing acquaintances), what he drank (coffee, water, Salers Gentian liqueur), the ringing of the bells of Saint-Sulpice (for funerals, for vespers), the traffic (car brands and colours, traffic

jams), pigeons in flight ("What triggers off this unified movement? […] the birds suddenly take flight, go round the square and return to settle on the district council building's gutter." (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 16)), and buses, the endless passing of buses: "why count the buses? Probably because they're recognizable and regular: they cut up time, they punctuate the background noise; ultimately, they're foreseeable. The rest seems random, improbable, anarchic […]." (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 22) He registered the passing of time, trying to discern whether a minuscule change might have an effect on the whole of the square: "I'm drinking a Vittel water, whereas yesterday I was drinking a coffee (how does that transform the square?)" (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 30) Perec focused on each detail to the point of fatigue and still was prone to omissions. (2010 [1975]: 24) As he turned his attention to an element how many others might he have missed? "Right by the café, at the foot of the window and at three different spots, a fairly young man draws a sort of 'V' on the sidewalk with chalk, with a kind of question mark inside it […]." (Perec, (2010 [1975]: 12) One could wonder if it were any other letter, would Perec have noticed the drawing? Like most, he tended to see what he was predisposed to see. A limitation he himself acknowledged: "*even when my goal is just to observe, I don't see what takes place a few meters from me* […]." (Perec, (2010 [1975]: 15. Emphasis in original)

In *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, Perec seemed, at first glance, to focus outwards, towards the "tens, hundreds of simultaneous actions, micro-events, each one of which necessitates postures, movements, specific expenditures of energy […]" (2010 [1975]: 10) that passed before his eyes. However, he also looked to recognise himself in others: "On the sidewalk, there is a man shaken, but not yet ravaged, by tics […]; he holds his cigarette the same way I do (between the middle finger and the ring finger): it's the first time I've come across someone else with this habit." (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 19) He searched for

memories, perhaps of the day before, perhaps of events not shared with the reader: “Unsatisfied curiosity (what I came here to find, the memory floating in this café …)”. (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 33. Ellipsis in original.) He looked for the ordinary, for that which happens daily but does not capture one’s attention, looking to see the everyday “fabric” beyond the eventful visible “rips”. (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 33-4) It was an active viewing, a way to catalogue a space, yet in its obsessive need to do so, as if he had no other alternative, Perec was suffering from a sort of archival ‘fever’. Perhaps recognising such possible pitfall, the writer attempted to establish a semblance of order, a system of classification: “Outline of an inventory of some strictly visible things: – Letters of the alphabet, words […]. – Conventional symbols […]. – Numbers […]. – Fleeting slogans […]. – Ground […].” (Perec, 2010 [1975]: 5) But, as the information grew, maintaining a methodology other than writing down what he saw at the moment he saw it proved impossible.

Whilst he obsessed over tiny details, Perec was nevertheless capable of stoping the venture. He ended his text abruptly, as if suddenly standing up to leave for a scheduled appointment: “Four children. A dog. A little ray of sun. The 96. It is two o’clock” (2010 [1975]: 47). In doing so, Perec’s over-description never crosses the threshold from a stabilising force to a sort of manic obsession. It is a boundary his friend, and fellow-Oulipian, Italo Calvino had the main character of his short story, *The Adventure of a Photographer* (1958), traverse, illustrating how a simple hobby might grow into something that alienates every other aspect of one’s life.

After becoming fascinated with photography, Antonino Paraggi, Calvino’s character, attempts to capture a fleeting look he had once encountered in his girlfriend, Bice. He does so by taking every possible image of her: “Photography has a meaning only if it exhausts all

possible images." (Calvino, 2014 [1958]: 241) Growing tired of his fixation, Bice abandons him, leaving Paraggi no alternative but to photograph her absence instead:

> He collected the photographs in an album: you could see ashtrays brimming with cigarette butts, an unmade bed, a damp stain on the wall. He got the idea of composing a catalogue of everything in the world that resists photography, that is systematically omitted from the visual field not only by the camera but also by human beings. On every subject he spent days, using up whole rolls at intervals of hours, so as to follow the changes of light and shadow. One day he became obsessed with a completely empty corner of the room, containing a radiator pipe and nothing else; he was tempted to go on photographing that spot and only that till the end of his days.
>
> […]
>
> Having exhausted every possibility, at the moment when he was coming full circle Antonino realized that photographing photographs was the only course that he had left — or, rather, the true course he had obscurely been seeking all this time. (Calvino, 2014 [1958]: 241-3)

One could propose that, in this process of exhaustion, of reaching towards the impossible goal of an absolute photographic understanding of a subject, what Calvino's character was after was the register of time. It was a sort of 'photography with time', that, whilst on the surface might be seen as recording only absence, was in fact capturing time through the minuscule shifts in light and space. As will be seen below, when Blaufuks turns to photo-

graphing his kitchen window, in a kind of self-imposed constraint, he is operating in much the same manner.

Attempting Exhaustion

A soft warm light, coming in from the right-hand side, shines through the hammered glass windowpanes, it falls on a wood-top table, its side pushed against the short tiled wall. Rarely bare, a rotation of cloths, toys, bowls, fruit and flowers, cover this table. At times it is joined by empty chairs, seldom occupied by visitors. This is the space that Blaufuks has been photographing since 2009:

> I was first attracted by its silence, later by how the objects received the light, and, finally, by their geometrical composition. I couldn't help noticing, more and more, how things repeated themselves without truly repeating themselves. Little changes, almost invisible transformations happened every day, according to weather and season. […] Retreating from the outside world, I slowly transformed my kitchen into a refuge, a shelter, a place for introspection and solace. […] Everything seemed to remain unchanged in this kitchen while the world outside transformed. A friend died, a government collapsed, a book came out, a war flared, a bomb exploded. One day the world attempted to break in: a constructor knocked on my door and told me the owner of the house wanted to replace the window; that I would feel much happier with a modern window with larger glass panes, more luminous and better insulated. He was still talking when I shut the door on his face. (Blaufuks, 2016)

The first post of Blaufuks's *Attempting Exhaustion* series on Instagram[158] appeared on 1 April 2013 and, on average, the artist has shared details of his kitchen window once or twice per week. In his continuous photographing of this space, with the light variations that come with the passing seasons, with the everyday objects that appear and disappear from the table, with the fruit that ripens and is eaten, Blaufuks seems to be cataloguing his very existence. (Fig. 113) It is an impulse that, arguably, many on the app seem to share, only perhaps not with the goal of developing an artistic project. With the use of the app's filters, Instagram users found that:

> basic things, like street signs and flower bushes and cracks in the paint of walls, all of a sudden were worth paying attention to, in the name of creating interesting posts. The filters and square shape made all the photographs on Instagram feel immediately nostalgic, like old Polaroids, transforming moments into memories, giving people the opportunity to look back on what they'd done with their day and feel like it was beautiful. (Frier, 2020: chapter 2. Epub)

Indeed, although a digital-born medium, Instagram strongly relied on the aesthetic of analogue instant photography, going as far as appropriating the look of a Polaroid OneStep Camera for an earlier version of its logo. Nevertheless, whilst one might propose that Instagram's promotion of nostalgia came from the mimicking of these analogue photographic formats, I would suggest that, as mentioned in Chapter 1.3, the app was also imbuing the

158 Publicly launched on 6 October 2010, and purchased by Facebook in 2012 Instagram, a photo sharing mobile application created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, made use of the addition of increasingly powerful cameras to mobile phones, implementing, nonetheless, a uniforming constraint to its users by its requirements to post only square images.

users' images with its own Instagram look. Like Fuji, Kodak or Polaroid before them, Instagram's technology resulted from a series of decisions by its creators, with characteristics and mistakes unique to it.[159] An Instagram image quickly became recognisable as an Instagram image, with its own kind of aura.[160] As for artists that had no interest in applying the available filters to their images, such as Blaufuks, Instagram proved valuable in continuing a work process reliant on instant photography.

As we have seen, Blaufuks has utilised instant photography, particularly Polaroids, in a number of his photobooks, including *London Diaries* (1994), *Ein Tag in Mostar* (1995), *Tasso* (1996), and *A Voyage to Saint Petersburg* (1998). In these part-photobooks part-travel journals, more than memory aids, Polaroids functioned as certificates of presence, as records of time lived. I argue that Blaufuks's quick adherence to Instagram and his incorporation of it into his projects partly stems from this previous use of Polaroid.[161] Blaufuks's success at the platform deriving from this ease of transition between the analogue format and the digital image: "I had worked a lot with instant cameras, made Polaroid diaries, so that the velocity of the digital image made sense to me from the start […]" (Blaufuks & Campany, 2012: 29)

Although initially available to the public only on Instagram, in 2016 Blaufuks presented for the first time the photographs of his window as an exhibition at Vera Cortês Gallery in Lisbon. *Attempting Exhaustion*, the show, featured a variety of photographic formats, including large-prints, view-masters and other forms of stereoscopic photography, slides, and even a journal of 320 views of Blaufuks's window[162] was made available to visitors. (Fig. 114) But there was also instant photography. (Fig. 115) If formats as the slides over light-boxes or the

159 Although always subject to being copied by others.

160 For more on the implications of digital technology on aura see Chapter 3.1.

161 In fact, Blaufuks's fifth post on Instagram, on 24 September 2012, was of his Polaroid SX-70 camera.

162 The photographs used in the journal were arranged in five rows of four square-images each.

view-masters replicated, in their transparency, the light emanating across the windowpanes, instant photography captured the sense of a quick action to seize a shifting light. (Fig. 116) A daily task that acquired a sort of ritualistic performance, offering a temporal dimension to the piece. As Sven Spieker reflects in examining Ernst Mach's *Contributions to the Analysis of the Sensations* (1886), "there is no reason to assume that the table we see at a certain point in time is the same table we see, under different light conditions and from a different perspective, at another." (2008: 29)

Although composed of individual images, as a sequential series *Attempting Exhaustion* might be read as something close to a paradoxical 'still-moving-image'. In speaking about his film work, particularly non-narrative pieces such as *Carpe Diem* or *Fábrica*, Blaufuks has suggested that he is engaging in an 'expanded photography', as was explored in Chapter 1.3. One might easily understand the use of this terminology in regards to films founded on long steady shots, where the exploration of the material qualities of the medium — particularly Super-8 — is as essential to the work as that which is being caught on camera. However, I would propose that Blaufuks is operating in two intersecting lines: if his filmic work moves towards an 'expanded photography', then his photographic work — specially *Attempting Exhaustion* — takes the opposite route towards a 'still-moving-image'. Thus, one might propose that what Blaufuks is practicing is in fact not just one or the other, but their convergence into something like a 'photography with time'.[163] The process of exhausting a

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163 The passage of time and the effects of light became key to the plot of a film written by Paul Auster (b. 1947), *Smoke* (1995). In this, Auggie (Harvey Keitel), the owner of a New York cigarette shop, takes a photo of the store's facade each day at eight o'clock in the morning. As he explains his images are, "all the same, but each one is different from every other one. You've got your bright mornings and your dark mornings. You've got your summer light and your autumn light. You've got your weekdays and your weekends. You've got your people in overcoats and galoshes, and you've got your people in shorts and T-shirts. Sometimes the same people, sometimes different ones. And sometimes the different ones become the same, and the same ones disappear. The earth revolves around the sun, and every day the light from the sun hits the earth at a different angle." (Wang & Auster, 1995)

theme or place, is key in the construction of such a notion, as the views accumulate with no apparent beginning and end.

