

## DESIRE GLOSS: A SPECIMEN

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Presented here is a specimen of *dESIRE Gloss*, a collaborative commentary on a series of 100 photographs drawn from Kristen Alvanson's *dESIRE Project*.<sup>1</sup> Befitting the polysemy of the word *gloss*,

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<sup>1</sup> "THE DESIRE PROJECT is an ongoing investigation on dESIRE which includes artistic components, the anti-disciplinary reading of desire texts by individuals such as Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Melanie Klein, Reich, Marx, Freud, de Sade, Irigaray, Hegel, Bataille, Sartre, Derrida, Barthes, Levinas, Plato, Augustine—from which thoughts and theories are disjointed, re-assembled, blended, ruled out—and conversations on dESIRE with current theorists and artists or other desire-minded individuals all in an attempt to reach concrete but not necessarily corporeal definitions of dESIRE by tapping into its obscure formations. CAPTURING dESIRE. Is it possible to capture desire whether abstractly, sensationally or concretely? Is it possible that an event or an entity is desired? Do we have any control over our desires or are they desiring-machines, flows as Deleuze and Guattari suggest? Are we aware of our desires consciously or do they operate according to another plane hidden or not directly connected to consciousness? To further these and other questions, I have developed an experiment as an art project which involves capturing what I desire on a long-term basis. HOW THE PROJECT WORKS. When I desire something, I document the dESIRE by capturing its photograph (currently using a compact camera that I carry wherever I go). Presumably, the photograph is a photographic representation of my intangible desire, yet it serves as a form of documentation. Each stamped (or numbered dESIRE) is a part of the ongoing string of desires which should reveal patterns which are not necessarily visual or thematic over time. I am as interested in the intangible desire and its qualities as I am interested in the photographic renderings – how, for example, a photo reveals accurately or inaccurately an intangible desire. Moreover, I am engaging in marketing and selling my dESIRES, both intangible and photographic representations. What are the potentialities and effects of selling desire and how can pimping dESIRE be used to better understand and test the economy and dynamics of desire? Once desires are produced, represented, sold, purchased and possessed, the dESIRE Project

*dESIRE Gloss* is designed to demonstrate the amorous relations between photography, commentary, and desire.

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WINGS OF DESIRE. “The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings. / They feast on the abundance of thy house, / and thou givest them drink from the river of thy delights. / For with thee is the fountain of life; and in thy light do we see light.” <sup>2</sup> Do not ask	IN SACRIFICE, beauty’s perfection points to death’s full brutality. Double-take. At first glance, it is as if the veiled woman is warding off the camera, the hennaed hands not so much a blessing as a curse. But it is the backs of her hands that are visible, of course,
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will be also a speculation on Intangible or Immaterial Art” (<<http://kristenavanson.com/new/about.html>>. Further documentation, including the artist’s essay “The Art of Nothing: Immateriality and Intangible Art,” is available on the website.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 36:7-9, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

about this desire—“Love’s pain, I have endured to such a degree—that ask not. / Separation’s poison, I have tasted in such a way—that ask not”<sup>3</sup>—about what is clear—“Beauty [*claritas, splendor formae*] re-spects the cognitive power, for things which please in being seen are called beautiful”<sup>4</sup>—about what comes seminally with its own commentary—“all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text”<sup>5</sup>—about what I cannot not *gloss*: “the phantasm generates desire, desire is translated into words, and the word defines a space wherein the appropriation of what could otherwise not be appropriated or enjoyed is possible.”<sup>6</sup> There is no answer, only translation, repetition of the question. That is enough, everything. For it is

splayed out and thrust towards the camera lens in pride and supplication, the tattoos perhaps signifying a forthcoming marriage. But then again, these hands are so much in the foreground that they are positioned in the picture almost as if they were ‘our’ hands—or indeed the photographer’s hands that should be taking the photo. It is as if we have suddenly dropped our camera in order to hold back some sinister apparition looming up from behind the glass. The blurring of the picture gives, for me, this sense of double movement, pushing back and forward, thrusting and repelling. A woman beautified, ceremonially painted-up, adorned, veiled for someone’s delight, looks ominous. ‘We’, similarly adorned, *hold back*, with our

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<sup>3</sup> Hafiz of Shiraz, *The Divan*, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke (London: Octagon Press, 1974), 313.1.

