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OCTOBER

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The Amazing Voyage of Gustave Flaubert and Raymond Russel. *1986.*

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Jeremy Bentham's Panoptic Device

JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER

translated by RICHARD MILLER

The Apparatus

To begin with, a description of the basic elements of the apparatus.

The apparatus is a building. It is circular. There are cells around the circumference, on each floor. In the center, a tower. Between the center and the circumference is a neutral, intermediate zone.

Each cell has a window to the outside, so constructed that air and light can enter, but the view outside is blocked; each cell also has a grilled door that opens toward the inside so that air and light can circulate to the central core.

The cells can be viewed from the rooms in the central tower, but a system of shutters prevents those rooms or their inhabitants from being seen from the cells.

The building is surrounded by an annular wall. Between this wall and the building there is a walkway for sentries. There is only one entrance or exit to the building or through the outer wall.

The building is completely closed.

The Universal Machine

The Panopticon is not a prison. It is a general principle of construction, the polyvalent apparatus of surveillance, the universal optical machine of human groupings.

And such was Bentham's intention: apart from various minor details, the panoptic configuration could be used for prisons as well as schools, for factories and asylums, for hospitals and workhouses. It has no unique application: it is designed to house involuntary, unwilling, or constrained inhabitants.

The double wall, the stone, the guards, all serve to enclose the space and ensure its impermeability. But this is not the building's original merit, which resides solely in its interior topology, one designed to apportion the visible and the invisible.

From the central point the whole of the enclosed space is totally visible; nothing is hidden, everything is totally transparent, unlike the circumambient

cells, from which it is impossible to see out, impossible to communicate with any adjacent cells, and impossible to see the central point.

This configuration sets up a brutal dissymmetry of visibility. The enclosed space lacks depth; it is spread out and open to a single, solitary, central eye. It is bathed in light. Nothing and no one can be hidden inside it—except the gaze itself, the invisible omnivoyeur. Surveillance confiscates the gaze for its own profit, appropriates it, and submits the inmate to it.

Inside the opaque, circular building, the jailer is clarity.

The Semblance of God

The two basic elements of the panoptic building are its central surveillance system and the invisibility of the eye. Each can be justified on its own terms.

The installation of the surveillance system in the center of a circular building is the most economical solution: economical from the viewpoint of personnel, since only one inspector is required to watch over each floor; economical because it reduces to the minimum the need to move about. It is also economical because all of the cells are uniform in size and shape. It is not essential that the building be circular, but "of all figures . . . this, you will observe, is the only one that affords a perfect view, and the same view, of an indefinite number of apartments of the same dimensions."[1] What gives the circular configuration its great value is the fact that it enables one to partition off identical areas within an area that is homogeneously lit. The only area that is different, the only unusual point, is the center. All of which attests to a common measure, with one exception to which all are obedient.

That the eye may observe without being seen—that is the most cunning thing about the Panopticon. If I can observe the watcher who spies upon me, I can control my surveillance, I can spy in turn, I can learn the watcher's ways, his weaknesses, I can study his habits, I can elude him. If the eye is hidden, it looks at me even when it is not actually observing me. By concealing itself in the shadows, the eye can intensify all its powers—and the economy gains even further, for the number of those on surveillance duty can be reduced with no loss of service. Thus, "the apparent omnipresence of the inspector [can be] combined with the extreme facility of his *real presence.*"[2]

We note the de-multiplicative power of the Benthamic device: for a maximum number of watched, it requires a minimum number of watchers; an apparent plethora conceals a parsimonious reality. But its powers actually create an all-seeing, omnipresent, omniscient body that condemns the inhabitants to a

1. Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon, Works of Jeremy Bentham Published under the Superintendence of his Executor, John Bowring*, New York, Russell and Russell, 1962 (11 vols.), vol. IV, letter V, p. 44. All subsequent citations of Bentham are drawn from this edition.
2. *Ibid.*, letter VI, p. 45.

dependency that no ordinary prison can emulate, a body that is very like some fabricated God.

The Panopticon is a machine that creates a semblance of God. Is this not what Bentham must have had in mind when he used the following verses of the 139th Psalm as the heading for one of the numerous "perceptions" he addressed to the powers that be concerning his plan?

> Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out my ways.
> If I say, peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned into day.
> Even there also shall thy hand lead me; and thy right hand shall hold me.[3]

Minute Detail

In his writings on the Panopticon—the pamphlet of 1791, the two longer postscripts, and the correspondence, only a small portion of which is yet known — Bentham theorizes about every element of the building, foresees every action, endlessly computes its advantages and its drawbacks. There are dicta on lamps and dicta on bells, a dictum on water (supply), on air (circulation), on earth (the proper ground upon which to build), and on fire (heating); every height, length, and depth is calculated; every material is tested; several chapters are devoted to theories about stairways, to the manner in which the inmate shall be clothed, how he will sleep, how he will wash and exercise—and every question gives rise to lengthy, impenetrable dissertations.

Such scrupulous realism obviously creates a hallucinatory effect in the reader. Yet Bentham's visionary minute detail ought not be confused with his personal psychology; it is merely an intrinsic part of his plan.

The axiom underlying the panoptic device--we recognize the debt to Helvetius—is that circumstances make the man. Because we are dealing here with an attempt to alter man, all chance must be controlled, banished. The Panopticon is to be an area of totalitarian control.

Everything in it must therefore be weighed, compared, evaluated. Everything is to have a place. Everything must be argued out. Everything must have a clear and explicable meaning. Here, the world must be ordered from top to bottom. The discourse will overlook no single detail.

Every circumstance acts upon man. For him, nothing is without its effect. Everything, therefore, is cause. Whoever wishes to master causes in order to reign over effects must therefore engage in an in-depth analysis, which is why Bentham never abandoned his work on the Panopticon. Every element, every group of elements, every act, every gesture had to be dealt with expressly, separately.

3. Bentham, vol. XI, p. 96, note.

As an example, the disposal of human waste, to which Bentham devotes a lengthy commentary. There can be no question of communal toilets. They would be counter to the necessary requirements for solitude and security. But evacuation in private is impossible for the same reasons, and the air in the cells would also be contaminated. Thus, each cell must be equipped with a tube for waste disposal, but not one large enough to be used for escape. And now such a device must be invented and its workings and material components described in detail.

We begin to learn that anything can be grist for the mills of logic.

The Temple of Reason

This utilitarianist concept of the world is based on a simple belief: nothing is without its effect. That is, every thing uses or serves another thing, which is tantamount to saying that things exist only in relation to other things.

Consequently there can be no absolute, but, on the contrary, in all things there is a *more* and a *less*, and any effect can be fitted into the hierarchy vis-à-vis its relationship to a result.

In this sense the Panopticon is the model of the utilitarian world: in it, everything is artificial, nothing is natural, nothing is contingent, nothing exists for its own sake, nothing is neutral. Everything is precisely measured, no more, no less. Articulations, systems, arrangements . . . machines on every side.

No object is merely itself, no activity is an end in itself. Surveillance actually begins long before the inspector takes up his position in the space reserved for him in the middle of the building; it begins with the writing out of the plan, with its concept and planning, with the first notion of it. Nothing is allowed "just to exist," because it is the vocation of all things to function. The Panopticon is a vast machine, each element of which is also, in turn, a machine, the subject of calculation.

The utilitarian says: since nothing is without effect, everything can be calculated. When it comes to results, we can always single out what will favor them and what will work against them. So the first must be augmented and the latter diminished; all causes must be evaluated and balanced one against the other.

In other words, logic is the sole imperative in the panoptic universe. Logical calculation reigns supreme over its empire, which is reclusive.

What could be more logical: total power is gained over the inmate, the pauper, the madman, the student, the sick, the entire population for which Bentham designed his invention. Everyone is turned over, bound hand and foot, to logic, to the apparatus, system.

The Panopticon is designed for those who have been forced to eschew any initiative and who are capable of being turned totally into instruments.

From this viewpoint the Panopticon is the temple of reason, a temple luminous and transparent in every sense: first, because there are no shadows and

nowhere to hide: it is open to constant surveillance by the invisible eye; but also, because totalitarian mastery of the environment excludes anything irrational: no opacity can withstand logic. Henceforth, logic can be brought to bear upon everything, which is what Bentham is actually telling us by means of his Panopticon.

It's a kind of madness, of course—an analytical insanity. On condition that it be understood as follows: it is the insanity proper to logic, which, conceiving a world in which all things are relative, makes itself absolute and, denying the whole of nature, establishes its own artifices.

All Is Usable

We can now formulate the law that governs the panoptic edifice's homogeneous space: everything must be usable, must work toward a result. Nothing inside it occurs in vain. All loss must be recouped. All activity is to be analyzed in terms of movement: all movement is expenditure and all expenditure must be productive.

A life devoid of leisure—such might be the utilitarian motto. Busy time is productive time.

Example: in the Panopticon, everything has a function, each thing works, and especially the inmates, on the same principle as other elements of the vast system. In order for their labor to bring a proper return, they must rest, from time to time, to refresh themselves, for distraction. Distraction? But that would mean *sub*tracting time from production. So it is not enough to reduce leisure and rest time to the bare minimum. The resultant "sacrifice"—to use Bentham's term—must, insofar as possible, be devoted to some other productive process. Any game must be profitable. Work must be made amusing, and happiness must bring in some return. "Could a man be made even to find amusement in his work, why should he not? and what should hinder him?"[4]

In fact, more labor is what Bentham proposes as the purpose of distracting from labor, and the ideal repose is in fact nothing but a change of activity. Only sleep is an unavoidable fact.

The panoptic ideal is to achieve the integral subjection of nature to the useful. Some way must be found to fit even the most basic needs into the profit system. One day Bentham said the following to his editor, Bowring, who has passed it on to us: "Remember we do not exercise, or ought not to exercise, even a *besoin* ('need,' Bentham genteelly used the French word) in vain. It should serve for manure."[5]

4. Bentham, *Panopticon*, vol. IV, postscript, part II, p. 142.
5. Bentham, vol. X, p. 585.

Polychrestia

The utilitarian demiurge organizes a universe in which life is based upon utility. As we have said, *everything* must be usable. But in its true form the whole dictum would be expressed thus: Everything must be usable *several times*.

Each element combines a number of uses. Each apparatus is a multiplier. Bentham, as always, attempts to arrive at a maximum; it was he who introduced into the English language the verbs "to maximize" and "to minimize."

Each Benthamic element represents the meeting point of several networks. For every cause there can be several effects. Contrariwise, each effect can be stronger for having been produced by several causes. Each cog of the machine is a nexus of uses traversed by multiple causal chains.

When Bentham rose to refute arguments against him, he always brought out unexpected uses by engaging in a definitive resection of relationships. He was continually inventing collateral benefits.

When several solutions were available, he would usually choose the one that would yield the greatest number of advantages. Here too, there was a need to divide, to classify, to count, and to organize. For that reason, we must pursue effects as far as we can, fit them into the most varied fields. Any Benthamic system can be dubbed with the term that, borrowing from Bacon, he once used: it is a *polychrest*, "a tool with multiple uses."

The Panopticon as a whole embodies that definition because it is simultaneously a prison, a manufactory, a school, an asylum. Yet the same is also true of the individual cell itself, in which the inmate labors, eats, and sleeps.

Bentham has conceived a world without waste, a world in which anything left over is immediately reused, a superusable world.

The Public Eye

The Panoptic field of vision derives its unity solely from its central point. Without the gaze that unifies them, we would have nothing but an unaccounted-for collection of atoms, of inmates immured in solitude, crushed under the yoke of surveillance. From this angle, the Panopticon is really nothing but what the inspector sees.

But such was never Bentham's intent. On the contrary, the house of calculations, the whole of the vast, efficient system, was designed to be a school for mankind. The public was welcome to view the spectacle.

Take the penitentiary version of the Panopticon. It is particularly necessary that punishments be executed in public, since the principal benefit any rational legislator should expect to gain from them is dissuasion by example.

Thus the opening of the building to the public already serves a dual utility: on the one hand, visitors (who can be regarded as potential delinquents, for—as Bentham makes clear—those most in need of such instruction will be the ones to show up to receive it, owing to their fondness for sensation) are deterred, the

population is made more moral; on the other hand, instruction is given in the virtues of economy, rationality. The moralizing process directly brought to bear upon the prisoners therefore also acts indirectly upon the visitors.

A third use is now added. In the Benthamic system it is crucial to know who watches the guards. Here is the answer: the eye of the public will watch over the inner eye. The visitor, while learning from the spectacle, will also inspect, control, and organize. In this way Benthamic space becomes totally "panoptic": in turn, the invisible surveillance reintegrates visibility; the watcher becomes the subject of surveillance. In addition, the visitors also watch over the inmates—a considerable advantage if it is true that an individual's curiosity may wane, whereas the curiosity of a great number of persons who are merely passing through in search of entertainment will probably be more vivid.

Thus, as a fourth use, we can include the strengthening of control over the inmates, the production of a supercontrol: "Here, to *one* room, you have inspectors by *thousands*."[6]

Thus, the prison, a place of exclusion, rejoins the social space: it becomes the most luminous, the nearest, the most familiar of sites. A veritable theater of punishment, it offers the spectators "a perpetual and perpetually interesting drama, in which the obnoxious characters shall, *in specie*, at any rate, be exposed to instructive ignominy."[7]

From which we can deduce the location for panoptic prisons: they will be built close to the capital, near large cities, in order to facilitate access to them by a large number of people. We are not surprised to learn that Bentham constantly argued against deportation to the colonies. On the contrary, a rational *management* will increase in every imaginable way the number of visitors and spectators.

To sum up: we have noted four distinct utilities arising from a single cause, that is, the opening of the prison to the public (which Bentham advanced at various times in different works). There is also a fifth: public observation can only increase the inmates' sense of shame and thus accelerate their moral improvement. Can one then, Bentham asks, condemn someone to endless infamy when he may one day be released? Here we have a situation in utilitarian ethics that equals the conflict of duties, namely, a conflict of kinds of utilities. And we are forced to admire the delicacy with which Bentham confronts it: "Let the offender, while produced for the purpose of punishment, be made to wear a mask."[8]

But he immediately invents a new method to gain an advantage from this concession and to make dissimulation an integral part of the display: "The masks may be made more or less tragical, in proportion to the enormity of the crimes of those who wear them. The air of mystery which such a contrivance will throw

6. Bentham, *Panopticon*, vol. IV, p. 133.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
8. Bentham, *Principles of Penal Law*, vol. I, p. 431.

over the scene will contribute in a great degree to fix the attention by the curiosity it will excite, and the terror it will inspire."[9]

No Cruelty

There is no cruelty in Bentham. Here, there can be no question of what he was really trying to be: a philanthropist. For cruelty is gratuitous —unproductive.

What principle can unify the theory of punishments? First, punishment is a system designed to torment, that is, to extract pain from an individual. To be cruel is to seek pain for the sake of pain, to accept it as an absolute. If the utilitarian maintains that he is a philanthropist, it is because, in his eyes, pain, like everything else, must serve a purpose. A second system must therefore be established that will include pain, give it a meaning, a value—in short, put it to use.

The first machine, per se, has only one drawback: "All punishment," Bentham wrote, "is a mischief."[10] The mischief is legitimized by its subsequent utilization, thus converting a negative into its opposite.

Logically, one must begin by knowing all the ways in which a man can be made to suffer. Drawing up a penal code presupposes an encyclopedia of sufferings, the lack of which Bentham can only deplore: "A valuable service would be rendered to Society by the individual who . . . should examine the effects produced by these different modes of punishment, and should point out the greater or smaller evil consequences resulting from contusions produced by blows with a rope, or laceration by whips, etc."[11] And both physical punishments and moral punishments must be studied in minute detail.

Punishment builds up a pain-capital ("The pain produced by punishments is, as it were, a capital hazarded in expectation of a profit"[12]). Bentham's analysis thus deals with its potential profitability.

Many uses make up for dumb suffering.

The victim of a crime has the right to assert a claim to benefit from its punishment. In that instance, pain is compensatory. This is justice, because every delinquent steals utility, that is, pleasure, and although he is made to suffer, a debtor must also be forced to cough up what he owes. In Benthamic psychology it is axiomatic that the pain of one cannot produce an equivalent pleasure in another. The suffering of the delinquent must therefore be invested in some productive labor, and, correlatively, a rate of measurement must be set for crimes.

Either the state appropriates the pain and puts it to work, or the pain can be turned back upon the delinquent from whom it has been extracted, with the

9. *Ibid.*
10. Bentham, *Of Laws*, vol. I, p. 83.
11. Bentham, *Principles of Penal Law*, vol. I, p. 414.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 398.

purpose of rendering him incapable of repeating his crime. Such incapacity can be produced in two ways: physically and morally. Which is better: to turn a delinquent into an invalid or to improve him morally? To disable or to reform—the question must be settled by a formula.

Each of the three utilities we have enumerated is legitimate and, furthermore, each can enter into the systems combining them. But they are subsidiary to the determination of punishments. Only individuals can be interested in compensation. Labor on behalf of the state expresses only the determination to "incapacitate" the delinquent. Moral betterment affects only one person.

Prevention yields the maximum profit of capital-pain, because it affects every possible delinquent, that is, "step by step, all of mankind."

The Flogging Machine

So, a penal code can be an economics of suffering. There are no light or rigorous punishments; there are only expensive or inexpensive punishments, punishments that yield high or low profits. Sentences, according to their utility, are calculated in terms of profit and loss.

Now, in order to become part of a calculation, punishments must fulfill certain prerequisites. Thus we must have a criterion for assessing some punishments as more effective than others.

Suffering cannot be calculated unless the system of punishment produces a stable, constant, regular effect. Here, this problem arises: the system is general, but individuals are singular; an identical punishment can extract varying amounts of pain from different persons: a fixed fine extracts less pleasure from a rich man than it does from a poor man, or, depriving an illiterate of paper and pencil deprives him of nothing, whereas a literate man is thereby deprived of an invaluable source of consolation.

Utilitarian economics is concerned with the fact that the same cause can produce disparate effects. This is why Bentham attempted to mechanize various kinds of corporal punishment: bodies are alike, and an automated torturer cannot differentiate between them. "A machine might be made, which should put in motion certain elastic rods of cane or whalebone, the number and size of which might be determined by the law: the body of the delinquent might be subjected to the strokes of these rods, and the force and rapidity with which they should be applied, might be prescribed by the judge: thus everything which is arbitrary might be removed."[13] In order to add a secondary utility to this principal one, Bentham further provides that the number of flogging machines can be increased so that a large number of prisoners can be subjected to punishment at the same time, "his time might be saved and the terror of the scene heightened, without increasing the actual suffering."[14]

13. *Ibid.*, p. 415.
14. *Ibid.*

This circumlocution is an explicit formulation of a principle that constantly guides Benthamic analysis: reality is worth no more than the appearance it produces. In fact, it is only the appearance—the visible face—of punishment that influences individual conduct and has a dissuasive effect, while the delinquent is the only one who experiences any real pain. Reality is the investment, appearance the profit. Whence the utilitarian's humane injunction: maximize the appearance and minimize the reality. "If hanging a man in effigy would produce the same salutary impression of terror upon the minds of the people, it would be folly or cruelty ever to hang a man *in person*."[15]

Thus we see that legislation becomes scientific at the same time as it draws upon the resources of theatrical art. The frugality of penalties supposes a profusion, an attraction, in the spectacle. A new angle from which to view the merits of the panoptic stage.

Frugality, stability—the flogging machine shows us a further, third, property any Benthamic punishment must have: adjustability. The good system must produce a regular but variable effect, so that the gradation of crimes can be rigorously reflected in the gradation of amounts of pain inflicted. Obviously, the mechanical whip meets this requirement, because the force, speed, and number of blows can be varied, thus affording the judge with a whole gamut of intensities.

An exact proportionality can now be established between crime and suffering. It is up to the legislator to codify it. Any active criminal must be able to compare the pleasure he expects to derive from his crime with the pain his punishment will inflict upon him. That is why the legislator's calculations must be unequivocally specific and, knowing them, the prospective delinquent can calculate and minimize his crime (that is, choose the lesser of two criminal acts) in order to minimize his future pain. Proportionality thus becomes a factor in dissuasion.

Analogy, Lost and Found

We can now envisage the function of the penal code: it is a table of equivalents that converts crimes into pains and thereby ensures an over-all commensurability among all the activities in which human beings indulge within the communities they form and, further, teaches them the virtues of prudence, of rationality, of calculating profits and losses. The utilitarian Golden Rule: everything has its price.

Thus, punishment is made part of the trade or exchange network.

Now we can answer the following question: What punishment best fulfills the function proper to it, the function of penal currency—in other words, to be

15. *Ibid.*, p. 398.

at once stable, economic, and adjustable? What is the ideal punishment, homogeneous in nature, if not imprisonment?

Deprivation of liberty can be experienced by all; it can be measured in lengths of time, and lengths of time are easily divisible. Prison is a machine for deducting time. Combined with forced labor, it is a high-yield punishment. Bentham is convinced: it will be the punishment of the future, the punishment fit for modern times.

Yet, what we gain in homogeneity we lose in exemplarity. The universal and monotonous penitentiary equivalence upsets all the natural relationships and all the similarities that heretofore linked the punishment with the crime it punishes, that made it a meaningful and obvious ransom. Imprisonment is, by nature, undifferentiated, it says nothing, it is indecipherable without consulting the code. Uniform, egalitarian, mute, prison does away with the merry profusion of analogous punishments.

Nevertheless, Bentham does devote a chapter of his *Principles of Penal Law* to the latter. Here, as elsewhere, his goal is to be exhaustive. A note by Dumont informs us that some received this exposé with "an extreme repugnance," but the surgeon is in duty bound to have as many instruments as possible at his disposal. The days of analogous punishment are past, but it subsists in the Benthamic text as a possible inspiration, held in reserve.

One of the merits of analogous punishment was that the spectacle of its application immediately evoked its cause—thereby giving it immediate legitimacy—and, conversely, that the preparation of the crime would also bring to mind the eventual punishment for it—intensifying the latter's dissuasive power. In fact, "Analogy is that relation, connection, or tie, between two objects, whereby the one being present to the mind, the idea of the other is naturally excited."[16] There must therefore be a similitude between them, or a contrast, a shift of gears by some operator or some characteristic mark.

For example: the instrument is identical, the tool used to commit the crime serves as punishment: the arsonist is punished by fire, the poisoner by poison, etc. Thus, the criminal organizing his penalty is made to put himself in the place of his victim, as if acting as his own executioner: "In every step of his preparations, his imagination will represent to him his own lot."[17] Here, in a way, analogy supplants the lack of identification with the other, the lack of sympathy, that makes crime possible.

Or punishment can strike at the organ used to commit the crime—you have slandered or lied: your tongue will be pierced; you have been guilty of forgery: your hand will be pierced with an "iron instrument fashioned like a pen"—or, for a corporal injury, a similar corporal injury—an eye for an eye, a

16. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 408.

tooth for a tooth—obviously easier to comprehend, but not the more equitable therefor.

Bentham devises a special punishment for those who perpetrate crimes with the aid of disguise to evade public view: analogy demands that some representation of the disguise be imprinted on the body, indelibly or not, depending.

This is the rich, inventive spring of original ideas that imprisonment—if it were to become, as Bentham hoped, the universal form of punishment—would dry up. Some compensation must be found for such a homogenizing effect. That was to be provided by architecture: every prison must display its function as such, its appearance must conform to its end use, and even—in line with the utilitarian axiom mentioned earlier—go beyond the reality. Penitentiary buildings are to be constructed in such a way as to "strike the imagination and awaken a salutary terror," to bring to the lips of the passerby these words: "This is the dwelling-place of crime."[18]

Further: the three classes into which Bentham separates the prison population—the poor, detained for inability to pay; criminals to be rehabilitated and one day released; and those with life sentences—will be incarcerated in three kinds of prison. Color will announce the guilt of the inmates: prisons of the first category will be white, those of the second, gray, and those of the latter, black. The first will not be distinguished by a sign, whereas the other two will have highly symbolic ones: on the outside may be "various figures, emblematical of the supposed dispositions of the persons confined in them. A monkey, a fox, and a tiger, representing mischief, cunning and rapacity. . . . In the interior, let two skeletons be placed, one on each side of an iron door. . . . A prison would thus represent the abode of death, and no youth that had once visited a place so decorated, could fail of receiving a most salutary and indelible impression."[19] Lastly, the three prisons will bear different names: "House for Safe Custody," "Penitentiary House," and the "Black Prison"—the latter with no applicable sign other than its color, for with regard to it there is nothing more to be said, it's being, on this earth, the symbol of the beyond.

The Utilitarian Mise-en-Scène

It is easy to think of utilitarian thought as being, fundamentally and in principle, hostile to entertainment. Because its intent is to reduce everything to what can be measured, we tend to believe that it must view anything aesthetic, any showiness, as superfluous. But this is to misunderstand the principle of the lowest cost, which, on the contrary, prescribes squeezing causes dry in order to yield the greatest number of effects. This multiplicative ingenuity is typical of Benthamic intelligence. Theatrical art, which can create magnificent fantasies

18. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 431.

with the slimmest of real means, is in this regard a model of the science of the useful—of course on condition that its prodigality leads to an end that can be otherwise justified.

There is a calculation with regard to appearances, and Bentham puts it into practice in all his writings. The eye, which reigns over the panoptic empire, is the prime organ to which its ruses are directed—Bentham says it straight out: "Preach to the eye, if you would preach with efficacy. By that organ, through the medium of the imagination, the judgement of the bulk of mankind may be led and moulded almost at pleasure. As puppets in the hands of the showman, so would men be in the hand of the legislator, who, to the science proper to his function, should add a well-informed attention to stage effect."[20]

Bentham criticizes the practice of oath-taking: it brings the deity into public life and it relies on a feeble motive, one's word, thus positing a high degree of morality. But if it is to be employed, then the act must be properly staged: a solemn formula must be used, an emphatic diction and gesture must be established, the walls must be hung with pictures with clearly legible titles spelling out the punishment for perjurers (in order to increase their effect, such pictures may be hidden behind a curtain and revealed only in extremis), a minister of religion must be present and clearly visible (to emphasize the sacred nature of the oath) or an officer of the peace (if one wishes to accentuate its political nature), and so on. The courtroom, under Bentham's reform, is thus turned into a theatrical machine.

Going deeper, we perceive that every utilitarian system is of necessity theatrical—in that not only does everything in it serve some end, but that everything in it has meaning. Every function is a role.

Prisons of Language

The utilitarian classifies. In order to compose the most profitable assemblages he must always analyze. His utterance creates in its wake tiny motes of thought that would be lost were they not continually enumerated.

It is to this that Bentham devotes himself: his interminable texts are replete with mutually contradictory lists, in which he painfully strives to capture, reassemble, get a grasp on the myriad results of his painstaking divisions. And this is why many of his works, *Chrestomathia*, *Defence of Usury*, *A Table of the Springs of Action*, *Tracts on Poor Laws and Pauper Management*, and so on, not to mention the *Panopticon*, culminate with the drawing up of a plan, a huge map, a vast general table of contents, a tree of logic, or a synoptic table.

One expression recurs in Bentham's writings: in legal or logical matters, one must always be able to get one's bearings "at first glance." Further, there

20. Bentham, *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, vol. VI, p. 321.

must be "no dark spot." Now, Bentham uses the same expressions when writing of the panoptic building.

And it goes without saying: the vast nomenclatures in all their exhaustive ramifications are prisons of language. It is the same goal of achieving mastery that inspired Bentham's penitentiary theory, his theory of logic. Whether classifying men or classifying words, the same eye predominates.

Men, words—it is a question of halting fluctuations, of enclosing all displacements, of fixing them once and for all in one place, or at least, of never losing sight of them as they move, of freezing them. Before being a liberal, we realize, the utilitarian is a despot.

Pauper-Land

Bentham's tables create prisons of words; contrariwise, all Benthamic buildings are materialized classifications. For the utilitarian, discourse and reality are reversible, without remainder.

In 1797, Parliament having put off its decision on construction of the panoptic prison, Bentham began to work to get his polyvalent machine used to house the poor. The depression of 1795 had turned the question of pauperism into a national problem, and the best minds labored to find some remedy for it.

The first tract (*Situation and Relief of the Poor*) begins with a "Pauper Population Table," which Bentham elsewhere calls a "General Map of Pauper-Land, With All the Roads To It." Here, we find the concept of pauperism separated into categories based on causes: Personal (Internal) Causes and External Causes. Among the first are: (1) Perpetual (arising from infirmity of mind or body); (2) Long-continuing but of limited duration (inability to provide for one's own needs because of childhood, "non-age"); (3) Casual and of Uncertain Duration (inability to work because of "sick-hands" or "child-burthened hands"). The External Causes are all temporary: loss of work, inability to obtain work (because of badness of character or want of character and acquaintances), and loss of property.

In this very simple chart, all the poor can be put into numbered slots: the deaf, the outcasts, brothel-keepers and asthmatics, bastards and their mothers, husbandmen and gardeners out of work in time of long-continued frost, domestic servants fired by a wicked master (to be distinguished from those laid off by a good master), the infirm of mind, those with only one arm—in short, an entire vast, colorful population, made wonderfully homogeneous by an implacable taxonomy. A form is to be sent to every parish so that the number of poor in each category can be precisely noted down, along with age, sex, state of health, etc.

And what is this Paupers' Panopticon whose workings Bentham describes in a second work (*Outline of a Work Entitled Pauper Management Improved*), other than this very chart created in stone?

Around the building's circumference—circular or, if need be, hexagonal

—— the floors, the walls, the cells, all represent divisions and subdivisions. Here, everything tends to separation and reunion. Every proximity has its reason; there is a motive for every separation. One must separate: to forestall corruption—moral—and infection—physical; to ensure security—here, too, the guards will be invisible—and salubrity—to eliminate noise and bad odors and to conceal unpleasant sights; and, above all, to prevent the arousing of "unsatisfiable desires"—to separate the sexes. But there is also a need to unite: to keep families together, to bring the sick into contact with a doctor, to ensure moral inspection and education, and to allow for communal labor. The institution's life consists of the incessant passage from one classification to another, those separated and reunited and then once again separated according to other criteria for other tasks, then to be brought together again for another reason, to meet with their peers in the evenings. In the evening, the inmates are divided up into classes and disposed according to an astute arrangement that establishes complementarity: next to the delirious and nonstop talkers will be put . . . who but deaf-mutes; the blind will not suffer from their proximity to the melancholics, who are silent, nor from being put next to the hideously deformed and infirm.

The panoptic residence is a site of coexistences; does it not demonstrate, in action, that man is compatible with his fellow man? does it not give mankind a being? is it not, insofar as possible, the best of all possible worlds created by an ingenious utilitarian out of all the ills of creation? "The improvement of management" is nothing but a matter of applying the logic of classes, in which everything has its place.

Identity Police

General transparency, general classification, general calculation, general utilization—these values demand that absolutely no uncertainty shall exist with regard to identities. Everything must have a name—and Bentham, like some new Adam, is a great creator of names—a place, a number. The utilitarian is as repelled by crowds as he is by beggars.

The beggar is a man without a place, a vagrant, a man who cannot be accounted for, who resists calculation, floating, haunting the dark corners afforded him by a society that is not, unfortunately, uniformly panoptic. Beggars must be somehow incorporated into society; such living logical errors must be eradicated. They will be put into panoptic workhouses.

The mob evades taxonomies, makes enumerations indeterminable. Instead of regulated relationships, confusion reigns, fomenting unrest, excluding reflection; change is constant in a mob, giving rise to impressions as varied as they are striking. Any mob—which is a lack of human classification—is already seditious. It is especially dangerous when it includes individuals of bad moral character, for it provides them with a common milieu in which they can shield each other from the eye's censure: "Shame is the fear of the disapprobation of those

with whom we live. But how should disapprobation of criminality display itself among a throng of criminals?"[21] The court of public opinion is removed from their thinking, they make up their own tribunal: "A *lex loci* is formed by tacit consent."[22] Each delinquent is culpable in a different way; there are hardened criminals and neophytes, the mild and the rabid; together, they become homogeneous and are prone to the worst.

The vagrant must be immobilized, the masses divided up. To achieve this, Bentham calls for a broad policing of identities. He strongly emphasizes the need for increasing the means by which individuals can be recognized and found: "In the capital of Japan, every one is obliged to have his name upon his dress."[23] In English schools the students wear a special costume. "Soldiers wear *uniforms*, why not paupers?—those who save the country, why not those who are saved by it?"[24] The least we can do is put the poor into uniform.

The ideal is to unite utter homogeneity—the uniform—with the most systematic and neutral of differentiations—number. But the prisoners in the Panopticon will benefit from an even more concrete differentiation, one that will keep them from being tempted to escape: the men will wear sleeves of unequal length, the left normal and the right no longer than a woman's gown. Thus the skin of the arms will be different in appearance, like a natural tatoo, creating an essential mark that will remain indelibly visible for a long time. "A man escapes. Minute personal description, *signalement*, as the French call it, is almost needless: one simple trait fixes him beyond possibility of mistake."[25]

In fact, the entire nation ought to be tatooed—as Bentham wrote in 1804 to Sir Henry Carew—not only prisoners or deserters. Such a practice would only be doing what sailors, who customarily have their first and last names imprinted on their wrists in clear and indelible letters, have been doing for years. Of course, it's a pity that individuals' proper names are so randomly distributed: indeed, many people even share the same name. It is a real breakdown in logic. A new nomenclature remains to be written, so that in each country every individual will have a proper name that belongs to him and to him alone.

To sum up: a proper name, a truly proper name, for everyone (in short, the equivalent of a number), tatooed on his flesh, ineradicable: this would spread the panoptic order throughout the world, throughout all mankind, and would lead to general security, since one would always be able to respond to the basic question of contracts: "Who are you, with whom I am dealing?"