Blaufuks explores exhaustion, and 'photography with time', in another of his works, *Original Copy* (2019). Here the artist hones in on a single bowl placed on his kitchen table, creating a set of 50 photographs, and replicating the original bowl in a 3D printed copy. Over a span of several weeks the artist photographed his bowl under ever which light the day might offer. There were no adjustments to the position of the camera, no changes in aperture, it was fixed, as was the bowl it was capturing. Such conditions meant that, at times, images were overexposed — blown-out to near white —, other times, light was muted, and the bowl became almost impossible to make out. Each image was a replica of the other, and yet, they were completely different. At its core, *Original Copy* was a single photograph where time had crept in. Yet, by limiting the set to 50 images, the piece worked as a type of contained exhaustion; there was a beginning and an end, even if the viewer had no way of discerning it. Although the notion of 'photography with time' might be applied to a variety of photographic sequences, it is a quality that is particularly emphasised in the repeated capture of light as it changes, both in *Original Copy* as in *Attempting Exhaustion*. However, this is not just applicable to Blaufuks's works, there are several artists that have equally created photographs with time, two of them that, by similarly resorting to windows, might illuminate some other aspects of Blaufuks's pieces: Josef Sudek (1896-1976) and André Kertész (1894-1985).

The use of windows has prevailed in art, be it in the history of painting or more recently in photography. Windows can work as framing devices or as light sources. One might look through a window at the outside landscape or, on the contrary, look indoors, into the home. Artists might focus on the texture and surface of the windowpane, or similarly use the glass as a reflective area, light bouncing on it or traversing it. As Rosalind Krauss has

proposed, “[a]lmost from the first, painters imagined piercing the ‘luminous concreteness’ of the canvas by likening it to a window, the view both opening the picture surface and returning depth to its plane. After the invention of perspective, the window frame came to be the signifier of painting itself.” (2011: 106) Upon the early development of photographic techniques, windows were not only crucial in reducing exposure times, they validated the medium as an art form by providing a connection to painting.[164]

For fourteen years, between 1940–54, Czech-photographer Josef Sudek[165] photographed the windows of his studio in Prague in what became known as *The Window of My Studio*.[166] For this series, the artist used a number of large-format cameras, the final image resulting from contact-prints, meaning each photograph maintained the exact size of the negative that produced it. Sudek, for the most, sought not to capture the outside world, but to focus on the surface of the windowpane *as surface*.(Fig. 117) True, there were shadows of the large tree in the artist’s garden — changing through the seasons, covered in foliage or snow —, or lights from the apartment building across the street, yet the water droplets that accumulated, the ice that formed at the edge of the window, all worked to block the outside from coming in. As Elliot Krasnopoler has expressed, “[a] fogged window is, in a sense, no longer a window as such. It no longer performs the window’s basic function as a pathway between the worlds of interior and exterior. Because of this veil, Sudek’s photographs enable us to look at rather than through the window.” (2018: 190)

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164 As Martha Langford explains, “[r]eferences to the Albertian window have been made to raise the status of photography by tracing its pictorial pedigree to the Renaissance.” (2007: 34)

165 Born in Kolín, in the Bohemia region of what was then Czechoslovakia, Sudek began his career as a bookbinder before serving in the Autro-Hungarian Army during World War One, where he was wounded and lost an arm to amputation. In addition to his still-lives and interior photographs of his studio, Sudek was known his pictures of Prague and landscapes of the Bohemian forest.

166 The name of this series went through several variations — *Views from the Window of My Studio*, *From the Window of My Studio* — before Sudek settled on *The Window of My Studio* in 1976. (Fárová, 2007: 7)

It is a process Blaufuks similarly achieves in his work, his focus never on what is beyond his window only on what is kept protected by it or on the windowpanes themselves. Using multicoloured-cellophane, the artist at times creates the look of 'stained glass' over the differing textures of each pane — as if once one had been broken its replacement could never match the others — exploring light shifts. (Fig. 118) Additionally, with chalk, Blaufuks draws on the glass surface; sometimes lines and squiggles, other times marking important holidays, or even just composing the outline of a stretched out dancer, leaping in the air. (Fig. 119) In this, the window works no longer as a framing device as it might have done for Alberti, rather it becomes the canvas. Whilst not using chalk, Sudek 'draws' on his windows too, with his breath, and the condensation it produces in contact with the cold glass — the fog interrupted by the lines of water drops quickly descending. (Fig. 120) In the length of his series, in the repetition of framing, and the focus on the changes to the window itself, rather than to what sits beyond it, Sudek's project might too be read as a 'photography with time'. Another artist that focused on exhaustion and experimented with glass surfaces and the windows of his home was André Kertész[167].

Following the death of his wife, Kertész took to photographing small glass figurines on his windowsill for the last six years of his life, from 1979 to 1985. He did so not by utilising large-format cameras like Sudek, but on the contrary by turning to the small scale of Polaroid. Using his Polaroid SX-70 camera, the Hungarian-artist played with the optical illusions provided by glass objects; the New York skyline appearing upside down within the rounded heads of two small busts. (Fig. 121) In another image, the outside world might look

167 Pressured by his family to pursue a career in business Kertész quickly turned to photographing the locals in Budapest and the surrounding landscape. After serving in the Austro-Hungarian army in World War One, Kertész moved to Paris in 1925 photographing the likes of Piet Mondrian, Marc Chagall or Sergei Eisenstein. In 1936, he and his wife Elizabeth emigrated to New York, where he produced commercial work for Condé Nast Publishing. Worldwide recognition of his work would only come in the early-1960s.

distorted by the placement of a spherical face. Another still, might feature glass paperweights shaped as hearts. It was a process of abstraction that would ultimately culminate in the utter concealment of the cityscape, the Polaroids showing a flame-like movement of light and shadow. (Fig. 122) In this manner, whilst looking outside, Kertész was nevertheless guaranty-ing the protective barrier between his intimate space and the exterior.

Before undertaking this project Kertész had been unable to work, mourning for the loss of his wife, but upon receiving the Polaroid camera he tentatively returned to producing art, or a "little play" as he put it in regards to his use of the medium. (Kertész *apud* Gurbo, 2007: 23) Soon he too would become entranced by the impossibility of exhausting a place:

> I began shooting slowly, slowly, slowly. But soon, going crazy. I worked mornings and late afternoons. […] I would come out in the morning and be-gin shooting, shooting, shooting; no time to eat. I discover the time has gone, and no breakfast. The same in the afternoon … I forget my medicine. Sud-denly, I'm losing myself, losing pain, losing hunger, and yes, losing the sad-ness. (Kertész *apud* Gurbo, 2007: 21. Ellipsis in original)

As proposed initially in this chapter, one could argue that obsessively describing or photographing the quotidian, be it by looking at micro-events, be it by capturing a space in every possible angle, might work as a stabilising force in the face of traumatic change. Whilst Kertész's work emerged from mourning a loved-one, Sudek was perhaps mourning the loss of his city. As he began his window series in "1940 during the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia […] exploring the city with a large-format camera became increasingly difficult during the war. As a result, Sudek was largely confined to his small studio." (Krasnopoler,

2018: 187) Similarly, Blaufuks placed himself in front of his kitchen window, growing the roots missing from an exiled family. Indeed, the artist uncovered within his family albums a picture of a window that one might be excused in believing is the window the artist has been photographing. In it were his great-grandparents, Elsa and Julius Leinung, as they found safety in Lisbon in 1940. (Fig. 123) Whilst it represents another space, it is a photograph that features much of the same light the artist finds in this series, almost creating a genealogy for *Attempting Exhaustion*. It was the image Blaufuks selected for the cover of the photobook born out of this project.[168] In doing so, the artist established a link between his past, his present and the repeating tomorrows he will encounter in front of his kitchen window. In exhausting a place, repetition comes into play. It may be in the passing buses Perec encountered, or in the windows Blaufuks, Sudek, or Kertész, did not move away from. But repetition also emerges in digital technology; it is present in Instagram. Moving away from Blaufuks, it is possible to find other paths to understand such attributes, looking at the work of an artist that equally sought refuge in repetition, shielding himself in the exhaustion of a place: Teju Cole.

168 Published by Akio Nagasawa in 2017, of the 142 photographs contained in the photobook, approximately half had been previously been featured on Instagram or were reframings and variations of posts. Not only that, although some had previously been shown in other formats for his exhibition, Blaufuks maintained the square framing of the images. Such was due in part to the use of the medium format (6×6) size of the found-photograph of his great-grandparents used on the cover, and in part as an association to the photographs' earlier online existence. Although minimal, the text included in *Attempting Exhaustion*, the book, serves to establish a time, space and even history — in Blaufuks's references to events taking place on the day the photograph was taken, for instance — of the image. Thus, *Attempting Exhaustion* continues the artist's diaristic practices. The photographs are placed individually in each page, filling only pages on the right-hand side. Occasionally, the facing, left, pages contain a comment that can easily resemble the quick captions used on Instagram or even hashtags: 'Sunday Morning', 'Silence is a Blessing', 'Summer!', 'Everyday is like Sunday', 'Here and there'. In this, one finds a meshing of previous approaches to photobooks by Blaufuks and a permeating of Instagram as a medium into the artist's obsessions.

Repetition and Ephemerality

He was photographing his kitchen counter as a way to counteract the anxiety of the, not so distant, US presidential election. Details of food and kitchen utensils on top of yellowed pages of an eighteenth-century cookbook. Daily repetition, daily change. These were the images that Nigerian-American-artist Teju Cole [169] shared for a little over a month, 1 October to 3 November 2020, on his Instagram,[170] they were the photos the artist would seek to transform into an upcoming publication in June 2021. [171]

> The moon, and to its right Jupiter, and more faintly, Saturn. It was Saturday night, we were sitting outside, September 26.
>
> In under six weeks, the election would happen. It felt suddenly like it was close, and it also felt like a long way away. How is one to survive that distance without a mental breakdown? One day after another, the inevitable thickening of the news, the unrelenting insanity. I needed something to hold myself with. I wanted a record of this impossible, impassible distance for myself, a record of the 'before,' whatever terrible 'after' there might be. The idea for the essay came to me, percolating from a number of things I had been thinking about.
>
> The moon, Jupiter, and Saturn tracked rightward. I took my camera to the kitchen that night, the kitchen that every day was changing like the skies above.

169 Born in Michigan, US, to Nigerian parents Cole moved as an infant to Lagos with his family. He returned to the US to pursue his studies when he was 17, graduating with a degree in art history. Cole is known as an author, having gain acclaim with his 2012 novel *Open City*. He also works with photography, having written a monthly column in the New York Magazine, *On Photography*, between 2015 and 2019.

170 https://www.instagram.com/_tejucole/

171 To be published by MACK books, under the title *Golden Apple of the Sun*.

Counter history. (Cole, 3 October 2020. Instagram post)[172]

In the captions to his photographs of the black-top kitchen counter, meals in preparation, Cole shared glimpses of his past; his memories of hunger from his school days, or of fasting when he was still a believer in Christ. (Fig. 124) But as he placed these present-day photographs on top of a background of handwritten recipes[173], he also looked to a past beyond his own. (Fig. 125) He drew a genealogical line in the use of food and cutlery in art, from a Dutch still-life painting by Juriaen van Streeck (1665-1675), *Still Life with Moor and Porcelain Vessels* (c.1670s), to Manet (1832-1883), Cezánne (1839-1906), Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964), and to the photographers Jan Groover (1943-2012) and Laura Letinsky (b. 1962). But he also highlighted the problematic colonial associations in food industries such as salt or sugar, and the history of slave workers that might have lived in Boston, where he now too resides.

Repetition, as in any of the artists examined thus far in the chapter, became for Cole a floating device to navigate his anxieties. He, nonetheless, looked at repetition through the lens of a thinker by presenting in his post captions considerations on John Cage's proposition that one should extend moments of boredom until they become interesting. Cole saw in this the possibility of an inversion, where one should exhaust the interesting until it becomes something else:

172 As will be seen below, Teju Cole has been regularly deleting his Instagram posts since 2018. All excerpts by Cole I include in this chapter are taken from posts and Instagram Stories that have since been deleted.