<sup>4</sup> “Pulchrum autem respicit vim cognoscitivam, pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent” (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I.5.4), <<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/sth1003.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, eds. Maudemairé Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.119. Whence philosophy as essentially the *practice* of consciousness. Cf. “the genuine philosophical element in every work, whether it be a work of art, of science, or of thought, is its capacity for elaboration, which Ludwig Feuerbach defined as *Entwicklungsfähigkeit*” (Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, trans. Luca D’Isanto with Kevin Attell [New York: Zone, 2009], 7-8. Photography is the technical apotheosis of developability.

<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 129.

exactly the no-thing between things that is all in all, the line that, being entirely nothing in itself, omnipresently touches each. That is what image is. Whence eros (love demanding the presence of the loved) as enlightening, levitating entanglement in something essentially linear—"Fortes tresses, soyez la houle qui m'enlève" [Strong tresses, be the swell that lifts me away]<sup>7</sup>—and desire's imaging as art of lineation: kohl = focuser/refractor/deflector of ocular rays (NB: pupilization of the eye's outside, precise inversion of the veil's solar border); *Pondus meum amor meus*<sup>8</sup>—love as gravitational alignment (NB: black heart/dark star at bottom center); seductive collusions between writing, covering, and gaze, activator of eye as follower (line-linen-lingere) . . . Beauty is a total barzakhification of being, absolutization of the (in)visible line between light and dark: "The created realm is the *barzakh* between Light and darkness. In its essence it is qualified neither by darkness nor by Light, since it is the *barzakh* and the middle, having a property from each of its two sides. That is why He 'appointed' for man 'two eyes

hennaed hands and our slender pointed nails, our double, our darkened image. The composition of the picture sets up this equivalence, this Iranian stand-off, conveying our gaze directly into the eye-line of the woman framed in the blackness of the veil. One eye, obscured behind the reflected flash of light, the other—the evil one, no doubt—looks directly at 'us', at me, behind thick eyeliner. "As we are about to take the final step, we are beside ourselves with desire, paralyzed, in the clutch of a force that demands our disintegration" (Bataille, *Erotism*: 141). Hands are held up against the translucent barrier and the dark figure behind it. What denotes the glass barrier, if it is glass, is the reflected light and, in the top left-hand corner, where the left index finger points, some painted writing. Whatever it is, writing signifies that there is Law somewhere, and here, as ever, it marks the point of separation, all points of separation, between light and dark, subject and viewer, beauty and its profanation, woman and woman. Because I must remember that the woman does not look at an 'us'. These hands at the foreground of the picture

<sup>7</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 'La Chevelure,' line 13.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 13.9.

and guided him on the two highways' (Koran 90:8–10), for man exists between the two paths."<sup>9</sup> "Such a one, as soon as he beholds the beauty of this world, is reminded of true beauty, and his wings begin to grow."<sup>10</sup> **N**

address another woman—the photographer—as if in challenge and complicity, each woman looking the other in the eye. What do they see—each other's life, love and beauty, or death? In her place, my looking enacts her sacrifice. **S**