It goes without saying that all goods and products must also be labeled. The label would be a short version of a certificate that would incontrovertably establish the product's ownership, its receiver, its quality and quantity.

21. Bentham, *Panopticon*, vol. IV, p. 138.
22. Bentham, vol. III, p. 138.
23. Bentham, *Principles of Penal Law*, vol. I, p. 557.
24. Bentham, *Pauper Management*, vol. II, p. 389.
25. Bentham, *Panopticon*, vol. IV, p. 156.

Once identities are assured, the great bookkeeping of utilities becomes possible.

Books must be kept, Bentham stresses, in every panoptic establishment. "Bookkeeping" is a science—the practice of which, by the way, is facilitated by the omnipresence of surveillance in, and the concomitant transparency of, the area to be accounted for. Chronological entries will be made daily, methodological entries—products, population tables, stock inventories, health records, moral conduct records, requests, punishments (with a black cover), rewards (red cover). . . . And the entries will cover the entire nation: every event will immediately be recorded and broken down into its constituent parts, each of which will then be noted in the corresponding book—once life is totally reflected in the mirror of its exhaustive inscription, the government will be in a better position to take informed and scientific decisions. And on the horizon—Bentham does not say so in his published works, but a manuscript must exist somewhere in which he did—looms planetary bookkeeping, the comparison of everything with everything, all of mankind entered in a ledger.

The Totalitarian Philanthropist

The utilitarian is, per se, dedicated to the exhaustive.

In the first place, no object is beneath the utilitarian's attention or unworthy of it: anything susceptible of being known is matter for a science, just as anything susceptible of being done is matter for an art. There is no a priori discrimination: the utilitarian indiscriminately welcomes anything at all, no matter what; he is a polyvalent theoretician to whom nothing is foreign.

In the second place, he performs the same operation on every object: he sums it up; he compounds it. The subject is always open to division: the utilitarian finds the separable everywhere. He feels compelled to analyze the original object, to denaturalize it, to transform it into a mass of separate elements. The utilitarian, therefore, is constantly producing systematic syntheses that must of necessity be exhaustive.

By the same imperative, the utilitarian's discourse is expansive, infinitely stretchable. Restricted as the object or field with which he is dealing may appear to be at first glance, he will reduce it to its basics and deal with it according to a vast general and exhaustive process; breaking it down, he reconstitutes it maximized, methodically turned into a huge montage. Bentham coined the word "methodization" to describe this process. A montage is "methodized" if it represents a subject that has been carried as far as it can go. Thus, the utilitarian solution always goes beyond the particular problem for which it was intended; it always has the validity of a model; it is exemplary and thus naturally imperialist. And, since there is no field that is not methodizable. . . .

In utilitarian theory the maximum represents the sovereign good. Of course, this sovereign good is not a defined object, maximization cannot be

definitive; on the contrary, it is fundamentally variable, always capable of "improvement"; as function, however, it is constant. Stubbornly, unflaggingly, the utilitarian builds and creates hierarchies—more and less prevail everywhere—and reforms—there is always something better.

It should now be clear that the utilitarian's point of reference, whatever the impetus behind his thinking, always turns out to be the great All itself: the universe, mankind. It is in this sense that the Panopticon is not just one theme among others in Bentham's work: the utilitarian is basically a panoptician.

Utilitarianism, which, in the political sphere, would seem, like radicalism, to be a variant of liberalism, is in fact a totalitarian concept of the world; it aspires to perpetual and universal maximization. Such totalitarianism is precisely what enables it to pose as a philanthropy: the expansion of its empire is limited, in effect, only by the human species.

In volume XI of his edition of the master's works, Bowring published extracts from Bentham's last notebooks: there we find the following entry, in which the principles of the maximum, philanthropy, and imperialism are lumped together with a refreshing charm:

> 1831—February 16—The day after arrival at the age of 83.
> J.B.'s frame of mind.
> J.B. the most ambitious of the ambitious. His empire—the empire he aspires to—extending to, and comprehending, the whole human race, in all places,—in all habitable places of the earth, at all future time.
> J.B. the most philanthropic of the philanthropic: philanthropy the end and instrument of his ambition.
> Limits it has no other than those of the earth.[26]

The Formula

As we know, utilitarianism, whose scope is all-embracing, can be summed up in one single sentence. It is, according to Bentham, a sentence that underlies the entire theory, that expresses it, that embraces it wholly; it is "all-directing" and "all-comprehensive." He condenses it so well that, once formulated, it became a platitude that almost renders nugatory any commentary. And this is not its most remarkable property. Bentham's dictum, into which some life must be breathed—one that, of course, has earned its author a high moral position in every textbook, alongside the stoics, the epicureans, and the skeptics—is:

"The greatest happiness of the greatest number."

"Priestly was the first (unless it was Beccaria) who taught my lips to pronounce this sacred truth."[27] As in the case of the Panopticon, Bentham does not

26. Bentham, vol. XI, p. 72.
27. Bentham, *Commonplace Book*, vol. X, p. 142.

claim paternity of the idea to which he was to devote his entire life. And indeed, the expression did come from the pen of Priestly, in his 1768 *Essay on the First Principle of Government*, as well as from that of Beccaria, who used it ("*la massima felicità divisa nel maggior numero*") in the introduction to his treatise *Dei delitti e delle pene* of 1764. But we can find it even earlier in a work by Hutcheson, who wrote: "That action is the best that procures the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (*Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*, 1726).

But Bentham came to favor the formulation of the principle of utility over the formula of the greatest happiness, a formulation that may well utter the same thing, but with a difference: one approves or disapproves of any action according to its apparent propensity to increase or diminish the happiness of the interested party. In 1822, Bentham was to express regret that his 1789 formulation failed to be sufficiently explicit as to who the "party" was whose interest, in the last analysis, is always the subject of any human action, in all circumstances: that "party" is mankind, the "happiness" is its well-being.

It is from this axiom that the over-all instrumentalization inherent in utilitarianism flows: Any proper means must work toward this end: "A use," Bentham writes in his *Logic*, "is either a modification of the universal *end*, i.e., well-being, or a subordinate and subservient end, i.e., a *means* capable of being employed in contributing towards that same universal end."[28] Bentham's immense discourse, which creates so many systems, is all supposed to have this one point of reference, the maximum happiness of the maximum number of human beings. But the entire discourse is actually based on another, shorter formula, one that flows from the first.

The Maximum

This is the maximum, per se. In other words, use for the sake of use: for is this not the law we can observe at work in all of Bentham's constructions? Everything must be useful vis-à-vis something other than itself, must serve. Nothing exists that is not relative to something else, namely, that does not function. And thus this functioning has, in principle, no end. It is infinitely extensible. It affects everything, transforms everything. It includes the entire globe. And although its end is "mankind," it is an end in the sense of its uttermost limits, its ultimate frontier—extrinsic because, left to its own devices, it would go even further. The paradox that underlies utilitarian discourse is, very simply, that it transforms something essentially relative—use—into an absolute. Bentham attempts to get around the paradox with his formula. Instrumental fanaticism is disguised as maximum philanthropy. At one fell swoop, willy-nilly, systems are designed to achieve a single universal end: you may be certain, Oh fellow men, that everything useful is useful to all!

28. Bentham, *Logic*, vol. VIII, p. 231.

For Bentham, the formula is Archimedian: it is a reference point from which one can posit everything that can be posited, an absolute criterion that is always valid, so much so that the Benthamic world has been forever rid of uncertainty. Every utterance in utilitarian discourse is, de jure, subject to the formula. But the formula itself, the foundation of all validity, is an autonomous utterance, it is self-enclosed, undemonstrable: "Is [the principle of utility] subject to any direct proof? apparently not, for that which we use to prove everything else cannot itself be proved: a chain of proofs must have its beginning somewhere."

But the fact that it defies any demonstration does not therefore make it any the more susceptible to refutation: Because it embraces All, it must be argued outside the All, that is, from an unthinkable position. "Is it possible for a man to move the earth? Yes, but first he must find another earth from which to do so." All-encompassing, the formula covers the entire surface of the discourse's universe; if we argue against it, we still do so, in some unperceived way, in its behalf. Its empire has no exteriority.

The arguments against the formula fit into two categories:

First, the principle of asceticism, which is nothing but the opposite of the formula, which teaches us to prefer the harmful to the useful; it can be refuted by its inconsistency. Bentham held that it had never been pursued to the end by any living creature, nor could it ever be.

The second is the principle of sympathy, a category to which Bentham relegates, pell mell, any criterion based on a personal estimation of good and evil, whether in the name of a moral sense, commonsense, understanding, natural law, natural justice, etc.; indeed, he maintained, it is capricious to see this as a principle at all, for it is not so much a positive principle per se as it is a mere term used to signify the negation of any principle.

Only the formula can provide a legitimate foundation for a law applicable to the whole of the human community, for it makes mankind its ultimate reference, it legitimizes the objective calculation of rational choices. Men quarrel amongst themselves only on behalf of the useful, and Bentham takes great pains to discern in every adversary argument a dissimulated appeal to the very principle it is seeking to refute. Differences arise solely with regard to interpretations of the useful, with regard to correct or false computations of use or between partial computations and the universal computation. Bentham is the only one who takes into account the human race as a whole, who calculates for all of mankind.

Obviously, it follows that the inscription of J.B. within his system is not contingent, that his person is necessarily implicit in his theory, for there must exist at least one man whose personal usefulness is totally bound up with universal utility—an exception analogous, within the human race, to that of the formula in all its manifestations and personifications.

That being so, we can say that Bentham found himself incomprehensible.

Two Masters

Is there any point in our following Bentham's example and enumerating pleasures and pains? In the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* he distinguishes fourteen principal varieties of the former and twelve of the latter; to which are added subdivisions and combinations. Other works contain slightly modified lists; terms are altered, species regrouped. For example, the nomenclature established for the "springs of action" contains "Prying," "Interest of the Spying-Glass," "The Pleasure of Curiosity," or "Pleasure of the Palate" as countervalent to the "Pain of Labor," and so on.

But this matters little, since his "species" do not differentiate pleasure, do not differentiate pain. All are homogeneous, the "Pleasure of Smell" and "Reputation," "Pleasure of the Sexual Sense" and that of "Skill." And this homogeneity extends even to the difference between pleasure and pain, for they are to each other as positive to negative. Whence, all one need do to calculate is posit that pleasure and pain come in discrete units, that is, that they do not flow in streams but are articulated like links in a chain. Sensibility is, from the outset, broken down into units; we thus speak of *a* pleasure, *a* pain, qualifying a single positive or negative quantity; we have an actual monetary system, with values that can be set and compared.

We might briefly review the six criteria that individualize a pleasure or pain and allow them to be evaluated: intensity, duration, certitude, proximity, fecundity (tendency to be followed by a sensation of the same sort), purity (tendency not to be followed by an opposite sensation); if the sensation concerns several persons at a time, we add the criterion of extension. We can be brief, because the calculation is purely regulatory: Bentham has told us that we should not expect this process of evaluation to be applied to every moral judgment or every legislative or legal proceeding. It must, nevertheless, always be borne in mind: and, depending upon the effective use made of it on such occasions, it is, to all intents and purposes, "an exact process."

The calculation of pleasures, on which Bentham's fame is to a great extent based, is the necessary postulate to the rationalization of politics. It is the instrument of a judge, not of a psychologist. It symbolizes a perfect justice capable of measuring penalties and reparations. The system, the device, for calculating pleasure and pain, with which Bentham's commentators have sometimes solely been concerned, as if it could actually be made to work, represents an ideal means of achieving absolute mastery over individuals and communities. Its secret is contained in the first section of the "Introduction" to the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, which reads: "Nature has placed mankind under the government of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure."[29]

What is innate to Benthamic man is subjection. The calculation of pleasures

29. Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, vol. I, p. 1.

is a commentary upon a single utterance: Man is subjectable, he is governable, he can, by nature, be denatured by his feelings; to lead him, one need only manipulate the levers that motivate and activate his actions; seeking pleasure, fleeing pain, he is an elementary machine delivered by nature into the hands of the dispensers of happiness.

Anything Is Possible

In utilitarian theory, nature is nothing but the following: It is what provides sources of pleasure and pain to the masters so that they may train and lead men. Here, nature is mute, it sets no standards, creates no point of reference, imposes no limits. It engenders an indefinedly plastic mankind.

In all of Bentham's work we find only two exceptions to this universal malleability. On the one hand, man's feelings are not inexhaustible; first, because his life is limited and, second, because an overly intense pleasure becomes painful, and excessive pain ends in unconsciousness. On the other hand, each individual body and mind is implacably different; there is a radical frame of body just as there is a radical frame of mind; this basic structuration is inalterable. The gamut of mutations cannot be crammed into a narrow space.

Thus, Benthamic optimism posits an "anything is possible" that leaves the future wide open to the furious activity of the powers of utility.

Bentham's first published work was devoted to a point-by-point refutation of the introduction to Blackstone's *Commentaries* on English law (*A Fragment on Government*). Indeed, it is solely intended to advance the theory later adopted by Hume: There is not and cannot be either an innate social contract or a natural law.

Indeed, nature must be mute for utility to reign supreme. Laws do not spring from any anterior discourse of nature or God; we cannot speak of their departing from it, nor can they be made to refer to it. Laws are only a system of language, controlling pleasure and pain on behalf of utility.

"Ex Nihilo"

To conceive a natural law, to establish concrete law on the basis of supposedly preexistent rights and duties, is to posit unuttered utterances—other than those providentially emanating from some Divine source. If a legislating nature does not exist, if use is the only source of legitimacy, then rights and duties must derive from the law, from its effective, humane utterance, in other words, from an act of language. Legislation is wholly a phenomenon of discourse, an effect of discourse.

How can language not reproduce a model but create entities that derive their being from it alone? Herbert Spencer, for example, has declared such creation incomprehensible in *The Great Political Superstitions*. Who, he asks, can

produce something from nothing? That would be an effect imputable solely to divine omnipotence, and, he adds, there are many who reject even that.

The "ex nihilo" nature of law obviously presents a problem the utilitarian finds it difficult to circumvent, since it forecloses any natural or divine guarantee. Bentham deals with it in his theories of fictions, which do not form a single work but are a running theme, marginal enough for neither James nor John Stuart Mill—nor Bowring and Dumont—to have isolated them as such. C.K. Ogden was the first to assemble the various texts into a single volume.[30]

It is impossible to express oneself without positing the existence of certain of the elements contained in the discourse. In other words, all discourse recognizes entities. One cannot express oneself without making reference *to* something. Substantives fulfill this referent function.

Now, the nature of such posited existing entities is not univocal. Perception underlies and forms the basis of discrimination: there are entities directly apprehended by the senses—physical objects—and entities apprehended by the mind—the incorporeal, the soul as such, or God—all, as Bentham reminds us, invisible. Thus the perceptible is contrasted with the inferential, as that which can be apprehended immediateiy as opposed to that the apprehension of which is mediated. Yet in mentioning such entities, whether sensed or deduced, I do mean that they exist in reality and that the substantive is founded on a substantiality.

Which brings us to a second dichotomy: that between the real and the unreal. There are in language substantives without substance. There are more nouns than there are objects. Discourse is excessive, plethoric; it enables us to speak of what does not exist as if it did exist. This simple observation, accepted in English philosophy since the time of Hobbes and Locke, motivates all linguistic analysis: not taking words for things, measuring discourse against reality, breaching the gap, instituting language inspection, repressing contraband vocables, foreclosing the unreal.

Yet, Bentham argues, the unreal is not homogeneous. In its sphere, we must distinguish between fable and fiction. If I state that in such and such a house in such and such a street in such and such a town there resides a devil with horns and a forked tail, and observation contradicts that statement, I have merely created a fable, describing as real an entity that does not exist: a "nonentity," a nothing. There are other entities that have no more concrete an existence, but which the demands of the grammatical form of the discourse constrain me to name, to evoke, to express, whereas "in truth and reality" it is not my intent to attribute an existence to them. If there is a fable, it is a necessary one. It is not

30. Here I have made use of Bentham's writings on fictions as collected by Ogden in *Bentham's Theory of Fictions*, London, 1932. Most of the texts are drawn from volumes III, IV, IX, and XV of the Bowring edition. Ogden has also examined the unpublished manuscripts Elie Halévy described as "lengthy and useless" (*L'évolution de la doctrine utilitaire*, p. 357).

created by me; it is the fabrication of the discourse per se: I cannot express myself without creating substantives, that is, without producing the unreal but indispensable entities Bentham chooses to call fictions.

Fictions are necessary to language. As long as language is used by human beings, we cannot do without them. Conversely, they derive their being solely through utterance; they have no separate existence; to posit real correlatives for them is to transform them into fables. It is to language and to language alone that fictive entities owe their existence, their impossible and yet indispensable existence. So we have linguistic beings wholly created by the stuff of language.

But since we can only speak of a fictive entity as if it were real, its expression is caught up in an interior drift; a malign, fallacious power—that of grammar—works upon it, and the fictive is constantly being confused with the fabulous; utterance engenders a belief—indeed, a superstition—that for every word there is a corresponding thing. We must therefore be on the alert for fictions. Yet how can we distinguish them? They are not susceptible to definition by genus or species; they are neither subsumed nor subsumers. As a result, they can be taken in, circumscribed, only by paraphrasis. Fictions must be retranslated. Any proposition having for its subject a fiction can be translated into a proposition having a real entity in its place. A proposition bearing on a fiction is emblematic: it proffers an image; to paraphrase it is to refer the image to a corporeal being. In this sense, a Benthamic fiction is what logicians would call an empty or incomplete symbol—witness the name Bentham coins to describe the fictional paraphrase: *phraseopleorisis*—a filling up of the sentence.

Does this mean that Bentham's ideal is to fill up the discourse integrally, to reduce fictive entities? We must bear in mind that there can be no language without fictions. Utilitarianism is not a nominalism: it is not a question of eliminating fictions, but of controlling them, for fictions can also act.

And it is here that we discover the purpose of the "theory of fictions," which is not disinterested linguistic investigation: the purpose is to arrive at a theory of legislation, of language as legislative power. Fictive entities mobilize real entities, distribute them, organize them. To speak is to legislate, in other words, to bring into play things that do not exist.

All legal entities are fictive entities—rights, duties, powers. Natural law is a fable; all law is a creation of language that brings into play two real entities: pleasure and pain, which are the sole, unique referents of all legal discourse. A law is only a linguistic system that artificially associates actions and perceptible effects, on the formula: such and such action will lead to this or that suffering, or this or that happiness.

Pannomion

Law is one of those objects we pretend exists for the demands of discourse through a fiction so necessary that, without it, there could be no human dis-

course. The same applies to the other entities put into play by legal discourse: crime, duty, power. Such entities are, let us say, simultaneous, exactly correlative, reciprocally translatable, substitutable. Without an awareness of their fictional natures, our heads begin to spin: a law is a power, or a power is a law, and so on; the weight of the definition is made to shift backwards and forwards, from one word to the other. Taking the Benthamic theory to its extreme, we could maintain that there is but one legal entity and that laws refer to one unique object upon which they comment, which they amend, translate, divide, and redistribute. And that unique object is suffering.

Suffering and pleasure, but suffering first of all. The law promises suffering, not reward. "By reward alone, it is certain that no effective part [of government work] would ever be carried forward, not even for half an hour."[31] Pain, in fact, is more reliable than pleasure (less dependent on circumstances, susceptible of greater scope, its sources are myriad; every part of the body is open to it, as we have seen), and fear, Bentham held, is the necessary instrument, the only one applicable to the goals of society. Consequently, of all legal fictions, crime is unquestionably the most elementary because it is the closest to punishment.

Similarly, codes are convertible: the discourse of legislation can be uttered in both penal and civil language. But, if there must be an order, the penal code will necessarily take precedence over the civil. The civil code, in fact, creates rights and duties, while the penal code creates crimes and punishments—whereby it implicitly includes the former. The penal code is the fundamental code; it is in its discourse that, Bentham tells us, the legislator makes himself manifest to each individual. He allows, he orders, he forbids; he lays down for each person the rules of his conduct; he employs the language of a father and of a master.

Still, the discourse that legislates is a single thing, and it is only for convenience's sake that it is divided up into codes. The theory of fictions tends to a universal and integral code—all laws brought together, assembled, unified, harmonized upon a single principle, each complete, individualized, numbered, drawn up in a univocal algebra—achieving "the projection of the legal sphere so that all its parts can be seen at a single glance"—which Bentham calls the Pannomion—the great panoptic code.

The panoptic legislator must be a linguist. What is a law if not the statement of a will clothed in an exterior sign. The master, Bentham tells us, makes the law for his manservant, the father for his child, man for woman. The laws that make up the codes can be distinguished only by the source of their transmission, that is, the sovereign, defined simply as the authority in a position to command obedience within a state. Another opportunity for classification: that authority can either delegate its powers or it can disperse them, or it can concentrate them;

31. Bentham, *Of Laws*, vol. I, p. 135.

legislative transmission takes paths of varying lengths; each legal utterance can be disassembled. Who is uttering? to what does the utterance apply? how? what motives underlie it? how is it expressed? and so on. (This painstaking dissection is the aim of Bentham's tract entitled *Of Laws*.) Every word counts. Which is why Bentham wrote his *Nomography*, a treatise on legislative language and style.

The legislator is a logician, in the Benthamic sense: logic is the science of the means to be used to attain ends. In other words, he is an engineer of egoisms. Legislative fiction adjusts interests and directs them toward the same ends. It employs fear to ensure the linkage between duty and interest. Thus the legislator is also a psychologist. In his great undertaking he summons before him every branch of learning and all the people, and he does not release them until they have been ground fine.

A Style

Bentham does not reserve his nomographic style to legislation alone; he employs it throughout his entire work. Thus, in discourse, everything must be in its proper place; whence it follows that the writing must continually carry out its own analysis. It must divide up—"The process of subdivision cannot be carried too far"[32]—down to the very atoms of meaning, the very single digits of thought. It must enumerate, so that no particle is overlooked, and it must designate, to individualize. Every element, every grouping of elements, must have a name. Thus each signification, like the prisoner in his cell, will be captive to a word—there will be adequation, transparency, between signifier and signified. To write is to remove ambiguity. Substantives are preferable to verbs. Through their use one can flush out existential suppositions; instead of saying that you implement a regulation, say rather that you make it applicable—and you also reveal an entity hidden by the verb, an entity whose extension and comprehension you can then vary, and you can, in turn, divide it down into categories to be numbered and named and classified in order of preference, variable according to cases—cases that can themselves become the subjects of numbering and classification, and so on and on. Thus, the discourse you write will be flat, without depth, without semantic thickness, it will be Bentham's writing, which he strove to make "algebraic." But just look at the effects produced by pursuing this ideal of absolute dis-ambiguity: Bentham continually finds himself forced to go over his classifications, to branch out into other classifications that overlap and intermingle, to draw out his sentences to interminable lengths, dividing them up, clause upon clause, filling every ellipsis and pursuing every allusion, each clause mangled by colliding parenthetical phrases after nearly every word, enveloping them, and proliferating so rapidly that the author

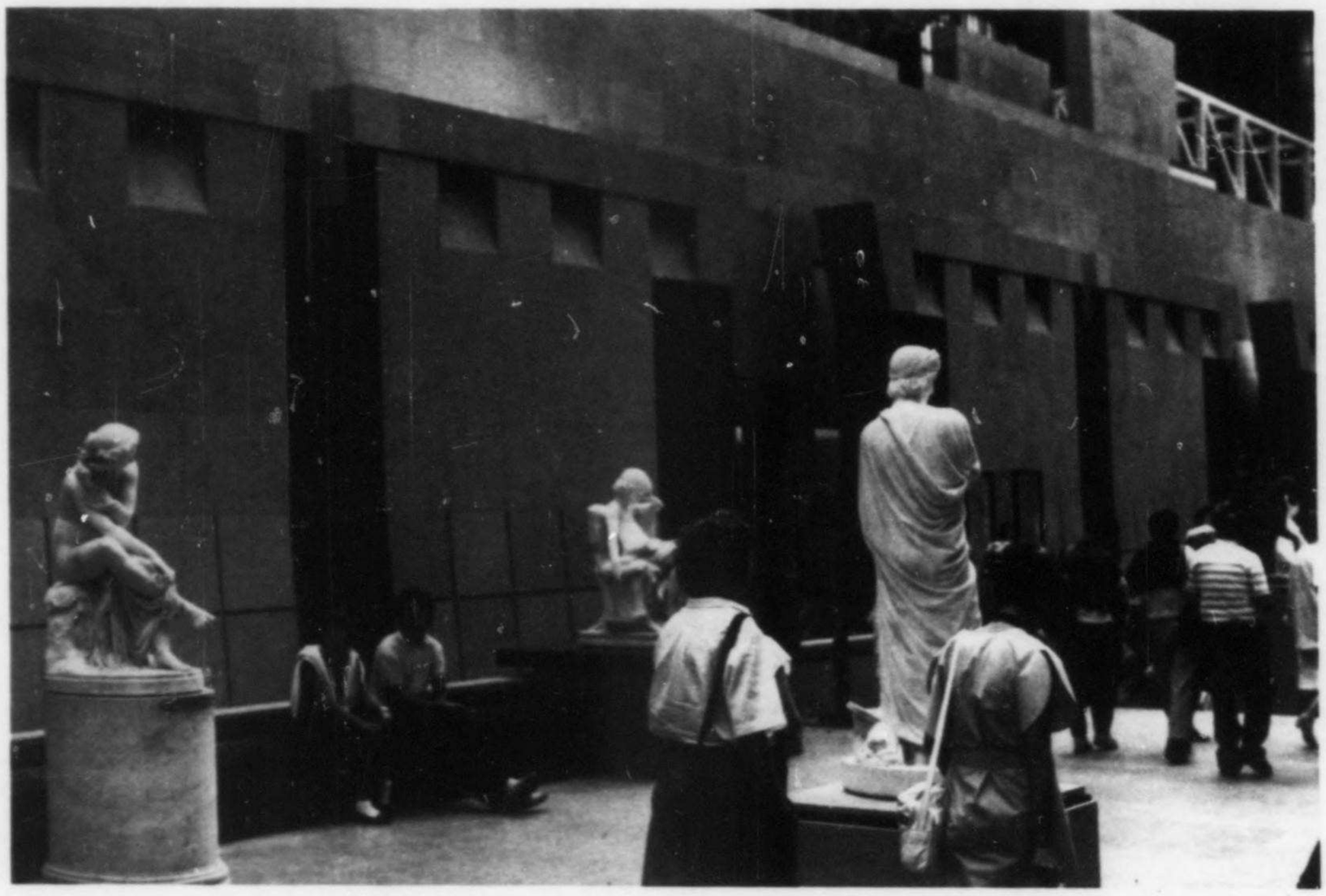
32. Bentham, *Nomography*, vol. III, p. 267.

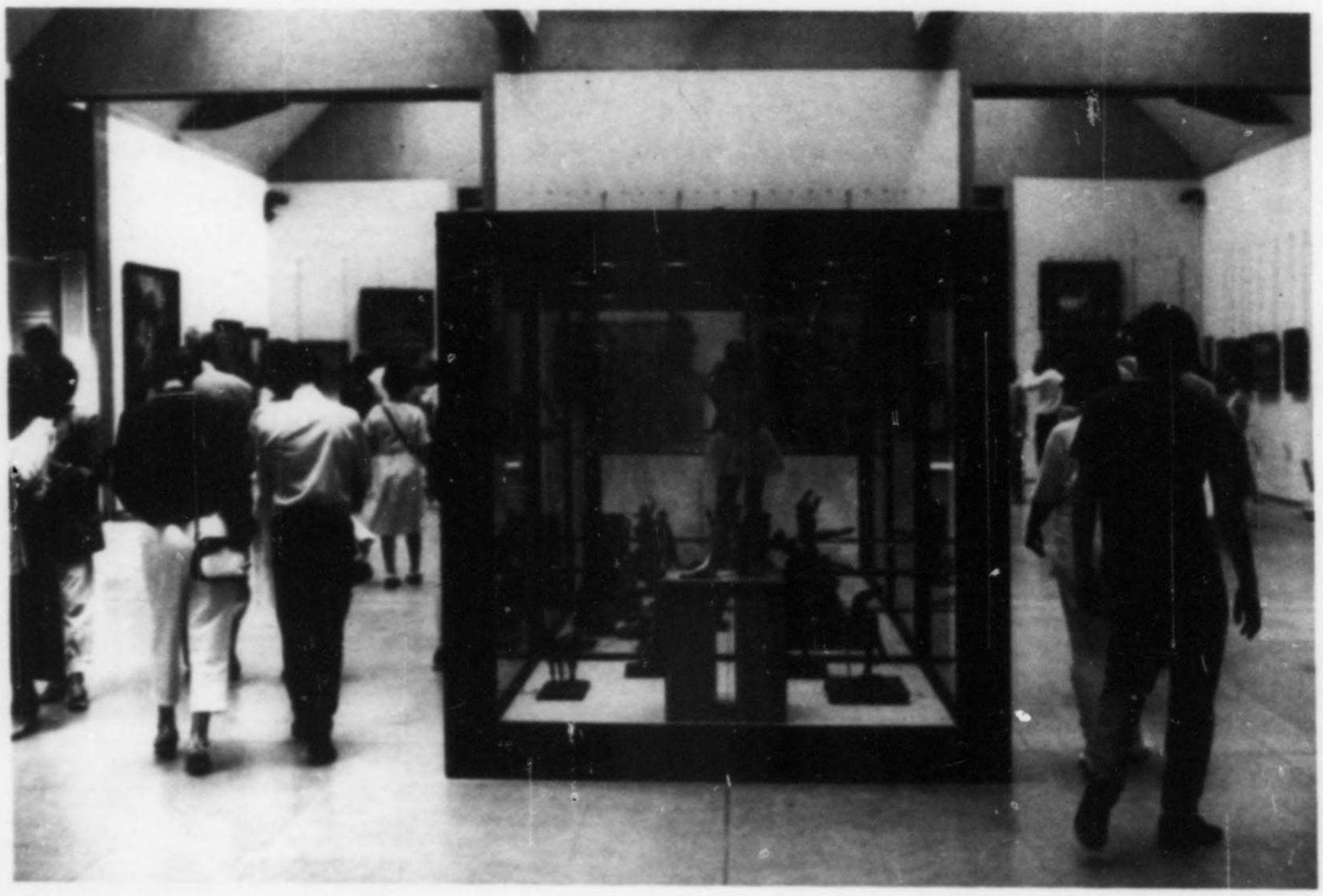
no longer has time to enter them in new lists, and he abandons his manuscript and starts all over again from the beginning, this time promising himself to leave nothing unilluminated, nothing ambiguous. But, try as he may, he cannot keep his word, the matter escapes him, his subject reforms behind him even as he pursues it, and he must add a note, the note becomes a chapter, the chapter grows longer and longer, it turns into a book, but another unfinished one, better to start over. . . . "Go on," we read, the last words of a manuscript, abandoned, on fictions. *Of Laws* was the result of a note and grew out of *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

So Bentham tirelessly continued to write away—this theorist of transparency, this promoter of a style free of all ambiguity, of a panoptic style, if we may use the term—producing unreadable texts, most of which were to see the light only after having been heavily edited by others: Dumont, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Francis Place, Bowring. . . . In addition, he preached the virtues of brevity: "The shorter the sentence," we read in *Nomography*, in a section subtitled "Remedies for Longwindedness," "the better"—and drew up a theory of the art of abbreviations. An opaque panoptician.

February 1973

Musée d'Orsay, Sculpture Court. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)





Musée d'Orsay, Impressionist Galleries. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)

Postmodern History at the Musée d'Orsay*

PATRICIA MAINARDI

The subtitle of *Le Débat*'s special issue on the new Musée d'Orsay, "Toward Another Nineteenth Century," is the most straightforward acknowledgment thus far of what is at issue in the controversy surrounding the new museum.[1] Everything about this museum of nineteenth-century art has been challenged: its architecture, its installations, its selection of works, its chronological scope. But the central issue has been, from the beginning, the revision of accepted historical readings of the past that inevitably accompanies political shifts in the present. This struggle over the appropriation of history has been largely misunderstood or ignored in the American press, where reports have been either patronizingly indulgent or extravagantly adulatory. The twin poles of this response are clear even in their titles: from Richard Bernstein's "In a City That Loves a Debate, Storms Swirl Over Its Newest Museum and Cultural Funds," in the *New York Times*, to Barbara Rose's "Amazing Space," in *Vogue*.[2]

The Musée d'Orsay was first planned under the presidencies of Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to show the relations between the visual arts and the larger culture; with the election in 1981 of François Mitterrand and the socialists, the program was revised to focus on the relationship between art and politics.[3] Now, with the opening of the museum, these conflicting positions

* This article has benefited from close critical readings by Douglas Crimp and Abigail Solomon-Godeau. Others who have helped clarify my ideas include Wanda Bershen, Christine Boyer, Carol Duncan, Josephine Gear, Sharon Zukin. I am also grateful to the friends who helped gather the material: Douglas Crimp, Josephine Gear, John House, William Menking, Jerome Viola, Henri Zerner. The research for this article was supported in part by a grant from The City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program.

1. *Le Débat*, no. 44(March-May 1987); all future references to articles in *Le Débat* are to this issue.
2. Richard Bernstein, "In a City That Loves a Debate, Storms Swirl Over Its Newest Museum," *New York Times*, March 15, 1987, p. H39; Barbara Rose, "Amazing Space," *Vogue*, February 1987, pp. 394–401. The only thoughtful evaluation in the American press is Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, "The Judgment of Paris," *New York Review of Books*, February 1987, pp. 21–25; the best analysis in England is John House, "Orsay Observed," *Burlington Magazine*, February 1987, pp. 67–72.
3. See "Les réponses de Françoise Cachin," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 16–22, 1987, p. 101

Musée d'Orsay, Exterior View. (Photo: Jim Purcell, Musée d'Orsay.)

have been resolved, as has the government itself, into "cohabitation"—in this case, of traditional art historical and museological concepts on the one hand, and revisionism and postmodern architectural theory on the other.