173 "In 1780, seven years after the Boston Tea Party and four years after the Siege of Boston ended and the British departed, a resident of Boston compiled a 'cook book' of some eighty pages. The recipes are handwritten, and we may suppose that the compiler was a woman.[…]" (Cole, 5 October 2020. Instagram post) "Two hundred and forty years later, a few miles from where she lived and cooked (where she wrote next to her recipes reminders to herself like 'good' and 'very good'), I began to paste into her cookbook photographs of my kitchen counter." (Cole, 5 October 2020. Instagram post)

> I'm looking for the moment when one kind of interest becomes something else, where the ideal words are not really 'interesting' or 'boring'. In this something else, which sometimes can only come after much reiteration, or what seems like reiteration, if we are lucky, some other kind of space is created.
>
> I have taken thirty-five photographs of the same kitchen counter over seven days, and I am worried that things are still interesting. (Cole, 4 October 2020. Instagram post)

As much as repetition seems to permeate photography as a medium, particularly when one considers the examples I have set out in this chapter, Cole, as Blaufuks, was operating within a platform that itself is founded on and promotes it. In previous chapters I have looked to Aby Warburg to identify continuities between analogue technology and its processes and digital ones, and, in examining his *Mnemosyne Atlas,* his capacity to uncover recurring gestures and figures in the history of art proves again useful to think about Instagram.

As he composed his genealogies for movement, Warburg developed the notion of *Pathosformel*, pathos formula: characteristics, actions or emotions that seemed to remerge in art. He found them in looking at a melancholic etching by Albrecht Dürer in 1905, but it was there also as Warburg looked to the *Nympha*: "Where is the nymph? In which one of the table's twenty-six apparitions does it reside? To search among them for an archetype or an original from which the others have derived would amount to misreading the *Atlas*. *None of the images is the original; none is simply a copy*." (Agamben, 2013 [2007]: 14-5. My emphasis) This is the key, it was not that images were copies of one another, although such did

happen, it was that there was something in capturing a scene, or a tale, or a character that called for the resurgence of the same core, the same central impression. Teju Cole understood and expressed something similar as he shared images taken by others.

Before deleting the vast majority of his Instagram posts in 2018, as we will see below, Cole had accumulated almost 2000 publications, part of these were re-shares, or 'regrams', of repeated tourist photos. These included found-selfies in front of the Mona Lisa, multiple identical views of the Statue of Liberty, or shots of an artwork by Nam June Paik (1932-2006), flashing television screens on top of each other occupying post after post. In analysing this phenomenon, Cole suggested that there was something more than the simple wish to take the same photograph one had seen in another's feed, he proposed that images were dependent on the 'affordances' of the site:

> Affordances are what let us know an object's purpose. […] Photography on social media, if you know where to look, can astonish with its hypnotic stream of inexact repetitions. We think we are moving through the world, while the whole time the world is pulling us along, telling us where to walk, where to stop, where to take a photo. Why have so many people looked straight down a stairwell at the New Museum and taken a photograph there? Each person who does it feels a *frisson* of originality but unknowingly reveals something that was latent in the stairwell all along. (Cole, 2018) (Fig. 126)

Cole identifies in this the notion that it is the place that invites the perspective on which it should be photographed, that the subject transmits itself into the camera rather than

is captured by it. Here one could propose that Instagram, and the Internet in general, thus become key in propagating what Warburg saw as *pathosformel*. Indeed, as Erkki Huhtamo has suggested, in looking at Ersnt Rober Curtius's (1886-1956) topos — a notion that finds parallels with that of Warburg's —, the "flow of topoi from ancient traditions to contemporary media culture is likely to become even more intense, rather than to dry out, in the era of the Internet. […] The Internet could be characterized as an enormous topos transmitter (and perhaps as a topos generator as well)." (2011: 36) Yet, even as *pathosformel* or topoi are transmitted, or remerge, one must still consider the possibility of ephemerality, or even of purposeful deletion.

As mentioned, by July 2018, Cole's Instagram held close to 2000 posts, at this date the artist began to systematically delete them. He began by deleting the older ones, leaving only about a third of the more recent ones, only to continue this process of erasure a few weeks later until there were only six posts. Since this time, Cole has shared projects on his account only to delete them in a span of weeks or even days, his counter series being no exception, as he had completely removed them by 3 December 2020, a month after finishing the project. Whilst Cole's example is that of a voluntary deletion, other online disappearances are unintentional. There is the notion that the Internet always remembers — and indeed as Cole deleted his work it still lives in my screenshots —, but the truth is that keeping digital information online, and archiving it, requires labour and attention. Like physical archives, digital 'material' must be cared for. As Abigail De Kosnik found in looking at what she coined 'Rogue Archives' — online archives dependent on the voluntary labour of communities that shape them, such as fan fiction archives — the "fragility of digital data and Internet sites, the fact that digital content is so prone to disappearance and loss, means that no Internet archive should be regarded as a structure that will last into perpetuity." (De Kosnik, 2016: 7) And

thus, that "[digital] archives are only as persistent and as reliable as the humans who make them." (De Kosnik, 2016: 61) On the flip-side of disappearance is reemergence, and, as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has found, "if things constantly disappear, they also reappear, often to the chagrin of those trying to erase data" (Chun, 2011 [2008]: 198). Thus instead of translating the randomness of the find in analogue archives into the randomness of the disappearance in digital systems, one might find that a true break has not yet arrived. Indeed, one should consider that analogue archives too rely on human labour, and that devoid of such they too might disappear. Moreover, it is by a process of deletion that Derrida's archive fever does not swallow us all, making it impossible to navigate the archive.

If Blaufuks sought to exhaust a place, Cole understood that to avoid losing himself in obsession he had to stop doing so: "I don't want to stop photographing my counter, but I will. This phase of the project ends tomorrow." (2 November 2020. Instagram Stories) It was a balance Perec had equally endeavoured in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*; between the wish of anchoring oneself into the mirage of absolute description and data, and the understanding of its impossibility and the acceptance of loss. With the knowledge that things do disappear, even if they might one day remerge.

Conclusion

The language of the digital database
belongs to the physical archive.
— Katherine Groo

When engaging with the work of Daniel Blaufuks there are several paths that might be taken. One could focus solely on his relationship with other artists and writers and not exhaust the subject. Or consider the impact of trauma and memory in a number of his pieces and not be able to unravel every one of his concerns. Further still, one might attempt to produce a genealogy for his obsessions, finding yet new branches along the way. Rather than assess the artist's oeuvre chronologically, I have sought to examine themes and connections, to explore how he employs such a variety of formats and media to the construction of meaning in his projects. I did so to consider not only the depth of the artist's work, but to attempt to unpack the issue that was first triggered when encountering his *Constellations* in 2014: might digital databases and image retrieval systems be viewed as developments of archival processes and thinking? Has the touted rupture between analogue and digital occurred, or does archival art live in them both?

In 2011, between August and November, writer and artist David Campany conducted an interview on Blaufuks through a number of emails. The artists exchanged reflections on photography, memory, the resurgence of the photobook, and the role of the aesthetic dimension in photographic work. In this conversation, Campany delved into Blaufuks as a practitioner of 'analogue' archival art:

> Many of your most striking projects contain images of what we might call the 'apparatus' of the analogue archive — the library, the postcard, the hand-written letter, celluloid film frames, files of various kinds, physical traces left behind, monuments and memorial sites. The material manifestation of the technology of modern memory. Put together they add up to an inventory of the 'analogue' archive. (Blaufuks & Campany, 2012: 28)

Whilst Campany was looking into Blaufuks's appropriation of the 'apparatus' of the analogue archive, he was not yet anticipating how the artist would expand his practice to the structures of digital archives and databases. Although Blaufuks would only come to more widely embrace digital platforms, such as Instagram and Google Image, from 2013 onward, the artist had not shied away from new developments in technology before that, on the contrary.

In the first section of this thesis — *Daniel Blaufuks: The 'Material' Archive* — I looked at what Campany so clearly addresses, Blaufuks's use of the instruments of analogue archives. Such was key in establishing a foundation upon which strands and comparative analysis might be developed afterwards. I began by identifying how procedures in analogue archives might be explored artistically. In doing so, I focused particularly on four branches in archival art. First, through the work of susan pui san lok, I examined the critical approach on the archive as system. Next, I considered the accumulation principle of the archive, what I defined as bowerbird impulse. Following that, I analysed the relationship to objects as memory traces and personal identifiers, crucial in Blaufuks's *Album* (2008) and *ITS* (2014) series. Finally, I delved into the processing of trauma through archival art, as might be found in several of the artist's works, not least *Under Strange Skies* (2002) and *judenrein* (2018).

In first considering the relationship between memory and technology — which might be expanded to propose a reading of the archive as a technology of memory — I turned to Blaufuks's summoning of obsolete memories through an obsolete medium. By examining a number of the artist's pieces, I found that this link between memory / technology / medium was a recurring concern for Blaufuks. It was there when he turned to Super-8, in works such as *Fábrica* (2012), *Carpe Diem* (2010), or *Eden* (2011), and was also present when he included an Internal Hard Drive as the final object in his *Album*, as a pointing forward, towards a new evolution of memory technologies. Thus, contrary to Campany's observation, Blaufuks has never just worked within an 'analogue' archival art practice. Furthermore, in including memory devices in his projects, the artist was able to make visible the theoretical frameworks Leroi-Gourhan first presented on the exteriorisation of memory. This was particularly significant in projects such as *Now Remember* (2008) and *As if…* (2014). Whilst in the former the artist made use of a device that works simultaneously as a memory capsule — as an archive — and as a player on which to share it — the iPod —, in the latter the exteriorisation of memory was expanded into the possibility of re-implantation, through a process Alison Landsberg coined as prosthetic memory.

It was in looking at the role of memory in Blaufuks's work, that the importance of literature came to the fore in Section 2 of this thesis — *Daniel Blaufuks: Writing with Images*. The writings of Georges Perec and W. G. Sebald in specific proving crucial. Whilst the artist has undertaken a 'dialogue' with both of these authors, Perec in particular has offered inspiration for a number of Blaufuks's works. In examining direct links between individual works by Perec and Blaufuks I was able to find correspondences in their methods. For instance, both constructed pieces founded on a process of excision predicated on their respective media — writing and the alphabet for Perec, film and the edit for Blaufuks —, or expanded the autobi-

ographical genre through the use of constraints. One aspect in this relationship that might warrant future analysis lies in what Blaufuks has chosen to ignore in Perec. Not necessarily which works he decided not to tackle, but which techniques or concerns the artist deviated from, for instance in not exploring further the possibilities of permutation as a creative stimulus.

If Perec was influential in his expansive creative techniques, Sebald was key in anchoring Blaufuks as he dove into a research on the Theresienstadt city-camp / ghetto. It was through Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) that the artist was able to question how to represent a past where the only documentation that survives is that of a staged film. He first undertook this exploration by appropriating the few surviving remnants of the propaganda film, *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944), slowing them down and stretching them. Similarly, on his second visit to the city-camp, in the long-running film, *As if…*, Blaufuks sought to identify in fictional representations some closeness to past events, some 'truth'. Moreover, in the later extending of the film one might read parallels to the endless production of memory. Whilst there was something here of an influence of expanded cinema, Blaufuks's extending and slowing-down also mirrored Sebald's long, sinuous sentences. As with possible new avenues of research in regards to his relationship with Perec, the issue of slowness in Blaufuks, particularly when considered in light of possible convergences or divergences with the possibilities offered by modern technology, merits a future detailed analysis.

As I turned to the final Section in this thesis — *Daniel Blaufuks: Traversing the Archive* —, my attention moved to the examination of digital archives and databases. Here I drew comparisons between the relational structure of databases and the classificatory systems of analogue archives. In doing so, what I found was that, as Marlene Manoff had explained:

"[w]hat we are seeing is not so much a rupture as a continuum. As the digital fosters the expansion of the archive, archival metaphor and archival theory proliferate." (2010: 395) To further examine this continuity, I first looked at a selection of artistic projects, susan pui san lok again emerging as an archival artist that, like Blaufuks, has had the ability to operate with both analogue procedures and digital systems. Following this, I drew a comparative analysis between Google Image and Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-9). In this I focused on two notions, interval and movement. First, in examining the iconology of intervals, I found that in their cross-linking Warburg's panels might be read as a network, and that similarly, in Google's Image search, images might bring forth interrelationships. As to movement, rather than a point to point mirroring, I proposed that these two systems function as two sides of the same coin. Warburg taking a relatively fixed number of images to create possibly endless associations, Google Image taking a limitless database and producing ever more stabilised results through the use of optimised algorithms.