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<sup>9</sup> Ibn Arabi, *al-Futūhāt*, 1911 edition, 3:274.28, cited from William Chittick, 'Ibn Arabi,' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/>>. "Know that the word *barzakh* is an expression for what *separates* two things without ever becoming either of them, such as the line separating a shadow from the sunlight, or as in His Saying-may He be exalted!: 'He has loosened the two Seas. They meet: / between them a *barzakh*, they do not go beyond' (55: 19-20)—meaning that neither of them becomes mixed with the other. But even if our senses are unable to perceive what separates those two things, the intellect judges that there is indeed a divider separating them—and that divider grasped by the intellect is precisely the *barzakh*. Because if something is perceived by the senses, it must be one of those two things, rather than the *barzakh*. So each of those two things, when they are adjacent to each other, have need of a *barzakh* which is not the same as each of them, but which has in itself the power of each of them" (Ibn Arabi, *al-Futūhāt al-Makkiya* [The Meccan Illuminations], chapter 63, trans. James. W. Morris, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> *Phaedrus*, 249c, cited from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), 496. Plato elaborates: "For by reason of the stream of beauty entering in through his eyes there comes a warmth, whereby the soul's plumage is fostered, and with that the roots of the wings are melted, which for long had been so hardened and closed up that nothing could grow; then as the nourishment is poured in, the stump of the wing swells and hastens to grow from the root over the whole substance of the soul" (251b). *Cauda pavonis*, Melek Taus, elaboration of the colorful space between dark and light, nigredo and albedo, opening up of the original-final relation between wings and eyes: "And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind . . . And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within" (Revelation 4:6-8).



003501

Desire and the drive: A Persian tale baked upon an arch made of brick. *Que vuoi?* I don't know anything about photography. I don't know anything about Kristen Alvanson except that she is American and has an Iranian partner. What does that have to do with anything? Are all these photographs taken in Iran? I don't know anything about Iran, couldn't identify a monument, square, rock. *We think you know a lot about desire.* This is the last, terrifying sentence on the email from N, inviting me to participate in this project. Who are *we*? And what do they suppose about my knowledge of desire? I've written on Lacan. But the page mock-up, determining the length of each gloss, consists entirely of repeated denunciations of psychoanalysis in favour of Deleuze and Guattari! Already my looking has been pre-directed by an imagined dichotomy I reject. This picture, the first one allotted to me, I cannot see now as anything but a staging of the question of desire, in a picture structured by a series of dualities, too many. But mainly: two planes and surfaces, ceramic tiles and whitewashed brick. I am struck by the awkwardness of the framing that truncates the images glazed on the tiles and makes the nature of the building difficult to read. (Already visual desire is provoked through a brutal act of photographic

‘castration’!) Modern (Western) consumer desire finds its origin and definition in eighteenth-century Orientalism in a fantasy of despotism and Other jouissance: *The Arabian Knights* but also Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721).<sup>11</sup> Scheherazade’s 1001 glosses, wagering life on the desire of the Other, for “desire is interpretation itself” (Lacan, 4fcs, 176). Who is he, horseman of desire with his train of followers, is he laying siege or coming home to the golden citadel I imagine in the top corner, the point towards which all the lines tend? Visual desire is related to the scopic drive that is all the more deadly and machinic for being photographic, click after click, picture after picture, arching around a vacuole in brick-like, stolid satisfaction. But the desire that this drive supports, I wager (but we will see), is not to picture, objectify or possess Iran or Iranian objects, but to “operate on a sacrificial plane” and arouse Iranian desire itself, “for what makes the value of the icon is that the god it represents is also looking at it” (Lacan, 4fc: 113). **S**

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<sup>11</sup> Which illustrates interestingly how the East and the West—the Orient and the Americas—could, in the 18<sup>th</sup> c., be related in a triangular structure that connected virtue with erotic and economic value.



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CHAINS OF BEING.<sup>12</sup> But | SEQUINED SEA of space-time /  
 without | hierarchical | the multiple / an apparition of

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<sup>12</sup> “[S]ince Mind emanates from the Supreme God, and Soul from Mind, and Mind, indeed, forms and suffuses all below with life, and since this is the one **splendor** lighting up everything and visible in all, like a countenance reflected in many **mirrors** arranged in a row, and since all follow on in continuous succession, degenerating step by step [*degenerantia per ordinem*] in their downward course, the close observer will find that from the Supreme God even to the bottommost dregs of the universe [*a summo deo usque ad ultimam rerum faecem*] there is one tie [*conexio*], binding at every link and never broken. This is the golden chain [*catena aurea*] of Homer which, he tells us, God ordered to hang down from the sky to the earth” (Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl [New York: Columbia University Press, 1952], 14.15). “The chain principle is an ontological wholism. It **threads** the fact of universe itself, expressing the inseparability of the *what* and the *that* [NOTE: The distinction does not happen to us arbitrarily or from time to time, but *fundamentally* and constantly. . . . For precisely in order to experience *what* and *how* beings in each case *are* in themselves as the beings that they *are*, we must—although not conceptually—already understand something like the what-being [*Was-sein*] and the that-being [*Dass-sein*] of beings. . . . We never ever experience