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The Gare d'Orsay, built in 1898 according to the beaux-arts design of academician Victor Laloux, was itself an anachronism.[4] In place of the expectation that railroad stations, as structures outside of tradition, would look to the future and serve as examples for a new modern architecture, this one looked to the past, disguising its function behind a historicist facade that faced the Seine, the Tuileries, and, farther off, the Louvre. The present, and by extension the

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(all future references to articles in *Le Nouvel Observateur* are to this issue). The history of the museum's development is given in the museum's comprehensive press information publication, chapter 8, "Le bâtiment et son histoire," and in numerous interviews with its principal administrators, Michel Laclotte, Inspecteur général des musées, chief curator of painting at the Louvre, and director of the team of curators responsible for the Orsay; Françoise Cachin, director of the Musée d'Orsay; Jean Jenger, director of the Etablissement public du musée d'Orsay; Madeleine Rebérioux, vice-president of the Etablissement public du musée d'Orsay. See especially "Le projet d'Orsay. Entretien avec Michel Laclotte," *Le Débat*, pp. 4–19; "Orsay tel qu'on le voit. Krzysztof Pomain, entretien avec Françoise Cachin," *Le Débat*, pp. 55–74; Jean Jenger, "Musée d'Orsay. L'étrange histoire d'une gare et de sa métamorphose architecturale," *La Revue du Louvre*, no. 6, 1986, pp. 355–363; Madeleine Rebérioux, "L'histoire au musée," *Le Débat*, pp. 48–54.

4. My account of the historical background is taken from the sources cited above and from Michel Laclotte, "Musée d'Orsay. Réflexions sur le programme muséographique," *La Revue du Louvre*, no. 6, 1986, pp. 363–372; and Emmanuel de Roux, "L'oeil souverain" (interview with Françoise Cachin), *Le Monde*, November 29, 1986.

future, appeared in this building to continue rather than disrupt tradition. The typical confrontation between past and future—the Louvre on the right bank versus the train station on the left—was suppressed. When the Gare d'Orsay opened in 1900, the military painter Edouard Detaille praised it with the statement, widely quoted today by Orsay publicists, "The station is superb, and has the air of a palace of art." Detaille, too, was an academician, however, and as such by no means neutral on this issue of the challenge to tradition, architectural and otherwise, posed by railway stations. Orsay was soon functionally obsolete: by 1939 it could no longer house the longer trains then in use and thereafter serviced only suburban commuters. Eventually abandoned, it was slated for demolition in 1971, to be replaced by a hotel/convention center. Ironically, it was the outcry over the destruction of Les Halles and the subsequent commitment to preserve nineteenth-century architecture that saved Orsay. In 1973 it was classed as a historical monument and in 1977 designated a museum to act as a bridge between the collections of the Louvre and those of the Centre Pompidou. The exterior renovation, executed with a minimum of violence to Laloux's original design, was the responsibility of A.C.T. Architecture (Renaud Bardon, Pierre Colboc, Jean-Paul Philippon), while the interior design was given to the Milanese architect Gae Aulenti. Much of the subsequent controversy has focused on her design.

During this same time the scope of the projected museum was also under discussion. It was to include all the arts of the period: painting and sculpture, drawings and prints, architecture, photography, cinema, and the decorative arts. But should it begin in 1830? 1848? or 1863? Pompidou favored 1860. Giscard attempted to push the date back to 1830 or even earlier, but the Louvre refused to part with works that would interrupt the David-to-Delacroix progression that has traditionally characterized the presentation of earlier nineteenth-century art. Under Mitterrand the date was returned to 1848. This choice of whether to begin the museum with the Restoration monarchy or that of Louis-Philippe, or with the Second Republic of 1848, assumed political as well as aesthetic significance. The Marxist historian Madeleine Rebérioux, appointed by Mitterrand as vice-president of the Etablissement public du musée d'Orsay (and now vocally disappointed with the results), defines the final chronological limits in frankly political terms: "1848: Europe enters into a period of revolutions; 1914; the world goes to war."[5] She dismisses 1863 as important only for the painting of the avant-garde (Manet and the Salon des refusés), but not at all for architecture, photography, or sculpture. This raises the question—left unanswered—of what greater significance might be attached to the dates 1815, 1830, or 1848. Rebérioux's closing date of 1914 (Michel Laclotte, who headed the curatorial team that assembled the museum, prefers 1905–08) assumes, in any case, a

5. Madeleine Rebérioux, "Où est l'histoire? A la périphérie," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, January 16–22, 1987, p. 100.

symbolic rather than real significance, since for all practical purposes the collections end around 1900; fauvism, cubism, and expressionism are virtually absent. Also absent is any real foreign presence; the museum's holdings are predominantly French.

Dissension over the museum's projected chronological scope extended to its museography as well. The political Right warned that the socialists intended the museum to advance class struggle by exhibiting irons with Degas's paintings of laundresses, spinning wheels with Van Gogh's weavers, and a locomotive in the navelike central space of the station.[6] As the socialists lost power and were eventually forced into cohabitation with the Right in the spring of 1986, Jacques Chirac becoming President Mitterrand's prime minister, the Left criticized the projected Orsay as "just another beautiful museum, retrograde and conservative."[7] Madeleine Rebérioux claims that it offers "pure delectation," while Françoise Cachin, its director, accuses Rebérioux of wanting to inject sociology (read "socialism") into art: "A museum," she says, "is not a book."[8] Thus were played out, for very high stakes—control over the program of the most ambitious museum of nineteenth-century art in the world—the very issues that constitute the central debate in the historiography of the period: traditional modernism, with its emphasis on the avant-garde and the autonomy of art, versus revisionism of various stripes, ranging from those who, like Rebérioux, want to place art in a historical as well as an aesthetic context, to those who simply want to promote artists excluded from the modernist canon.

In the political arena, the stalemate between Left and Right appears to be just what the electorate wanted; public opinion polls show that the majority desires an end to the polarization that has characterized French politics since the revolution. In the France that was preparing the Musée d'Orsay, then, cohabitation had become not just a necessity but a positive goal.

Virtually the same political exigencies faced France in the mid-nineteenth century, the period the museum covers. At that time, cohabitation was given the name eclecticism, which had been developed into a comprehensive political and aesthetic system by Victor Cousin. "Eclecticism is the philosophy of the century," he wrote, while detractors pointed out that it was nothing more than a compromise between the ancien régime and the 1789 revolution.[9] Nevertheless, Cousin arrived at the conclusion around 1815, at the beginning of the Restoration and

6. Madeleine Rebérioux recounts these charges and gives their sources in *Le Débat*, p. 48; the locomotive proposal was reported by Rosen and Zerner; see note 2.
7. Jean Jenger, "Une mutation architecturale paradoxale," *Le Débat*, pp. 24–30.
8. Rebérioux, *Le Débat*, p. 52; Cachin, *Le Débat*, p. 65; see also Cachin, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 101.
9. Victor Cousin, "Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie" (1828), in *Oeuvres de Victor Cousin*, 3 vols., Brussels, 1840–41, vol. I, p. 109. For an extensive discussion of eclecticism, see Albert Boime, *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1980, pp. 3–35. For its application in the Second Empire, see Theodore Zeldin, *The Political System of Napoleon III*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1971; and Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, forthcoming September 1987, pp. 66–72.

after much personal torment, that phenomena which seem mutually exclusive can and must coexist.[10] He claimed that eclecticism would resolve the major contradictions of nineteenth-century France, "monarchy and democracy, order and liberty, aristocracy and equality."[11]

Current contradictions may differ, but the tensions among warring factions, none of which can summon a clear majority, repeats the nineteenth-century experience and has called forth the same solution, albeit under a different name: cohabitation. It comes, then, as no surprise that this museum of nineteenth-century art has become one of the arenas wherein present-day politics are played out. The Musée d'Orsay has taken on a significance far beyond what in the U.S. is generally considered merely an academic question of aesthetics and taste.

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If there were ever an architecture designed to reconcile contradictions and to substitute spectacle for history, that architecture is postmodernism.[12] Its central stylistic attributes, the appropriation of a historicizing architectural vocabulary and the combination of mutually contradictory styles, create a spectacle of historical references while at the same time dissembling whatever historical meanings those references might possess. This, as we shall see, is an apt description of the "history" put forth by Orsay, where postmodernist architecture and a species of revisionism work hand in glove to reconcile opposites and suppress dissent.

Museums today have different purposes than their eighteenth-century origins might suggest. No longer is the museum visit akin to attendance at church, instructive and uplifting.[13] French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has found that for most visitors the experience of traditional museum installations is dull, analogous to a visit to the library.[14] In her review of the Musée d'Orsay, however, Barbara Rose announced that "museum visits are replacing country outings as a way to relax and revive."[15] At Orsay, these two apparently contradictory attitudes have been reconciled by postmodern architecture; the resolutely inert, non-multi-

10. Cousin, vol. I, p. 102.
11. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 108.
12. I use the term *postmodernism* here only as it is used in architectural discourse, dating from Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1966.
13. The origins of the museum-as-sanctuary have been discussed most recently by Douglas Crimp, "The Postmodern Museum," *Parachute*, no. 46 (March-May 1987), pp. 61–69. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1984, pp. 272–273; and Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History*, no. 3 (December 1980), pp. 449–469.
14. Bourdieu, pp. 272–273.
15. Rose, p. 396.

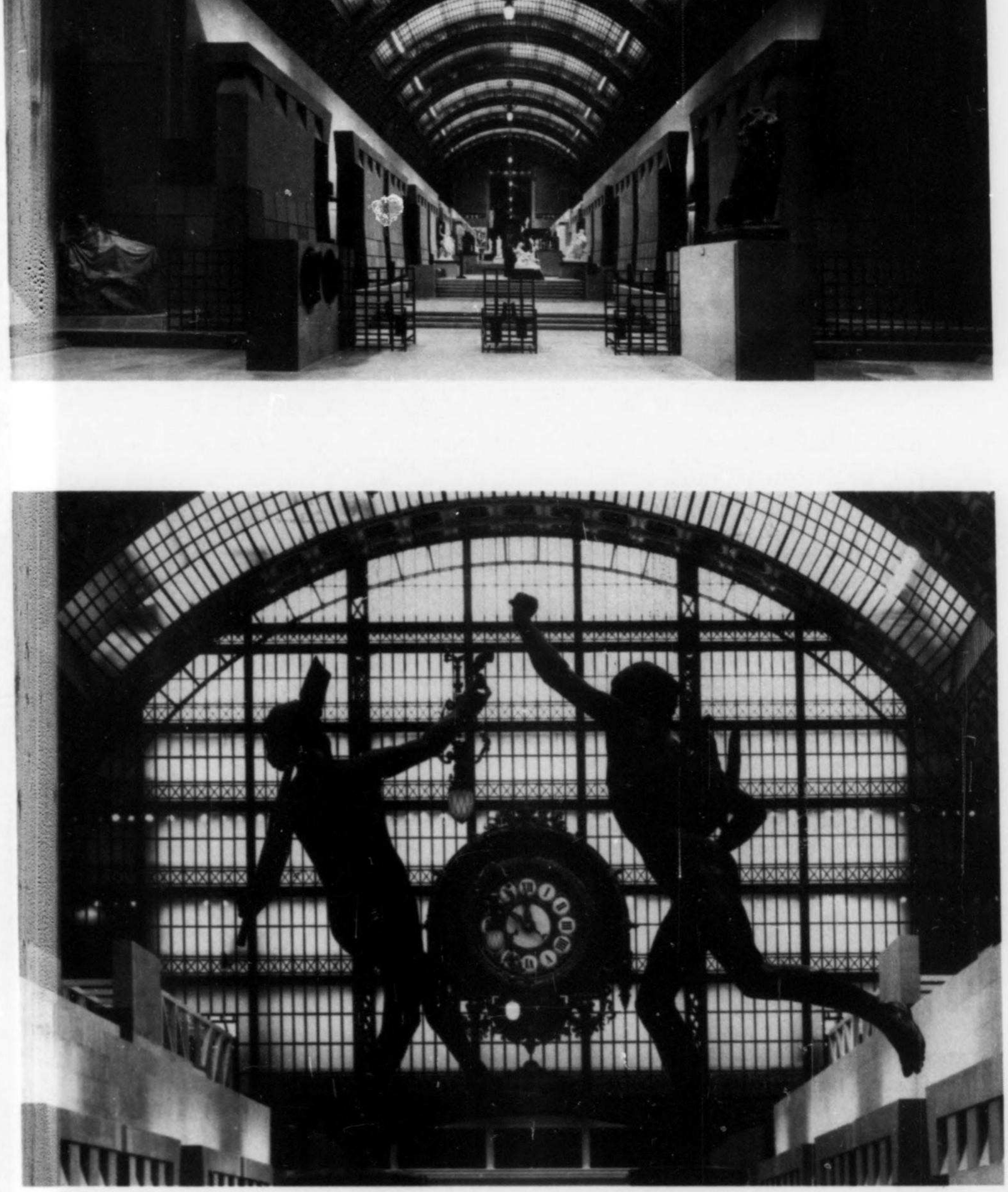
media quality of nineteenth-century art has been subsumed by the highly dramatic "amazing space." Never has there been a museum whose publicity shots reveal such a variety of perfectly composed theatrical images. The museum is conceived as a series of startling, dramatic vignettes, from the endlessly reproduced twin figures by Falguière and Moulin framing the station's giant clock, to the view down the sculpture court embracing both the twin towers and the barrel-vaulted glass roof. Every gallery in the museum has its own special mise-en-scène. Aulenti's experience as a stage designer is immediately apparent. But none of this is accidental: Michel Laclotte has stated that Gae Aulenti was appointed precisely because her work fulfilled the intentions of his curatorial team. The multiplicity of points of view ("a photographer's paradise," he calls it); the diversity of spaces, rarely two galleries alike; the resulting fragmentation of the collections—all were decisions made at the highest level and freely acknowledged.[16] To ensure proper viewing of the spectacle, there are official processional routes to which the visitor is obliged to adhere, allowed to make only occasional choices to lengthen or shorten the visit. Traffic is controlled as it is on one-way streets, with signs indicating only what lies ahead, never behind.

The most successful and popular installation in the museum is a multimedia presentation of the Paris Opera by theatrical designer Richard Peduzzi. It includes an exquisitely crafted cutaway model of Garnier's Opera and a 1:100 scale site model of its *quartier* installed under a transparent floor; museum goers are invited to walk over it and peer down like Superman—and they do so with great enthusiasm. Set into the walls are lighted vitrines showing maquettes of the opera's most memorable stage designs. The installation is something of a high-culture Disneyland, lacking, of course, as Rebérioux has pointed out, any acknowledgment that the opera plan was integral to the Haussmannization of Paris, the massive project of Napoleon III to rid the city of dangerous neighborhoods and their inhabitants and to make it militarily defensible against the revolutions that had toppled every successive regime since 1789. It was a project that raised then many of the same questions raised today by urban renewal, slum clearance, and gentrification; but the installation at Orsay does away with these disturbing issues in order to entertain us with, in Rebérioux's words, "a superb gadget."[17] Fortunately, most nineteenth-century art cannot so easily make the transition to mindless forms of mass entertainment; the absence of such crowds in other parts of the museum makes its own point.

The very aspects of the museum-as-spectacle that have been so successful with the general public have been almost unanimously condemned by professionals. Aulenti's design was disparaged in *Progressive Architecture* as "distracting self-assertion," while in *Architectural Record* it is called "an inexplicable jumble of

16. Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 16; the program is laid out in the press information, chapter 3, "La muséographie."
17. Rebérioux, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 100.

Musée d'Orsay, Sculpture Court. (Photo: Jim Purcell, Musée d'Orsay.)



Sculptures by Moulin and Falguière framing the Gare d'Orsay clock. (Photo: Jim Purcell, Musée d'Orsay.)

materials, forms, colors, and details."[18] Sculptor Pol Bury wrote an article on Orsay entitled "Cannibal Architects," and painter Pierre Soulages one called "Creation in Parentheses."[19] Claude Lévi-Strauss claims the museum gives him migraines.[20]

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> *Here is a real cohabitation comparable to the one existing in politics. For me revolutionary art, Monet, Van Gogh, Cézanne; for you a bit of reactionary art, Cormon, Bouguereau, and the salon painters!*
>
> —Yann Le Pichon, "Orsay: Vive la Réconciliation!" *Paris Match,* December 12, 1986

Embedded within the spectacle of Orsay there is a history lesson. Françoise Cachin maintains that the presence of history is "slight," and adds that, in any case, "History in a museum is art history."[21] By art history she means, of course, a progression of styles arranged in more or less chronological sequence. This is perfectly familiar; what is new at Orsay is the inclusion in the sequence of almost forgotten official artists. This cohabitation of avant-garde and *pompier* art, with all the gradations in between, constitutes, in fact, a major revision of nineteenth-century art history, and Orsay is the first museum to carry it out on this scale. Considering the magnitude of the change and the passions it has ignited, one might expect some sort of position statement on the subject, and yet those provided by the museum officials are strangely bland. "You know, it wasn't a new theoretical visio that engendered the museum," commented Françoise Cachin, "but, once again, a stroke of luck that allowed us to exhibit in the same space works that were scattered about in different places, and to place works in a longer chronological progression and in a larger context."[22] One wonders if Orsay's program consisted of nothing other than emptying out the storage rooms of the Louvre. Asked specifically about revisionism, Cachin responded, "If the public comes away with the feeling that it has been in a revisionist museum, we

18. Thomas Matthews, "The Controversial Musée d'Orsay," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 2, 1987, p. 36; Charles K. Gandee, "Missed Connections," *Architectural Record*, March 1987, p. 128.
19. Pol Bury, "Les architectes cannibales," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 99; Pierre Soulages, "La création entre parenthèses," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, pp. 98–99.
20. Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Le cadre et les oeuvres," *Le Débat*, p. 180.
21. Emmanuel de Roux, "Orsay. Le dix-neuvième mis à neuf," *Le Monde*, November 29, 1986, p. 27; Cachin, *Le Débat*, p. 65.
22. Cachin, *Le Débat*, p. 58.

will feel that we have failed."[23] Michel Laclotte is more forthright: "I don't believe that there exists any fundamental unity among the different tendencies other than negative, the fact that they weren't impressionists. We tried to distinguish precisely what we felt were different currents."[24] This appears to be a modern version of Victor Cousin's program of aesthetic eclecticism: "Every one of the schools represents, in some manner, some aspect of the Beautiful."[25]

Cousin's eclecticism was put into practice during the Second Empire by the government of Napoleon III, which encouraged notables of all political persuasions to rally to the regime.[26] It was soon decided that an aesthetic version of this eclecticism should determine the organization of the 1855 Universal Exposition. Breaking with the official tradition of identifying the French School as classicism and everything else as the opposition, the government arranged separate retrospective exhibitions for the major artists of the period, each of whom represented one of Laclotte's "different currents." Ingres, Delacroix, Decamps, Horace Vernet all received shows; Courbet refused to rally to the government and mounted his own show instead.[27] Laclotte cites this eclecticism of 1855 specifically as a precedent for Orsay, at the same time distorting history by claiming that the government had given Ingres and Delacroix each his own large, separate gallery.[28] In fact, only Ingres and Vernet, the two "official" artists, were accorded this privilege.

The principles governing Orsay's installation have been clearly set forth in its own publications: rejection of period reconstructions, rigid separation of styles, cohabitation (in separate installations) of official and avant-garde art. There are to be no "confrontations" of opposing currents.[29] According to Jacques Rigaud, president of the Etablissement public du musée d'Orsay, "Everything is done to present the work authentically in its integrity, one might say in its solitude, accompanied only by works of the same nature, the same author, the same inspiration. . . ."[30] I have argued elsewhere that the eclecticism of 1855 had the intention of, and succeeded in, emptying art of its politically inflammatory content, replacing it with neutral, purely aesthetic readings.[31] It would appear that Orsay's brand of revisionism attempts the same thing, rein-

23. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
24. Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 11. Both Laclotte and Cachin are careful to make no claims for the *quality* of the work they have chosen to exhibit, except to say that what they have left out is worse. See Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 12; Cachin, *Le Débat*, pp. 66–67.
25. Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, Deuxième édition augmentée d'un appendice sur l'art français, Paris, 1854, p. 206.
26. This is the central thesis of Theodore Zeldin's *The Political System of Napoleon III.*
27. See Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, pp. 39–61.
28. Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 6.
29. Cachin, *Le Débat*, p. 66; also stated in the Orsay press information publication, chapter 3, "La muséographie."
30. Jacques Rigaud, "Réflexions d'un administrateur," *Le Débat*, p. 35.
31. Patricia Mainardi, "The Political Origins of Modernism," *Art Journal*, Spring 1985, pp. 11–17.

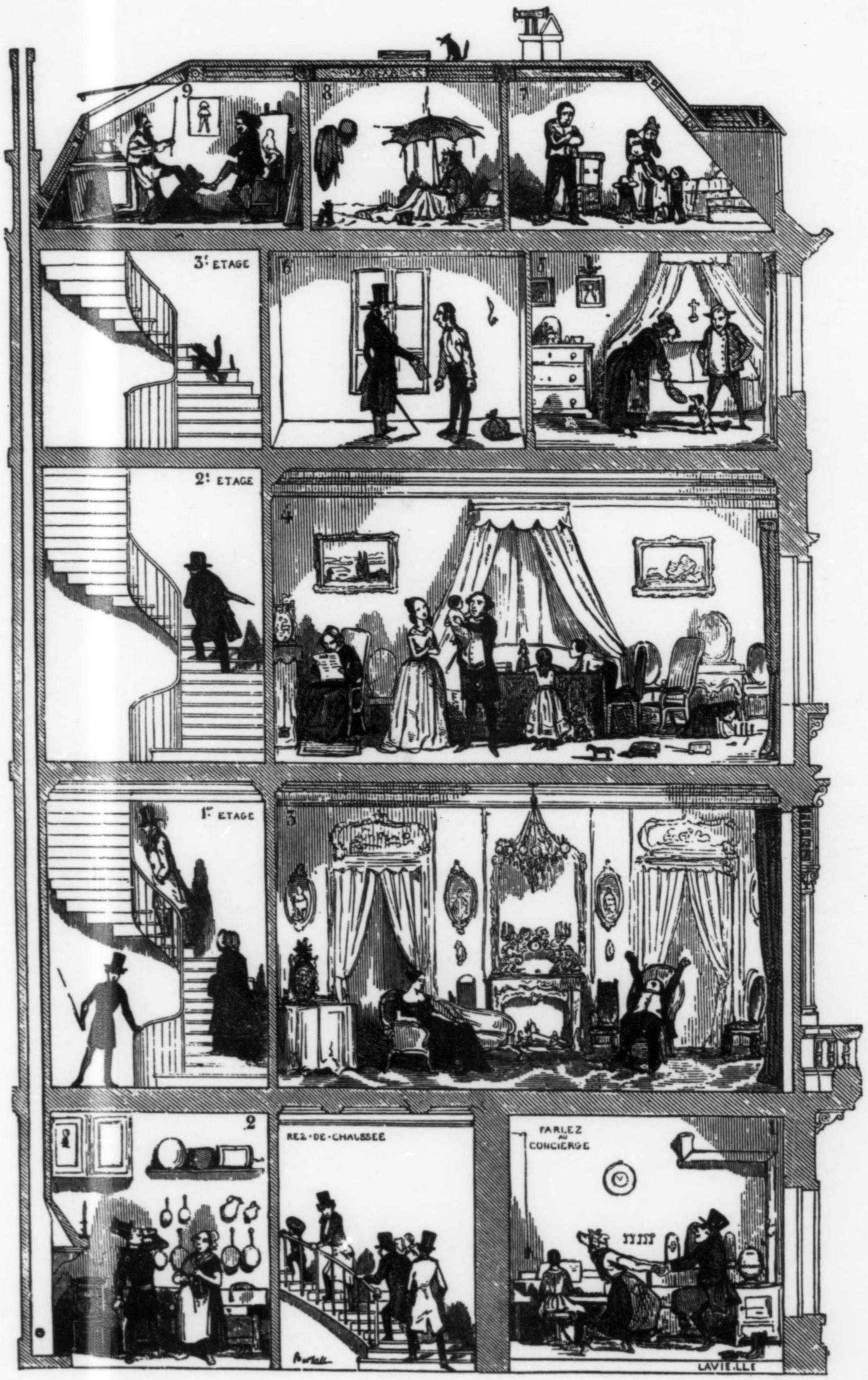
forcing rather than reconsidering formalist readings of art in order to neutralize it all the more and thus integrate a heterogeneous mix of styles—through their isolated installations—into a single museum.

Only a postmodernist architect would be capable of accomplishing such a goal. The official press information package of the Musée d'Orsay describes Aulenti's interior architecture as "escaping from all historical or stylistic references."[32] This is clearly wishful thinking; the notion that architecture can exist outside of history, that an architect can create or appropriate forms empty of all historical significance, is patently absurd, no more acceptable than the notion that history is a mere presentation of "the facts" (in this case works of art), or that museum installations are transparent vessels for the exhibition of art. There is no way to place even two works of art together, much less several thousand, independent of a particular logic or set of governing values. Why these works and not others? installed in this order? and in this kind of space?

At Orsay, the nave contains a grandiose exhibition of neoclassical sculpture; the galleries on the "left" contain works by Daumier, Millet, the Barbizon painters, Courbet, Manet, Monet; those on the "right," Ingres, Cabanel, Couture, Moreau. Photography, a popular medium, is on the left, while the applied arts, here high-art examples, not objects of daily use, are on the right. All of this has been noted in the French press but dismissed by Cachin as ridiculous.[33] The works of the impressionists and postimpressionsts have been hung in the museum's garret—the most crowded installations in the galleries with the lowest ceilings—while the official art of the same period is shown in spacious galleries with high ceilings. The museum's overall scheme is reminiscent of a famous nineteenth-century cartoon showing a cross-section of a typical Parisian apartment house: on the first floor, the bourgeoisie live in opulence and splendor; as one ascends, the ceilings become lower and the residents poorer, until, on the top floor, one finds the bohemian artists. Are the impressionists being "skyed" once again, this time without even the honestly expressed antipathy that ruled the first campaign?

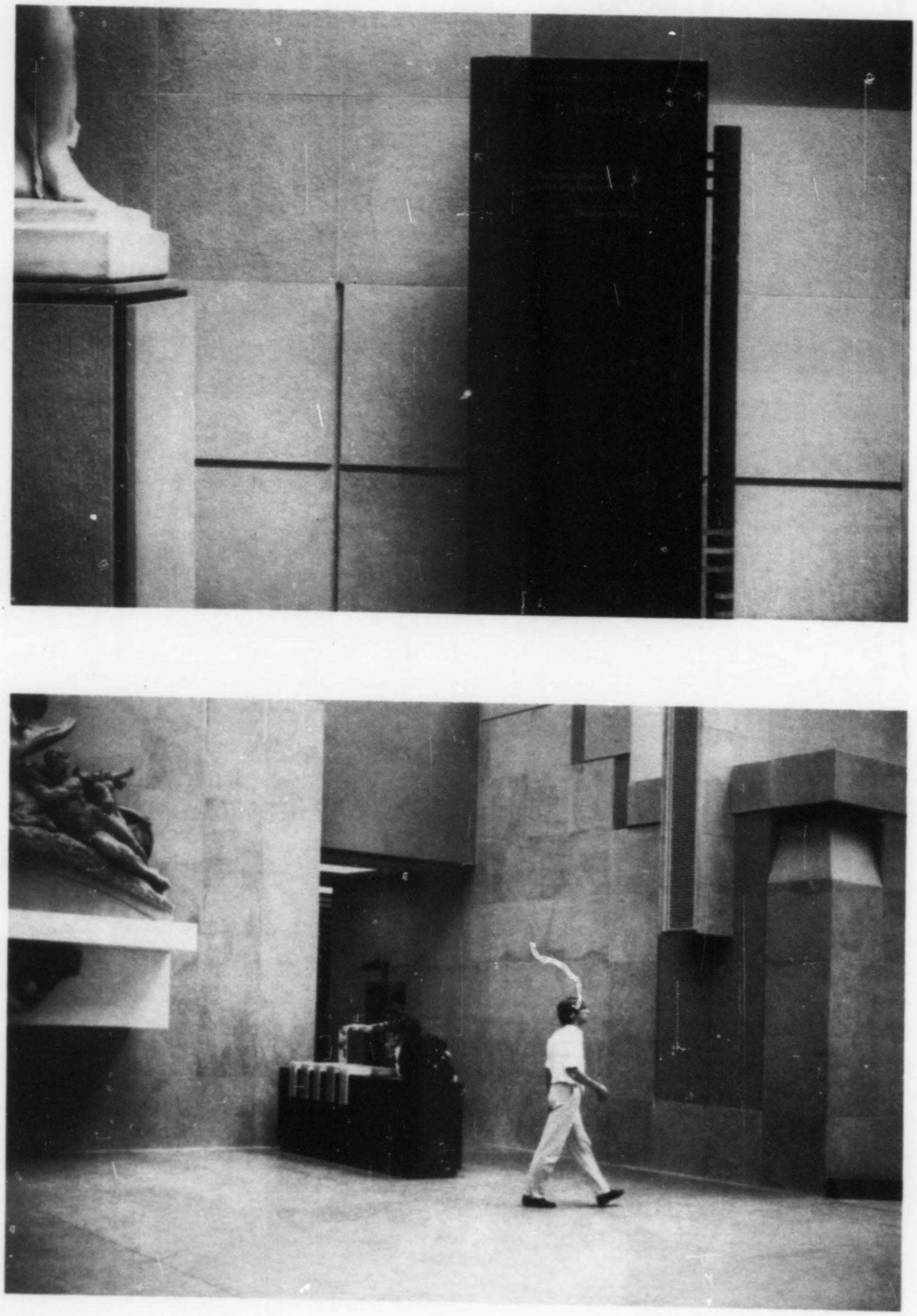
*

32. Press information publication, chapter 9, "L'architecture du musée.
33. Cachin, *Le Débat*, p. 66; among the critics who have noted this fact is Philippe Dagen, "Les Pompiers sous le feu des impressionistes," *Le Monde*, November 29, 1986, pp. 27–31.



Edmund Texier. Tableau de Paris. *1852.*

Musée d'Orsay, Directional sign and information station.
(Photos: Louise Lawler.)



Historical context is what the Orsay is all about.

—John Russell,
"Encyclopedic Museum:
Reviewing the Orsay," *New York Times,*
December 4, 1986

This is not a matter of camp revival as some moralists insist, but of real history as against pious polemic.

—Robert Hughes,
"Out of a Grand Ruin,
A Great Museum," *Time Magazine,*
December 8, 1986

What is "real history"? Robert Hughes would probably be hard-pressed to say, since throughout his review he conflated the three regimes covered by Orsay, the Second Republic (1848–51), Second Empire (1851–70), and Third Republic (1870–1940), into a single all-purpose and nonexistent "Third Empire." The museum's critics have seen in it alternately too much or not enough historical context. Let us not forget that Madeleine Rebérioux, who was appointed to put historical context into the museum, has declared her efforts a failure, resulting only in isolated information stations and a few installations in out-of-the-way corridors.[34] The characterization of the museum's installations as historical has arisen not from its efforts to place the art works in context—as we have seen, this is what it programmatically refused to do—but rather from the mere presence of Laclotte's "different currents," works that have been until recently considered outside of art history.

The museum's decision to have the lion lie down with the lamb (but not too close) can only be applauded; few today would want to continue the traditional polarization of modernism into the annointed and the damned. Modernism itself could legitimize that view only by insisting on the primacy of purely aesthetic values. Now that we begin to see art in more complex terms, we perceive the need to understand the full historical context, which includes the complete range of artistic production. The Musée d'Orsay has gone halfway in this endeavor by placing on view, for the first time, a variety of works no doubt more genuinely representative of the period. But by presenting them simply as variations of style for our delectation, it has suppressed any meanings these works might possess, or have once possessed. In so doing the museum has, however, surreptitiously imposed its own reading of history.