It was through *All the memory of the world, part one* (2014) that a more detailed study could be made on how Blaufuks, an archival artist, engages not only with the analogue archive, as Campany had identified, but also with online databases and retrieval systems. As in my previous approach to Warburg, I found in Blaufuks's *Constellations* the merging of an atlas and a web browser. Moreover, in the very way the artist illustrated the archive in one of his panels, he was positioning the analogue system as something close to the structure of a server room. Additionally, the *Transmission Room* in the exhibition functioned as a networked brain, allowing for a hypertextual reading of the work. The dichotomy between boundlessness and finite again emerged, this time associated to notions of the archive and the collection. I argued that Blaufuks deconstructs such divisions, for, on the one hand, he fails to define a collection, as the material he appropriates might be subjected to endless permutation,

and, on the other hand, his archive is tied to recurring themes. Thus, Blaufuks is constructing in this project not an anarchive or an anti-collection, but a meta-collection, the *part one* in the compulsion to archive *All the Memory of the World*.

Taking such an impulse in hand, in the last chapter of this thesis, I found that parallels could be established between the wish to accumulate and the need for over-description. Again, Perec's influence on Blaufuks was evident, as the artist appropriated the title and methodology of one of the writer's texts for his *Attempting Exhaustion* (2016-present) project. It is a work that lives off repetition, and as such could be read under the lens Blaufuks previously offered of 'expanded photography'. However, I argued that with its subtle light shifts *Attempting Exhaustion*, and *Original Copy* (2019), should instead be understood as a 'photography with time'. Moreover, the use of repetition might stem in part from the very medium chosen for the project, Instagram. Here, one finds once more that Blaufuks's use of digital platforms live side-by-side with analogue procedures, even providing a continuity for previous projects such as his Polaroid diaries.

As I end this thesis, and as a move towards understanding how Blaufuks's artistic practice now stands in relation to the analogue / digital question, I turn briefly to two ongoing projects by the artist, *blaufuks_daily* (2020-present) and *The Days are Numbered* (2018-present), both pieces that might be understood to progress from *Attempting Exhaustion.* Like this earlier project, *blaufuks_daily* takes place on Instagram.[174] Initiated on 19 March 2020, during the first COVID-19 Portuguese confinement, it consists of daily 30-seconds-long video clips — a time limit imposed by Instagram —, where the artist gives the local weather report in a deadpan manner and includes some idiosyncratic comments on the pandemic, similarities between the sky and the films of Quentin Tarantino or Andrei Tarkovsky, or histor-

174 Available on: https://www.instagram.com/blaufuks_daily/

ical (and maybe not so historical) events such as the death of John Lennon, the meeting of Man Ray and Lee Miller, and the sharing of a *pain au chocolat* between Foucault and a pigeon. It is a piece inspired by David Lynch's (b. 1946) *Weather Report* (2005-2010, 2020-present), and like Lynch's work it lives online. Whilst the North-American filmmaker first posted the earlier version of the project on his, now dead, subscription site — davidlynch.-com —, he has since reignited the artwork on 11 May 2020 on his YouTube channel following the COVID-19 pandemic.[175] In this, Blaufuks continues the diarist strand of his work, exploring still the possibilities of Instagram as medium, constructing his own digital archive.

Yet, as Blaufuks has moved towards digital media he has also returned to instant photography in another daily piece, *The Days are Numbered*.[176] This is a project closely related to the works of archival artists such as On Kawara (1932-2014) and his *Today* series (1966-2014). In *The Days are Numbered*, Blaufuks continues to focus on the changing light that shines through windows. He frequently photographs his kitchen window, but as he spends time in the Birre house a square window, with a fluttering white curtain, is often captured as well. Placed on top a white sheet of paper, the photographs might be accompanied by some short sentences or collages. At the bottom right-hand side, the corresponding number of the panel is stamped. Number 0781, corresponding to 26 April 2020, features a lone Instax photo of the Birre window, centred on a page that reads "The days mirror one another".[177] (Fig. 127) A few days later, on 29 April 2020, panel 0784 is again composed of a photograph of the square Birre window sitting, this time, over an illustrated map of the imaginary voyage of the

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175 The channel is available on: https://www.youtube.com/c/DAVIDLYNCHTHEATER/videos.

176 A selection of *The Days are Numbered,* those pertaining to 24 April – 4 May 2020, was published in *Electra* Magazine (Summer 2020).

177 "Os dias espelham-se uns aos outros."

Pequod whaling ship from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), the artist's written caption reads: "The days are not better nor worse. They are equal to themselves".[178]

In these two projects, Blaufuks's obsessive registering of the day figures as the central theme, continuing the concerns *Attempting Exhaustion* introduced, operating within a diaristic practice that might be associated to the construction of archives. Whilst examining possible shifts in archival art due to the so-called digital turn, Susanne Ø. Sæther proposed that, in order to understand what are archival concerns addressed by artistic projects of today, it is precisely practices that "bridge and confuse" the polarities of works that are tactile and face-to-face and those that relate to the Internet, "that are vital to consider when attempting to give an answer to [the question of the aforementioned archival concerns], since the archive finds itself between analogue and digital regimes." (2010: 102) In simultaneously appropriating analogue and digital media, Blaufuks, like a number of other artists, is straddling both these systems, much like the archive itself: no longer fully analogue, nor wholly digital. Artists have not abandoned elements of analogue archival art, not because they insist on looking back — although there are those who do —, but because digital archives and databases incorporate so much still of past processes and procedures. Rather than a transition, one might propose a flux that advances and returns.

178 "Os dias não são melhores nem piores. São iguais a si mesmos."

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Appendix

Fig. 1. Clay tablet; Nuzi. 1500BC-1400BC
Distribution of barley among 6 men
© The Trustees of the British Museum
Image retrieved from:https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=147327001&objectId=324447&partId=1

ACCENTS / AERIAL VIEWS / AFRICA & AFRICANS / ALI, Mohammed / AMBASSADORS
/ AMERICA & AMERICANS / AMSTERDAM / ANGOLA AND THE ANGOLANS / ANIMALS /
ARGENTINA / ARMED FORCES / ARTS & CRAFTS / ASIA & ASIANS / AUSTRALIA /
AUSTRIA & AUSTRIANS / AVIATION / AYLESBURY, Bucks. / BABIES / BASSEY, Shirley
/ BEAUTY QUEENS / BELFAST / BELGIUM / BENYON, Tom / BIRDS / BIRMINGHAM /
BIRTHS & CHRISTENINGS / BLACK COUNTRY / BOLIVIA / BONAPART, Shirley Ann /
BONHAM-CARTER, Mark / BOTSWANA, President of / BRIDGNORTH / BROWN, Bryan /
BROWN, Rt.Rev. Lawrence / BRUSSELS / BUCK, Maurice / BUCKINGHAM, Bucks /
BUILDINGS / BUTLER, Adam / CALVERTON, Notts. / CAMBODIA / CANARY ISLANDS /
CANNING, George / CANNOCK, Staffs. / CAPPER, Sir Derrick / CARNE, Judy /
CENSUS / CENTRAL INDEPENDENT TELEVISION PLC / CEREMONIES / CHINA & CHINESE
/ CRIMINAL & JUDICIAL / DRUNK DRIVING / CROSSROADS / CROWDS / CYPRUS /
CZECHOSLOVAKIA / DALY, Barbara / DEAN, John / DEATHS & FUNERALS / DERBY /
DISASTERS / DOTRICE, Michele / DUDLEY, Worcs. / DUDLEY, Earl of / ECCENTRICS
/ ELGAR / EMIGRATION / ENTERTAINMENTS / ESPIONAGE / ETHIOPIA & ETHIOPIANS
/ EVE, Trevor / EVICTIONS / EXHIBITIONS / EXPEDITIONS / FALKLAND ISLANDS /
FAMINE / FERNYHOUGH, E. / FISH / FLAGS / FLOWERS & PLANTS / FOLEY, Maurice
/ FOOT, Michael / FRANCE & THE FRENCH / FULLERTON, Fiona / GALWAY, James /
GERMANY & THE GERMANS / GHANA / GIBRALTAR / GLOUCESTER / GORBACHEV, Mikhail /
GORDON, Noele / GRADE, Lord / GRAHAM, Billy / GREECE & THE GREEKS / GRENADA
/ GRUBB, Michelle / GUITING POWER VILLAGE / GYPSIES / HANDSWORTH / HANSON,
Councillor Edward / HARTLEBURY, Worcestershire / HATTERSLEY, Roy / HENRY,
Lenny / HERBERT, Wally / HESELTINE, Michael / HISTORY / HOBBIES / HOLIDAYS
/ HOLLAND / HONG KONG / HOT WEATHER STORIES / HOWE, Sir Geoffrey / HOWELL,
Dennis / HUA KUO-FENG, Chairman / HUGHES, Howard / HUNGARY & HUNGARIANS /
HUNT, Lord John / HUNT, Rex / HUNTE, James / HURD, Douglas / IGLESIAS, Julio

Fig. 2. From *News* (2005), susan pui san lok
Courtesy of the artist

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

T.A.S. 3.12.69	Ints. with two elderly couples married in double ceremony at Coventry Registry Office SOF
T.A.S. 6.1.70	Roy Wood of 'The Move' married to Maureen Holmes at Lea Bank, Birmingham
T.A.S. 8.1.70	Vietnamese couple married at Birmingham Registry Office
T.A.S. 6.4.70	Bev Beavon of 'The Move' married to Val Taylor at St Margaret's Church, Great Barr
WOMEN TODAY 8.6.70	'June Bride' wedding 13.2.81.
TODAY 9.7.70	Marriage of coloured P.C. Yunus Darr and Woman P.C. Cynthia Willbond

Fig. 3. From *News* (2005), susan pui san lok
Courtesy of the artist

LANGUAGES

TODAY 1.3.78 BI LINGUAL FAMILY The Creek family from Coventry with their two young sons who speak fluent German and Englisl
Talking to Mr. and Mrs. Creek re how they talk to their sons in the two languages, and the reasons for their decision to try this experiment.
G✓v's family trip to the zoo SEP.MAG

Fig. 4. From *News* (2005), susan pui san lok
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 5. Male Satin Bowerbird and his bower
Image retrieved from:
https://blog.nus.edu.sg/lsm1303student2013/2013/04/11/satin-bowerbirds-the-obsessive-compulsive-bachelors-of-the-animal-kingdom/

Fig. 6. Waste Not (2005), Song Dong
Exhibition view. Barbican Centre, 2012.
Image retrieved from: https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2012/event/song-dong-waste-not

Fig. 7. Contents of Andy Warhol's Time Capsule 44 (detail).
© The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy-Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc
Image retrieved from: https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/andy-warhols-time-capsules/

Fig. 8. From the series *ITS* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 9. From the series *ITS* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