<p>(de)generation, and like the weird placeless place we see ourselves in (universe), without center or edge. Those are projections of perspective, ocular ego, the cameral eye that, judging all in the space of its body-</p>	<p>forms. Immersed, neither inside nor out, how can I tell that this doesn't go on forever? Undulating, an iridescent mirage that discloses nothing but desert without end or horizon reaching from the earth to the farthest</p>
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anything about being subsequently or after the event from beings; rather beings—wherever and however we approach them—*already* stand *in the light of being*. In the metaphysical sense, therefore, the distinction stands at the commencement of Dasein itself. . . . Man, therefore, always has the possibility of asking: What is that? And Is it at all or is it not?” (Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995], 357). The cosmic *catena* is the necessary point of identity, **piercing** every entity, between essence and existence, the invisible thing making it so that everything is next to something else and part of everything itself. It is thus in a full and total sense the *chain of being*, the fact of being's being a chain or binding: at once the universal necessity of the actuality of the everything (the fact that there is such a thing as everything) and the individual necessity of the actuality of individuation (the fact that each thing is inexorably shackled to itself) [NOTE: “Why am I me? A stupid question. . . . I am too stupid to answer this question. And to ask it, just stupid enough. What is the mechanism of such stupid questioning? I imagine a small organ, neither inside nor outside myself, like a polymelic phantom limb, a subtle psychic appendage implanted at birth behind my crown, during the moment of my coming to be, whenever that was. This organ (or appendix, or tumor), whose painful inflammation is despair—'despair is the paroxysm of individuation' (Cioran)—is like a strange supplementary bodily member, intimate and inessential, which I can feel yet not move, barely move yet without feeling. Stupid organ, organ of stupidity. It moves, is moved, like an inalienable shackle, only to reinforce its immobility. Am I to sever this organ, hemorrhage of haecceity, escape it? '[E]scape is the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-mé-me]' (Levinas). Just *who*, then, would escape?” (Nicola Masciandaro, “Individuation: This Stupidity,” *Postmedieval* 1 [2010], forthcoming). “The act whereby being—existence—is bestowed upon us is an *unbearable* surpassing of being” (Bataille)]. The chain encompasses from within the impossible unity of perspective on being that cosmos presupposes: the definite vision of the unbounded whole from the position of one-sided asymmetry occupied by the individual” (Nicola Masciandaro, “Anti-Cosmosis: Black Mahapralaya,” in *Hideous Gnosis: Black Metal Theory Symposium 1*, ed. Nicola Masciandaro [New York: 2010], 71-3, my emphasis in bold).

chamber, is bound to frame things, above all the frameless, to capitalize what it cannot see crossing: “The human being arrives at the threshold: there he must throw himself headlong [*vivant*] into that which has no foundation and has no head.”<sup>13</sup> Hence: the cosmological principle (homogeneity & isotropy). Yet: “the world does not consist of infinitely many essentially identical things—atoms moving in space—but is in reality a collection of infinitely many things, each constructed according to a common principle yet all different from one another. Space and time emerge from the way in which these ultimate entities *mirror* each other.”<sup>14</sup> And: “Picture yourself as drops, and your body as bubbles inside the ocean. Now, each of you drops sees neither your own drop-state nor the drop-state of others. You see your own bubbles and bubbles of others, and this large bubble of

heavens, extending to remotest space, countless particles multiplied as often as there are leaves in the forest, feathers upon birds, scales on fish, drops of water in the mighty ocean, atoms in the vast expanse of the air . . . How much do I love thee? Let me count the ways . . . Love is of course the immeasurable and the unaccountable. It’s not the sequins that she wears, it’s not her baby-fine blond hair, it’s more the desert in her stare (Iggy Pop). The truth of desire discloses itself as nothing but semblance. But what is this auto-disclosure? Desire of course transcends the object, directed by the semblance of being immanent to it. Desire is always directed towards another desire which, without mediation or regulation, replicates itself endlessly in sequences so that desire is desire of desire of desire of desire of desire . . . Not signifiers but sequins: no longer *zecchino*, medium of exchange, but pure