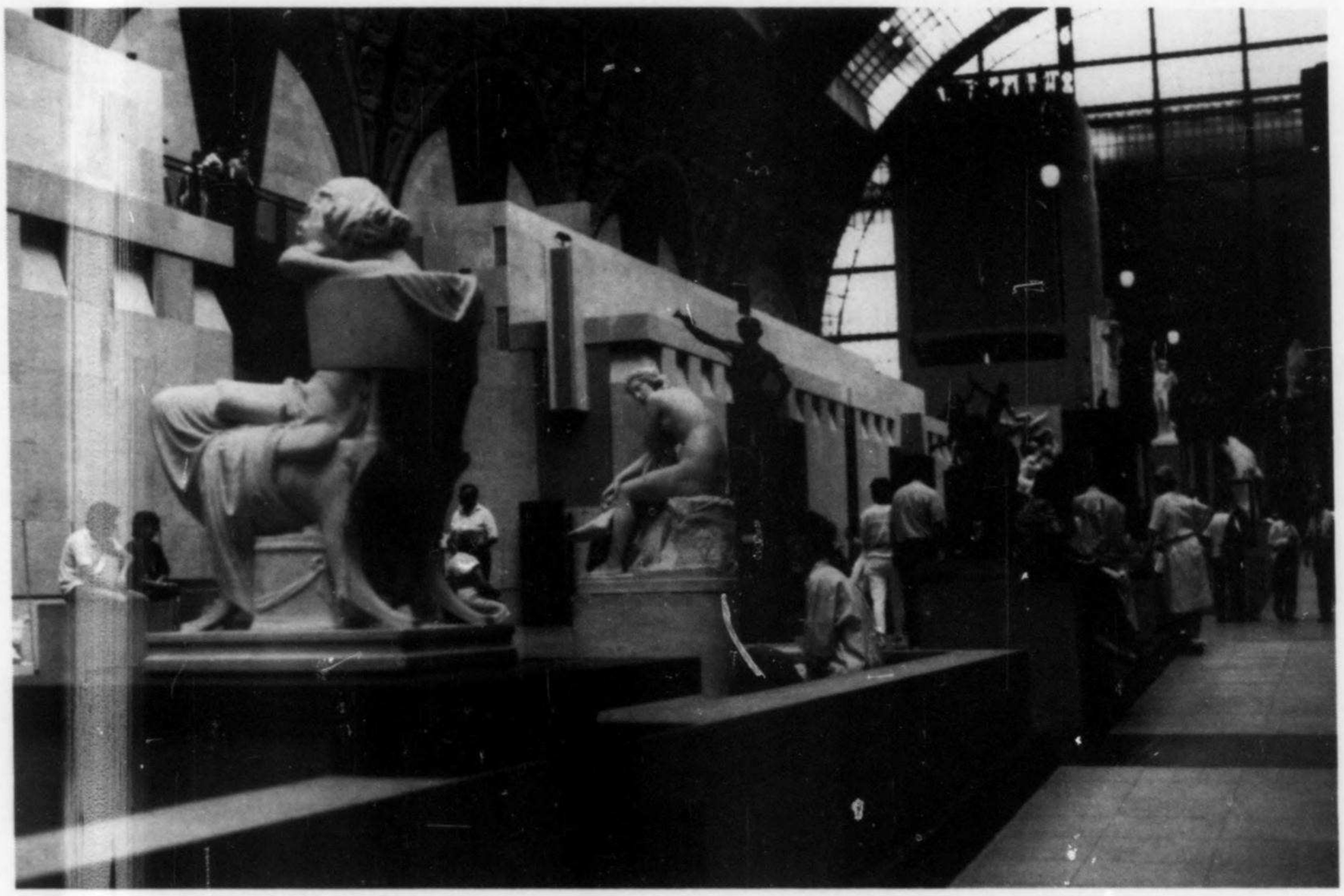
34. Rebérioux, *Le Débat*, pp. 48–54; and *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 100.

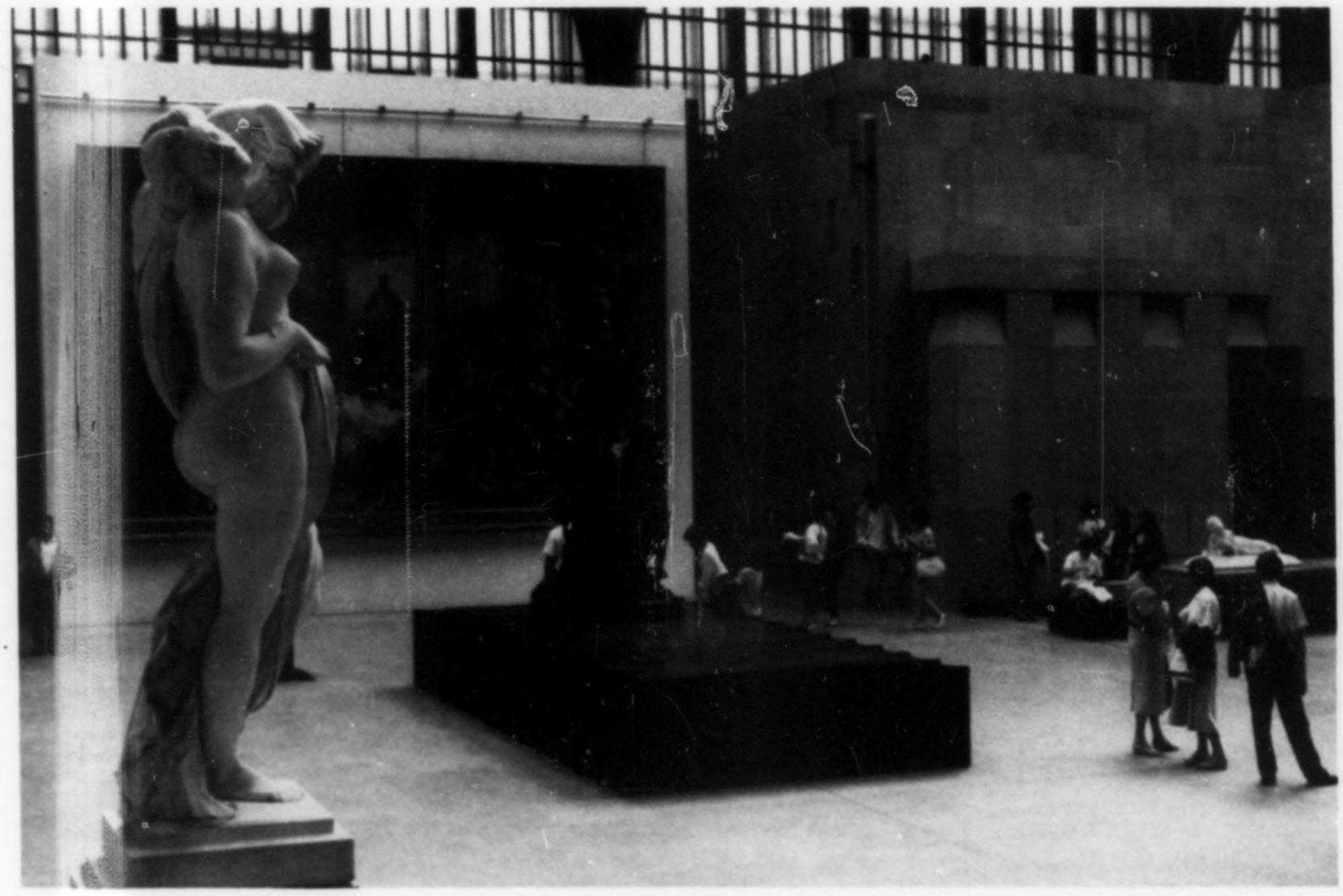
One enters the museum through its nave, passes Rude's *Napoleon Reawakening to Immortality* on the left, Barye's *Lion* of the July Monarchy on the right, and arrives at Aulenti's "Egyptoid" sculpture court. With its flat slab walls and ponderous forms, the sense of the main nave is that of a ceremonial procession of monolithic state power. *Pharaonisme* is the term used in France to describe the political and stylistic implications of the currently popular Egyptian revival, which comes—and not only in France—during a period of political reaction.[35] The industrial past of the train station has been subsumed by Aulenti's design into a traditional temple of the arts, but no longer with the humanizing quality of the classicism employed in earlier museum architecture. Aulenti's gigantic stage set is a bluntly expressed image of state power that brooks no dissent—*pharaonisme* indeed. It is then fitting that this exhibition area—the museum's central one and eight stories high—should contain the sculpture officially sanctioned by the nineteenth-century French state. Had this art been installed in a period installation, amidst the extravagance and frivolousness of the Second Empire, it would have been relativized as taste. But here, reaching back across the centuries, Aulenti has found in Egyptian architecture an image more relevant to contemporary concerns—that this was an art backed by political power.

This is by no means a historical reconstruction; conformity reigns here as it never did in the salons. Most of the artists exhibited are unfamiliar today and were no favorites of the public even in their own time. Their works all share the cool neoclassical style, supported by the government and the academy, that inspired Baudelaire's "Why Sculpture Is Boring" in his *Salon of 1846*, and elicited jabs from caricaturists and yawns from the public. This is sanitized history: the excluded aesthetic dissenters such as Barye, Clésinger, Rodin, Frémiet, even Préault, did, in fact, regularly "polute" the salons with an unsanctioned eroticism, perversity, and violence. Clésinger caused a sensation—and secured his reputation—at the salon of 1847 with his erotic *Woman Stung by a Serpent,* a work that refused to cloak its sensuality in mythological guise. At Orsay this sculpture is relegated to one of the side galleries, and Clésinger is replaced in the main sculpture court by artists such as Eugène Guillaume *(Anacreon),* Jules Cavelier *(Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi),* and Alexandre Schoenewerk *(The Young Tarentine),* who made neither scandals nor reputations. Thus the main court of the museum presents not a historical reconstruction but a fantasy of an officially sanctioned artistic hegemony unchallenged by dissident aesthetics. As no such "purity" existed historically, what can be the intention of creating it now in the keynote exhibition of the museum? At best, Orsay's central installation offers as history only the mirror image of a reified modernism, yet another version of a nonexistent aesthetic hegemony, in this case a revisionist reassessment of minor reputations removed from the dialectic of competition and challenge from newer

35. Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 15.

Main Sculpture Court. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)





Installation of Thomas Couture's Romans of the Decadence. *(Photo: Louise Lawler.)*

styles. At worst it implies a reactionary definition of aesthetic value as determined by the approval of institutional power.

Installed at the crossing of the nave, in the sculpture court, is Thomas Couture's painting *The Romans of the Decadence*, surely the most impressive setting for a single work of art since Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel. It stands alone on a separate, flat, neutral, uninterrupted partition, for once free of the jiggery pokery Aulenti has imposed elsewhere. Most critics have commented on this installation, since, before the museum's opening, this painting would not have been high on anyone's list as the most important work of the period. Françoise Cachin has defended the decision by pointing out that the picture had been exhibited at the Louvre all along (true, but hardly in a place of honor) and by stating repeatedly that at Orsay it is exhibited not as a painting but as part of the architectural decor.[36] In this, of course, it in no way differs from the other art in the museum. Whether the museum officials acknowledge it or not, the next generation of museum goers will undoubtedly draw the obvious conclusion from this installation: that *The Romans of the Decadence* is the preeminent painting of the period. But, necessities of architectural decor aside, the public is not enlightened as to the reasons for this preeminence. Art historical revisionism may be necessary and welcome, but the least one might expect from its adherents is an articulation of the theory that informs their version of history.

Couture was not, for example, acclaimed a major figure during his lifetime, as were Ingres and Delacroix.[37] He was never elected to the academy, and, although the government did purchase *The Romans of the Decadence*, it purchased a good many other pictures as well. With the advent of the Second Empire, Couture's fortunes declined; he was not offered a special exhibition at the 1855 Universal Exposition, even though the government actively courted the renegade Courbet. Acclaimed neither by a popular audience, as were Horace Vernet, Decamps, and, later, Meissonier, nor by dissident political or aesthetic constituencies, as were Delacroix and, later, Courbet, Couture's *juste milieu* position left him outside the aesthetic party politics of the period. Even the academy and conservative critics preferred—still—Ingres.

If the work was not chosen for its historical importance, can we assume that its status was conferred by the curators as an aesthetic judgment? Apparently not, since Cachin's explanation is only that Couture's classical figures echo the neoclassical sculptures in the nave.[38] Although Clésinger's *Woman Stung by a Serpent* was shown and acclaimed in the 1847 salon along with the Couture, the work installed opposite Couture's *Romans* at Orsay is Carpeaux's *Ugolino*, no doubt because *its* classical forms echo those of the Couture.

36. Cachin, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 101; *Le Débat*, p. 66.
37. Albert Boime, in his massive study *Thomas Couture and the Eclectic Vision*, does not attempt to make the case for his stature as a "great artist." For *The Romans of the Decadence*, see pp. 136–137.
38. Cachin, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 100.

An even more serious issue is that the juxtaposition of works with such different meanings neutralizes the political criticism intended by *The Romans of the Decadence*, which caused a furor when first exhibited. At Orsay the painting is installed with its ideological opposites—academic neoclassical sculptures—to present a single "look," envisaged, as Cachin said, as part of the decor. This subservience of art to decor is, in fact, one of the most damaging criticisms leveled against the museum, yet it is issued as a simple statement of fact by its director.

Revisionists who confidently claim that they are resurrecting the artists that were important during their own lifetimes are rarely willing to analyze the terms of that importance. The implied symmetry of public taste and official favor is misleading, for, throughout the nineteenth century, the academy was steadily losing its power to set standards, and the government's preferences were increasingly at variance with public sentiment. The following two quotations illuminate the problems of determining the relation of popularity to historical significance. The first is drawn from Courbet's famous account of his lunch with the Surintendant des beaux-arts, le comte de Nieuwerkerke, in 1854:

> I also reminded him that he owed me 15,000 francs in entrance fees that he had collected for my pictures at previous exhibitions, that his employees assured me that they had each conducted 200 people a day to my *Bathers*, to which he responded with the following stupidity: "But those people weren't going there to admire them." It was easy to respond by challenging his personal opinion, by stating that that wasn't the issue, that whether to admire or criticize them, the truth was that he had taken the entrance fees and that half the newspaper reviews were about my pictures.[39]

The second comes from the critic Edmond About, writing in the conservative *Revue des deux-mondes* in 1868, after the censorship had been lifted: "If a list were made up of French painters in hierarchical order according to the number and importance of prizes that these eternal schoolboys have received from the ministry, you would die laughing."[40]

While it is true that the impressionists, to take another example, did not have a large following, neither did Cabanel or Bouguereau. Ingres was never popular, nor did he want to be, for in politically conservative circles anything having to do with "the people" smacked of vulgarity, if not riot and revolution. Nonetheless Ingres was outraged in 1855 to learn that not only the public but also the jury at the Universal Exposition preferred Horace Vernet to him, and Landseer to them both. In 1883 the academic sculptor Eugène Guillaume (six of

39. Gustave Courbet to Alfred Bruyas, 1854, quoted in Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire*, p. 59.
40. Edmond About, "Le salon de 1868," *Revue des deux-mondes*, June 1, 1868, p. 727.

his works are in Orsay's nave) finally prevailed upon the government to establish a triennial exhibition to encourage "serious" (what we would call *pompier*) art. But despite the participation of Baudry, Bastien-Lepage, Bouguereau, and Cabanel (all well represented at Orsay), the public stayed away in droves, and the exhibition was subsequently canceled.[41] Perhaps we can look forward to this still, as the *New York Times*, after a series of articles about Orsay, finally advised its readers, "Don't waste time downstairs in the impressive main hall. The Orsay museum's finest treasures, the collection of Impressionist paintings by Monet, Van Gogh, Renoir, Pissarro and others are all crowded into the last four rooms upstairs."[42]

Revisionism often implies a critique of modernist judgments as qualitative (read "subjective") and thus inferior to those of whatever version of revisionism is being promulgated, usually naively construed as quantitative. But how is this positivist "truth" to be determined? Numbers of medals? of government commissions? Membership in the academy? Preference by the greatest numbers? Preference by critics writing for the largest circulation journals? for government journals? art journals? Or perhaps historical importance should be judged retroactively according to the preferences of future generations, regardless of contemporary opinion. The literature of modernism has, to be sure, relied on the opinions of critics who are judged the greatest writers of the period and are therefore assumed to have had the most finely tuned aesthetic sensibilities. It is this that has privileged Baudelaire, Zola, Mallarmé, and given us the avant-garde. This may be an inadequate standard, but, in suggesting as an alternative the ill-defined criterion of preference by official power, Orsay has done considerably worse.

Works of art are grouped together in museum installations according to various categories: works by an individual artist, works of a stylistic movement, of a given period, or related to a particular theme. All but the last are traditional museological strategies to provide a manner of viewing art devoid of any hints of its social context. It is therefore the thematic category that has been adopted by revisionist museology, which provides a mechanism for showing the best and the worst artists, high and popular art, the academic and avant-garde, pure art and commercial, painting, photography, illustration. And yet recent attempts at revision along these lines have often intentionally omitted the best-known artists, as though it would be sacrilegious to include them in this leveling context. The 1981 *Realism* show in Cleveland and Brooklyn offered us that movement with Courbet virtually absent. In the same vein, Orsay gives us realism minus Courbet, Millet, and Daumier, as well as a gallery of Orientalism without Ingres and

41. "Nouvelles," *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, December 8, 1883, p. 306; "Concours et expositions," *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, December 15, 1883, p. 313; Gustave Ollendorff, "L'exposition nationale de 1883," *Revue des deux-mondes*, November 15, 1883, pp. 452–453.
42. Paul Lewis, "What's Doing in Paris," *New York Times*, April 19, 1987, p. XX10.

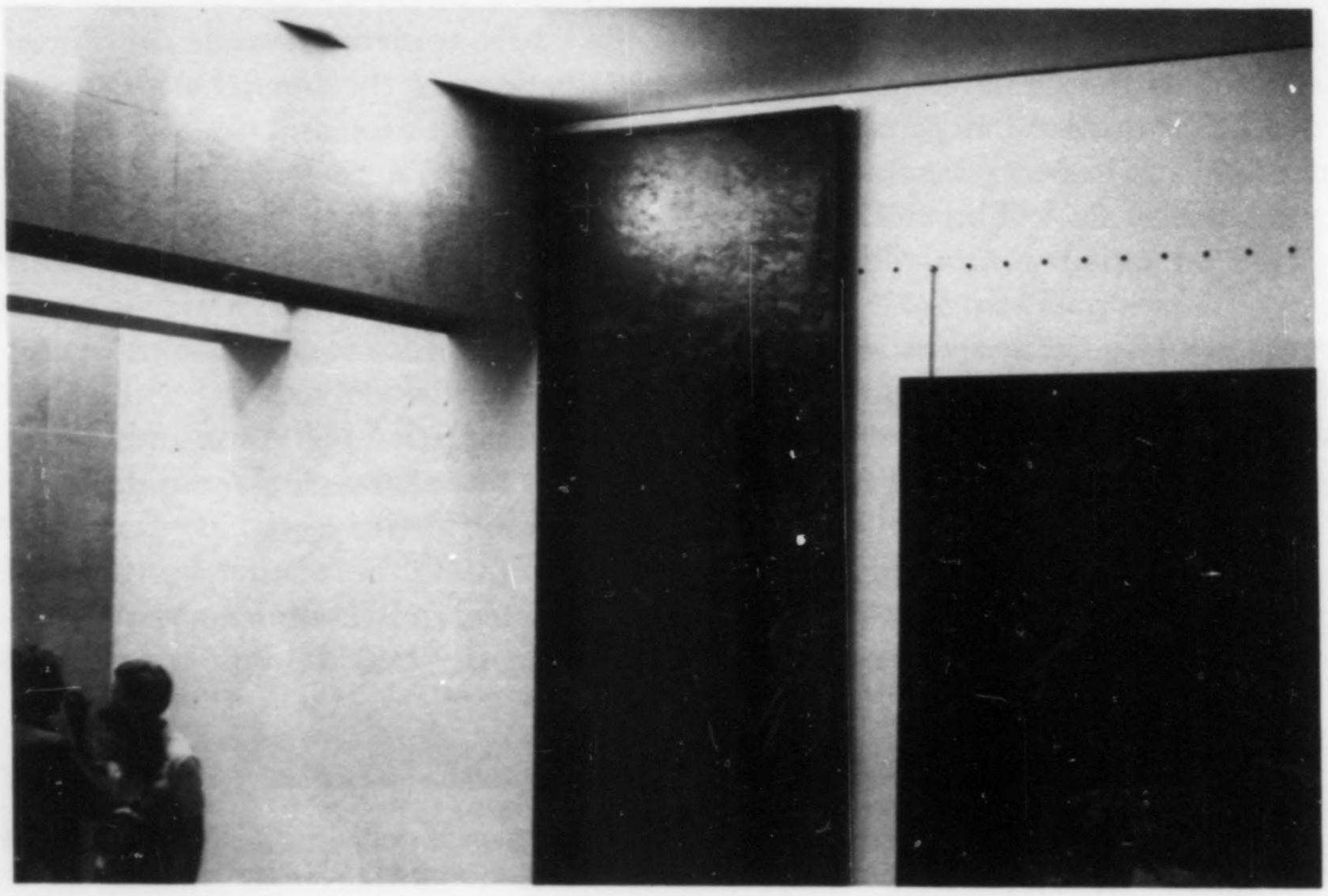
Delacroix. Courbet's work is installed separately as a one-artist show; thus, instead of seeing Courbet without the realist movement, as in the former Louvre installation, we now see realism — Meissonier, Vollon, Ribot — without Courbet. At the Louvre Courbet was presented as the culmination of the tradition of *la grande peinture*; his *Burial* and *Studio* completed the progression of large history paintings by which centuries of French artists measured their stature. At Orsay, Courbet is marginalized, placed in the transept of Couture's nave. The glare of cross lighting makes the Courbets at times invisible; Aulenti's notched, corniced partitions inflict a peculiar rhythm on his paintings; and the use of baffles and screens to regulate the erratic lighting destroys whatever elegance the installation might have had. More importantly, Courbet stands alone, isolated from even the art historical context that informed his ambition to paint his grand *machines* with subjects drawn from contemporary life.

The reason given for separating official from avant-garde art, even in the thematic galleries, is that a mixture of styles would be degrading to all concerned.[43] Françoise Cachin is proud of an installation that places Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* near Clésinger's *Woman Stung by a Serpent,* the one a celebrated work of hybrid rococo-classicism, the other of romanticism. But she is incensed at the suggestion that Manet's *Olympia* be shown with the Cabanel (they were both exhibited at the Salon of 1863, where the Manet caused a scandal and the Cabanel was bought by the emperor): "Perhaps there is reason to do this for schoolchildren, to show them that the comparison would be devastating for the Cabanel. But we don't want to work for schoolchildren."[44] The purity of the avant-garde is thus preserved, but so is its inability to confront directly the official styles of its day. The issues, stresses, contradictions of the nineteenth century have been rendered invisible through compartmentalization and the distractions of theme-park spectacle. As Michel Laclotte put it, "There are virtually never two galleries alike. This fully corresponds to our program of compartmentalization. We needed to show this by a succession of rooms, each one different both from the one preceding and the one following."[45] But this strategy is neither so neutral nor so transparent as Laclotte would suggest. Throughout the museum, the works of dissident artists are marginalized; the lesson appears to be that history is made by official power, that art once rewarded will always retain its primacy, that to occupy a dissident position is to be — forever — marginalized.

Implicit in the Orsay installations is an ambivalence about context that reveals its position on history to be postmodernist. The belief that "great art" exists for its own sake, outside of history, continues; thus Cachin's irritation at the charge of revisionism. What is new is the idea that "bad art" (the term is the

43. This has been repeatedly stressed in all the interviews given by Laclotte and Cachin, as well as in the Orsay press information publication.
44. Cachin, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 100; *Le Débat*, p. 61.
45. Laclotte, *Le Débat*, p. 16.

Third Republic pompier *art "in context." (Photo: Jim Purcell, Musée d'Orsay.)*



Impressionist Galleries. (Photo: Louise Lawler.)

curatorial team's) must be exhibited, but at the same time, unlike "great art," needs a context in order to be appreciated. To understand this fissure developing within contemporary museology, we need only compare the luxurious setting provided for the *pompier* art of the Third Republic—the only period reconstruction in the museum—to the spare modernist appearance of the impressionist galleries.[46]

Whatever symbolic effect the ascent toward impressionism-in-the-garret might have is mitigated by the lowered ceiling level and elbow-to-elbow hanging. Not for these outsiders the luxury of space enjoyed by their Third Republic salon brethren. At times the installation approaches parody, as when in the Seurat gallery a latticework ceiling and regular rows of black dots—holes in the wall above and below the paintings, supposedly to aid in reducing noise—seem to mimic the postimpressionist technique. Everywhere the architect's presence is intrusive, upstaging the art, conscripting it as an aspect of the decor. Gauguin's paintings are installed in shallow alcoves on either side of a central aisle barricaded by rows of dark, closely spaced, and structurally unnecessary columns. Perhaps the worst installation is not that of the late nineteenth-century avant-garde, however, but that of the mid-century Barbizon painters. These intimate landscapes, in heavy gold baroque frames, are hung against bare, stone block walls. The curators' antipathy to contextual settings seems to have led in this case to an anticontextual one. But of course this combination of baroque and modern, ornate and functional perfectly accords with postmodern architecture's passion for juxtapositions of stylistically disparate, historically contradictory elements.

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If a camel is a horse drawn by committee, then Orsay is a camel of a museum. Compromise is everywhere evident and, not surprisingly, no one is entirely pleased. Traditionalists point to the vivisection of Manet, whose work is scattered throughout the museum. Some revisionists point to the segregation of official and avant-garde artists and the absence of historical context. The inclusion of several collections whose bequests stipulated that they be installed as units further divides the work of major artists. There is an obvious crumbling of the old verities, but little to replace them. Fragments of museological ideas remain intact: here a stellar installation for Manet or a gallery of Orientalism, there a private collection or a salon—the living room, not the exhibition—of *pompier* art.

To imagine the opposing ideological positions that determined the "cohabitation" that Orsay has finally settled upon, one might consider how this mu-

46. The most telling omission in this museum of nineteenth-century art is that there has been no attempt to recreate the appearance of a salon, the central exhibition institution of the time. A salon installation would, of course, necessitate the direct confrontation of avant-garde and official art.

seum would have differed if it had implemented the proposal, attributed to Madeleine Rebérioux, that a locomotive be placed in the nave.[47] What would become of Aulenti's Egypteria and the neoclassical sculpture gallery? Would it then have made sense to install the impressionists, who took such pleasure in train stations, up in the attic?

The art of the nineteenth century has always presented and will continue to present political problems, for, despite revisionist attempts to soften or conceal the fact, the judgments of nineteenth-century official institutions were unsupported both by contemporaries and by future generations. This failure of vision remains a source of deep anxiety, constantly challenging the infallibility of power. The Musée d'Orsay has opened during a moment of irresolution in French political life and reflects that irresolution, while at the same time attempting to distract us from it with postmodern forms of entertainment and spectacle. But the spectacle carries its own message: a reading of history that reinforces the authority of the state, even in aesthetics.

47. Rebérioux has stated that for her Art and Industry are "the warring goddesses of the nineteenth century," and that the absence of any acknowledgment of industry at Orsay is a major flaw. See Rebérioux, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, p. 100; *Le Débat*, p. 49.

Learn to Read, She Said

ANN SMOCK

"Albert des Capitales" is an account of a torture session. It is one of the narratives in Marguerite Duras's *La douleur*.[1] I was not inclined, initially, to pay much attention to it. I was put off by various things, among them this: that Duras should not have hesitated to provide an account of torture with *tone*. That she should place one impersonal, expressionless phrase after the other like dull blows dealt in deliberate succession—and thus, with these resoundingly impassive, dramatically colorless utterances, enthrall. "The first blow falls. It resounds strangely. The second." "This is serious, it's true; a man is being tortured." The flat, laconically declarative style that refuses torture a single spectacular or even extraordinary feature and denies it the status of the utterly foreign and unthinkable very effectively surrounds it with an aura of spellbinding fatality. Or so it seemed to me. "Now it's inevitable," pronounces Thérèse, the interrogator. "You have to be somewhere, doing something. I happen to be here, in this dark room, closed in. . . . People think these are extraordinary things. They're like anything else. Like anything else, they happen to you. Then, they've happened. They could happen to anyone."

It is true that before I even read "Albert des Capitales" I'd already gotten my back up to some extent because of Duras's observation, in *L'amant*[2] (which was published the same year as *La douleur*) that between the writers and intellectuals she knew before the war who became collaborators, and herself, who joined the Resistance and later the Communist Party, there was after all no appreciable difference. "Albert des Capitales" seemed a sensational corroboration of that to-my-mind rather melodramatic remark. For the story describes French leftists at the end of the war torturing a Frenchman who had served the Gestapo. People who risked everything, it informs us in its hauntingly toneless tone—people who themselves endured torture rather than acquiesce in Nazi brutality—were nev-

1. Marguerite Duras, *La douleur*, Paris, P.O.L., 1985; trans. as *The War: A Memoir* by Barbara Bray, New York, Pantheon, 1985. The quotations in this paper are given in my own translation.
2. Marguerite Duras, *L'amant*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1985; trans. as *The Lover* by Barbara Bray, New York, Pantheon, 1985.

ertheless just as brutal as the Nazis and in the same way. They too tortured. "You have to be somewhere, doing something. People think these are extraordinary things. They happen. They could happen to anyone." What follows from such a message? Nothing, in my view. It is not so much a challenge to think, about anything, as an invitation to become transfixed by horror, immobilized, as if there were something mesmerizing, infinitely fascinating about human indecency; as though it were a mystery, bringing ideas and principles to their knees. "These are sacred texts," Duras intones at the edge of "Albert des Capitales." "Learn to read." This portentous introduction made me impatient.

Certainly it is important that accounts of torture be published, that we read about torture, in detail, and know for a fact that human beings of all persuasions are capable of practicing it, of surrendering to it, *and* of resisting it. But this is precisely because it is important that depravity not exert upon reason the numbing effect which, as Sartre sensibly pointed out in the preface he wrote to Henri Alleg's *La question*, tends to serve a purpose: pacification. Sartre was writing during the Algerian War, in the face of a situation similar to the one presented in "Albert des Capitales." For it was not very long after Frenchmen suffered torture at the hands of the Germans that Frenchmen were torturing Arabs in Algeria. The single thing that had seemed indisputable during the Occupation, when scarcely anything could be counted on, the one thing that had seemed absolutely certain—that Frenchmen would never be torturers (though the worst befall them, they could never be brought so low as that)—turned out to be an illusion. The inconceivable proved perfectly possible. Nothing, not the most fundamental principles or traditions, could rule it out. Nothing could guarantee the boundary between humanity and the abyss; no value or commitment ever had done anything but mask the horrendous sameness of the just and wicked. The awful news that the torturer lives in everyone, including the victim, circulated in France during the Algerian War like a rumor, Sartre observes, despite rigorous censorship of books accurately documenting specific occurrences of torture in Algeria; and the French government, which required that censorship, had no objections to the rumor. In fact, Sartre suggests, the government tacitly encouraged the rumor. For like the complacently cynical wisdom—"all victims turn out to be traitors, they all talk eventually"—it served a useful purpose: this bleak understanding of human events (disabused, realistic, free of self-righteous and reassuring illusions) served to remove torture from the realm of realities that demand lucid and resolute reactions. Sartre admired Alleg's account of the torture he withstood because it bore witness to the fact that while nothing at all insures any Frenchman, or anyone at all, against becoming a torturer like those who brutalized Alleg, nothing determines that anyone should become one either. The victory of Alleg, a Frenchman, over his French torturers proves that nothing about torture is inevitable or a matter of some awesome fatality at all. Alleg restores the whole issue of torture to the domain where each person's relation to it remains to be determined, by him.

It was willful blindness on the part of French communists during and after World War II that Duras intended to denounce, I expect, in the remark I've referred to from *L'amant*; it was their willingness to collaborate with the Soviet Union, whose brutality they refused to recognize, that she equates with willingness on the part of other French men and women to collaborate with Nazi Germany. A comparison between these two attitudes may well have its usefulness, but the momentously conclusive *equation* of communism and fascism, Stalinism and Nazism, Left and Right, collaboration and resistance sweeps the whole issue, it seems to me, out of the realm where reason and judgment must keep on operating against stiff odds, into one where an apparently measureless abyss of cruelty and treachery opens before the mind. There, helpless to maintain its ordinary, unglamorous procedures and responsibilities—reduced to regarding these as trivial affectations—the intelligence simply staggers. Maybe it is proper to quake before the divine, but surely human power—to deceive, kill, torture—should not provoke in me religious awe, especially not inasmuch as I have to acknowledge these powers to be among my own. If you know how to read at all, I thought, you ought to recognize that.

*

My impatience at Duras's story was accompanied, however, by quite another feeling, a rather dim one which I tried to clarify, by rereading and thinking again. It was that "Albert des Capitales" is what language is for.

I mean, it *has* to be told. There has to be language, because "Albert des Capitales" *must* be told. Other stories that have been or will be told—this, at any rate, was my feeling—might or might not be, can or cannot. It's fine if they are, even marvelous, but they aren't subject to the same absolute requirement—*tell! talk!* And if there is a language in which to tell them—if language is a given, to be employed, or not—it is because of "Albert des Capitales."

This story seemed to me alive with the urgent necessity that it be communicated, and it caused me to think of texts such as *L'espèce humaine*—Robert Antelme's account of his time in a concentration camp, or Sarah Kofman's *Paroles suffoquées*, dedicated to Antelme and to the memory of her father killed at Auschwitz—texts that attest to what defies speech and comprehension and must nevertheless be heard, heeded, and known. Yet I was not sure—I remain quite unsure—that "Albert des Capitales" does tell anything, or that what it recounts, if a torture session is what it recounts, is, actually, that which must be told and heard; my impression was rather simply that in this story language is subject to the demand, *talk!* And that this story gives the response. "Albert des Capitales" gives language (and is what language is for).

To give *(donner)* is, I realized, the main verb of the story. The victim of the torture session is a *donneur*: he furnished names to the Gestapo, turned in Jews and resisters—delivered, betrayed, gave them. He talked. It's from him that

Thérèse, the interrogator, undertakes to extract a confession, together with information on accomplices in a suspected ring of spies and informers. So: it's talking that is subject to the demand, *talk!* And, it's something unspeakable. By unspeakable, I mean disastrous to speech; I mean talking.

La donneur is given to Thérèse, by D., the leader of her Resistance group. "D. gave me *le donneur*. I took him. I have him." What is it to have, to receive a *donneur*? That is in fact the interrogator's question, I think. Thérèse has the *donneur* mercilessly beaten to extract the answer. The answer to the question, what *is* the gift, *le don*—the gift of this "giver," *le don du donneur*? She wants the *donneur* to tell, to talk. She wants him to give giving, to give the gift.

But she gets no answer. The traitor gives her no information about his treachery; he names no accomplices. The traitor betrays no one, gives nothing away: *le donneur ne donne rien, personne.* He doesn't talk.