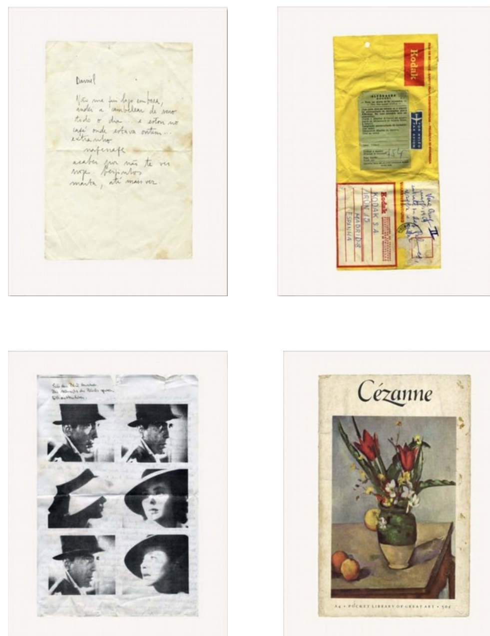


Fig. 10. From *Album* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

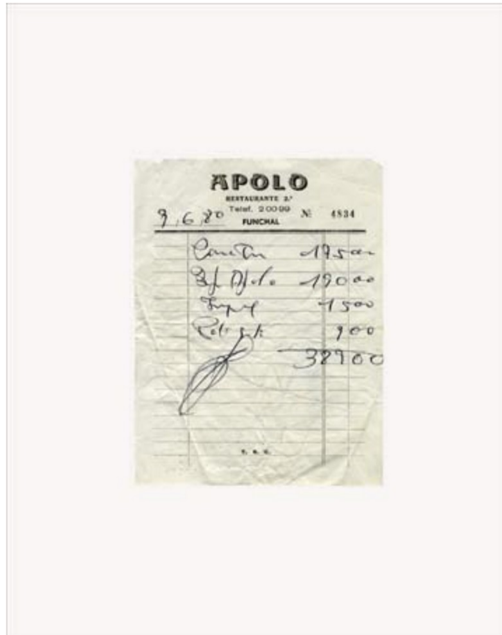


Fig. 11. From *Album* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

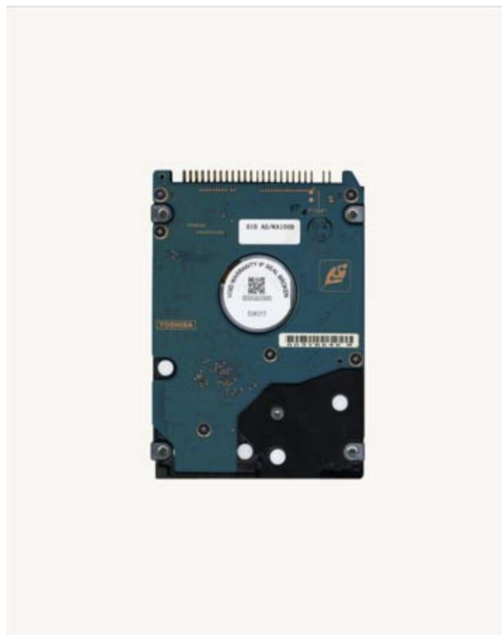
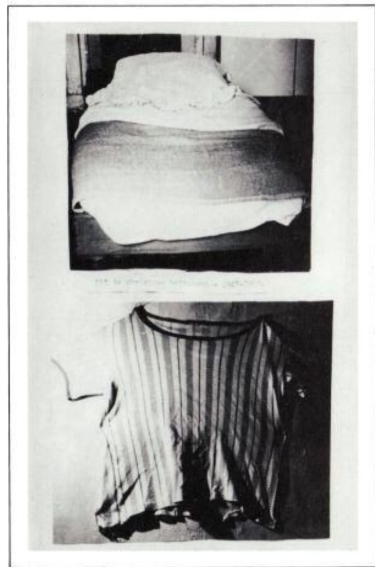


Fig. 12. From *Album* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist



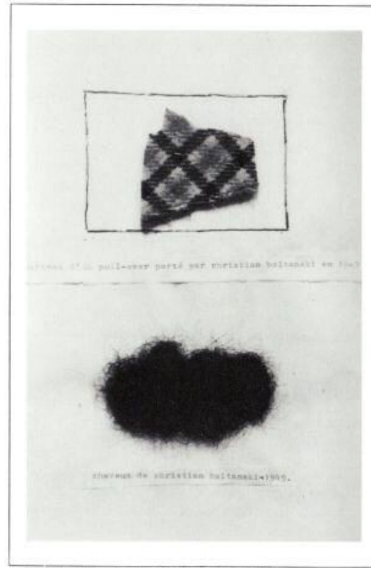


Fig. 13. From *Recherche et présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance, 1944–1950* (1969), Christian Boltanski. Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 14. Anonymous photograph, 1939.
Image retrieved from Susan Greenberg Fisher (2009), *Christian Boltanski's Fête de Pourim*.

Fig. 15. *La fête de Pourim* (1988), Christian Boltanski.
Image retrieved from Susan Greenberg Fisher (2009), *Christian Boltanski's Fête de Pourim*.

Fig. 16. *The Jewish Type* (1883), Francis Galton
Image retrieved from Allan Sekula (1986), 'The Body and the Archive'

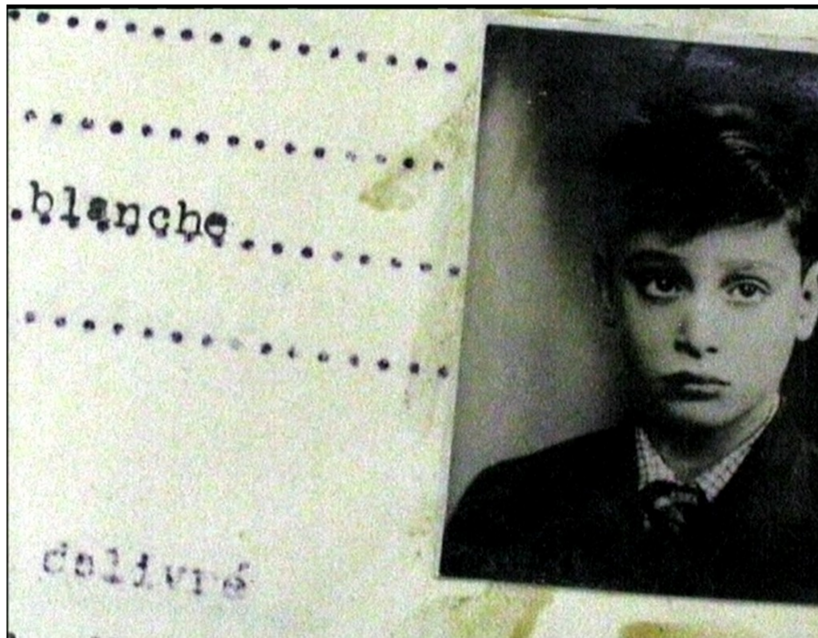


Fig. 17. From *Rejected* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

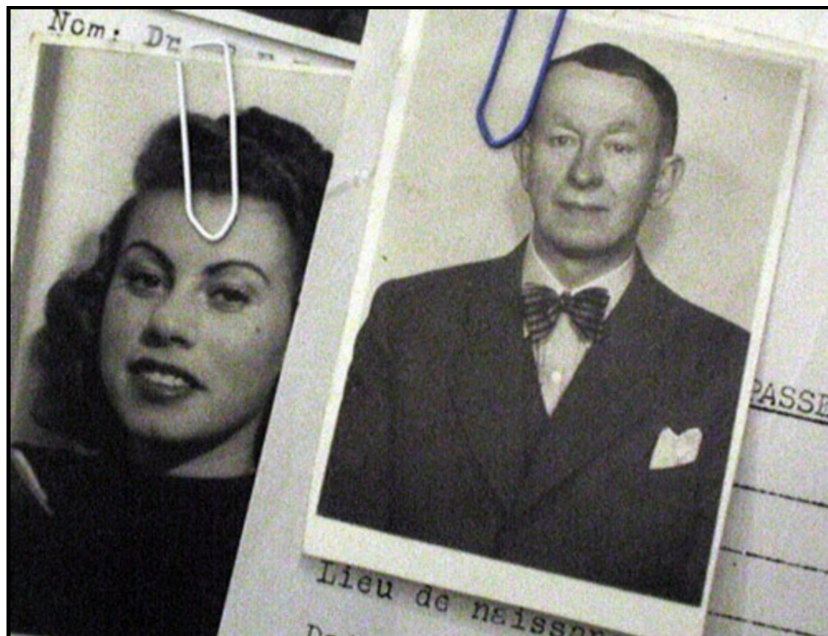


Fig. 18. From *Rejected* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 19. Stills from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 20. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 21. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 22. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 23. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 24. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 27. Still from *judenrein* (2018), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 28. Still from *Under Strange Skies* (2002), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

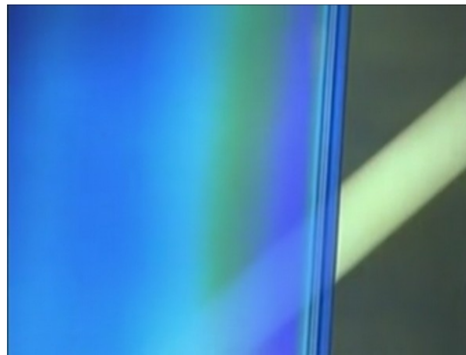
Fig. 29. Still from *judenrein* (2018), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 30. Still from *Fábrica* (2013), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 31. Still from *Fábrica* (2013), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 32. Kodak advertisement, circa 1968
Image retrieved from: https://br.pinterest.com/pin/395683517256507038/

Fig. 33. Still from *Kodak* (2006), Tacita Dean
Courtesy of the artist



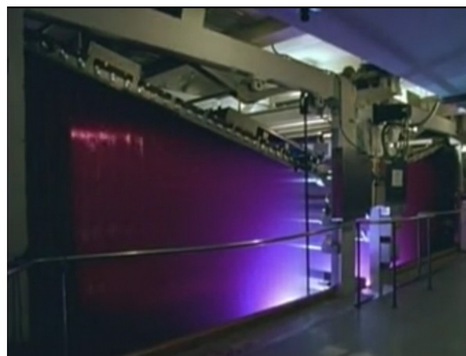


Fig. 34. Stills from *Kodak* (2006), Tacita Dean
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 35. Still from *Kodak* (2006), Tacita Dean
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 36. Still from *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (1895), Louis Lumière.
Image retrieved from: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/107632

Fig. 37. Stills from *Fábrica* (2013), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 38. Still from *Eden* (2011), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 39. Still from *Eden* (2011), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 40. Still from *Eden* (2011), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 41. Still from *Carpe Diem* (2010), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 42. Still from *Carpe Diem* (2010), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 43. Still from *Fábrica* (2013), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 44. Still from *Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal* (2012), Víctor Erice
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 45. Still from *Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal* (2012), Víctor Erice
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 46. Still from *Broken Windows: tests for a film in Portugal* (2012), Víctor Erice
Courtesy of the artist

cenoura.
bolo de senora
2 chavenas e meia de farinha
2 " " " açúcar
3 " " " de senoras crúas
uma " " " olio
4 ovos
3 cholheres de chá fermento pó
2 " " " " " canela
1 " " " " " sal fim
1 " " " " " banilha
1 " " " " " soda
a senora ralada

mestura-se o açúcar com os
ovos e o olio a senorar ralada
a farinha e os outros engrediem-
tes

250g farinha para samoças
50g manteigo
1 ovo sal e agua

Fig. 47. Celeste Camacho’s recipe for carrot cake

Fig. 48. *ZEPPELIN 1936 – 1994 – 2012* (2012), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 49. From *Everyone is Present* (2018), Terry Kurgan
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 50. From *Everyone is Present* (2018), Terry Kurgan
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 51. From *Everyone is Present* (2018), Terry Kurgan
Courtesy of the artist