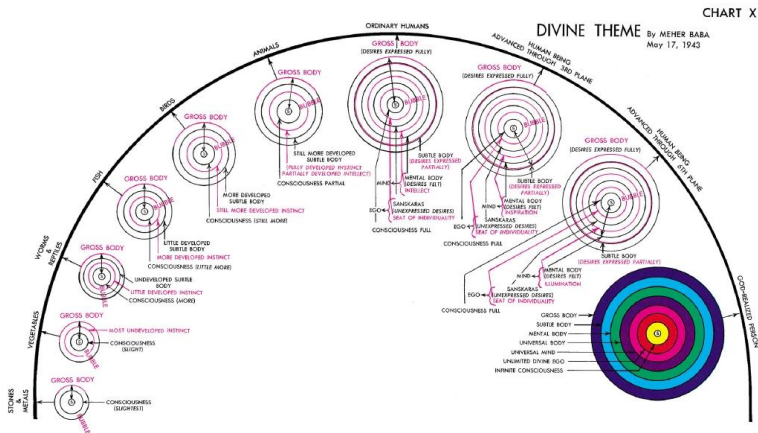
<sup>13</sup> Georges Bataille, “The Obelisk,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 222. “L’ être humain arrive au seuil: là il est nécessaire de se précipiter vivant dans ci qui n’a plus d’assise ni de tête” (*Oeuvres Complètes*, 12 vols. [Paris: Gallimard, 1970-88], 1: 13).

<sup>14</sup> Julian Barbour, *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in our Understanding of the Universe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 240, cited from “The View from Nowhen: Interview with Julian Barbour,” *Collapse V* (2009): 108, my emphasis.

the world.”<sup>15</sup> Until you finally find yourself: “that last amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity.”<sup>16</sup> Following the sequins, a bubble-catena is in order.<sup>17</sup> Led

metonymy, pure sequentiality without order of priority or narrative, flickering in the full nothingness of evacuated exchange-value, the empty plenitude of digitality. Who could make a metaphor of it?

<sup>15</sup> Meher Baba, cited from Bhau Kalchuri, *Meher Prabhu*, 14 vols. (Myrtle Beach, SC: Manifestation, 1980), 8.2885, commenting in 1943 on a version of the following chart.



<sup>16</sup> H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*, in *The Dreams in the Witchhouse and Other Weird Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 156.

<sup>17</sup> “A somewhat surprising application of fermentation to cosmology . . .” (Walter Pagel, *Joan Baptista Van Helmont: Reformer of Science and Medicine* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 85, describing Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s *Hypothesis physica nova* (1671), wherein “divine ether is made to penetrate the major part of matter, which becomes the earth, and to be enclosed in *bullae* [bubbles]”). “Unicorns do not exist, but a soap bubble would burst were it punctured by a unicorn horn” (John Heil, *From An Ontological Point of View* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 221). “And even to me, one who likes life, it seems butterflies and soap bubbles and whatever is of their kind among human beings know most about happiness” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 28). “There will be no social solution to the present situation. First, because the vague aggregate of social milieus, institutions, and individualized bubbles that is called, with a touch of