"I give this text along with others," Duras writes. "Learn to read, these are sacred texts." Maybe to "have" a *donneur* is something like having "Albert des Capitales"—something like receiving this text, this gift. Maybe reading is the term for having the gift that can neither be given nor received—*le don du donneur*. Maybe reading is the term for receiving the gift of speech *(le don de la parole).*

It was in large part exasperation at Duras's comment concerning no difference—no difference between resistance and collaboration, Stalinism and Nazism, Left and Right—that inclined me not to pore over "Albert des Capitales." When I got to poring over it anyway, what seemed to me to count was the difference there neither is, nor is not, between one meaning of *donneur*, or *don*, and the other, the phrases I've been led by the story to pronounce: *le don du donneur, le don de la parole*. The difference between to give—to offer—and to give—to denounce or betray. That was what seemed to matter. The difference between gift—offering—and gift—treachery. Between the gift, that is, and the disaster. Between the gift of speech, say, and its ruin, the disastrous betrayal of human communication—telling, talking. I believe it is that difference, which there neither is, nor is not, in an expression such as *le don de la parole* (or *to talk*)—I believe it is that difference that the relentless blows during the torture session try to expose. Or rather, to make. There are some indications of this. For example, Thérèse desperately accelerates the rhythm of the blows in order that the difference between silence and silence be heard—be heard to speak: the difference between the silence of the traitor whom she can't get to talk, whom she can't, that is, get to quit lying, and the silence of those who wouldn't talk to the Germans, who were lined up against the wall and shot, the silence of the dead. "Against the wall that is silence—this one *has* to talk, this *donneur*, this one, here." It is the difference between "that silence," "against the wall," "such a different silence" and "this one," "this *donneur*, here"—that the interrogation addresses, and whose avowal all the questions demand. It is that difference that

must speak, that is subject to the demand, *talk*! That difference, that speech. That is the gift, I believe, that the interrogation demands be given.

I should say that certain sentences of Blanchot's, from *L'écriture du désastre*,[3] were in my mind when I reread "Albert des Capitales." "The danger is that the disaster should acquire meaning instead of body." "Pain suffers from being innocent, and would like to become guilty in order to lessen." "To give is not to give anything that one can give, but rather that which has always been disposed of already." And then this expression, difficult to understand: "*Le don du désastre,*" the gift of the disaster; and finally, this surprising sentence: "*Le désastre prend soin de tout.*" The disaster takes care of everything.

Anxiousness that difference be exposed, or rather, made (that the gift be given), is not peculiar to Thérèse; it is in the air, and from the first pages of "Albert des Capitales." Everyone, we read, was eager to see a traitor, and know for sure that that was what he was looking at; everyone wanted to discover what a *donneur* was like—a betrayor of men, a *donneur d'hommes*. "For years we'd been hearing about them; at first we thought we saw them everywhere. This one would be the first we'd maybe see for sure. Finally we had the time to be sure. And to see what a *donneur* looked like. Our curiosity was intense." The determination to see, bring to light, uncover, lay bare grows more adamant on every page; as in other descriptions of torture I've read, the intent to obtain particular information is forgotten or abandoned practically from the start; it is scarcely ever a matter of that at all. It is difference that has to be brought to show itself: what doesn't resemble, isn't like, has nothing in common with humans, doesn't share humanness. And this does come to show, as the blows dealt by the torturers intensify. "He's become a man who has nothing in common with other men. Every minute the difference increases, settling in." Difference: what doesn't link human beings one to the other, but separates; what doesn't bind them together, but dissolves the bond of community, or, you might say, gives it. The gift of humanness: that is what increases, settles in, and augments when *le donneur d'homme* is exposed.

Now, although Thérèse is not alone in her eagerness to reveal difference, it seems she is more intransigently preoccupied with it than anyone else in her Resistance group, and that is why D. gives her the *donneur*. She had recently quarreled with her comrades when they reported having spread out straw for a group of German soldiers they'd captured to rest upon, and distributed some beer among their prisoners, as though between fighting men a moment's rest and provisions can always be shared, regardless of whatever makes them enemies officially. Thérèse, upon hearing this, insulted her friends and left the room. There's nothing in common between Hitler's soldiers and anyone, according to

3. Maurice Blanchot, *L'écriture du désastre*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980; trans. as *Writing of the Disaster* by Ann Smock, University of Nebraska Press, 1986.

her, and it is a phony generosity that forgets this. She is one who won't ever forget it, and who recognizes how easily it is forgotten—how swift the Liberation forces will be to smooth over the difference between those who resisted and those who got along more or less well by going along to one degree or another. She foresees how quick the Gaullists will be to make a place in their new order for the traitor ("They'll find a use for him") if he's not dealt with immediately, by her. She observes how complacently those who died, tortured or shot or deported by the Germans, are already being dismissed from all consideration by the others who were careful to survive the Occupation and who will have no more difficulty surviving the Liberation because they are always ready to fall into line and always have everything in common with everybody else. They always share this in particular: readiness to judge, the readiness of those who never doubt they're in the right. In "La douleur," the opening narrative of the volume, the sheer legitimacy of the Gaullist officials is revolting, shameless. From hallway to hallway they herd mute women, volunteers for work in German factories, straggling back to France. It is with these women, objects of contempt, who have nothing in common anymore with anyone, and with whom she, who lost her husband to the Germans they volunteered to serve, shares nothing—it is with these women that Duras clearly shares everything: not with the officious representatives of the right side, ostensibly her own side. "I have nothing in common with anybody anymore." Similarly, in "Albert des Capitales," it is with her comrades in clandestinity, who resemble her not in the least and with whom she has practically nothing in common, that Thérèse shares everything. She prefers no one to them, and no one of them to any of the others; for each of them she had thought nothing of waiting up all night. "During the fight, everybody waited up for everybody the same way. We were careful to have no favorites. Now we're going to start again. We're going to start favoring again, preferring." Now we're going to start in again discriminating, differentiating, all of us. But in the last moments, before it's too late, Thérèse is going to *differentiate*; she'll *discriminate*; she'll force the traitor to talk and to divulge the difference between those who always have everything in common with everyone else, everything that *can* be held in common and shared—being right, for example, in the right, or (but it's the same) in power—and those who have nothing, which is to say everything, everything human, everything that cannot be held in common, that doesn't have that right, that power, that sanction or authority, but is clandestine, indefensible, unavowable (sorrow, for example, or friendship, or solitude, or shame). She'll strip the traitor of the thick layers of lies that constitute his invulnerability, his free pass through the world where others were helpless; she'll tear off the wrapping of silence that for years enabled him to circulate untouchable among those whose friends and families he'd delivered to death camps, and she'll expose the truth, *le donneur d'hommes*, the giver of men, the gift of humanness.

And, really, it is as though what she demanded to hear from him were not anything he, the traitor, the talker, the betrayor of men could ever say, but the

human gift, *le don de l'humain*, the silence—"such a different silence"—of those who didn't talk, who were lined up and shot. They cannot talk. But it is their word, incommunicable, that must be heard. It has to be spoken, it absolutely must be; Thérèse can't bear that it not be, that it not have its utterly different meaning, so she tries to get what *can* speak to speak and say it: she tries to make the *donneur* pronounce the disastrous communication, *le don de la parole*. She tries to get guilt to say it, and give it. For guilt can: eliminate it. Indeed, she herself wants to eliminate the difference she wants to make, the difference between everything that can be held in common (power, ability, *culpabilité*) and all that cannot, does not have that ability (innocence). At a certain point in the torture session, some—not all—of the observers (some women among the observers) consider that it's enough. Some are willing to go along with the beating, to keep up the blows; others cannot. They become strangers. The difference is insupportable; it exacerbates the desire to beat up and hurt and destroy. "The women are with the *donneur*, the *donneur* is with all those who won't go along. The impulse to beat grows with the number of enemies, the strangers."

Thérèse herself wants to annul the difference, the difference she wants to make; she wants to eliminate it, beat it right out of existence, that it might be made. That *le don* might have its meaning, and *la parole*. This is the danger. That the disaster acquire meaning. . . . That the difference between possible and impossible become possible, and that the gift be given. *Donné*. But it is that which has always been disposed of already—already *donné*. This is the disaster. Thérèse cannot bring about giving; she cannot make it possible—any more than she can eliminate the difference, and the gift, there where it is installed itself, there where it persists, increases, augments. This is the disaster; this is the gift of the disaster, *le don du donneur*: that the gift cannot be given, but persists, saved from ability, and *culpabilité*, preserved from the ability to have meaning, to have its meaning. It is *le donneur d'hommes*, in "Albert des Capitales," who, being in no position to do so, without being able to do so at all, preserves, with his inability to preserve anything, everything. "*Le désastre prend soin de tout.*" "Albert des Capitales" gives language, and this is what language is for.

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I've expressed two separate reactions to "Albert des Capitales," and I intend to leave it at that. For I do not want to suggest that the second disqualifies the first, that what came to my attention upon rereading the story makes up for the features of it that initially provoked my impatience. I don't, that is, want to imply that what *seem* to be political or ethical issues (which at first I thought required consideration on their own terms) turn out *really* to be articulated at some "deeper" level characterized by a mysteriously complicated paradox: I don't want to imply that what *appear* to be political or moral issues must "ulti-

mately" find their "true" expression in some "more profound" region where it is powerlessness and sheer estrangement, not competence or commitment, that faithfully answer. I suspect, however, that "Albert des Capitales" does imply this.

In *L'amant*, when Duras states that collaboration and communism are the same thing, she says that they are "the same lack of judgment, the same superstition if you will, that consists of believing in a political solution for the personal problem." As if issues that seem to require political reflection and commitment were actually another kind of problem altogether. In "Albert des Capitales," she sets up a torture scene in such a way as to allow the thought that the determination to expose a human being as not-human really lay elsewhere—actually lay deeper—than the history of racism and oppression to which it is in fact absolutely central. I attach a good deal of importance to what I said in the second part of this essay not only about that determination, but about difference, what isn't like, doesn't link, can't be shared, but "gives" communication, community, humanness. Yet these terms—as well as the terms *gift*, *unavowable*, *disaster*, and so on—by no means claim to form the mystical vocabulary of a language wherein questions merely purporting to be political or ethical are destined to find their sole genuine (their mute and meaningless) expression. Such a claim—complacent, sentimental, and facile—seems to me to inhabit Duras's story, and that is why I remain after all somewhat skeptical about it.

At the end of the book entitled *La communauté inavouable (The Unavowable*—inadmissible—*Community)*[4]—which is also the end of the part of that book devoted to a text by Duras, *La maladie de la mort*—Blanchot asks: does that expression, *la communauté inavouable*, mean that one should just keep quiet about community? Wittgenstein's statement, that one ought to keep quiet about what cannot be spoken of, indicates—since, in order to prescribe silence, he couldn't keep still—that in order to be silent one has to speak. How? Blanchot asks. With what sort of speech? That is one of the questions, he says, that his book, *La communauté inavouable*, proposes to others, not so that they'll answer, but so that they'll abide with the question, prolonging it, discovering that it also has a political sense and does not permit indifference to the present; that it renders us responsible for new relations, always precarious, between what *can* be (spoken, affirmed, offered)—between what may *become* possible (what can be aspired to, worked and struggled for)—and the unaffirmable, the unenduring and unendurable, the persistent impossible. New, precarious relations—these are our responsibility—new relations always awaited and hoped for between what we call *l'oeuvre*, Blanchot says, and what we call *le désoeuvrement*. Between what demands realization, through purposeful action, and what is foreign to all the accomplishments of power and competence, but calls upon weakness, human weakness.

4. Maurice Blanchot, *La communauté inavouable*, Paris, Gallimard, 1983; trans. as *The Uncommunity* by Pierre Joris, Station Hill Press, 1987.

Ramble City: Postmodernism and *Blade Runner*

GIULIANA BRUNO

"History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it—and in order to look at it we must be excluded from it. . . . That is what the time when my mother was alive *before me* is—History. No anamnesis could ever make me glimpse this time starting from myself—whereas, contemplating a photograph in which she is hugging me, a child, against her, I can waken in myself the rumpled softness of her crepe de chine and the perfume of her rice powder."[1] That is history for Roland Barthes and history for the replicants of *Blade Runner*. The replicants are perfect "skin jobs," they look like humans, they talk like them, they even have feelings and emotions (in science fiction the ultimate sign of the human). What they lack is a history. For that they have to be killed. Seeking a history, fighting for it, they search for their origins, for that time before themselves. Rachel succeeds. She has a document—as we know, the foundation of history. Her document is a photograph, a photograph of her mother, hugging her, a child, against her, wakening in her the rumpled softness of, most probably, a hamburger. History is hysterical; it is constituted only if we *look* at it, excluded from it. That is, my mother before me—history. History/Mother/My mother. "My mother? I'll tell you about my mother. . . ."[2]

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The debate on postmodernism has by now produced a vast literature. Roughly, we might distinguish three positions: one elaborated with reference to the human sciences and literature, by Jean-François Lyotard and Umberto Eco, among others; one concerning the visual arts, recently developed in particular in the U.S.; and one related to the discourse of and on architecture.[3] It is the latter

1. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, Hill and Wang, 1981, p. 65.
2. Thus answers the replicant Leon when asked about his mother; he then kills his questioner.
3. The literature is by now extensive, if not particularly distinguished. See, for example, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, Cambridge, Massachusetts,

which, for the most part, constitutes the theoretical groundwork for this paper, in which *Blade Runner* will be discussed as a metaphor of the postmodern condition. I wish to analyze, in particular, the representation of narrative space and temporality in *Blade Runner*. For this I will use two terms, pastiche and schizophrenia, in order to define and explore the two areas of investigation. The terms are borrowed and developed from Fredric Jameson's discussion of postmodernism. In his essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society"[4] and in the later, expanded version, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,"[5] Jameson suggests that the postmodern condition is characterized by a schizophrenic temporality and a spatial pastiche. The notion of schizophrenia which Jameson employs is that elaborated by Jacques Lacan. According to Jameson's reading of Lacan, schizophrenia is basically a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers, linked to the failure of access to the Symbolic. With pastiche there is an effacement of key boundaries and separations, a process of erosion of distinctions. Pastiche is intended as an aesthetic of quotations pushed to the limit; it is an incorporation of forms, an imitation of dead styles deprived of any satirical impulse. Jameson's suggestion has proved a viable working reference and a guideline in analyzing the deployment of space and time in the film. Pastiche and schizophrenia will thus act, in the economy of my argument, as what Umberto Eco calls umbrella terms, operational linguistic covers of vast and even diverse areas of concern. My discussion of postmodernism and *Blade Runner* will involve a consideration of questions of identity and history, of the role of simulacra and simulation, and of the relationship between postmodernism, architecture, and postindustrialism.

Pastiche

It is useful to note that Jameson has derived his view of postmodernism from the field of architecture: "It is in the realm of architecture . . . that modifications in aesthetic productions are most dramatically visible, and that their theoretical problems have been most centrally raised and articulated; it was indeed from architectural debates that my own conception of postmodernism began to emerge."[6] It is in the architectural layout of *Blade Runner* that pastiche is most dramatically visible and where the connection of postmodernism to postindustrialism is evident.

MIT Press, 1977; Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, New York, Rizzoli, 1977; Paolo Portoghesi, *Postmodern: l'Architettura nella societa postindustriale*, Milan, Electa, 1982.

4. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Port Townsend, Bay Press, 1983, pp. 111–125.

5. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July-August 1984), pp. 53–92.

6. Jameson, "Cultural Logic," p. 54.

Blade Runner. *1982. Deckard on a rooftop.*

The film does not take place in a spaceship or space station, but in a city, Los Angeles, in the year 2019, a step away from the development of contemporary society. The link between postmodernism and late capitalism is highlighted in the film's representation of postindustrial decay. The future does not realize an idealized, aseptic technological order, but is seen simply as the development of the present state of the city and of the social order of late capitalism. The city of *Blade Runner* is not the ultramodern, but the postmodern city. It is not an orderly layout of skyscrapers and ultracomfortable, hypermechanized interiors. Rather, it creates an aesthetic of decay, exposing the dark side of technology, the process of disintegration.

Next to the high-tech, its waste. It is into garbage that the characters constantly step, by garbage that Pris awaits J. F. Sebastian. A deserted neighborhood in decay is where Deckard goes to find the peace he needs in order to work. There he finds the usual gang of metropolitan punks exploring the ruins for unexpected marvels. In an abandoned, deteriorating building, J. F. Sebastian lives surrounded by nothing but his mechanical toys. It is a building of once great majesty, now an empty shell left to disintegrate. The rain completes the am-

Blade Runner. *1982. Deckard in pursuit of a replicant.*

bience. It falls persistently, veiling the landscape of the city, further obscuring the neobaroque lighting. It is a corrosive rain which wears things away.

The postindustrial decay is an effect of the acceleration of the internal time of process proper to postindustrialism. The system works only if waste is produced. The continuous expulsion of waste is an indexical sign of the well-functioning apparatus: waste represents its production, movement, and development at increasing speed. Postindustrialism recycles; therefore it needs its waste.[7] A postmodern position exposes such logic, producing an aesthetic of recycling. The artistic form exhibits the return of the waste. Consumerism, waste, and recycling meet in fashion, the "wearable art" of late capitalism, a sign of postmodernism. Costumes in *Blade Runner* are designed according to this logic. The "look" of the replicants Pris and Zhora and of some of the women in the background in the bar and in the street scenes reinforces this aesthetic. Pris, the "basic pleasure model," is the model of the postindustrial fashion, the height of exhibition and recycling.

7. On the history of waste, see Dominique Laporte, *Histoire de la merde*, Paris, Christian Bourgeois, 1978. Laporte traces the history of waste as a cyclic process of repression and return.

The postmodern aesthetic of *Blade Runner* is thus the result of recycling, fusion of levels, discontinuous signifiers, explosion of boundaries, and erosion. The disconnected temporality of the replicants and the pastiche city are all an effect of a postmodern, postindustrial condition: wearing out, waste. There is even a character in the film who is nothing but a literalization of this condition. J. F. Sebastian is twenty-five years old, but his skin is wrinkled and decrepit. His internal process and time are accelerated, and he is wearing out. "Accelerated decrepitude" is how the replicant Pris describes his condition, noting that he and the replicants have something in common. What Pris does not say is that the city suffers from it as well. The psychopathology of J. F. Sebastian, the replicants, and the city is the psychopathology of the everyday postindustrial condition. The increased speed of development and process produces the diminishing of distances, of the space in between, of distinction. Time and tempo are reduced to climax, after which there is retirement. Things cease to function and life is over even if it has not ended. The postindustrial city is a city in ruins.

In *Blade Runner*, the visions of postindustrial decay are set in an inclusive, hybrid architectural design. The city is called Los Angeles, but it is an L.A. that

looks very much like New York, Hong Kong, or Tokyo. We are not presented with a real geography, but an imaginary one: a synthesis of mental architectures, of *topoi*. Quoting from different real cities, postcards, advertising, movies, the text makes a point about the city of postindustrialism. It is a polyvalent, interchangeable structure, the product of geographical displacements and condensations. *Blade Runner*'s space of narration bears, superimposed, different and previous orders of time and space. It incorporates them, exhibiting their transformations and deterioration. It is a place of vast immigration, from countries of overpopulation and poverty. While immigrants crowd the city, the indigenous petite bourgeoisie moves to the suburbs or to the "off-world" as the case may be. Abandoned buildings and neighborhoods in decay adjoin highly populated, crowded old areas, themselves set next to new, high-tech business districts. The film is populated by eclectic crowds of faceless people, Oriental merchants, punks, Hari Krishnas. Even the language is pastiche: "city speech" is a "mishmash of Japanese, Spanish, German, what have you." The city is a large market; an intrigue of underground networks pervades all relations. The explosive Orient dominates, the Orient of yesterday incorporating the Orient of today. Overlooking the city is the "Japanese simulacrum," the huge advertisement which alternates a seductive Japanese face and a Coca Cola sign. In the postindustrial city the explosion of urbanization, melting the futuristic high-tech look into an intercultural scenario, recreates the third world inside the first. One travels almost without moving, for the Orient occupies the next block. The Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* is China(in)town.

The pertinence and uniqueness of architecture to specific places, cultures, and times has been lost in postmodernism. The metropolis of *Blade Runner* quotes not only from different spatial structures but from temporal ones as well. The syntactic rules are broken down in postmodernism and replaced by a parataxis, a regulated aesthetic of lists. The connections are not made at random, but ruled by a different logic. It is the logic of pastiche, which allows and promotes quotations of a synchronic and diachronic order. "The resultant hybrid balances and reconciles opposed meanings. . . . This inclusive architecture absorbs conflicting codes in an attempt to create (what Robert Venturi calls) 'the difficult whole'. . . . It can include ugliness, decay, banality, austerity. . . . In general terms it can be described as radical eclecticism or adhocism. Various parts, styles or sub-systems are used to create a new synthesis."[8] In *Blade Runner* recollections and quotations from the past are subcodes of a new synthesis.[9] Roman and Greek columns provide a retro mise-en-scène for the city. Signs of classical Oriental

8. Jencks, p. 90.
9. Among other elements, the city of *Blade Runner* includes a set called "New York street," built in 1929 and used in a number of Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney movies; and the Ennis-Brown house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

mythology recur. Chinese dragons are revisited in neon lighting. A strong Egyptian element pervades the decor. The Tyrell corporation overlooks what resemble the Egyptian pyramids in a full sunset. The interior of the office is not high-tech, but rather a pop Egyptian extravaganza, to which the choreography of movement and makeup of Zhora adds exoticism. Elevators might have video screens, but they are made of stone. The walls of Deckard's apartment are reminiscent of an ancient Mayan palace. Pastiche, as an aesthetic of quotation, incorporates dead styles; it attempts a recollection of the past, of memory, and of history.

The result of this architectural pastiche is an excess of scenography. Every relation in the narrative space produces an exhibitionism rather than an aesthetics of the visual. The excess of violence is such an exhibitionism. The iconography of death as well is scenographic. The "scene" of death becomes a sort of "obscenity," the site of total, transparent visibility. The fight and death of Pris are rendered as a performance. Zhora dies breaking through a window in slow motion. The decor, the choreography of movement and editing, the neobaroque cinematography emphasize visual virtuosity. It has been said that scenography is the domain of postmodern architecture. Paolo Portoghesi claims that "Postmodern in architecture can be generally read as the re-emerging of the archetypes and the reintegrations of the architectual conventions and thus as the premise for the creation of an architecture of communication, an architecture of the visual, for a culture of the visual."[10]

Schizophrenia

Pastiche and the exhibitionism of the visual celebrate the dominance of representation and the effacement of the referent in the era of postindustrialism. The postindustrial society is the "society of the spectacle," living in the "ecstasy of communication." Addressing this aspect of postmodernism, Jean Baudrillard speaks of a twist in the relationship between the real and its reproduction. The process of reproducibility is pushed to the limit. As a result, "the real is not what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced . . . the hyperreal . . . which is entirely in simulation."[11] The narrative space of *Blade Runner* participates in this logic: "All of Los Angeles . . . is of the order of hyperreal and simulation."[12] There, the machinery of imitations, reproductions, and seriality, in other words, "replicants," affirms the fiction of the real.

The narrative "invention" of the replicants is almost a literalization of Baudrillard's theory of postmodernism as the age of simulacra and simulation.

10. Portoghesi, p. 11.
11. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman, New York, Semiotext(e), 1983, p. 146.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Replicants are the perfect simulacra—a convergence of genetics and linguistics, the genetic miniaturization enacting the dimension of simulation. Baudrillard describes the simulacrum as "an operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes."[13] It would be difficult to find a better definition of the nature and functions of the replicants and their capacity of simulation in the narrative motivation of *Blade Runner*. In L.A., year 2019, simulation is completely dominant as the effect of the existence and operations of the replicant/simulacrum. "The unreal is no longer that of dream or of fantasy or a beyond or a within, it is that of *hallucinatory resemblance of the real with itself.*"[14] The replicant performs such hallucinatory resemblance. "It" looks and acts like a he or a she. Perfect simulation is thus its goal, and Rachel manages to reach it. To simulate, in fact, is a more complex act than to imitate or to feign. To simulate implies actually producing in oneself some of the characteristics of what one wants to simulate. It is a matter of internalizing the signs or the symptoms to the point where there is no difference between "false" and "true," "real" and "imaginary." With Rachel the system has reached perfection. She is the most perfect replicant because she does not know whether she is one or not. To say that she simulates her symptoms, her sexuality, her memory, is to say that she realizes, experiences them.

The fascination with the simulacrum has, of course, generated narratives before *Blade Runner*. We find in *Der Sandmann*, for example, one of the most influential fictional descriptions of simulacra. It is this tale, in fact, which inspired Freud's reflections on the uncanny. *Der Sandmann* concerns the android Olympia, who is such a perfect "skin job" that she is mistaken for a real girl, the daughter of her inventor. The protagonist of the tale, Nathaniel, falls in love with her, but reality triumphs: the android is unmasked and destroyed. In Hoffmann's time, replication is still a question of imitation, for the real still bears a meaning. The replicants of *Blade Runner* are, on the contrary, as the name itself indicates, serial terms. No original is thus invoked as point of comparison, and no distinction between real and copy remains.

It is, indeed, in simulation that the power of the replicants resides. Since the simulacrum is the negation of both original and copy, it is ultimately the celebration of the false as power and the power of the false.[15] The replicants turn this power against their makers to assert the autonomy of the simulacrum.

But these replicants, "simulacra" of humans, in some ways superior to them, have a problem: a fragmented temporality. "Schizophrenic vertigo of

13. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 142. See also Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit, Black and Red Press, 1983.
15. For this aspect of the theoretical discussion of the simulacrum, see Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October*, no. 27 (Winter 1983), pp. 45–56.

Blade Runner. *1982. Deckard fights with a replicant amidst J. F. Sebastian's mechanical toys.*

these serial signs . . . immanent in their repetition—who could say what the reality is that these signs simulate?"[16] The replicant affirms a new form of temporality, that of schizophrenic vertigo. This is the temporality of postmodernism's new age of the machine. The industrial machine was one of production, the postindustrial machine, one of reproduction. A major shift occurs: the alienation of the subject is replaced by the fragmentation of the subject, its dispersal in representation. The "integrity" of the subject is more deeply put into question. Baudrillard describes the postindustrial age thus: "We are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic. . . . The schizophrenic can no longer produce the limits of its own being. . . . He is only a pure screen."[17] A replicant.

Blade Runner presents a manifestation of the schizophrenic condition—in

16. Baudrillard, p. 152.
17. Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," trans. John Johnston, in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, p. 132.

the sense that Lacan gives this term. For Lacan, temporality, past, present, future, memory are of a linguistic order: that is to say, the experience of temporality and its representation are an effect of language. It is the very structure of language that allows us to know temporality as we do and to represent it as a linear development from past to present and future. The experience of historical continuity is therefore dependent upon language acquisition, upon access to the realm of speech. It is dependent upon the acceptance of the Name-of-the-Father, paternal authority conceived as a linguistic function.

Schizophrenia, on the other hand, results from a failure to enter the Symbolic order; it is thus essentially a breakdown of language, which contributes to a breakdown of the temporal order. The schizophrenic condition is characterized by the inability to experience the persistence of the "I" over time. There is neither past nor future at the two poles of that which thus becomes a perpetual present. Jameson writes, "The schizophrenic does not have our experience of temporal continuity but is condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon."[18] Replicants are condemned to a life composed only of a present tense; they have neither past nor memory. There is for them no conceivable future. They are denied a personal identity, since they cannot name their "I" as an existence over time. Yet this life, lived only in the present, is for the replicants an extremely intense experience, since it is not perceived as part of a larger set of experiences. Replicants represent themselves as a candle that burns faster but brighter and claim to have seen more things with their eyes in that limited time than anybody else would even be able to imagine. This kind of relationship to the present is typical of schizophrenia. Jameson notes, in fact, that "as temporal continuity breaks down, the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and 'material.' The world comes before the schizophrenic with heightened intensity."[19]

The schizophrenic temporality of the replicants is a resistance to enter the social order, to function according to its modes.[20] As outsiders to the order of language, replicants have to be eliminated. Theirs is a dangerous malfunction, calling for a normalization, an affirmation of the order of language and law. Their killing constitutes a state murder. It is called "retirement," a word which connotes exclusion from the productive and active social order.

If the replicants are to survive, the signifiers of their existence have to be put in order. Some semblance of a symbolic dimension has to be put together to release them from the trap of the present. Their assurance of a future relies on the possibility of acquiring a past. In their attempt at establishing a temporally

18. Jameson, "Consumer Society," p. 119.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
20. Jameson states that "schizophrenia emerges from the failure of the infant to accede fully into the realm of speech and language" (*ibid.*, p. 118).

persistent identity, the replicants search for their origins. They want to know who "conceived" them, and they investigate their identity and the link to their makers. The itinerary is that of an Oedipal journey. To survive for a time, the android has to accept the fact of sexual difference, the sexual identity which the entry into language requires.

Of all the replicants, only one, Rachel, succeeds in making the journey. She assumes a sexual identity, becomes a woman, and loves a man: Deckard, the blade runner. Rachel accepts the paternal figure and follows the path to a "normal," adult, female, sexuality: she identifies her sex by first acknowledging the power of the other, the father, a man. But the leader of the replicants, Roy Batty, refuses the symbolic castration which is necessary to enter the symbolic order; he refuses, that is, to be smaller, less powerful than the father. Roy commits the Oedipal crime. He kills his father; and the Oedipal topos of blindness recurs, reversed. Roy thus seals his (lack of) destiny, denying himself resolution and salvation.

In this tension between pre-Oedipal and Oedipal, Imaginary and Symbolic, the figure of the mother becomes a breaking point in the text. Replicants can be unmasked by a psychological test which reveals their emotional responses as dissimilar to those of humans.[21] *Blade Runner* begins with such a test as it is being administered to Leon, a replicant who is trying to hide his identity. Leon succeeds up to a certain point, but there arises a question which he cannot handle. Asked to name all the good things that come to his mind thinking about his mother, Leon explodes, "My mother, I'll tell you about my mother," and kills the inquirer. The mother is necessary to the claiming of a history, to the affirmation of an identity over time. Unmasked by the same test, Rachel goes to her inquirer, Deckard, to convince him, or herself rather, that she is not a replicant. Her argument is a photograph, a photograph of a mother and daughter. "Look, this is me, with my mother." That photograph represents the trace of an origin and thus a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore of having the right to exist.

A theoretical link is established in *Blade Runner* between photography, mother, and history. It is a connection that we also find in Barthes's writings on photography. In *Camera Lucida*, reflections on photography are centered on the figure of the mother as she relates to the question of history. Photography and the mother are the missing link between past, present, and future. The terms of the configuration photography/mother/history are knotted together in dialectics of totality and division, presence and absence, continuity and discontinuity.

21. A further observation on schizophrenia is made in regard to the test. In the novel from which *Blade Runner* was adapted (Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Eclectic Sheep?*, New York, Ballantine Books, 1982), a moral question arises from the possibility that humans might be "retired" by mistake. It is proved, in fact, that a certain "type" of humans respond to the test the same as do replicants. This type is the schizophrenic. Thus replicants and schizophrenics are "scientifically" proved to be the same.

"The name of Photography's noeme will therefore be 'that-has-been,' or again the Intractable. In Latin, this would doubtless be said: *interfuit*: what I see has been there, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred."[22] As a document of "that-has-been," photography constitutes a document of history, of its deferred existence. A history conceived as hysterical is established only in an act of exclusion, in a look that separates subject and object. History is that time when my mother was alive before me. It is the trace of the dream of unity, of its impossibility. The all-nourishing mother is there, yet as that which has been given up. The Imaginary exists as a loss.

Photographs are documents of existence in a history to be transformed into memories, monuments of the past. Such is the very challenge of history, as Michel Foucault has pointed out. "History is that which transforms documents into monuments."[23] The document is for Foucault a central question of history; for *Blade Runner* it is the essential element for the establishment of a temporality, of perceiving past and future. Foucault defines history as "one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked."[24] Photographs can be such documentation for the replicants. Not only does Rachel exhibit her document-photograph of that past moment with her mother, but she is fascinated by photographs generally. In a second visit to Deckard, she produces her memories in response to his photographs. She attempts to look like the woman in his old photograph, and plays the piano to recapture a memory, an atmosphere. Leon's preciously kept pictures serve no apparent purpose other than the documentation of the replicant's existence in history. Deckard understands this motivation when he finds the photos. "I don't know why replicants would collect photos. Maybe they were like Rachel, they needed memories."

The desire of photography in *Blade Runner* is essentially a phenomenological seduction: "In photography I can never deny that 'the thing has been there.' There is a superimposition here of reality and of the past."[25] Photography is perceived as the medium in which the signifier and the referent are collapsed onto each other. Photographs assert the referent, its reality, in that they assert its existence at that (past) moment when the person, the thing, was there in front of the camera. If a replicant is in a photograph, he or she is thus real.

The function of photography in film's temporal construction is further grasped in Barthes's observation that "the photograph's immobility is the result of perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live. By attesting

22. Barthes, p. 77.
23. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York, Pantheon, 1982, p. 7.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Barthes, p. 76.

that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive. . . . Photography, moreover, began historically as an art of the Person: of civil status, of what we might call, in all senses of the term, the body's formality."[26] Replicants rely on photography for its perverse confusion, as it induces the surreptitious belief and hope of being alive.