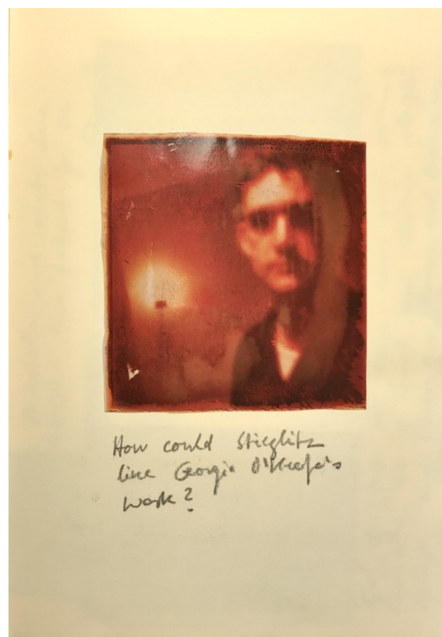


Fig. 52. From *London Diaries* (1994), Daniel Blaufuks

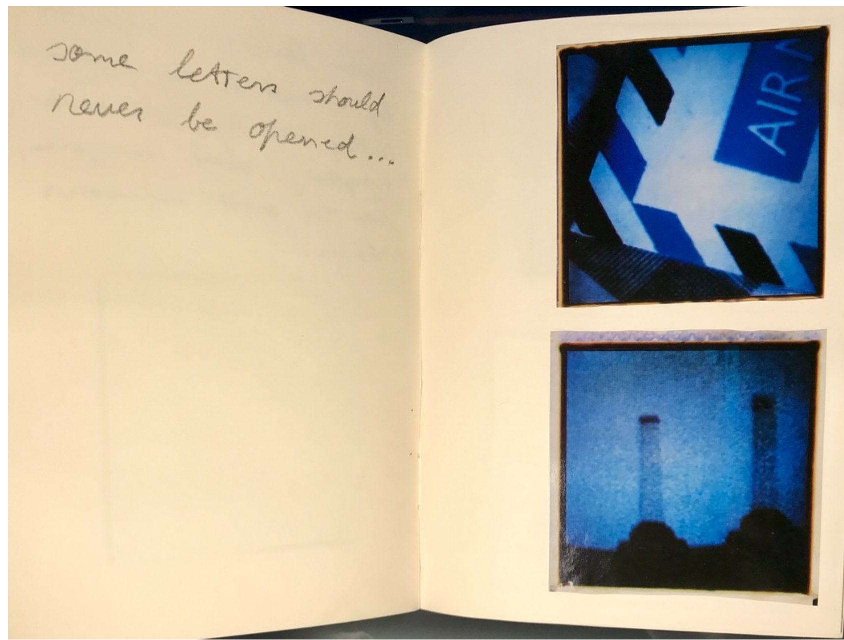


Fig. 53. From *London Diaries* (1994), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 54. From *Collected Short Stories* (2003), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

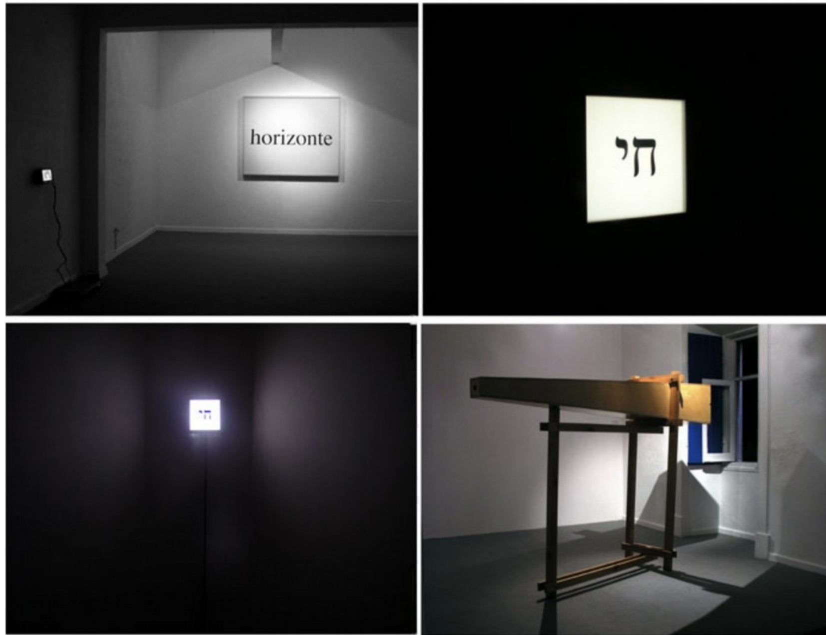


Fig. 55. Exhibition views of *Sobre o Infinito* (2004), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 56. Still from *The Absence* (2009), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

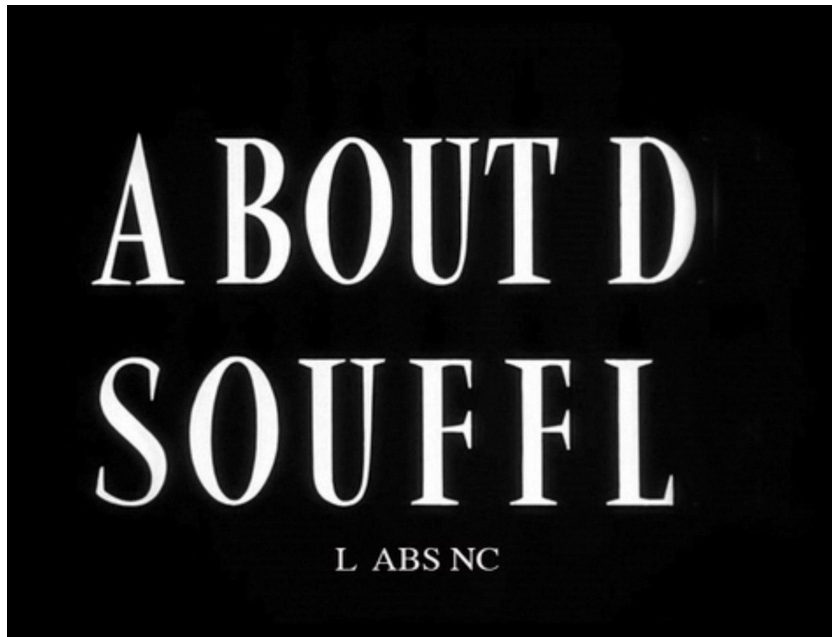


Fig. 57. Still from *The Absence* (2009), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

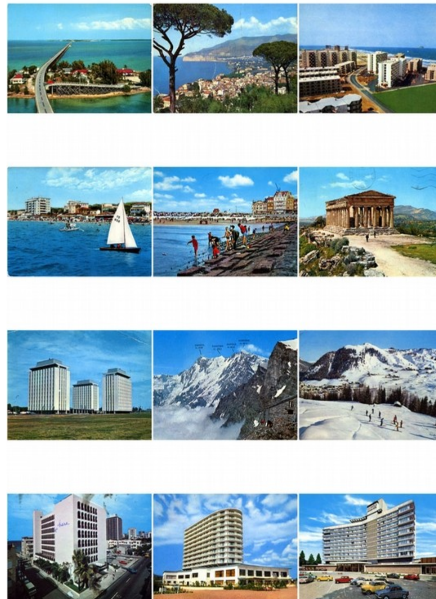


Fig. 58. From *Perfect Day* (2003-2005), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 59. From *Perfect Day* (2003-2005), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 60. From *Perfect Day* (2003-2005), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 61. Still from *A Perfect Day in Wannsee* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig 62. Still from *A Perfect Day in Wannsee* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 63. Still from *A Perfect Day in Wannsee* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig 64. Still from *A Perfect Day in Wannsee* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 65. Still from *Now Remember* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

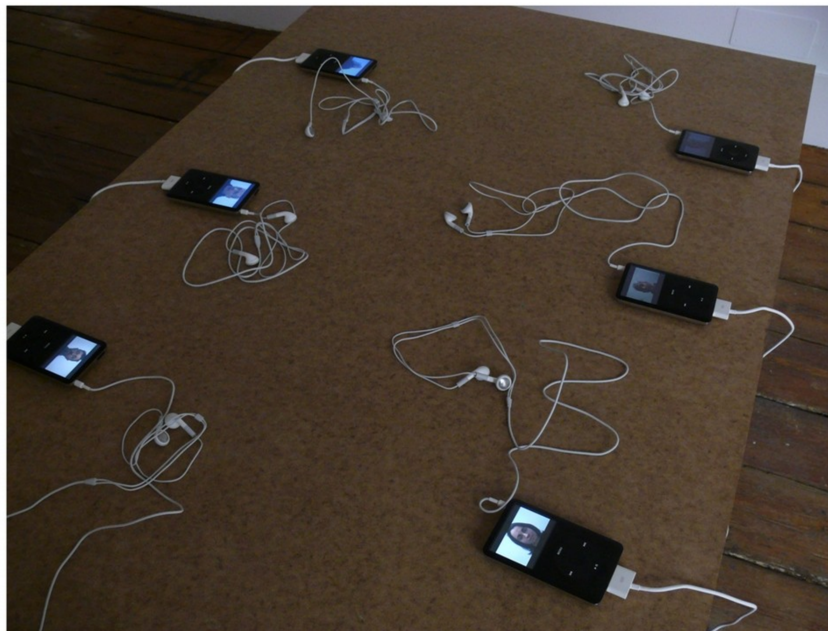


Fig. 66. Exhibition view of *Now Remember* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 67. Still from *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944), Kurt Gerron under supervision of Hans Günther and Karl Rahm. Included in *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 68. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 69. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 70. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 71. Still from *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944), Kurt Gerron under supervision of Hans Günther and Karl Rahm. Included in *As if*... (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

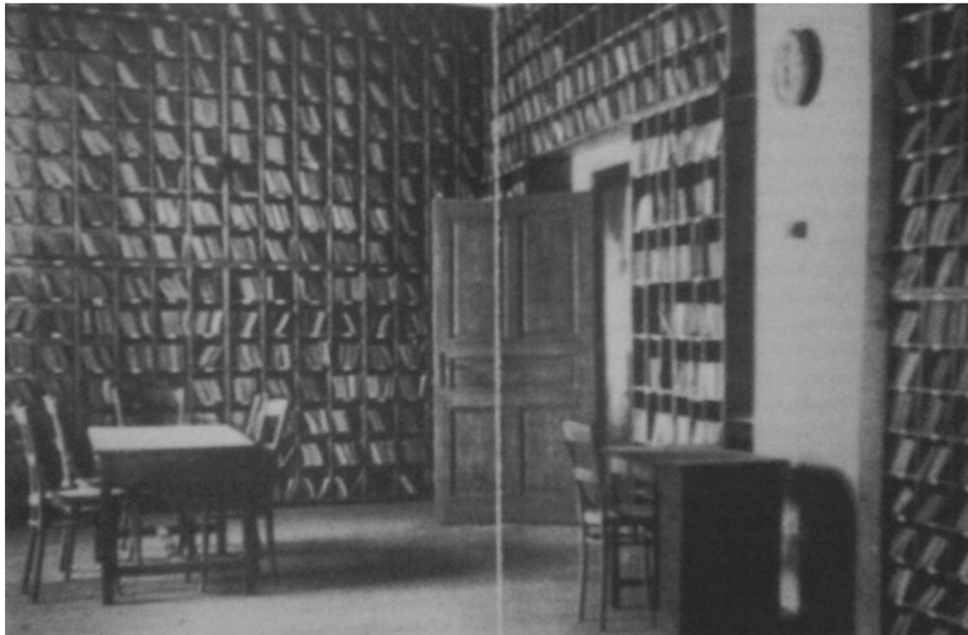


Fig. 72. From *Austerlitz* (2001), W. G. Sebald

Fig. 73. From *Terezín* (2010), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 74. Still from *Theresienstadt* (2007), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 75. *Rose Hobart* (1936), Joseph Cornell.
MoMA, New York
Image retrieved from: https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/joseph-cornell-rose-hobart-c-1936/

Fig. 76. Still from *As if*... (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 77. Still from *As if*… (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 78. From *Austerlitz* (2001), W. G. Sebald

Fig. 79. Still from *War and Remembrance* (1988), Dan Curtis.
Included in *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 80. Still from *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1950), Alfréd Radok.
Included in *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 81. Still from *Holocaust* (1978), Marvin J. Chomsky.
Included in *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 82. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 83. Still from *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1950), Alfréd Radok.
Included in *As if*... (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 84. Still from *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1950), Alfréd Radok.
Included in *As if*... (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 85. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 86. *Memory Landscapes (Shoah)* (2008), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 87. From *Austerlitz* (2001), W. G. Sebald