*antiphrasis*, “society,” has no consistency” (The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, <<http://tarnac9.wordpress.com/texts/the-coming-insurrection/>>). “The innocent cruelty; the opaque monstrosity of eyes scarcely distinguishable from the little bubbles that form on the surface of mud; the horror as integral to life as light is to a tree” (Georges Bataille, *Encyclopedia Acephalica: Comprising the Critical Dictionary and Related Texts*, trans. Iain White [London: Atlas, 1996], s.v. “Metamorphosis”). “. . . these and many other instances which could be given prove that indeed the personal consciousness is but a bubble floating on the tide of Being, and liable, at any moment of strong emotion, to be swept into nothingness” (Oliver H. P. Smith, “Evolution and Consciousness,” *The Monist* 9 [1899]: 231). “The devout soul is a fountain which glides and flows, and which ever springs up anew, because it is renewed in God. It never ceases to bubble forth, and break out in love for Him, to swell for its own needs, and to expand itself in affection for its neighbor” (Richard of Saint Victor, cited from Richard Frederick Littledale, *A Commentary on the Song of Songs, from Ancient and Medieval Sources* [London: Joseph Masters, 1869], 192). “The bubble was formed from water, in water it disappears” (‘Abd al-Quddus, Cited from Scott Alan Kugle, *Sufis & Saints’s Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, & Sacred Power in Islam* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007], 246). “But elsewhere, deeper in the granite, are there certain chambers that have no entrances? Chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods. Local report declares that these exceed in number those that can be visited, as the dead exceed the living—four hundred of them, four thousand or million. Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil. One of them is rumoured within the boulder that swings on the summit of the highest of the hills; a bubble-shaped cave that has neither ceiling nor floor, and mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely” (E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* [Orlando: Harcourt, 1984], 136). “Animals and plants come into being in earth and in liquid because there is water in earth, and air in water, and in all air is vital heat so that in a sense all things are full of soul. Therefore living things form quickly whenever this air and vital heat are enclosed in anything. When they are so enclosed, the corporeal liquids being heated, there arises as it were a frothy bubble” (Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, trans. Arthur Platt, <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/>>). “As in the multiple worlds view, the spacetime sheet separates into two opposing curvatures, resulting in a ‘bubble’ or ‘blister’ in underlying reality” (Stewart R. Hameroff and Jonathan Powell, “The Conscious Connection: A Psycho-Physical Bridge Between Brain and Pan-Experiential Quantum Geometry,” in *Mind That Abides: Panpsychism in the New Millennium*, ed. David Skrbina [Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009], 117). “Imagine the infinitely unconscious God state A, before the Creation came into being, as motionless infinite ocean. A puff of

by its thread, I return nowhere. Unless the line belongs to Ariadne, bride of Dionysius, unless I am moved: “A l’alta fantasia qui mancò possa; / ma già volgeva il mio disio e ‘l velle, / sì come rota ch’igualmente è mossa, / l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stele.”<sup>18</sup> Then something else happens: the shockingly silent current of a being so deeply outside that touching it short-

Who would turn this multiple into the likeness of One? She puts on a universe comprised entirely of sequins strings, patterns emerge—life seems to glisten in *semblants* of being—in folds and clusters, in degrees of intensity, in the fabric of space/time, to arouse the desire of God, who names her the Universe, the One. But she is *la belle noiseuse*, querulous beauty

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wind then stirred the tranquil uniformity of this ocean, and immense waves, countless drops of water, and innumerable bubbles appeared from out of the uniformity of the limitless, infinite ocean. The puff of wind that set the ocean into commotion may be compared to the impulse of the infinite, original urge-to-know originating with the infinite, original whim of God, surging in God to know Himself through His infinite God State II. The stir on the surface of the ocean, caused by the infinite urge, surcharged every drop of that infinite ocean with the infinite urge-to-know itself. Thus *Paramatma* [Over-Soul] in His infinitely unconscious state A, being urged to know Himself, simultaneously bestirs the tranquil poise of every *atma* [soul] in *Paramatma* with an urge to know itself. This could only be understood when *Paramatma* is compared to an infinite ocean and the *atmas* to the drops of that infinite ocean. But it must also be well noted that every drop of the ocean, when in the ocean, is ocean itself, until the drops inherit individuality through bubble formations over the surface of the ocean. Every bubble thus formed would then bestow a separate and a particular individuality upon every drop. And this created separateness would exist with the uniform indivisibility of the drops of the infinite ocean as long as these bubbles creating separateness exist. As soon as the bubbles burst, the drops, which are and were already in the ocean itself, come to realize that they are and were one with the infinite ocean; and they gain this consciousness of the **eternal infinity in the infinite ocean** only after they first experience separateness and then dispel the bubbles of ignorance that were instrumental in bestowing upon them the experience of their apparent separateness from their inherent indivisibility” (Meher Baba, *God Speaks: The Theme of Creation and Its Purpose*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1973], 182-3, original emphasis).