Investigating the other side of the body's formality and the civil status of the replicants, blade runners also make use of photography. Once Deckard finds the photographs/documents in Leon's apartment, he proceeds by questioning them. History as a process of investigation is involved in a questioning of the document. "History now organizes the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations."[27] Foucault's description of the historical process exactly describes the way in which Deckard interrogates the documents/photographs producing history. Deckard puts a photograph in a video machine to analyze it. The photograph is decomposed and restructured visually through the creation of new relations, shifting the direction of the gaze, zooming in and out, selecting and rearranging elements, creating close-ups of what is relevant. The dissected and reorganized signifiers of photography result in a narrative. At work is the same process of investigation and detection that we find in *Blow-up*: the serialization of the still image, the photograph, produces a new meaning, a story, a filmic text. The revelation of the secret is an effect of the sequentialization, and thus narrativization, of the still image. This is how and why the murder is discovered in *Blow-up* and the replicant Zhora is discovered in *Blade Runner*. Searching the document/photograph, Deckard unveils the investigative and narrative process of history. *Blow-up* stops at the level of the signifier of photography; *Blade Runner* wants to believe in its referent: Zhora has-been-there; therefore she is (to be captured) real and alive. Not far off is Barthes's comment, "I went to the photographer's show as to a police investigation."[28]

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Blade Runner posits questions of identity, identification, and history in postmodernism. The text's insistence on photography, on the eye, is suggestive of the problematics of the "I" over time. Photography, "the impossible science of the unique being," is the suppressed trace of history, the lost dream of continuity. Photography is memory. The status of memory has changed. In a postmodern age, memories are no longer Proustian madeleines, but photographs. The past has become a collection of photographic, filmic, or televisual images. We,

26. *Ibid*., p. 79.
27. Foucault, p. 6.
28. Barthes, p. 85.

like the replicants, are put in the position of reclaiming a history by means of its reproduction. Photography is thus assigned the grand task of reasserting the referent, of reappropriating the Real and historical continuity. The historical referent is displaced by a photographic referent. In a world of fragmented temporality the research of history finds its image, its photographic simulacrum, while history itself remains out of reach. Schizophrenia and the logic of the simulacrum have had an effect on historical time. The meaning of history is changed, and changed too is the representation in which history, forever unattainable, merely exists.[29]

The loss of history enacts a desire for historicity, an (impossible) return to it. Postmodernism, particularly in art and architecture, proclaims such a return to history as one of its goals. It is, however, the instanciation of a new form of historicity. It is an eclectic one, a historical pastiche. Pastiche is ultimately a redemption of history, which implies the transformation and reinterpretation in tension between loss and desire. It retraces history, deconstructing its order, uniqueness, specificity, and diachrony. Again, as with the photographic reconstitution, with the logic of pastiche, a simulacrum of history is established.

A tension is expressed in *Blade Runner* between the radical loss of *durée* and the attempt of reappropriation. This very tension, which seeks in the photographic signifier the fiction of history and which rewrites history by means of architectural pastiched recycling, underlies as well the psychoanalytic itinerary. An itinerary suspended between schizophrenia, a fragmented temporality, and the acceptance of the Name-of-the-Father, standing for temporal continuity and access to the order of signifiers.

29. The debate on questions of memory and history in postmodernism is well represented in the special issue on "Modernity and Post-Modernity" of *New German Critique*, no. 33 (Fall 1984).

An Interview with Steve Fagin

PETER WOLLEN

The following is an edited transcript of an interview, conducted in the spring of 1987, concerning Steve Fagin's two feature-length videotapes. Virtual Play: The Double Direct Monkey Wrench in Black's Machinery *(1984) is a video essay on representation, narrative, and love humorously woven through the life of Lou Andreas Salomé, the turn-of-the-century romantic intellectual who captivated, among others, Freud, Nietzsche, and Rilke.* The Amazing Voyage of Gustave Flaubert and Raymond Roussel *(1986) is organized around the lives and writings of two solipsistic, indulgent, maternally obsessed personalities who, as it has been said of Balzac, "saw nothing and remembered everything." The mood of the tape fluctuates between vaudeville and opera, and the narrative unfolds in the form of letters, diary entries, and postcards —all fictitious. Both tapes are distributed by The Kitchen and Video Data Bank.*

Wollen: How did you first get into video? I guess there is always a shadow to that question: why video rather than film?

Fagin: The shadow that film casts is quite long. In fact, sometimes I feel like Cary Grant, in *North by Northwest*, pursued by an ominous, noisy thing casting a large shadow on the flat landscape. I really wrestled with the option of doing the Lou Salomé project on film, but it didn't seem to fit. The financial demands of film are tremendous. Both the Salomé and the Roussel and Flaubert pieces would have cost twenty to thirty times more in film than in video. I wanted to work cheaply to show that good work in time-based art could be done inexpensively, out of one's piggy bank. Sometimes I feel I'm Rumplestiltskin trying to weave straw into gold. Other reasons for working in video related to a general sense of film's losing its experimental edge; this is especially the case with the feature in the United States. Yvonne Rainer and Mark Rappaport remained positive examples, but so many other filmmakers have crossed over into something called deconstructive mainstream cinema, which I distrust immensely. Also, the format of video production really turns me on. The indulgence of improvisation, the ability to work off the monitor—things just feel so resilient. I guess in the end I always think of cinema in terms of Bazin's story about rushing to the set of *To*

Catch a Thief to watch the master at work, only to find the crew eagerly working and the great Hitchcock sound asleep. In addition, at least in the experimental venues, there no longer seemed to be a place where something could really happen. I remember reading about the splash Snow made in the mid-'60s with *Wavelength*. Video still seems to have events—the World Video Festival in the Hague and the American Film Institute Video Festival—where everyone is. Of course, the same people appear in both contexts. I was amazed at how few people constituted the world of video validation. I didn't mind seeing them over and over again; I just wished they had changed clothes between Holland and Los Angeles.

Wollen: I have a follow-up question on the specificity of video. In your tape we see backdrops, close-ups, ECU's, miniatures, a very shallow space with bright, saturated colors, not very many camera movements, a preference for frontal shots and for "low altitude" top shots. Was this a visual strategy that you thought about in advance? Or did it evolve, did you find yourself adapting to the medium? Do you think the medium has that sort of aesthetic specificity?

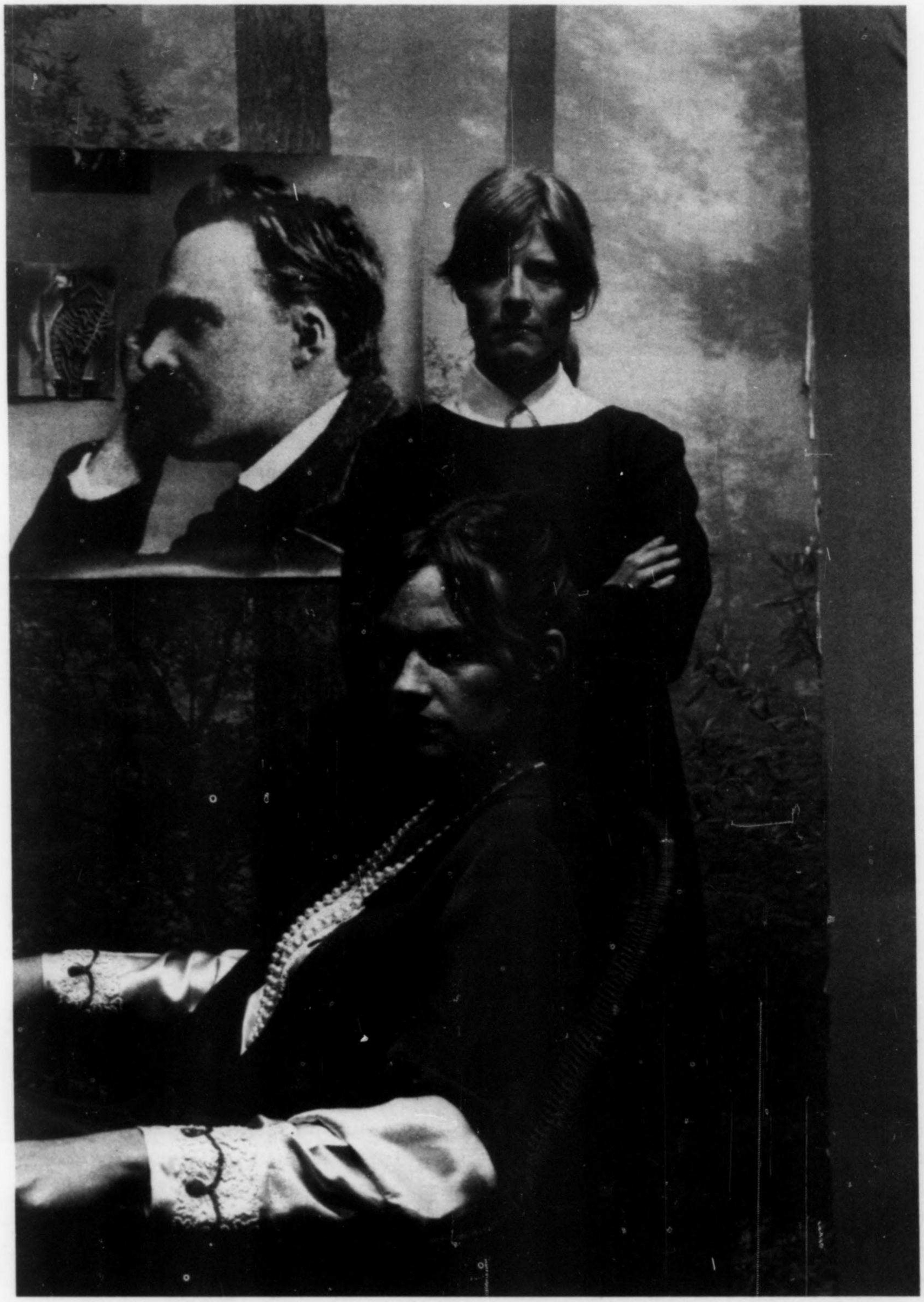
Fagin: When I decided to work in video, I sat down and watched a lot of MTV. In fact one New Year's Eve I sat home and watched all 100 top rock videos.

Wollen: But music videos tend to have three-dimensional sets. They have a deeper space.

Fagin: That's when they are originally shot in film. When shot in video they're extremely flat. I came to the conclusion that visually video combined two or three traditions from painting and very little from film. One is a postimpressionist sense of space, like Cézanne's. Two is obviously a pop use of color, which comes out of video's/TV's formative years. And three is an ability to overlay materials and spaces from different traditions, which pushes the work in two directions: toward a collage aesthetic derivative of someone like Rauschenberg, and a Byzantine sense of space attached to early Madonna-and-child icons. But the two-dimensionality of my work relates to the fact that I only have sight in one eye. When people ask me why my work lacks the third dimension, I tell them I don't believe in the third dimension, only the second and the fourth.

Wollen: You mean the fourth dimension in Duchamp's sense?

Fagin: This emphasis on two-dimensional space also relates to specific issues which grow out of the projects. In the Salomé tape there's an interview with a photography historian who discusses how the nineteenth-century portrait always used flat backdrops. And there's the picture of Salomé, Ree, and Nietzsche used in the tape which has such a backdrop. So fake flat backdrops are used in a



Steve Fagin. Virtual Play. *1984. (All photographs and stills: Margaret Hussey.)*

perverse sense to respect the nineteenth-century photograph, which that culture used to authenticate itself. It's my gesture toward "realism." Also, the flattening out of space allows me to juxtapose objects from different materials to produce a synthetic but rather uniform space, one similar to a rebus, where areas of people, pictures from books, and writing overlap, producing a zone of exchange among them. There's also an effort to animate the museum diorama. I believe it was Michelet who remarked that after his visit to the natural history museum in Paris, as a child, he felt history had come to life, and this inspired him to be a historian.

Duchamp's glass became very important to me, and it related to several different ideas: a space more conceptual than retinal; the third dimension as a fold between the second and fourth, appearing only as a shadow; the sense of a bachelor/bride relation in the piece. But in terms of specific video aesthetics, what interests me is the sound/image relation and how different it is from film. In cinema, even in an extreme example like *Earthquake*, in "Sensaround," where the sound is literally above, below, and behind you, it still feels firmly rooted in the screen in front of you.

Wollen: What about the "dimension" of sound?

Fagin: I have never bought the arguments about Duras and the voice-off. In the cinema, at least at the level of enunciation, one never feels the voice is off screen. And ironically, in regard to Duras, for me the work is quite childlike, things speaking, the water, a bridge, a tree, and so on. Video is very different; technically the sound in video is better than the sound in film, and the image in video is small. One's attention can be pulled off the image, toward sound and the space in between; the darkness becomes quite active. My aesthetic is based on that possibility, where you have a sort of Cornell box waiting, unavailable, tacky, flat, which you reach toward, and the sound is very full and energizing. The sound shocks the image to life, like Frankenstein's monster.

Wollen: In most people's minds there is probably a contrast, a tension, between video, which is regarded as ultra-contemporary and high-tech, and the subject matter of your tape: the web of references to the late nineteenth century, a lost prevideo age, Roussel, Flaubert, the photographic backdrop, the optical toy, the museum diorama. How do you see this working—this curious juxtaposition of a contemporary medium with Victorian and fin-de-siècle material?

Fagin: There's a quote from Nabokov that I like, that the future is the obsolete in reverse. On one level it's similar to my respecting and using fake backdrops, to dealing with the historical distance between me and the nineteenth century by using my own authenticating machine, TV. On another level, Europe and the nineteenth century are posed as an unavailable other, which needs to be put through secondary revision, American popular culture, so that we can have

anything to hold onto at all. Nineteenth-century Europe as the dream, and America as the daydream. Also, the project is posed in relation to the novel, but with TV as intermediary. I produced a makeshift machine using found objects to stand in for the novel, working as a sort of twentieth-century Robinson Crusoe using whatever bric-a-brac was available.

Wollen: Doesn't the machine function as an emblem of the late nineteenth century: Edison's optical machine, the "machine" of academic painting, Roussel's bizarre textual machines? And you look back at them from the new electronic age?

Fagin: There's a machine in *Impressions of Africa*, cumbersome, but able to tell the weather perfectly. After many generations of prosperity, the culture grew tired of the practical side of the machine and concentrated on its aesthetic qualities instead, admiring its elaborate construction. After several generations, they had entirely forgotten how to read it to tell the weather. Eventually the culture was overrun by storms and drought and, on the verge of extinction, tried to recover the lost art of reading this awkward objet d'art. But instead of trying to decode the top half, which was the relevant half, they concentrated on the bottom, reading a few badly scrawled, meaningless marks left in the sand. My relation to the nineteenth-century novel is like this, a relation to the bottom half.

Wollen: I'd like to zoom in on Roussel and Flaubert, "fathers" who specialized in the exotic. Why—let's start with Roussel—why him?

Fagin: As usual with an obsession, I've forgotten the initial impetus. I think I was attracted to the level of detail by which he is known to us, how many times he changed shirts, the fact that he never traveled to places he had been to as a child, never opened letters, was afraid of germs, etc.—all these seem so much a part of his reputation. But on the other hand, there is so little written which can be considered comprehensive biography; this surely overlaps with my interest in Lou Salomé. They both seemed to be infinitely generatable at the periphery, transparent at the edges and totally opaque at the center. There is a void at the so-called core.

Wollen: When Roussel traveled, he always kept the blinds drawn.

Fagin: All these sorts of details stuck in my mind and are repeated in the piece. There is also in my piece a lot of *Locus Solus*, which I thought to be spectacular. Its relation to language, representation, its weavings of story into myth, with language blocking up and backfiring, producing lots of images, but failing to depict a world; the more the language describes, the more the images fall apart. It is fabulous, and I wanted to unravel its writing process and psychoanalytic

makeup, to deconstruct it and at the same time reproduce a double of it, an invocation.

Wollen: Did you use Roussel's system of composition, which he explains in *How I Wrote Certain of My Novels*? Owen Land works in a Rousselian way in *The Marriage Broker Joke according to Sigmund Freud*, and I used techniques derived from Roussel in *Crystal Gazing*. Or were you more interested in the projection of an exotic "other," the obsession with machines, the weird personal details?

Fagin: All of the above. I really had trouble writing; and the level of ecstasy, then withdrawal, then system that allowed Roussel to start writing very young, then stop writing altogether, and then begin working in a systematic way was something that intrigued me. I decided to work from theoretical texts, or movies I liked, or baseball games I had gone to; I would take notes of these things, then leave the so-called original material aside, and several months later pick up the notes and write stories from them. I found this comforting in the sense that I already knew I had something I loved. I had a grid to work from, so I didn't have to face the empty page, and it allowed me to produce combinations of words and story twists that I don't think I would have otherwise.

For instance there's a story I told about books. The first book, *Empire of Flora*, is the title of a Cy Twombly painting. He interests me tremendously. A line, some scribbles, color, and then a title like *The Veil of Orpheus*. I feel two ways at once about Twombly's work. It is about gesture, the painter's hand, etc., and then like an archeological object full of hope of a lost civilization restored but charred almost past the point of recognition. Much of my work strives toward this sense of being both very close to some origin and full of death. So I say that Cy Twombly's father pitched in the major leagues, and I like baseball, so the names are those of baseball teams, and then you have Angel, Tiger, Cardinal, Twin. . . .

Wollen: Now I get it.

Fagin: And then *Cy* becomes a switchword, becomes *sigh*, and *Cy Young*, the name of the award in baseball given to the best pitcher. . . .

Wollen: This makes it hard for the European viewer. . . .

Fagin: Yet people often say that it's too European, not American enough. But basically I feel the work is very American and situates Europe in a particular way. So the writing process is in the spirit of Roussel, but I didn't submit totally to the system. I used it as inspiration.

Wollen: In the American way. Pragmatic and can-do.

Fagin: In the American way. I cheated and made it vulgar!

Wollen: Let's turn to Flaubert—the novelist, the traveler, the decadent. Do you see Flaubert as the double of Roussel, or is there a difference between them?

Fagin: There's a quote from Sartre that I use: "Why Flaubert? Because he is the imaginary. With him we are at the border, the barrier of dreams." One should remember that Sartre chose Flaubert over Robespierre for his magnum opus on the construction of the subject. For me Flaubert was a rich relative. With all the advantages and disadvantages of the literary validation withheld from Roussel. Initially I came across Flaubert while researching travel to exotic lands. I was impressed by his letters and also his relation to Maxime Du Camp, his traveling companion. His story is told in the received ideas section. The way Du Camp, the first photographer of ancient Egypt, would talk of Flaubert: of his languidness, his wanting to stay in and watch the world like a moving diorama. This led me to put Flaubert and Roussel together as traveling companions. The mood between them is a bit carping. First came the idea of a traveling companion, and then the idea of the companion relating to the way that Roussel wrote—with two words that sounded the same, taking the second meaning, the lesser meaning, and spinning the story off of that. So Flaubert somehow became the greater meaning. And then I read the Sartre book, which . . .

Wollen: You're telling me you read the whole of Sartre's book?

Fagin: I read a bit and thought, "This is good enough to read a bit more." *Yale French Studies* printed fragments from one of the unpublished volumes—exactly

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage of Gustave Flaubert and Raymond Roussel. 1986. *"Line of Received Ideas."*

the kind of mystery, the "missing archeological link," that really attracts me. Sartre was important to a generation of Americans just before my own—I think of "like, beatniks" snapping their fingers and quoting Sartre; a phenomenon I was never really part of. And I was overwhelmed by the way Sartre constructed Flaubert's infancy from so little information; the stories he created were so spectacular, and so cold. It's actually the only text in my piece that appears literally copied.

Wollen: With "nauseating repetition," as you say in the tape.

Fagin: The other source was *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, a novel about two people's . . .

Wollen: Bric-a-brac. An assemblage of bric-a-brac.

Fagin: Yes, and the emphasis on copying, and the privileging of books in an effort to master the real. Also the sense of being lost in an infinite regress of quotation which eventually leads back to the beginning, simply copying. After the project, I came across a wonderful article in *October* by Douglas Crimp on the museum and ruins, which I thought a great companion piece to the tape.

Wollen: There are two other important "virtual" characters: Flaubert's and Roussel's mothers. Now we are getting further into the Oedipal lineage.

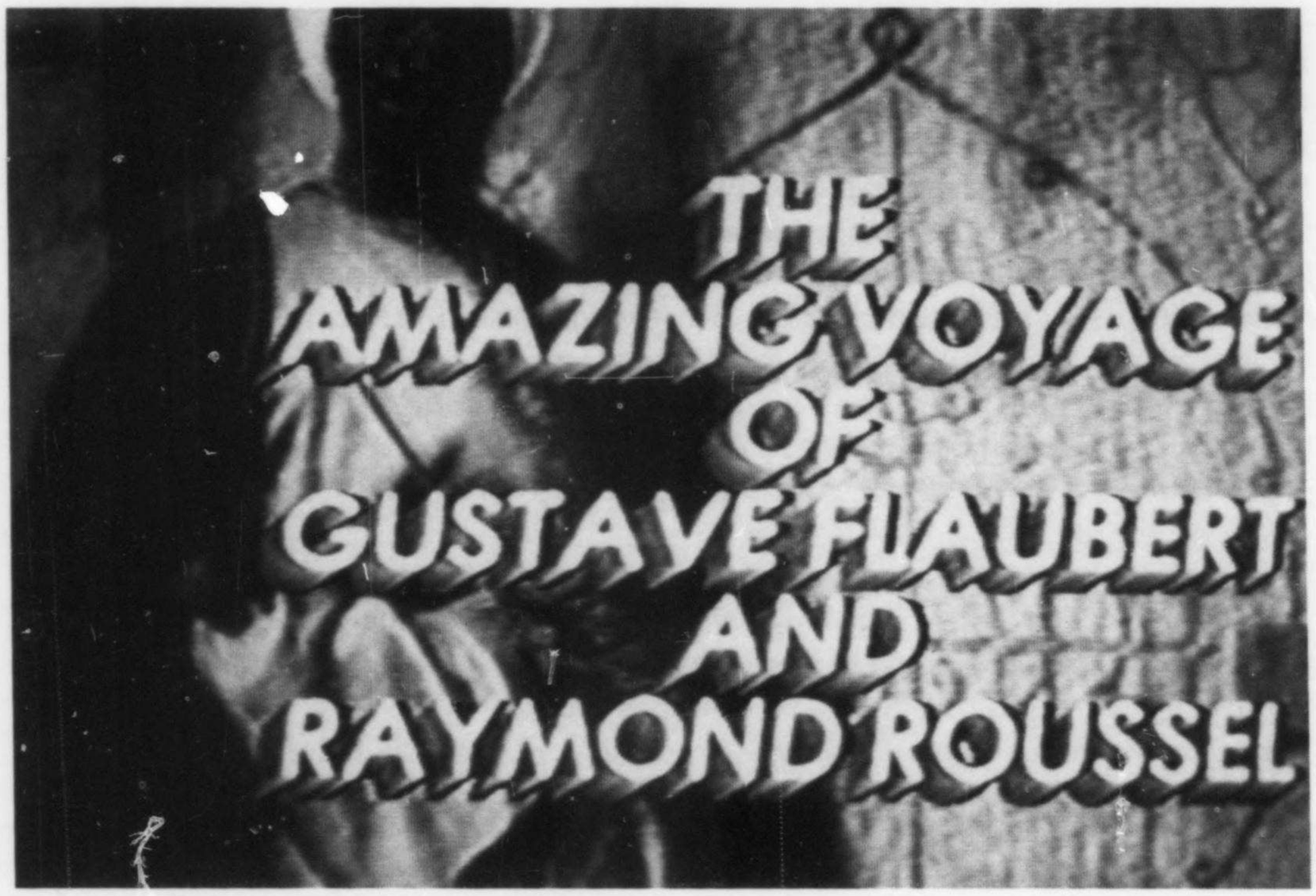
Fagin: After the Lou Salomé tape I was quite lucky to have several very bright people become interested in my work. At a conference on psychoanalysis a friend of mine presented a paper on my work; since he knew that the original title of the piece was *The Everyday Life of Lou Andreas Salomé*, he discussed it in relation to Freud and Lefèbvre. But right before the talk, someone told me of an analysis which my friend had arrived at, but would not present in his paper: that my work was all about breaking up with my girlfriend. Well, the Flaubert/Roussel piece is organized around a personal incident, a very horrible eye accident I had, and a series of operations. The male narrator in the tape, someone in exile, running away, a very different amazing voyage, tries to fight off the pain of blindness in order to tell this tale of Flaubert, Roussel, the imaginary, their mothers . . .

The work of Roussel and Flaubert, so invested in writing as a substitute for a maternal absence, trying to fill the space in ways diverting, but always insufficient, is much of the terrain of the work. The mothers are stand-ins, mannequins brought to movement, somewhere between two worlds, Madonna and [the pop star] Madonna. These images as north stars guiding us into this prison of the imaginary. Often during work on the piece I felt trapped, as if in a coffin, digging through treasures, cut off from their function in exchange, being led by a voice, the sound track, which I thought would get me out of the trap. But, upon

hearing the voice, I knew it was just telling me over and over again, in different tongues, that I was trapped and would never get out. The tape is a mock journey, desperate, amused. In some ways I would have preferred to be Lautréamont—more hostile—or even Céline, but the piece comes out more like Cornell. Several sections on the sound track, especially the one called "Penelope's Song," and the last section, where the sons are figured in conical mirrors, directly lay out and address the dilemmas of this trap. It is a bachelor journey, very sad, like the ones of Roussel and Flaubert. The effort is to pose questions not from the point of view of the hysteric, asking, "Am I a man or a woman?" Much of the work of contemporary film theory has focused on this question, but from the point of view of the obsessional, who asks, "Am I alive or am I dead?" And the world feels much different if you think, "I am dead."

Wollen: To what extent do you see the "imaginary" as being on the side of the "feminine"? Perhaps I am asking why there isn't a single male character who appears directly on the image track, but posing it in a theoretical way.

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Their Fathers."*



Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *main title.*

Fagin: In the Flaubert/Roussel tape the feminine is that which allows the bachelor entry into the imaginary, but the feminine is not the imaginary. The opening credit, of Gérôme's rigid guard standing in front of the opaque door, the sound of the sea bleeding through, cut to the stand-in for Roussel's mother wearing a red dress, holding a stick, guarding the ocean, dancing while she narrates the story of her son's journey, the telling never completed, broken across the tape. The tape ends with her at attention, head bowed, stick forward parallel to the sea, then the credits. Gérôme's guard returns, repainted, garishly, but unfinished, as bad Hawaiian music plays on the sound track. The painting is a fraud, Gérôme's forged signature at the bottom is only crudely imitated; the painting, unlike the work of Gérôme, has a poor sense of perspective. For me at least, as just another reader, this is not the meaning of the piece that I find especially interesting. What interests me is the piece's mobility, its evasiveness, so to speak. I think of psychoanalysis and Oedipus and remember what an uninteresting story it is. What interests me is not its deep meaning, but the fact that it's in the unconscious, subject to displacement, condensation, and the absence of negation. In its telling one can see the unconscious at work/play. My two pieces have a

complementary quality. The Salomé tape is organized around the woman, but is distilled through Nietzsche, Freud, Rilke, Ree, and, most importantly for me, Victor Tausk. The Flaubert/Roussel tape takes the men as the organizing figures, but images the feminized. Also, unlike the way Propp associated the Oedipus story with the coming of patriarchy, the tape—the section called "The Land of Propp"—tries to trace matriarchy's coming to power. So narrative in the tradition of *The Thousand and One Nights* becomes, from the side of the female, associated with the suspension of death.

Wollen: Steve, I'm going to interrupt you. You know, I've written about Scheherazade. Her narration takes place in a setting which served as a screen for the projection of Orientalist fantasy—by Flaubert and by Gérôme, two of the "patrons" of your tape. Within the context of nineteenth-century Orientalism, you could interpret the tape as a succession of almahs or odalisques, confined by the images of the harem guard, which occur at the beginning and the end of the tape. So even if the "symbolic" is associated with matriarchy, the "imaginary" could be given a patriarchal reading.

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Land of Propp."*

Fagin: I don't see the tape as coming from the place of the sultan, but perhaps from that of the sultan's son.

Wollen: You mean the child who was brought up in the seraglio but has been excluded and looks back with regret to a lost paradise?

Fagin: Yes, this is the sadness of the piece—its destiny. If I knew nothing else when I began the piece, I knew that there would be this inversion, and this is specifically dealt with in the last sections of the tape, most densely in the one called "Dying in Front of the Large Glass: The Perfect." The music: the Shangri-las singing "and that's called sad" over and over again, mixed with Bellini's *Norma*. The images, domesticated versions of Orientalism: Ingres's odalisque turned into a couch, Gérôme's Napoleon turned into a footstool, and the sphinx now a lamp—what an odd notion of ready-mades! And Magritte's *Human Condition* joined at the horizon line of sky and sea by a baseball game, Don Larsen and Yogi Berra, hugging, after the perfect game. The voice track: talking of Roussel dreaming of heaven, imagining Dante, but finding only street names,

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Dying in Front of the Large Glass: The Perfect."*

monuments, and medals, "it was perfect." This is the only image in the tape that is perfectly still.

Wollen: But not silent.

Fagin: Often there is a vulgar separation, posing image on the side of the imaginary, language on that of the symbolic. One should remember that for Freud the separation is between word-presentations and thing-presentations. The tape is a game of cat's cradle interweaving the imaginary and the symbolic. Language and image are appropriated as need be, the game is always reset by the impossible, the hint of the real which causes the narrative to flee and latch on to whatever will keep it afloat. The images are animated from beyond the dead; they reek of the symbolic. Anyway, I don't see only woman, but a bachelor machine driven by the sound, the wind, and moved by the image, the sail.

Wollen: What about the veil? This seems to be a very overdetermined image. It stands for the East and exoticism, it clearly connects to the harem guard, and then it also relates to the bride and thus to the bachelor; and, in addition to that, you tell the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasios toward the end of the tape, the story of a successful painting of a veil as a demonstration of trompe l'oeil.

Fagin: Yes, there is much in the piece about veiling, unveiling, etc. To answer, I guess I should say a bit about meaning. When asked about the resemblance of his process to Sherlock Holmes's uncovering an enigma, getting at the heart of a story, telling the true meaning, Freud recoiled and said he thought his work not like Holmes's at all but like that of Schliemann, the man who uncovered Troy. The emphasis is in laying out, restoring things to their place, not interpreting. This is my ambition. Whether I'm right or wrong is not the point. Readings are always a question of timing anyway.

The veil in the piece has two sides, one marked by red paint, which stands for both the blood of the Virgin and the stain of the son, the Shroud of Turin. A virgin already stained and a son already bloodied. A friend commented that the piece seemed to be constructed around Catholic envy, and there *is* a way in which Catholicism has a place for the mother that Judaism does not. Not a correct place, but one to start discussing. Between the two sides is a lining, the paste of royalty, depicted through purple satin, then displaced through a shawl worn by the Madonnaesque singer. The unveiling also relates to a turning of pages, relating the piece to reading and, in general, a series of unwrappings. But then there is the retort in the section organized around a series of packages, making exotic sounds: if unwrapped they would no longer be a gift. I guess at its most abstract the veil suggests the way the obsessional relates to his/her object of desire. It is as though a thin veil stands between him/her and the loved object, almost like a pane of glass. The tape is an exhuming, something that the nine-

teenth century was obsessed with. Death is necessary for the obsessional to act. There's a famous psychoanalytic story about the obsessional's always imagining people to be dead so that he/she can pay his/her condolences. Maybe the piece is a condolence card.

Wollen: Talking about regret and exhumation, I was struck by the number of traces of cinephilia in the tape. There are citations of many great classics: *Lola Montès*, *The Barefoot Contessa*, *Johnny Guitar*, *Morocco*. Old favorites. How do you see cinephilia now in relation to the "imaginary" and to video?

Fagin: Cinema is in some senses a tremendous inspiration. Part of the advantage in working in video is that it allows a more distant relation to the cinema. It becomes another arena of loss. I often say, very willfully, about the Lou Salomé tape, that it's my effort to remake *Lola Montès*, and I'm sorry I couldn't do any better. One of the sections people like the most in that tape includes Elizabeth Nietzsche and Lou Salomé arguing about the status of language and truth. It's inspired by the sequence in *Johnny Guitar* between Sterling Hayden and Joan Crawford.

Wollen: "Tell me lies. Tell me you love me." Godard takes that scene word for word in *Le petit soldat*. But it's as if you had shrunken the cinema into the video box of tricks. Giant images become scaled down into a world of postcards, playing cards, shells, tiny objects, toys, miniatures, all these diminutive things. Let's discuss this question of scale. I saw the TV set as an aquarium or a dollhouse. And then I related this to the Cornell boxes which are alluded to intermittently through . . .

Fagin: I think you want to produce an anthropomorphic scale for video which would have more potential for identification. By reducing things to a certain size you are allowing an exchange. As when you make hands participating in some activity the actual size of your own hands. In some senses, ironically, when things are small, parts of your body seem the right size. So it's a way to engage the body actively, a bit life-size. Also I think there's a way in which whatever information you have in front of you can function as the full field. So you can have a picture of the Eiffel Tower which has the force of the actual thing for a second. Then when you pull back and see it's just a postcard, it's thrown into cultural relief, becomes kitsch.

Wollen: It's another kind of trompe l'oeil effect.

Fagin: Yes.

Wollen: How did you accumulate all the objects?

Fagin: I usually steal them from people, borrow them. There are people who won't let me into their houses when I'm working on a project; they say, "Uh oh, he's back again, hide all the objects, he'll take everything!" I've also been very lucky to have people work with me who are able to make some things. But most importantly I've had a great producer, Jack Walsh.

Wollen: The other cinema you cite is that of Méliès. Like Roussel or Lou Andreas Salomé, he was also a fin-de-siècle figure. He also used backdrops and tricks of scale and dreamlike props.