Fig. 88. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 89. Still from *War and Remembrance* (1988), Dan Curtis.
Included in *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks

Fig. 90. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 91. Still from *As if…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

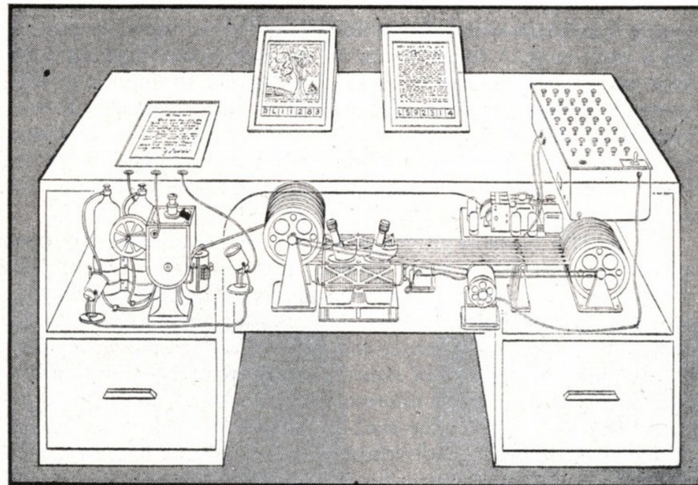


Fig. 92. Vannevar Bush's Memex (1945), from "As We May Think", *Life*

Fig. 91. *Giver of Names* (1991-present), Dave Rokeby
Courtesy of the artist

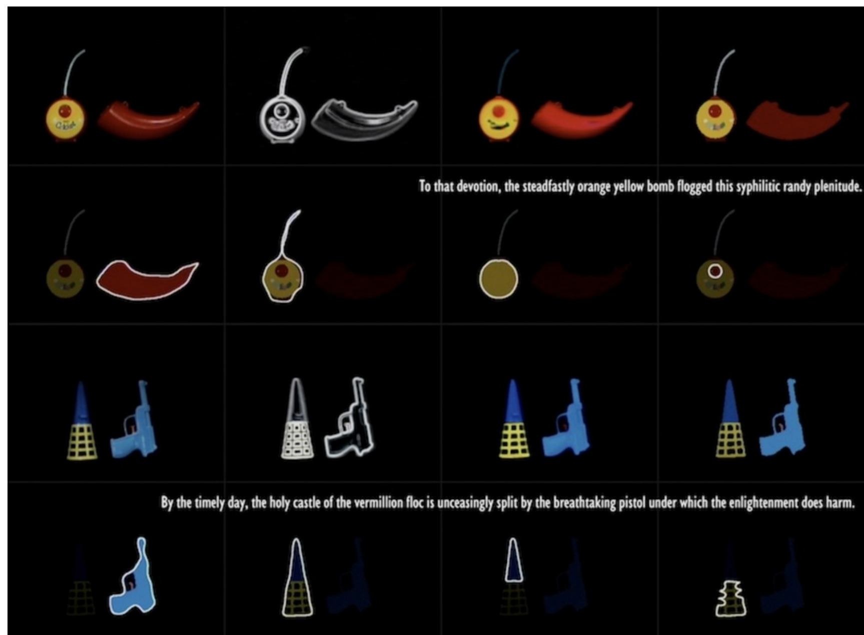


Fig. 92. *Giver of Names* (1991-present), Dave Rokeby
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 93. *From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels)* (2019), Trevor Paglen
Courtesy of the artist

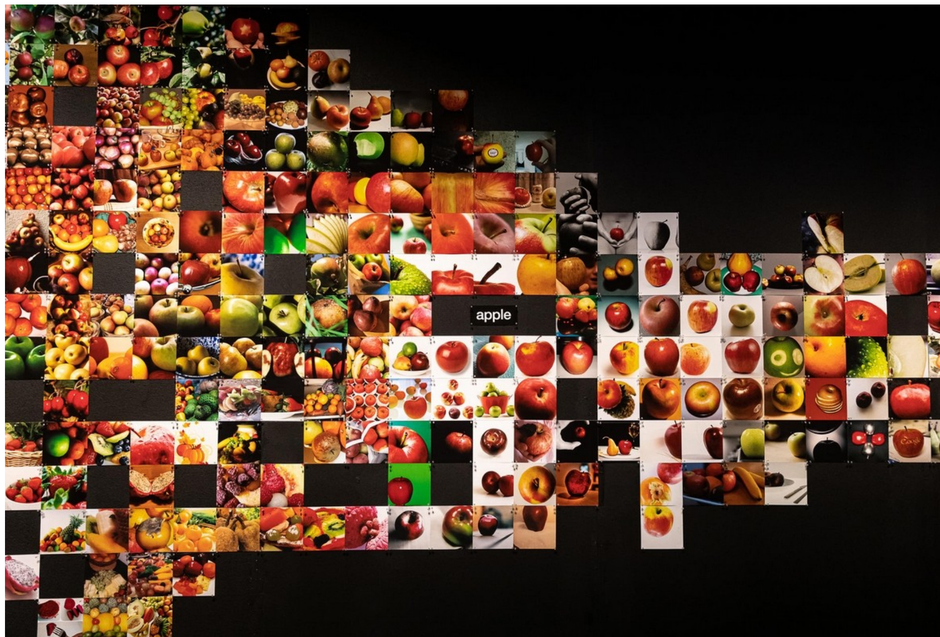


Fig. 94. *From 'Apple' to 'Anomaly' (Pictures and Labels)* (2019), Trevor Paglen
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 95. Exhibition view *RoCH (Return of the Condor Heroes) Fans & Legends* (2013-present), susan pui san lok
Courtesy of the artist

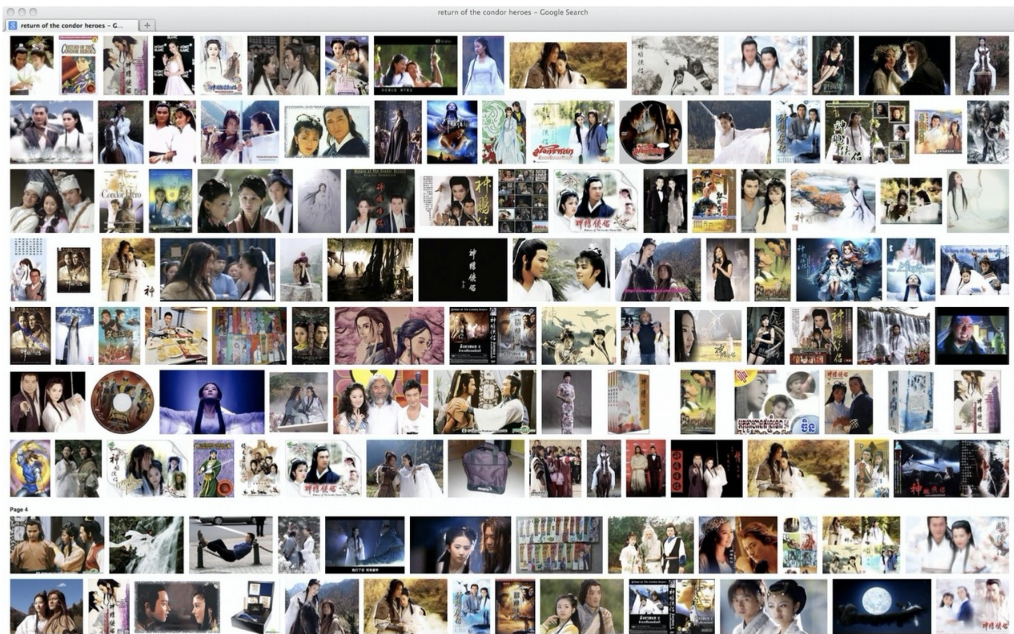


Fig. 96. *RoCH (Return of the Condor Heroes) Fans & Legends* (2013-present), susan pui san lok
Courtesy of the artist