Fagin: I think Méliès is an extraordinary figure, and the whole phenomenon of "primitive cinema" and tableaux structure is something that's very interesting to me. It's a tremendously rich tradition, surely more interesting than things that have been done recently. Except for *Pee Wee Herman's Playhouse*, which is great.

Wollen: What's that?

Fagin: It's a Saturday morning TV show with an infantile character amidst lots of color, and objects, and silliness. You've never seen it?

Wollen: No, no. I never had Saturday morning TV. Cornell used to collect trick films, didn't he? Méliès and Zecca. I was struck by the insistence of Cornell, not only the boxes, but the procession of female figures, which, with Cornell, begin with Lind and Malibran, with nineteenth-century opera, and then descend to the twentieth-century cinema, to Rose Hobart, Hedy Lamarr, and Sheree North.

Fagin: Much of the relation to Cornell is a ruse. A woman I lived with for a very long time, Aimee Rankin, does these wonderful boxes—unfortunately we don't talk. Often my work is an exchange with hers; she makes a comment about Masaccio, I respond; she says something about *Turandot*, I give a different reading. A rather expensive form of letter writing. But I guess it's better than arguing. On the other hand, a ruse is a very serious thing.

Wollen: A different topic: the traveler's tales, the ethnographic footage, the imaginary Land of Propp. Where is all this travel taking us?

Fagin: In some sense both pieces are organized around Ulysses, whom I see as the patron saint of chutzpah. I looked in Freud for reassurance and was stunned that he had never written about Ulysses. Anyway, the organization of the voyage home and the series of wanderings is important, both personally and structurally. Also the way Ulysses becomes the meta-tale of telling, narration, in the West. So Joyce becomes a major influence. In the Flaubert/Roussel tape, Verne's becomes the meta-tale for the nineteenth-century voyage. After all, Roussel thought

Verne the greatest writer in history. What we end up with is a library of the voyage with many different types of analysis: personal stories, geographical descriptions, political conquests, ethnography, etc., all stacked next to each other under the card-catalogue topic "the amazing voyage." Also, there is an effort to confront the postromantic imagination, of which Flaubert and Roussel are such a strong part. To join the work being done within the critique/discussion of Orientalism.

Wollen: When you talk about this very complex web or mesh of allusions and threads of metaphor and metonymy, do you see it as a web that has some kind of a center or direction? Or do you let it grow haphazardly through a free play of signifiers?

Fagin: Sometimes I think of the way things hold together in a rather mundane way. It's as though you've gotten up in the middle of the night, gone into the kitchen, turned on the light, and opened a drawer to find an empty center with all these cockroaches at the edge. You feel like closing the drawer, but instead grab at them to restore them to their place. Often when people think of how things connect they think of the symptom. There's a real meaning underneath, sweep the symptom to the side, and get to the bottom of it. But Freud himself remarked that he was bringing the plague. So things get connected from so little and can turn in almost any direction. The Western disciplines of the dead—archeology, geology, etc.—pull so much together from so little. From a bone we get a dinosaur eating ferns in a swamp. The object found is used to constitute discourses on origin, legitimacy, and custom. And this is what so many stories in the tape use as their methodological base. There is a quote I like of Cornell's: It's not that things so close feel apart that's the problem, but that things so far apart fit together so easily.

Another issue of organization is very important to the piece, and this is a distinction that I would draw between Duchamp and Cornell, both so important to me. Much of the aesthetic of Duchamp is on the side of the ludic, the game of chess, and we know to what degree chess is a synchronic event; it doesn't need to know the move before. On the other hand, so much of the play structure of Cornell is modeled on the fort/da game, a waiting for the mother to return. I see my own work as closer to Cornell's. It's very important to me that it was the American movers who broke the large glass, made *marmalade* out of it, as Duchamp said, using a word that doesn't exist in French. All of this relates to the tape's prelude, the interrogation of virginity, very direct, set off in tone from the rest of the tape, which is sublimated and childlike. The interrogation is followed by the pop-up book which, in the tradition of the prelude, introduces all that follows. The body of the tape has a very symmetrical structure, rhyming both on micro and macro levels. Then there is the male narrator, the backbone of the piece, holding it together but turning it inside out.

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Pop-Up Book."*

Wollen: The chess player can be figured as an automaton, as a bachelor machine. But this idea of the bachelor . . .

Fagin: There's a very eccentric book by Craig Adcock on Duchamp and *n*th dimensional geometry, in which he traces Duchamp's last piece, *Etant Donnés*, back to Gérôme's *Guard of the Harem*, discussing the door in great detail. Within my work there is an antinomy between doors and veils. The bachelor with a door in front of him sees a bride with a veil, who imagines she must be imprisoned by the veil instead of, like him, a solid door. This difference is represented and narrativized in many ways, ranging from the section on Flaubert's being locked in his father's study through the retelling of the Zeuxis and Parrhasios legend.

Wollen: I think of Duchamp's bachelor more in terms of "nauseating repetition," the spectacle of repetition. The nineteenth century becomes the site of this spectacle.

Fagin: For the twentieth century to have doubts about what it is missing.

Wollen: Then there's the repetition of the image, the idea of the museum of the copy, which the tape keeps coming back to.

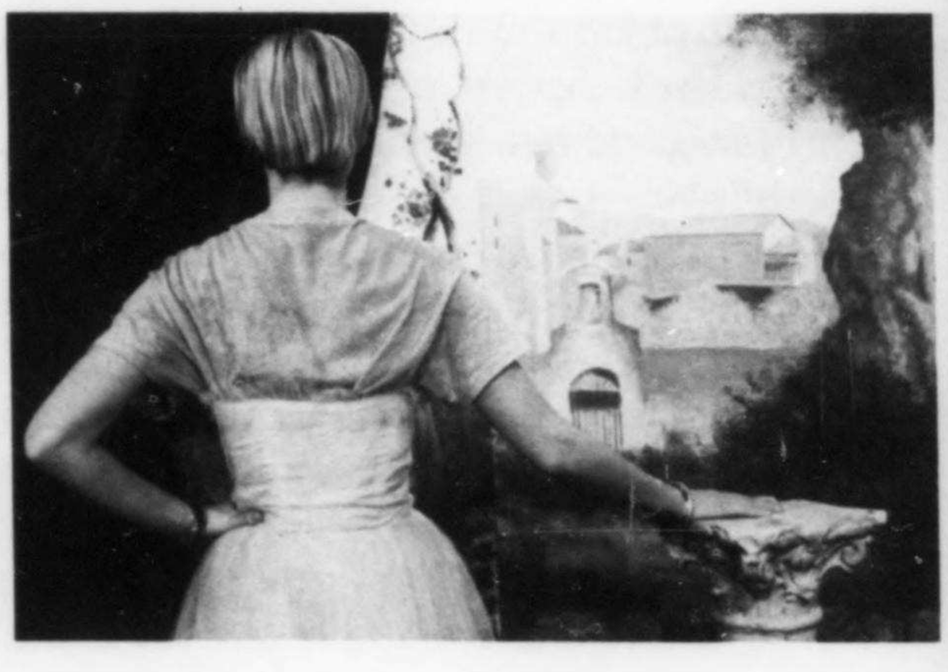
Fagin: I was very interested in pursuing nineteenth-century modes of producing images. One of the major aspects of this involved the journey to Rome, where one would simply copy other images. There was even a museum of copies. It was thought that a good copy was better than a bad original. I was also fascinated by Gérôme's Orientalist work. I did some research into his work process and was interested to learn that people generally comment on his paintings' *fini*, their extremely finished surface construction. The image that was in front of Gérôme was in fact an extraordinary collage. I show the way the paintings were constructed in one of the stories in the tape: there's a bunch of bric-a-brac, a woman there, a fake backdrop, a photograph, clothes brought back from the original place, and objects that he more or less always used. It's a very eccentric combination. I was intent on reproducing *that* space rather than the finished space of the painting.

Wollen: In dwelling on copies, did you want to get into a discourse about postmodernism?

Fagin: I did once, but now postmodernism is an overused idea, it's become too fashionable, so it's hard to go back to it. It's the same with the issue of the simulacrum versus the copy.

Wollen: That's a section that works very well, the dramatic knockabout debate between the finger puppet and the tape recorder.

Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Museum of Copies."*



Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"The Copy vs. the Simulacrum."*

Fagin: The person who performed it, Valerie Manenti, is very good, and she really worked very hard on the ideas. This section also relates to Roussel's being a mimic, his thinking that his greatest triumphs were the mimicking of the music hall entertainers of his day in front of his family. As a child I was always impressed by ventriloquism; in the U.S. there was someone named Señor Wences, who performed with a hand puppet and a box. My tape runs the Deleuze piece on Plato through my memory of Señor Wences. It's meant to be a good illustration of Deleuze. You start with a Cornell box, and you substitute an image of a gremlin; I think of the movie *Gremlins*; the gremlin is the image of the simulacrum . . .

Wollen: This is the sequence with an altered facsimile of a Cornell box?

Fagin: Yes. I think the gremlin is the perfect idea of the simulacrum. And so a debate ensues between the copy and the simulacrum, sort of substitutions of substitutions. The ideas of the simulacrum and the copy are taken directly from Deleuze. I'm hesitant about Baudrillard's work. Actually, I think Baudrillard should become a painter—you know, "This is the real Baudrillard, see, there's the signature, if all you want to do is illustrate my ideas, here's my signature, this should be worth something."

Wollen: I think he's probably becoming a gremlin.

Fagin: I don't think he's interested though. To return to the question about postmodernism: I think the style comes to me from growing up on TV and always filtering things through an ethnic specificity. I have a hard time reading poetry, because it sounds to me like it comes out with my own accent, a Chicago

accent. I have been resistant to reading much of the literature on postmodernism, though I think that even by scanning and trying to avoid it, I have probably read the equivalent of several books. Even when you avoid it, you see three words each time, and I've seen so much on it.

Wollen: Like the person in the Godard film who worked at the check-out counter in a bookstore and always glanced at the first and last pages while wrapping the books. I was interested in raising the question of postmodernism because I wondered whether quotation, repetition, copying—whether all these things were necessarily pervaded with nostalgia and regret.

Fagin: If one is presuming that wholeness can be restored, that's one thing; but if one is willing, more in the tradition of Benjamin, or Barthes, or even Nietzsche's best texts, to hold pridefully onto the fragment and use it as a critical fold, a tactical relation to the future. . . . The effort to bind it always has to be undone.

Wollen: You used this term *fold*, and I'm not quite sure . . .

Fagin: Cooking! Like when you fold in egg whites; when you make a soufflé you whip up the egg whites, then you fold them in so they keep their identity, though they're integrated completely with the other ingredients.

Wollen: But my question was going to be about repetition. There's another aspect to it. One of the main features of your sound design is the use of loops.

Fagin: Yes, I use the sort of circularity and delirium attached to loops to pull away from the imaging. I also tried to set up a series of repetitions in order to provide that sense of security one gets when things are repeated. You have, then, both sides of the roller coaster ride—delirium and the return to the point of entry.

Wollen: There's a kind of aural bric-a-brac: snatches of pop songs, bits of opera, found noise . . .

Fagin: The sound has a perspectival space that the image lacks. A rather eccentric space combining pop music, ambient sound, and opera, but it has a semblance of perspective, as in Escher. I work very closely with William Davenport on the tracks. They take months, and I'm very pleased with his input into my work. For me the pieces are sound entry pieces. The ear is the one organ that doesn't close, so everything begins with the ear. Unlike cinema, which grows out of the fantasy of its own origin as image without sound, video had sound from the beginning. In fact I think of TV, historically, simply as deposing the radio. It's a stand-in for the radio, which was so comforting a part of the American past. Think of Woody

Allen's *Radio Days*. From my own past, I remember Sunday mornings, the only time I ever noticed that my parents slept together, because they would sleep in, door closed. I would sit in front of the radio, Sunday funnies sprawled in front of me, and let the radio animate them for me. I've never read the Sunday funnies since; they make no sense to me without the sound. In my own work the sound is an anchor, which is a bit different than anchorage; if you hold on too tightly you'll drown.

Wollen: You refer a lot to childhood memories of radio and TV. How do you see the tapes fitting into the landscape of video art?

Fagin: One of the issues is long work versus short work. People readily understand the difference between short stories and novels; they know they are organized around different principles. In film you have a distinction between the short and the feature. But in video you have, "Oh yes, you're the guy who makes the long tapes." And so I've made a real effort to intervene in video, to push away from the notion of video as moving wallpaper, toward something that might have to be looked at more than once. I've also been interested in shifting the space of exhibition to one where people might have to pay to sit, would commit their time.

Wollen: Turn it into cinema.

Fagin: No, turn it into a machine like the cinema, but with a different aesthetic.

Wollen: How do you see your work in relation to museums, which are really the dominant space for video?

Fagin: I think of the "Tristan und Isolde" section in Bunuel's *L'age d'or*. I see the image as a severed hand twitching on a kitschy, fake pedestal, very small, and the sound as a high school band version of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* played very loud, and the audience sitting attentively. Assuming the image as central, but being torn to the edges by the sound, even to the point of erotic delirium (perhaps a bit wishful). Anyway, I'm very thankful for the support I've gotten within the video world. Many of the curators have tried to accommodate video's particular demands, to give the best viewing context available within their institutions.

Wollen: And how do you see the audience? Because the dollhouse, Cornell-box scale of the TV monitor in some way determines the scale of the audience as well.

Fagin: In many ways video is more on the side of painting, for which there's not really an audience, but rather a kind of connoisseurship. If you had a gallery

opening, and Mary Boone or the Saatchis walked into your gallery and said, "This is wonderful," and they were going to circulate or buy your piece, it wouldn't matter, in terms of validation within the institution, what anyone else thought. In place of a functional audience, video has an audience of connoisseurs.

Wollen: There's no box office.

Fagin: I look at it as an advantage in a way, because it allows me to experiment, to work at the edge, which I don't think I'd be able to do if I had to work in a forum that wasn't supported in this way.

Wollen: Yet, in a way, there is a mass audience. I read somewhere that the attendance at museums was now greater than that at sporting events. It's not implausible. Museums are open all week. There are many new ones being built. They have lines around the block. The throughput must be immense. But it's an audience which just comes in and feeds through, pausing for a moment, moving on, stopping, skipping whole rooms, and so on. How do you create that fixed look, that attentive look, which you're talking about, when it goes against the whole grain of museum spectatorship?

Fagin: One could argue that cinema has that same problem in the museum, it's not just video. But on the other hand . . .

Wollen: I don't want to put cinema in the museum. I would much sooner it was in other kinds of spaces. But video art doesn't seem to have many alternatives.

Fagin: I'm trying to work from what's there, to figure out a way to have it work. On one side I'm trying to work with the notion that the image *isn't* compelling. But when I try to organize a screening in alternative spaces, the thing I try to do is set up a system, perhaps like five very good monitors in a circle with thirty people around each monitor—nobody does window-shopping among monitors—and the sound coming from outside through large speakers. One of the advantages of having an art form based on connoisseurship is that it allows you to experiment and take risks, and the history of much of what passes for experimental exists initially under a very protected patronage. So I think what I do is look at this as a license to be experimental.

Wollen: Do you think video art in general has that license?

Fagin: I think that one can take that license. Because of the demands of the museum and of broadcast, video often functions according to a middle-brow aesthetic which I don't like. I do like some of the work done in video; I like the

work of John Adams in England, and the installation work of Tony Oursler is fantastic. I like Paper Tiger's work very much—informal, alternative, and cheap. Video provides several different formats for doing interesting and creative work, and I'm using some sort of license, and other people are using others.

Wollen: We've talked about museums and the conditions of exhibition. What about the discourse that surrounds video? Do you see problems or constraints there?

Fagin: The curators are the people who produce and are often the critics as well. This leaves very little room for the separation of estates. Video is an art form raised on pluralism as opposed to partisanship. And traditionally, at least where I come from, the cinema is based more on partisanship; there's a healthy disrespect for other people's work and you argue and work out positions and alliances across differences, not according to the pretense, I'm OK you're OK. That upsets me.

Wollen: Is that because the video world is too small?

Fagin: It's because it's developed as a sort of network, which probably relates to its smallness and the need for friendship. I don't know the history well enough, but coming to it at this moment in time, that's the way it feels.

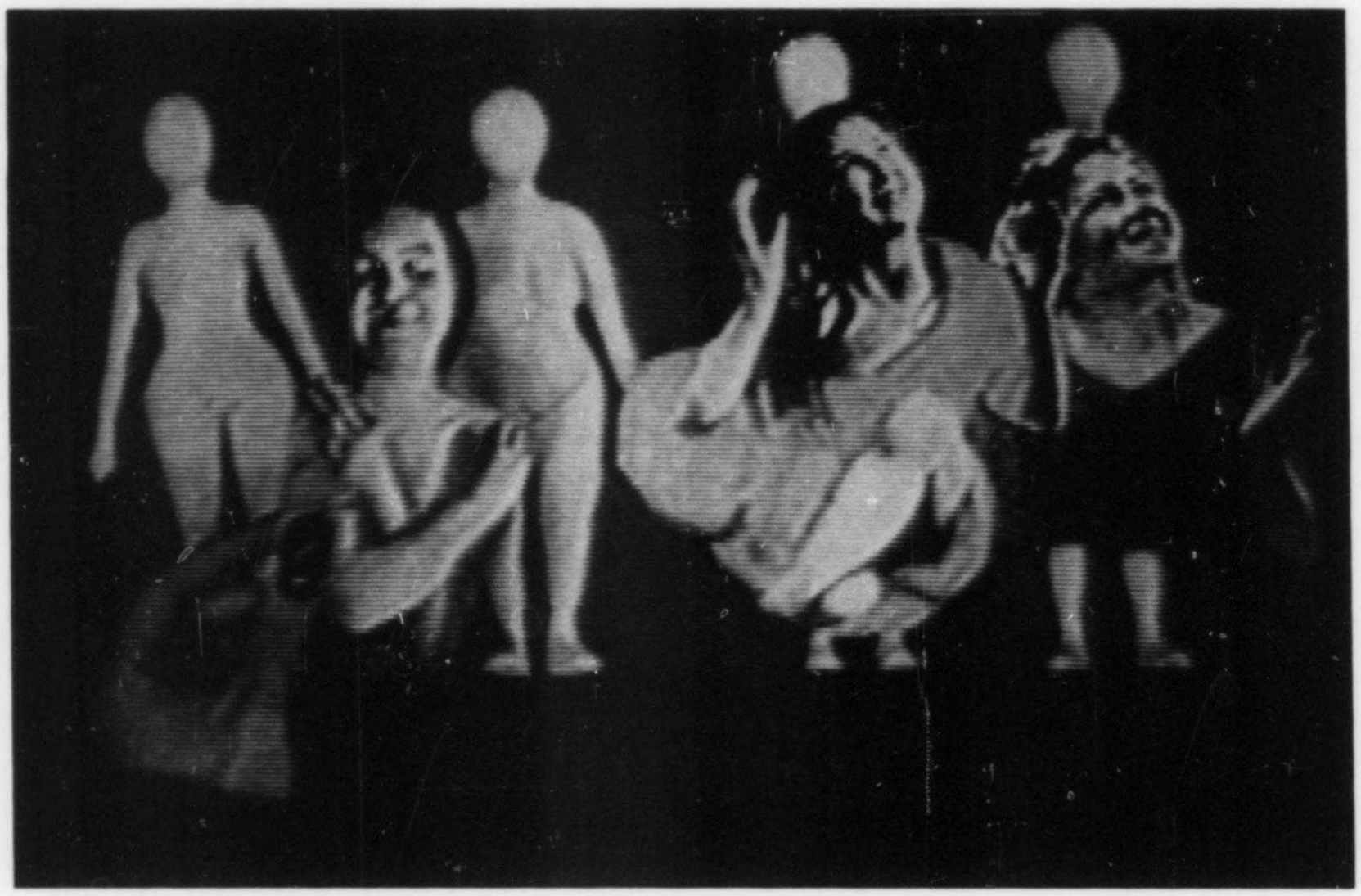
Wollen: When you talk about partisanship in the film world, isn't that connected to the role of film theory as a partly prescriptive force? There isn't any pressure of video theory in the same way.

Fagin: I want to insist very strongly that one of the reasons I'm doing video is to run away from film theory. At a certain moment film theory felt very much like it had lost its exploratory and speculative dimension and had settled into a series of axioms in response to which you get people writing papers: "True or false: *Desert Hearts* is an embodiment of female desire."

Wollen: "Undecidable."

Fagin: "Undecidable." So it began to feel that theory had become a sort of Discourse Police over practice, which I think has now spread to the art world. So video struck me as a place where I could produce in an atmosphere of exploration and risk.

Wollen: You see the theoretical culture as a kind of constraint, rather than as liberating?



Steve Fagin. The Amazing Voyage . . . , *"Proust of the Night."*

Fagin: I think it's switched its function in both the art world and the film world. There is a cross-examination of the text for correctness so that you eventually lose any sense of speculation and risk-taking.

Wollen: I think maybe you're trying to have your cake and eat it too. You can't have the liberating side of theory without the constraints. And certainly you can't have partisanship without prescription.

Fagin: Everything has its imaginary, even film theory. And for film it's the Soviet Union in the '20s, where there was a high level of partisanship.

Wollen: That was an extremely constraining discourse—as well as liberating.

Fagin: At what level?

Wollen: Look what happened.

Fagin: I don't think you can say, "Look what happened." I'm talking about the polemics surrounding LEF, not Zdhanovism.

Wollen: LEF was under pressure from the various proletarian groups and tendencies, as well as from more universalist currents; look at Trotsky's critique. After Lenin's death, the art world became inextricably caught up in inner-party struggles. The collapse of LEF and Mayakovsky's suicide took place at the end of a long period of intense theoretical and political struggle over the correct line.

Fagin: Yes, but I think the flow of energy between creativity, risk-taking, and speculation within both writing, which is called critical, and production, which is called artistic practice, was very rich at that time. Also I feel my work and other people's work, including yours and Trinh T. Minh-ha's, have been trying to produce a Northwest Passage, an open-ended relation, where one sees both sides as being creative and speculative. Criticism at its edge, Barthes, Blanchot, Benjamin, and certain filmmakers, Godard and Marker, cross over—perhaps not dissolving the border but allowing one to travel freely, without a passport.

Wollen: I agree with that. Without a passport.

Fagin: I don't think that video criticism is lacking its Christian Metz; it's lacking its Jonas Mekas.

Wollen: I would have thought it was lacking something other than either of these.

Fagin: I'm talking about partisanship, championing, saying that something is important.

Wollen: Mekas was a partisan for independence and experiment, but within that boundary, very pluralistic. I think that's probably the situation with video now. People see themselves as partisans for video as such. What about the relation to television? You've talked a lot about television, how you sat there watching the Winky Dink show all the time.

Fagin: I mentioned Pee Wee Herman, but I did watch the Winky Dink show. You used to put this Saran Wrap piece in front of the screen, and it was up to you to connect the bridge so Winky Dink could go from one side to the other. I really liked that show.

Wollen: There's all this childhood investment in television. And now here you are with video. How do you see its relation to television?

Fagin: I have a hard time watching TV, except for news and sports—assassinations and touchdowns—where I think something's happening. Otherwise I begin to hyperventilate. Again, I see television as something that is pushing from behind and allows me to produce and organize things in a way that is

probably different from those people who have only a high-culture background. But I do not at this moment in time see my work as an intervention in TV.

Wollen: Would it ever be possible to see it in that way in the United States?

Fagin: I think Paper Tiger is good. To work on cable, work at your own density, push your own issues, feel that if you produce something interesting, people will come to it, is important. But the level of compromise in relation to the institutions of PBS . . . I have not seen anything coming out of that tradition which interests me.

Wollen: I find the audience for TV even more scattered and abstract than that in museums. Obviously, there is an audience out there, watching. But inchoate and ephemeral. Here one minute, gone the next. It's just the inverse of the museum: throughput of images instead of throughput of viewers.

Fagin: For me video culture is more like a cell group. Like Freud: if he sells 100 copies of *Interpretation of Dreams* in ten years, what's important is who reads it and what they do with it. I've concentrated on people who could do something with it, people who will come to it, to the edge. The center will collapse because enough people will move from the center to the edge. There's more of an effort to conquer the edge than the center.

Wollen: A kind of micro-cultural politics.

Fagin: Yes.

Wollen: Enough questions. Let's switch off. Can we still catch Pee Wee Herman?

Gramophone, Film, Typewriter

FRIEDRICH KITTLER

translated by DOROTHEA VON MÜCKE with the assistance of PHILIPPE L. SIMILON

Optical fiber networks. Soon people will be connected to a communication channel which can be used for any kind of media — for the first time in history or for the end of history. When films, music, phone calls, and texts are able to reach the individual household via optical fiber cables, the previously separate media of television, radio, telephone, and mail will become a single medium, standardized according to transmission frequency and bit format. Above all, the optoelectronic channel will be immunized against disturbances that might randomize the beautiful patterns of bits behind the images and sounds. Immunized, that is, against the bomb. For it is well known that nuclear explosions may send a high intensity electromagnetic pulse through traditional copper cables and cripple the connected computer network.

The Pentagon is capable of truly far-sighted planning. Only the substitution of optical fibers for conducting cables can accommodate the enormous rates and volume of bits that are presupposed, produced, and celebrated by electronic warfare. Then all early warning systems, radars, missile bases, and army headquarters on the opposite coast, in Europe,[1] will finally be connected to computers, safe from an electromagnetic pulse and able to function when needed. And for the intervening period there is even the by-product of pleasure: people can switch to any medium for their entertainment. After all, optical fibers can transmit any imaginable message but the one that counts — the one about the bomb.

1. Karl Haushofer — who, "though not the author of the technical term *geopolitics*," was nevertheless "its main representative in its German version" — prophesized: "After the war, the Americans are going to appropriate a more or less wide strip of the European west and south coasts, and simultaneously annex England, thus fulfilling Cecil Rhodes's ideal from the opposite coast. They will thereby act in accordance with the age-old ambition of every naval power to gain control over the opposite coast(s) in order completely to dominate the ocean in between. The opposite coast is at least the entire east coast of the Atlantic, and — in order to round off the domination over the 'seven seas' — possibly also the entire west coast of the Pacific. In so doing, America wants to connect the outer crescent to the 'axis'" (Karl Haushofer, "Nostris ex ossibus. Gedanken eines Optimisten" [1944], in Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer. Leben und Werk,* Boppard,/Rhein, 1979, vol. II, pp. 635, 639).

But even now, before the end, something is coming to an end. The general digitalization of information and channels erases the difference between individual media. Sound and image, voice and text have become mere effects on the surface, or, to put it better, the interface for the consumer. Sense and the senses become mere glitter. Their media-produced glamour will last throughout the transitional period as a waste product of strategic programs. In computers everything becomes number: imageless, soundless, and wordless quantity. And if the optical fiber network reduces all formerly separate data flows to one standardized digital series of numbers, any medium can be translated into another. With numbers nothing is impossible. Modulation, transformation, synchronization; delay, memory, transposition; scrambling, scanning, mapping—a total connection of all media on a digital base erases the notion of the medium itself. Instead of hooking up technologies to people, absolute knowledge can run as an endless loop.

But right now there are still media; there is still entertainment. One is informed—mainly, unfortunately, thanks to jumbo jets. In the jumbo jet, media are more densely connected than in most places. They remain separate, however, according to their technological standard, frequency, user allocation, and interface. The crew is connected to radar screens, diode displays, radio beacons, and nonpublic channels. The crew members have deserved their professional earphones. Their replacement by computers is only a question of time. But the passengers can benefit only from yesterday's technology and are entertained by a canned media mixture. With the exception of books, that ancient medium which needs so much light, all the entertainment techniques are represented. The passengers' ears are listlessly hooked up to one-way earphones, which are themselves hooked up to tape recorders and thereby to the record industry. Their eyes are glued to Hollywood movies, which in turn must be connected to the advertising budget of the airline industry—otherwise they would not so regularly begin with takeoffs and landings. Not to mention the technological medium of the food industry to which the mouths of the passengers are connected. A multi-media embryonic sack supplied through channels or navels that all serve the purpose of screening out the real background: noise, night, and the cold of an unlivable outside. Against that there is muzak, movies, and microwave cuisine.

The technological standard of today, and not only of the jumbo jet, can be described in terms of partially connected media systems. All can still be described in the terms McLuhan provided. According to him, the contents of one medium are always other media: film and radio constitute the content of television; record and tape the content of radio; silent movie and magnetic sound that of cinema; text, telephone, and telegram that of the semi-media monopoly of the postal service.[2] Since the beginning of this century, when Lieben in Germany and

2. In West Germany, in contrast to the U.S., telephone and telegraph services are subject to the federal postal service.—trans.

deForest in California developed the electronic tube, it has become possible, in principle, to amplify and transmit signals. The vast systems of connected media that have come to exist since the '30s can tap into writing, film, and phonography—the three storage media—and connect and emit their signals at will.

But between those systems of connected media there are incompatible data channels and differently formatted data. Electrotechnics and electronics are not quite the same. Within the spectrum of the general data flow, television and radio, cinema and the postal service function like individual windows for one's sense perception. In contrast to the perfected optoelectronic future, today infrared radiation or radar echoes of approaching missiles are still sent over separate channels. Our systems of connected media can only distribute words, sounds, and images as they are sent and received by people. Above all, the systems do not compute data. They do not produce an output which, under computer control, would transform any algorithm into any interface effect, to the point at which people will no longer be able to make sense of their senses. Right now only the transmission quality of the storage media, which in the connected media systems represents the content, is being computed. A compromise between engineers and sales people regulates the degree to which the sound from a television set can be poor, the pictures in the cinema can be fuzzy, or a beloved voice on the telephone can be filtered. The dependent variable of this compromise is what we take for our sense perception.

A composite consisting of a face and a voice, which, as in the case of Kennedy, remains calm during a TV debate, even when faced by someone like Richard Nixon, is telegenic and wins presidential elections. Voices which would become traitors in an optical close-up, however, are called *funkisch* ("radiogenic") and rule over the VE301, the *Volksempfänger* of World War II. For, as a student of Heidegger, one of Germany's early commentators about radio, remarks, "Death is primarily a radio topic."[3]

But what we take for our sense perception has to be fabricated first. The domination and the connection of technical media presuppose a particular kind of coincidence, in Lacan's terms: something had to stop not writing itself. Long before the electrification of the media, that is, even before their electronic end, there were modest, merely mechanical apparatuses. Those apparatuses could neither amplify nor transmit, but they could still store data for our sense perception: there was the silent movie for sights and Edison's phonograph for sounds. (Note that Edison's apparatus—in contrast to Berliner's later gramophone disk—could also be used for the recording of sound.)

On December 6, 1877, Thomas Alva Edison, lord of the first research laboratory in the history of technology, presented the prototype of the phono-

3. Wilhelm Hoffmann, "Vom Wesen des Funkspiels" (1933), in Gerhard Hay, ed., *Literatur und Rundfunk 1923–1933*, Hildesheim, 1975, p. 374.

graph. In the same town of Menlo Park, on February 20, 1892, the so-called kinetoscope was completed. Thus, three years later the Lumière brothers in France (or the Skladanowsky brothers in Germany) only had to provide a means of projection for this apparatus in order to turn Edison's kinetoscope into our cinema.

Since this epoch-making event storage systems have been developed that can record and reproduce the temporal flow of acoustic and optical data. Ear and eye have become autonomous. This has brought about a far more radical change than have lithography and photography, which in the first third of the nineteenth century merely propelled the work of art into the age of mechanical reproduction (according to Walter Benjamin's thesis). Media "define what constitutes reality"[4]; they are always already ahead of aesthetics.

What was new about the storage capability of the phonograph and cinematograph—and both names refer, not accidentally, to writing—was their ability to store time: as a mixture of audio frequencies in the acoustic realm, as a movement of single picture sequences in the optic realm. Time, however, is what determines the limits of all art. The quotidian data flow must be arrested before it can become image or sign. What is called style in art is only the switchboard of these scannings and selections. The same switchboard also controls those arts that administrate in writing a serial, that is, a temporally transposed data flow. In order to store the sound sequences of speech, literature has to arrest them in the system of twenty-six letters and thereby exclude noise sequences from the beginning. It is no coincidence that this system includes, as a subsystem, the seven tones, the diatonic system from *a* to *h* that forms the foundation of occidental music. In order to fix an acoustic chaos assaulting European ears as exotic music—according to the suggestion of the musicologist von Hornbostel—one first of all interpolates a phonograph, which can record the chaos in real time and reproduce it in slow motion. When the rhythms then become paralyzed and the "individual measures, even individual sounds resound," occidental alphabetism, with its staves, can proceed to an "exact notation."[5]

Texts and scores were Europe's only means to store time. Both are based on writing; the time of this writing is symbolic (in Lacan's terms). This time memorizes itself in terms of projections and retrievals—like a chain of chains. Nevertheless, whatever runs as time on a physical or (again in Lacan's terms) real level, blindly and unpredictably, could by no means be encoded. Therefore all data flows, if they were real streams of data, had to pass through the defile of the signifier. Alphabetic monopoly, grammatology.

If the film called history is wound back, it will become an endless loop. What soon will end in the monopoly of bits and fiber optics began with the

4. Norbert Bolz, "Die Schrift des Films," in *Diskursanalysen 1: Medien,* Wiesbaden, 1986, p. 34.
5. Otto Abraham and Erich Moritz von Hornbostel, "Über die Bedeutung des Phonographen für vergleichende Musikwissenschaft," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie,* no. 36 (1904), p. 229.

monopoly of writing. History was that homogenous field which, as a subject in school curricula, included only cultures with written language. Mouths and graphisms dropped out into prehistory. Otherwise events and their stories could not have been connected.[6] The commands and judgments, the announcements and prescriptions that gave rise to mountains of corpses—military and juridical, religious and medical—all went through the same channel that held the monopoly on the descriptions of those mountains of corpses. This is why anything that ever happened ended up in libraries.

And Foucault, the last historian or the first archeologist, had only to look it up. The suspicion that all power comes from archives to which it returns could be brilliantly illustrated, at least within the legal, medical, and theological fields. This is the tautology of history or merely its calvary and tomb. For libraries, the archeologist's rich places of discovery, gathered and catalogued papers which differed greatly according to address, degree of secrecy, and writing technique: Foucault's archive as entropy of a post office.[7] Before it falls into libraries, even writing is a communication medium of which the archeologist only forgot the technology. That is why his analyses end immediately before that point in time when other media penetrated the library's stacks. For sound archives or towers of film rolls, discourse analysis becomes inappropriate.

Nevertheless, as long as there was history, it was indeed Foucault's "endless bleating of words."[8] More simply, but not less technically than the fiber optics of the future, writing functioned as the general medium. For that reason the term *medium* did not exist. For whatever else was going on dropped through the filter of letters or ideograms.

"Literature," Goethe wrote, "is the fragment of fragments; the least of what had happened and of what had been spoken was written down; of what had been written down, only the smallest fraction was preserved."[9]

Accordingly, today oral history confronts the writing monopoly of the historians; accordingly, a media theoretician like Walter J. Ong, who, particularly in his function as a Jesuit priest, must take a professional interest in the spirit of the Pentecostal mystery, celebrates a primal orality of tribal cultures, as opposed to the secondary orality of our media acoustics. But that kind of research was inconceivable as long as the opposite of "history" used to be simply (again in Goethe's terms) "legend."[10] Prehistory disappeared in its mythical name; Goethe's definition of literature did not even have to mention optical or

6. *Geschichte*, the German word for history, means both "story" and "history."—trans.
7. See Rüdiger Campe, "Pronto! Telefonate und Telefonstimmen," in *Diskursanalysen 1: Medien*, Wiesbaden, 1986, pp. 70ff.
8. Michel Foucault, *Schriften zur Literatur*, Munich, 1974, p. 101.
9. J. W. Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre!* (1829), *Sämtliche Werke*, Jubiläums-Ausgabe, Eduard von der Hellen, ed., Stuttgart and Berlin, 1904, vol. XXXVIII, p. 270.
10. J. W. Goethe, *Die Farbenlehre* (1810), *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XXXX, p. 148. (The German word for legend, *Sage*, derives from *sagen*, "to say."—trans.)

acoustical data flows. And under pretechnical, though literary, conditions even legends, those spoken segments of what had happened, could last only when they had been fixed in writing. Since it has become possible, however, to record on tape the epics of those last Homeric bards, who until recently were wandering through Serbia and Croatia, oral mnemotechniques or cultures can be reconstructed in an altogether new way.[11] Then even Homer's rosy-fingered Eos is transformed from a goddess into a piece of chrome dioxide, which used to be stored in the memory of those rhapsodists and could be combined with other pieces into whole epics. Primal orality or oral history are technological shadows of the apparatuses which they can document, only, however, after the end of the writing monopoly.

Writing can store only writing, no more, no less. The holy books testify to this fact. The second book of Moses, chapter twenty, fixes a copy of what Jaweh originally had written with his own finger on two stone tablets: the law. Of the thunder and lightning, the dense cloud and very powerful trumpet that accompanied the writing-down on the holy mountain of Sinai, the Bible could store nothing but mere words.[12]

Even less is handed down of the nightmares and visitations that came to a nomad called Mohammed after his flight to the holy mountain of Hira. The Koran does not begin until, in place of the many demons, the one God rules. Archangel Gabriel descends from the seventh heaven with a roll of scripture and the command to decipher it. "Read," he says to Mohammed, "read in the name of your Lord, who has created all and made man out of his own coagulated blood. Read, in the name of your Lord, the glorious, who taught man the use of the quill and all he did not know before."[13]

But Mohammed answers that he, the nomad, does not know how to read, not even the divine message about the origin of writing and reading. The archangel has to repeat his command before this illiterate man can become the founder of a book religion. For soon, or all too soon, the illegible roll starts making sense and offers to Mohammed's magically alphabeticized eyes exactly that text that Gabriel already uttered twice as the oral command. It is the twenty-sixth sura that, according to all traditions, was at the beginning of Mohammed's enlightenment—a beginning which then has "to be learnt by heart by the believers, to be written down on primitive surfaces such as palm leaves, stones, wood, bones, and leatherpieces, and to be recited again and again by Mohammed and elect believers, especially during Ramadan."[14]

11. See Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World*, London and New York, 1982, p. 27, and, more clearly, p. 3.
12. See the second book of Moses, 24:12 to 34:28.
13. *Koran*, 96, V. 1–6.
14. L. W. Winter, ed., *Der Koran. Das Heilige Buch des Islam*, Munich, 1959. p. 6.

Thus, writing stores only the fact of its authorization. It celebrates the storing monopoly of the god who has invented it. And because this god rules over signs that are not meaningless only for readers, all books are books of the dead, like those from Egypt that stand at the beginning of literature.[15] The realm of the dead beyond the senses to which they lure us coincides with the book itself. When Zeno asked the delphic oracle what was the best way to live, the answer he was given was: "'To mate with the dead.' Which he understood as the equivalent of to *read* the *ancients*."[16]

How the teaching of a god who taught the use of quills went from Moses and Mohammed to simpler and simpler people—this tedious history can be written by no one, since this would be history itself. Comparable to how, in electronic warfare, the memory capacities of the computers will soon coincide with the war itself, gigabyte upon gigabyte shall exede all the processing capacities of historians.

Suffice it to say that one day—in Germany, perhaps, this was already so at the time of Goethe—the homogenous medium of writing was additionally homogenized by the state apparatus. General compulsory school attendance pulled a hide of paper over everyone. No longer a "misuse of language" (according to Goethe) struggling with cramped muscles and individual letters, they learned a way of writing which went on even in darkness or intoxication. They learned a "silent and private way of reading" which, as a "sad surrogate of speech,"[17] could easily consume letters, bypassing the oral organs. Whatever they were emitting or receiving was writing. And since whatever exists depends on what can be posted, the bodies themselves were submitted to the regime of the symbolic. This is unthinkable today, but it was once a reality: no movie stored the movements that they produced or perceived, no phonograph the noises they uttered or heard. For whatever existed failed before time. Silhouettes or pastel drawings fixed the play of features, and the staves failed before the noise. But whenever a hand would take the quill a miracle occurred. Then that body that had not yet stopped not writing itself would curiously, unavoidably leave traces.

> I am ashamed to admit it. I am ashamed of my handwriting. It exposes my naked mind. In that handwriting I am more naked than when I get undressed. No leg, no breath, no dress, no sound. Neither a voice nor an image. Everything is emptied out. Instead the full man is shriveled, shrunk, and stunted into his scribbling. His lines are all that is left of him and his propagation. The unevenness between the upstroke and the blank paper, minimal and hardly to be felt by the fingertips of a

15. See Aleida and Jan Assman, eds., *Schrift und Gedächtnis. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation I*, Munich, 1983, p. 268.
16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* (1874), *Sämtliche Werke*, Musarion-Ausgabe, Munich, 1922–29, vol. V, p. 213.
17. J. W. Goethe, *Aus meinen Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811–14), *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XXII, p. 279.

> blind man, forms the last proportion that comprises the fellow once again in his totality.[18]

The shame that overcomes the hero of Botho Strauss's *Widmung* whenever he sees his own handwriting exists only as an anachronism. The fact that the minimal unevenness between upstrokes and paper can store neither a voice nor an image of a body presupposes in its exclusion the invention of phonography and cinema. Before their invention, however, without any competition, handwriting could guarantee the perfect securing of traces. It wrote and wrote, in an energetic and ideally uninterrupted flow. For in this continuous flow of ink or letters the alphabetic individual had, as Hegel correctly observed, "its appearance and exteriority."[19]

And what applies to writing also applies to reading. Even if the alphabeticized individual of the "writer" finally had to fall out of the private exteriority of his handwriting into the anonymous exteriority of print in order to secure beyond distance and death "what is left of him and his propagation"—alphabeticized individuals called "readers" could nevertheless reverse those exteriorizations. "If one reads correctly," Novalis wrote, "the words in us will be unfolded into a visible world."[20] And his friend Schlegel added that "one believes one hears what one merely reads."[21] Perfect alphabetism was supposed to supplement precisely those optical and acoustical data flows which refused to stop not writing themselves under the monopoly of writing. In order to naturalize writing, writing had to be made painless, and reading had to become silent. Educated people who could skim letters were provided with sights and sounds.

Around 1800 the book became both film and record simultaneously—not, however, as a media technological reality, but only in the imaginary of readers' souls. General compulsory school attendance and new technologies of alphabetization helped to bring about this new reality. As a surrogate of unstorable data flows the book came to power and glory.[22]

In 1774 an editor named Goethe had the handwritten letters or *The Sorrows of Young Werther* printed. Even the "unknown masses" (as they are called in the *Dedication* of *Faust*) "should have the chance to hear a song," which, "like an old,

18. Botho Strauss, *Die Widmung. Eine Erzählung*, Munich, 1977, pp. 21ff.
19. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), *Gesammelte Werke*, Hamburg, 1968ff., vol. 8, p. 42. Kittler uses the neologism *alphabetisiert* (literally "alphabeticized") to refer to a literate individual. German has no precise word meaning "literate," whereas it does have the noun *Analphabet* which means "illiterate"—ed.
20. Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), *Das allgemeine Brouillon* (1798–99), *Schriften*, Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, eds., Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, 1960–75, vol. III, p. 377.
21. Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Philosophie* (1799), *Kritische Ausgabe*, Ernst Behler, ed., Munich, Paderborn, Vienna, 1958ff., vol. VIII, p. 42.
22. See Friedrich Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, Munich, 1985, pp. 115–130.

almost forgotten legend," evoked "first love and friendship."[23] This exactly describes poetry's new road to success: voices or handwritings are unnoticeably turned into Gutenbergiana. For the same reason, we find Werther's last letter before his suicide still sealed, though not yet mailed off, giving his lover the promise of poetry itself: during their lifetime she would have to remain the wife of the unlovable Albert, but thereafter, "before the eyes of the infinite being," she would be united with her lover in an "eternal embrace."[24] And indeed, that addressee of the handwritten love letters which were given into print by a mere editor/author was to be rewarded with the same kind of immortality as the novel itself. The novel, and only the novel, will constitute that "beautiful world"[25] in which, also in 1809, the lovers in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* "will once reawaken united" according to the hopes of the novelist.[26] During their lifetime Eduard and Ottilie already had a marvellously similar handwriting. Therefore, their death had to take them into a paradise which, under the storage monopoly of writing, used to be called poetry.

And it might very well be that that paradise was more real than our media-manipulated senses can imagine. The suicides among *Werther's* readers might have perceived their hero, if they only read correctly, in a real, visible world. And the lovers among Goethe's female readers, like Bettina Brentano, might very well have died with the heroine of his *Elective Affinities* in order to be reborn through "Goethe's genius" "into a more beautiful youth."[27] Possibly the perfect readers of 1800 were a living answer to the question with which, in 1983, Chris Marker ends his film essay *Sans Soleil*:

> Lost at the end of the world, on my island Sal, in the company of my dogs strutting around, I remember January in Tokyo, or rather I remember the images that I filmed in January in Tokyo. They have put themselves in the place of my memory, they *are* my memory. I ask myself how people remember if they do not make movies, or photographs, or tapes, how mankind used to go about remembering.[28]

It is the same with language in which one has merely the choice of remembering the words and losing the meaning or, vice versa, of remembering the

23. J. W. Goethe, *Zueignung* (1797), *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XIII, pp. 3ff. For the reasons why even a fully alphabetized literature simulated orality, see Heinz Schlaffer, introduction to Jack Goody, Ian Watt, and Kathleen Gough, *Entstehung und Folgen der Schriftkultur*, Frankfurt/Main, 1986, pp. 20–22.
24. J. W. Goethe, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XVI, p. 137.
25. Walter Benjamin, *Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften* (1924–25), *Gesammelte Schriften*, Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, eds., Frankfurt/Main, 1972–85, vol. I, part 1, p. 200.
26. J. W. Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XXI, p. 302.
27. Bettina Brentano, *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (1835), *Bettina von Arnim, Werke und Briefe*, Gustav Konrad, ed., Frechen, 1959–63, vol. II, p. 222.
28. Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil. Unsichtbare Sonne. Vollständiger Text zum gleichnamigen Film-Essay*, Hamburg, 1983, pp. 23ff.

meaning and losing the words in doing so.[29] As soon as optical and acoustical data can be put into some kind of media storage, people no longer need their memory. Its "liberation" is its end.[30] As long as the book had to take care of all serial data flows, however, words trembled with sensuality and memory. All the passion of reading consisted of hallucinating a meaning between letters and lines: the visible or audible world of romantic poetry. And all passion of writing was (according to E.T.A. Hoffmann) the poet's wish "to pronounce the inner being" of these hallucinations "in all its glowing colors, shadows, and lights" in order to "hit the favorable reader as if with an electric shock."[31]

Electricity itself has brought this to an end. If memories and dreams, the dead and the specters have become technically reproducible, then the hallucinatory power of reading and writing has become obsolete. Our realm of the dead is no longer in books, where it was for such a long time. No longer is it the case that "only through writing will the dead remain in the memory of the living," as Diodor of Sicily once wrote.

The writer Balzac was already overcome by fear when faced with photography, as he confessed to Nadar, the great pioneer of photography. If the human body (according to Balzac) on the one hand consists of infinitely thin layers of "specters," and if on the other hand the human spirit cannot be made of nothing, then the daguerreotype must be a shady trick: it fixes, that is, steals those layers, one after the other, until finally nothing remains of those "specters" and of the human body itself.[32] Photo albums establish an infinitely more precise realm of the dead than Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, the competing literary enterprise. In contrast to the arts, the work of media is not limited to the grid of the symbolic. Media can reconstruct bodies beyond the systems of words, colors, or sound intervals. It is only media that can fulfill the "high standards" which we have applied to the "image" since the invention of photography. According to Rudolf Arnheim: "It [the image] is not only supposed to resemble the object, but it is also supposed to guarantee this resemblance by being the product of this object itself, i.e., by being mechanically produced by it—in the same way as the illuminated objects in reality mechanically imprint their image onto the photographic layer";[33] or, as the frequency curves of noises inscribe themselves onto the phonographic plate.

A reproduction authenticated by the object itself has physical precision. This kind of reproduction refers to the real of bodies which necessarily slips

29. See Gilles Deleuze, "Pierre Klossowski ou les corps-language," *Critique*, no. 21 (1965), p. 32.
30. See André Leroi-Gourhan as quoted in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, 1976.
31. E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der Sandmann* (1816), *Späte Werke*, Walter Müller-Seidel, ed., Munich, 1960, p. 343.
32. See Nadar, "My Life as a Photographer," *October*, no. 5 (Summer 1978), pp. 7–28.
33. Rudolf Arnheim, "Systematik der frühen kinematographischen Erfindungen" (1933) in Helmut H. Dieterichs, ed., *Kritiken und Aufsätze zum Film*, Munich, 1977, p. 27.

through all the symbolic grids. Media always already provide the appearances of specters. For, according to Lacan, in the real even the word *corpse* is already a euphemism.[34]

And the tapping specters of the spiritistic séances, with their messages from the realm of the dead, appeared quite promptly at the moment of the invention of the Morse alphabet in 1837. Promptly, photographic plates—even and especially with the camera shutter closed—provided images of ghosts or specters which, in their black-and-white fuzziness, only emphasized the moments of resemblance. Finally, one of the ten uses Edison predicted (in 1878, in the *North American Review*) for the recently invented phonograph was to preserve the "last words of the dying."

From those kinds of "family archives,"[35] with their special attention to the returning dead, it was only a small step to fictions which connect the living and the dead via telephone cables. This was something wished for by Leopold Bloom on the occasion of his visit to the Dublin cemetery.[36] It had already been turned into science fiction by Walther Rathenau in his double role as chairman of the board of AEG and as a writer. In his story *Resurrection Co.*, the cemetery administration of a town—Necropolis, Dakota, USA—reacts to the scandal of people being buried alive by founding a daughter company, the Dakota and Central Resurrection Telephone and Bell Co., with a capital stock of $750,000 and the sole purpose of ensuring that even the inhabitants of graves are connected to the public telephone network. Whereupon the dead take advantage of their opportunity and, long before McLuhan, proceed to prove that the content of each medium is another medium—which is, in this concrete case, a specific professional deformation.[37]

Paranormal voices on tape or radio, as they have been spiritistically researched since 1959 and preserved even in rock music since Laurie Anderson's 1982 release, *Big Science*, tend to tell their researchers only their preferred

34. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, Paris, 1978.

35. Thomas Edison, quoted in Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph 1877–1977: From Edison to Stereo*, New York, 1977, p. 29. Phonograph recordings of last words presuppose that "physiological time *is not reversible*" and that "in the realm of rhythm and time there is absolutely no symmetry" (Ernst Mach, *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen*, Jena, 1886, p. 108).

36. See John Brooks, "The First and Only Century of Telephone Literature," in Ithiel de Sola Pool, ed., *The Social Impact of the Telephone*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1977, pp. 213ff.

37. Walther Rathenau, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1918–29, vol. IV, p. 347. Two examples of professional deformation among the dead of Necropolis: "A writer is not content with his epitaph. An employee of the telephone company rings in short and long intervals, signaling, in a kind of Morse code, a criticism of his successor." King Alexander, the protagonist of Bronnen's *Ostpolzug*, says all there is to say about telephonitis and Hades while, according to the stage directions, the telephone is ringing: "Oh, you black beast, growing on fatty brown stems, you flower of untimeliness, you rabbit of dark rooms! Your voice is our beyond, and it has displaced heaven" (Arnolt Bronnen, *Ostpolzug* (1926), *Stücke*, Hans Mayer, ed., Kronberg, 1977, vol. I, p. 133.

wavelengths.[38] This is quite comparable to the case of Judge Schreber, in which, in 1898, a paranormal "base or nerve language" of beautiful autonomy revealed its code and channels,[39] that is, when channel and message became one. "You just have to choose a talk show station of the middle, short, or long wave, or the so-called white noise, a noise in between two stations, or the "Jürgenson wave," which, depending on your location, is to be found between 1450 and 1600 kHz, between Vienna and Moscow."[40] You then connect a tape recorder to the radio and, when you replay the tape, you will hear ghost voices which do not originate from any known station, but which will, like any official newscaster, result in sheer advertising for the radio. For the location and the existence of such a "Jürgenson wave" has been pinpointed by "Friedrich Jürgenson, the nestor of vocal research."[41]

The realm of the dead has the same dimensions as the storage and emission capacities of its culture. Media, as you can read in Klaus Theweleit, are always already flight apparatuses into the other world. If grave stones stood as symbols at the beginning of culture,[42] our media technology can bring back all the gods. The old lamentations about temporality that always used to measure the distance between writing and sensuality have been suddenly silenced. In the media landscape immortals have come to exist again.

War on the Mind is the title of a book on psychological strategies of the Pentagon. In it we are told that the planning staff for electronic warfare, which is merely continuing the battle of the Atlantic,[43] has already made lists of those days that mean luck or mishap for other peoples. This allows the U.S. Air Force "to choose the time of a bomb attack in accordance with the predictions of some local god." Voices of those gods have been tape recorded in order to be able "to frighten primitive native guerillas and confine them to their villages" when played from a helicopter. And finally, the Pentagon has had developed special film projectors which can project those tribal gods on low-hanging clouds.[44] The technologically implemented beyond. . . .

There is no need to mention that the lists of those good and black days are not kept in the Pentagon in the form of manuscripts. Office technology keeps up with media technology. Cinema and phonograph, Edison's two great developments, which inaugurated our present, have their third term in the typewriter.

38. Indeed, the song "Example #22" montages the announcements and sound of "Beispiels Nr. 22" ("Hier spricht Edgar" [Hildegard Schäfer, *Stimmen aus einer anderen Welt*, Freiburg, 1983, p. 11]), which must have wandered on a paranormal cassette-to-book from Freiburg to the U.S.
39. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York, 1977, p. 184.
40. Schäfer, p. 3.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
42. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, Paris, 1966.
43. See Don E. Gordon, *Electronic Warfare: Element of Strategy and Multiplier of Combat Power*, New York, 1981, *passim*.
44. Peter Watson, *War on the Mind: The Military Uses and Abuses of Psychology*, New York, 1978.

The authors of books and their publishers, however, have become so accustomed to dealing with typescripts that cultural histories, which recently have regained so much popularity, generally tend to forget about the typewriter. Since 1865 (in Europe) or 1868 (in America) writing has no longer consisted of those ink or pencil traces of a body, whose optical or acoustical signals were irretrievably abandoned in order that the readers, at least, might flee into the surrogate sensuality of handwriting. In order to allow for a series of sounds and sights to be stored, the old European storage technique had first of all to be mechanized. Hans Magnus Johan Malling Hansen in Copenhagen and Christopher Latham Sholes in Milwaukee developed typewriters that could be mass-produced. Edison thought highly of the potential of this invention at the time when Sholes went to see him in Newark to show him his recently patented model and to invite the man who had invented invention itself to cooperate with him.[45]

But Edison turned the offer down—almost as if the phonograph and the kinetoscope had, already in 1868, been waiting for their inventor, thus limiting his time. Instead, the offer was accepted by an arms manufacturer that had been suffering from a loss in sales since 1865. Remington, and not Edison, took over the discourse machine-gun from Sholes.

Finally, it was not the marvellous One from whom the three media of our age would have sprung. At the beginning of our age there is quite the opposite situation: there is division or differentiation.[46] On the one hand there are two technical media which can, for the first time, fix unwritable data flows; on the other hand there is "something in between tool and machine," as Heidegger wrote so precisely about the typewriter.[47] On the one hand there is the entertainment industry with its new forms of sensuality; on the other hand there is a writing which already separates body and paper in the process of production, not just in the process of reproduction (as in the case of Gutenberg's movable type). The letters and their order are standardized from the beginning as type and keyboard, while media are placed in the noise of the real—as the fuzziness of the pictures in the cinema, as the hissing on tape.

In a standardized text, paper and body, writing and soul fall apart. Typewriters do not store an individual, their letters do not transmit a beyond which could be hallucinated by perfect alphabets as meaning. Everything which, since Edison's two innovations, can be taken over by the technical media disappears

45. See Alfred Walze, "Auf den Spuren von Christopher Latham Sholes. Ein Besuch in Milwaukee, der Geburtsstätte der ersten brauchbaren Schreibmaschine," *Deustche Stenografenzeitung*, 1980, p. 133.

46. See Niklas Luhmann, "Das Problem de Epochenbildung und die Evolutionstheorie," in Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht and Ulla Link-Heer, eds., *Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie*, Frankfurt/Main, 1985, pp. 20–22.

47. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (1942–43), *Gesamtausgabe*, Manfred S. Frings, ed., Frankfurt/Main, 1982, part 2, vol. 54, p. 127. The professionalism of this assertion is confirmed by Erich Klockenberg, *Rationalisierung der Schreibmaschine und ihre Bedienung*, Berlin, 1926, p. 3.

out of the typescripts. The dream of a real, visible, or audible world arising from the words is over. The historical synchronicity of cinema, phonography, and typewriter separated the data flows of optics, acoustics, and writing and rendered them autonomous. The fact of this differentiation is not altered by the recent ability of electric or electronic media to bring them back together and combine them.

In 1860, five years before Malling Hansen's mechanical writing ball, this first typewriter that could be mass-produced, Keller's *Missbrauchte Liebesbriefe* announced the illusion of poetry: love had only the impossible alternative either to "speak with black ink" or "to let the red blood speak."[48] When typing, filming, and taking photographs become three equal options, however, writing loses those aspects of a surrogate sensuality. Around 1880 poetry becomes literature. It is no longer the red blood of a Keller or the inner forms of a Hoffmann that have to be transmitted by standardized letters; it is a new and beautiful tautology of technicians. According to Mallarmé's instant insight, literature does not mean anything but that it consists of twenty-six letters.[49]

Lacan's "methodological distinction" between the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic is the theory (or merely a historical effect) of this differentiation. The symbolic includes the signs of language in their materality and technicity; that is, they form, as letters and ciphers, a finite set which does not address the philosophical dream of an infinity of meaning. What counts are only differences (or in terms of the typewriter) the spaces between the elements of a system. For that reason the world of the symbolic, in Lacan, is already called "the world of the machine."[50]

The imaginary, however, is constituted as the mirror image of a body which appears to be more perfect as regards its motor control than the body of an infant.[51] The imaginary thereby implements precisely that optical illusion which was being explored at the birth of film. A body that is fragmented or (in the case of the film) cut apart is confronted by the illusory continuity of movements in the mirror or movie. It is not merely accidental that the euphoric reactions of infants at the sight of their double in the mirror were fixed by Lacan in a documentary film.

From the real, nothing more can be brought into the daylight than what Lacan had presupposed in its being given—nothing. It forms that residue or waste which can be caught neither in the mirror of the imaginary nor in the grids of the symbolic: physiological accident, stochastic disorder of bodies.

48. Gottfried Keller, *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe* (1865), in *Die Leute von Seldwyla. Gesammelte Gedichte*, Munich, 1961, p. 376.
49. See Stéphane Mallarmé, *La littérature. Doctrine* (1893), *Oeuvres complètes*, Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry, eds., Paris, 1945, p. 850.
50. Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre II*.
51. Jacques Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," in *Ecrits: A Selection*, pp. 1–7.

Methodological distinctions of modern psychoanalysis and technical distinctions of the modern media landscape coalesce very clearly. Each theory has its historical a priori. And structuralism as a theory only spells out what has been coming over the information channels since the beginning of this century.

Only the typewriter provides a writing which is a selection from the finite and ordered stock of its keyboard. The typewriter literally illustrates what Lacan shows in terms of the antiquated letter-box. In contrast to the flow of handwriting, here discrete elements separated by spaces are placed side by side. The symbolic has the status of block letters. —Film was the first to store a moving double in which men, as opposed to all other primates, misrecognize their bodies. That is to say that the imaginary has the status of cinema. —And the phonograph was the first to fix what is being produced by our larynx as noise before any semiotic order or semantic units. To obtain pleasure, Freud's patients need no longer want the good of the philosophers; they just have to babble.[52] The real—particularly in the talking cure of psychoanalysis—has the status of phonography.

The technical differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing around 1880, as it exploded Gutenberg's storage monopoly, made the fabrication of so-called man possible. His essence runs through apparatuses. Machines conquer functions of the central nervous system, not merely the muscular system as they did previously. And it is only then—not yet with the steam engine and railroad—that we have a clean division between matter and information, between the real and the symbolic. In order to invent phonography and cinema, the ancient dreams of mankind do not suffice. The physiology of the eye, ear, and brain have to become objects of research. In order to optimize writing for machines, it must no longer be dreamt of as an expression of individuals or as a trace of bodies. The forms, differences, and frequencies of letters have to be reduced to formulas. So-called man becomes physiology on the one hand and information technology on the other.

When Hegel summed up the perfect alphabetism of his time, he called it spirit. The readability of all history and all discourse transformed man or the philosopher into god. The media revolution of 1880, however, laid the grounds for all theories and practices which could then avoid the confusion of information and spirit. In place of thinking we have Boolean algebra; instead of consciousness we have an unconscious which is transformed from "The Purloined Letter" (at latest with Lacan's reading) into a Markoff-chain.[53] The fact that the symbolic is called the world of the machine liquidates the megalomaniacal assumption of so-called man that he is distinguished by the "quality" of having a "consciousness" and that he is anything more than a computer. For both people

52. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XX: Encore*, Paris, 1975, pp. 53, 73.
53. See Jacques Lacan, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *Yale French Studies*, no. 48 (1973).

and computers are subject to interpellation by the signifier, that is, both are programmed. Already in 1874, eight years before he decides to buy a typewriter, Nietzsche asks himself whether these are still men or simply thinking, writing, and computing machines.[54]

In 1950 Alan Turing, the practitioner among England's mathematicians, will answer Nietzsche's question. With formal elegance he shows that the question is not a real question. Turing's essay, "Computing Machinary and Intelligence," which appeared in the philosophical periodical *Mind*, of all journals, proposes an experiment, the so called Turing game:

A computer A and a man B communicate data via some interface connections of some sort of telewriter. The exchange of texts is monitored by a censor C that also receives merely written information. A and B pretend to be men. C has to decide which of the two does not simulate and which of the two is merely Nietzsche's thinking, writing, and computing machine. But because the machine, each time it gives itself away by making a mistake or rather by not making any, can improve its program through learning, the game remains open ended.[55] In the Turing game man and his simulation coalesce.

This is already the case because the censor C receives no manuscripts, but plotter outprints or typescripts. Certainly computers could also simulate human hands, with their routines and occasional mistakes, their so-called individuality, but Turing, as the inventor of the universal discrete machine, was a typist. He was not a particularly good typist—not much better than his tom cat, Timothy, who was allowed to jump on the key board of his typewriter in his chaotic secret service office[56]—but nevertheless, his typing was less catastrophic than his handwriting. Already the teachers of the honorable public school Sherborne could hardly forgive their pupil his chaotic lifestyle and messy handwriting. He got bad grades for brilliant exams in mathematics only because his "handwriting was worse than ever seen before."[57] This shows how faithfully schools cling to their old duty of fabricating quite literally in-dividuals by drilling them in a beautiful, continuous, and individual handwriting. But Turing, a master in subverting all kinds of discipline and self-cultivation, escaped. He made plans for the invention of an "incredibly primitive" typewriter.[58]

Those plans were not realized. But when on the meadows of Grantchester, the meadows of all English lyrics from the romantics to Pink Floyd, he came

54. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873–76), *Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, eds., Berlin, 1967ff., vol. 3, part 1, p. 278.
55. See Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, no. 59 (1950); see also Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, New York, 1983, pp. 415–417.
56. Hodges, p. 279.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

across the idea of the universal discrete machine, the student's dream was realized and transformed. The principle of Sholes's typewriter, patented in 1868, has survived until today. Only the man or stenotypist who was needed by Remington & Son for writing and reading has been rendered obsolete by Turing.

And this is so because a Turing machine is even more incredibly primitive than the Sherborn plan for a typewriter. All it has to deal with are a paper ribbon, which is at once its program and its data material, its input and its output. Turing has slimmed down the common typewriter page to this one-dimensional ribbon. But there are even further economizations: his machine no longer needs those many redundant letters, cyphers, and signs of a typewriter keyboard; all it needs is one sign and its absence, 1 and 0. The machine can read this binary information, or (in Turing's technical word) can *scan* it. It can move the paper ribbon a space to the right, or a space to the left, or not at all. It moves by jerks and therefore discretely, like typewriters, which have, in contrast to handwriting, block letters, back spacers, and space bars. (In a letter to Turing we find: "Pardon the use of the typewriter: I have come to prefer discrete machines to continuous ones."[59]) The mathematical model of 1936, however, is no longer a hermaphrodite between a machine and a mere tool; as a feedback system it beats all the Remingtons. For the sign on the paper ribbon, or respectively its absence, which is read, steers the next step, which is a kind of writing: it depends on the reading whether the machine keeps the sign or erases it or, vice versa, whether it keeps a space blank or puts a sign on it. And so on, and so on.

That is all. But no computer that will ever be built can do more. Even the most advanced Von-Neumann machine (with program storage and computing unit), though faster, is in principle no different from Turing's infinitely slow model. Furthermore, not every computer has to be a Von-Neumann machine, while all imaginable computers are only a state n of the universal discrete machine. In 1936 Turing proved it mathematically, two years before Konrad Zuse built the first programmable computer out of simple relays.[60] At that point the world of the symbolic really turned into the world of the machine.

The age of media—as opposed to the history that ends it—moves in jerks, like Turing's paper ribbon. From the Remington, via the Turing machine, to microelectronics; from mechanization, via automatization, to the implementation of a writing which is cypher and not sense—one century sufficed to transform the ancient storage monopoly of writing into the omnipotence of integrated circuits. Like Turing's correspondents, everything goes from the analogous ma-

59. Quoted in Hodges, p. 387.

60. See Konrad Zuse, *Der Computer. Mein Lebenswerk*, Berlin 1984, p. 41: "Decisive thought, June 19, 1937. There are elementary operations to which all computing and thinking operations can be reduced. A primitive type of mechanical brain consists of a storage system, a dialing system, and a

chine to the discrete. The compact disc digitalizes the gramophone, the video camera the cinema. All data flows end in a state *n* of Turing's universal machine; numbers and figures become (in spite of romanticism) the key to all creatures.

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simple apparatus which can treat conditional chains of two or three links. With this form of brain it has to be theoretically possible to solve all puzzles that can be mechanically dealt with, regardless of the time required. More complex brains are merely a matter of the faster accomplishment of those processes."

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A WEEKEND COLLOQUIUM, OCTOBER 17 AND 18, 1987

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

10am-1pm — François Peraldi, Montreal
Freud's Four Times
Catherine Millot, Paris
The Short Session

3pm-6pm — Barry Opatow, New York
The Temporal Structure of the Drive
Jean-Gerard Burstein, Paris
Time in the Practice of Psychoanalysis and the Importance of the Short Session

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

10am-1pm — Gerard Pommier, Paris
Unconscious Timing, Session Timing
Paola Mieli, New York
Apropos Après-Coup

3pm-6pm — Marie-Madeleine Chatel, Paris
Analytic Effects Produced by the Interruption of the Session
David Lichtenstein, New York
The Ideal of the New

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Entire Colloquium: $30, students $10
Single day: $20, students $8

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To register send checks to:
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Buell Hall, Columbia University
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For further information contact:
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