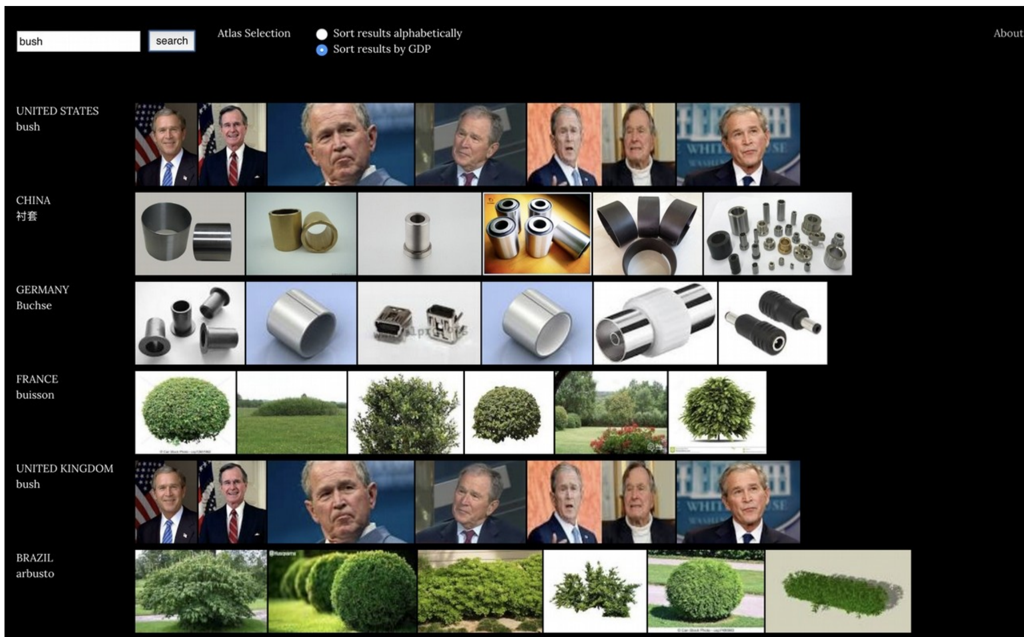


Fig. 97. *Image Atlas* (2012-present), Taryn Simon & Aaron Swartz

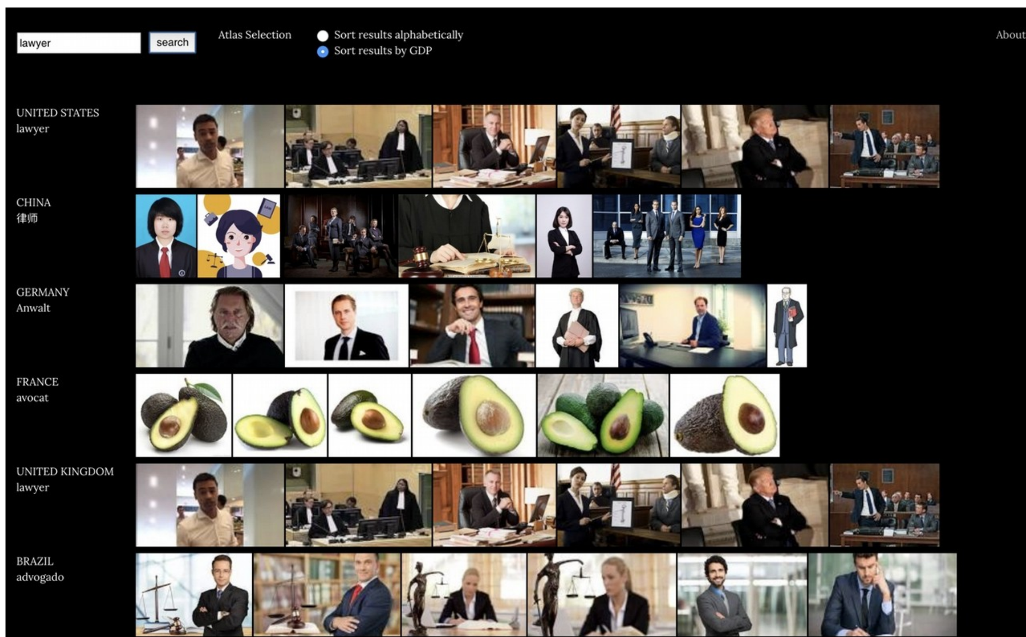


Fig. 98. *Image Atlas* (2012-present), Taryn Simon & Aaron Swartz

Fig. 99. *Mnemosyne Atlas* (c.1929), panel 77, Aby Warburg

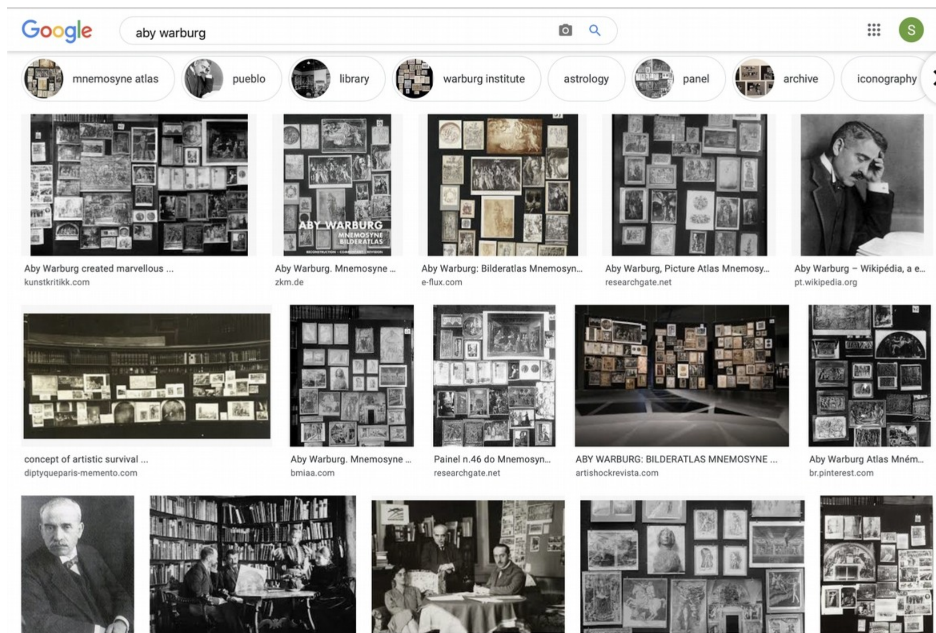


Fig. 100. Google Image search on Aby Warburg

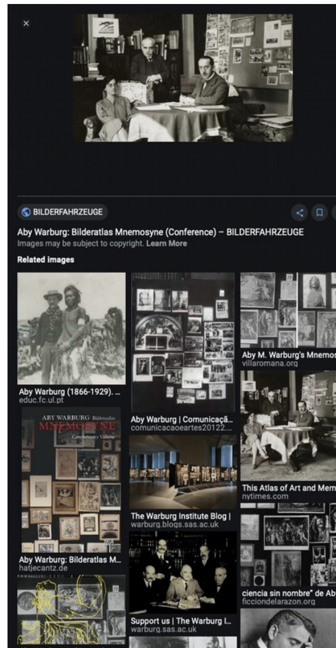


Fig. 101. Google Image search on Aby Warburg

Fig. 102. *Mnemosyne Atlas* (c.1929), panel 39, Aby Warburg

Fig. 103. Exhibition view of *All the Memory of the World, part one* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

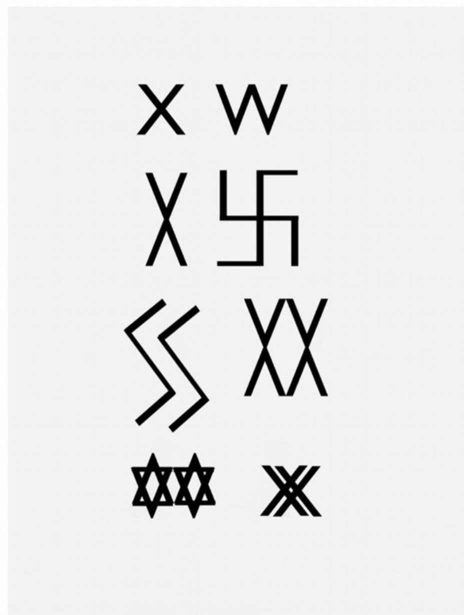


Fig. 104. From *All the Memory of the World, part one*(2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 105. *The Departure (The Parachute Jump)* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 106. Exhibition view *All the Memory of the World, part one*(2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

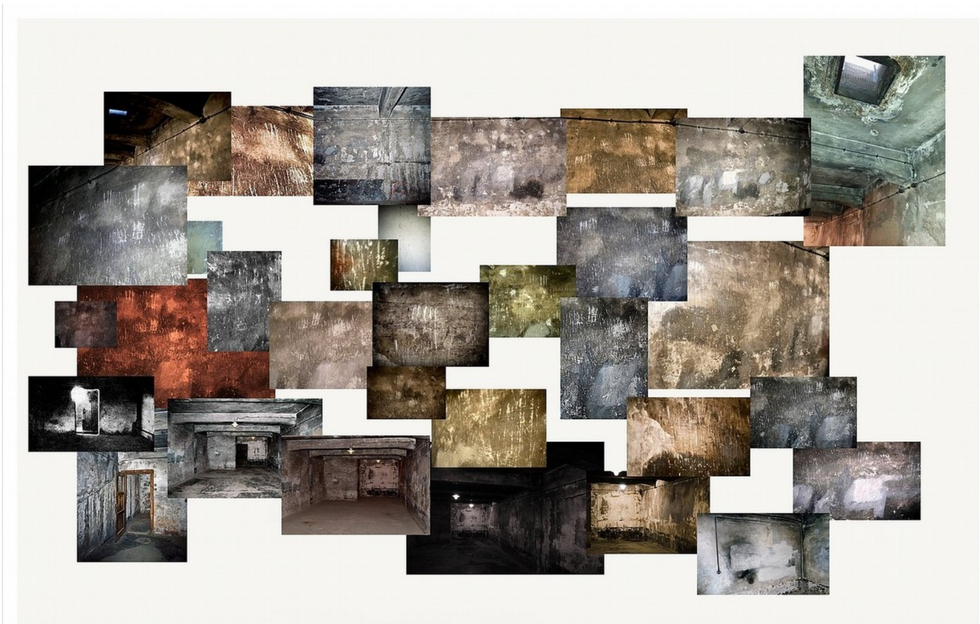


Fig. 107. *The Victims' Fingernails* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 108. *...piles of gold teeth, rings and spectacles, clothes in heaps, dusty card indexes, and stocks of poor-quality soap…* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 109. *W* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 110. *Bahnhof* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 111. *All the Memory of the World I* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 112. *Archiv* (2014), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 113. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 114. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 115. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 116. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 117. From *The Window of My Studio* (1940–54), Josef Sudek
Courtesy of the artist

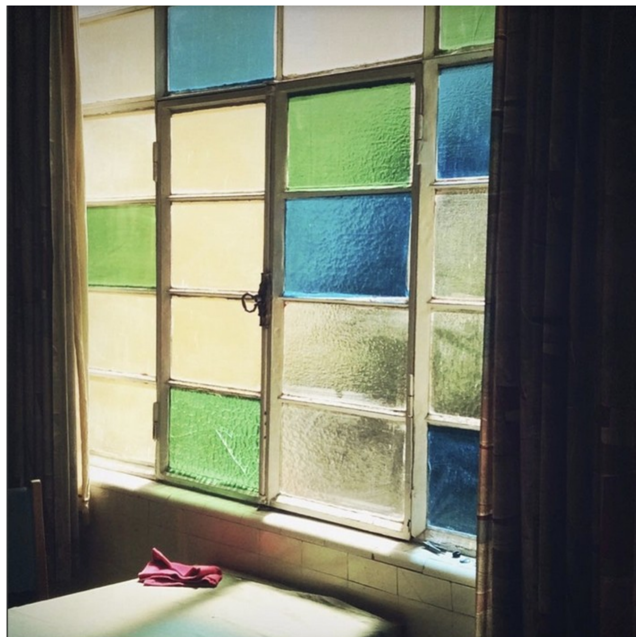


Fig. 118. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 119. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 120. From *The Window of My Studio* (1940–54), Josef Sudek
Courtesy of the artist

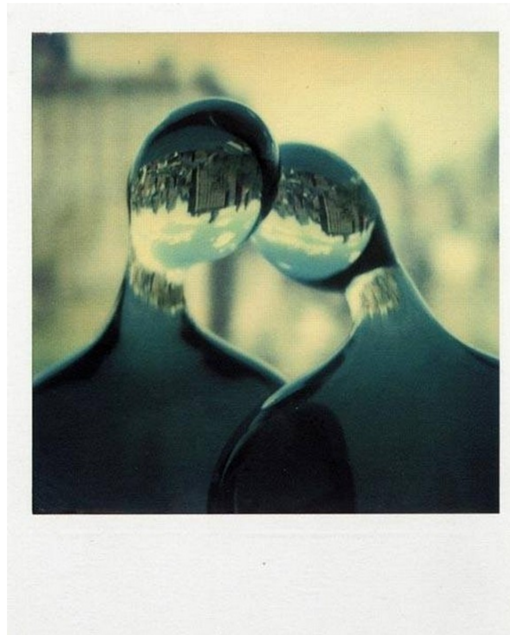


Fig. 121. *August 16, 1979* (1979), André Kertész
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 122. *August 13, 1979* (1979), André Kertész
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 123. From *Attempting Exhausting* (2016-present), Daniel Blaufuks
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 124. From *Golden Apple of the Sun* (1 October 2020), Teju Cole
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 125. From *Golden Apple of the Sun* (5 October 2020), Teju Cole
Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 126. Stairwell at the New Museum in New York(2018), collected by Teju Cole.
Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/magazine/take-a-photo-here.html

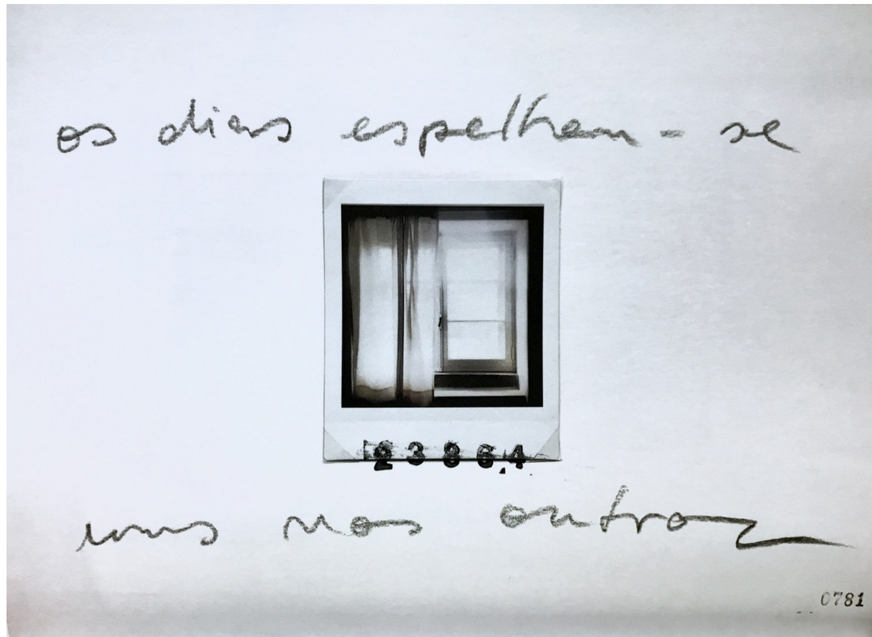


Fig. 127. From *The Days are Numbered* (2018-present), Daniel Blaufuks