<sup>18</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. Charles Singleton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), *Paradiso* 33.142-5. [Here power failed the lofty phantasy; but already my desire and my will were revolved, like a wheel that is evenly moved, by the love which moves the sun and the other stars].

circuits interiority by keeping it all the more intact, so that everything intensifies contact by staying right where it is, accelerating individuation's thrilling spin: "Individuation as such, as it operates beneath all forms, in inseparable from a pure ground that it brings to the surface and trails with it. It is difficult to describe this ground, or the terror and attraction it excites."<sup>19</sup> Here one disk flashes above all the others, becoming solar.<sup>20</sup> And this is due only to the undulation of the (w)hole, the movement of everything within its own emptiness. Physicist says, "We must understand how the universe can 'swim in nothing'."<sup>21</sup> Waves. Wave is how ocean swims, so that somewhere, somehow, somewhen, "Wave, sea and bubble, all three are one."<sup>22</sup> N

(Serres), flashing eyes and glinting hatred: noisily not (not) one she ex-sists in the domain of the infinite with which she is continuous. Glistening jouissance, pure surface – not of the repetitive circuit of the drive (the brickwork, the crumbling walls, the undead historical process that goes nowhere) but in the *en-corps* (Lacan) which insists in the body beyond its sexual being (Seminar XX 26/23). "It is in the traces of jouissance inscribed in this *en-corps* that we can, perhaps, discern something of the *poesis*—the something coming from nothing—that Lacan links to the contingency of being and, ultimately, to the path of love" (Suzanne Bernard). S

<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia, 1994), 152.

<sup>20</sup> I.e. instantaneous participation "in the Project of Tellurian Omega, where the Earth reaches utter immanence with its burning core – or the metal core of the tellurian real – and the Sun" (Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* [Melbourne: re.press, 2008], 45).

<sup>21</sup> "The View from Nowhen: Interview with Julian Barbour," *Collapse V* (2009): 117. "Seeing something simply in its being-thus—irreparable, but not for that reason necessary; thus, but not for that reason contingent—is love" (Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993], 105).

<sup>22</sup> Shah Nimatullah Wali, cited from Leonard Lewisohn, *The Heritage of Sufism, Volume II: The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), xviii. Cf. "The hyperlocality of the Cosmos is the feature of the Cosmos causing instantaneous geometrical change either on



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THOUGHT IS WAR. In one noetic stroke I ‘mak siccar’ my tanist ascension-succession to the throne of blood,<sup>23</sup> suffer decollation by

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the scale of the Cosmos itself or between volumes of space not locally connected by matter but connected only by the vacuum bubbles of the cosmic foam. The whole of physical space across the entire Cosmos has a vibrating topology (vibrations too small to be physically detected) caused by the undulation of all of the Cosmos’s composite vacuum bubbles connected in one seamless continuum. This is the hyperlocality of the Cosmos” (Kip K. Sewell, *The Cosmic Sphere* [New York: Nova Science, 1999], 120).

<sup>23</sup> “The ancient succession of Scotland had been by tanistry, that is, the monarchy was elective within a small group of kinsmen, the descendants of Macalpine. In consequence, the king was almost as a matter of course assassinated by his successor, who chose the moment most favourable to himself to ‘make siccar’ an inheritance that could never be regarded as assured . . . by tanist law Macbeth had as good a claim as Duncan, and his wife a rather better one” (M.C. Bradbrook, “The Sources of *Macbeth*,” in *Shakespeare Survey 4: Interpretation*, ed. Allardyce Nicoll [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951], 38). Here is a telling of Robert Bruce’s killing of John Comyn in the Franciscan church at Dumfries that allegorizes perfectly unintentionally the binary verbo-violent dynamism of murder (Cf. “Roussillon waited until Cabestanh was at close range, then he rushed out at

him with murder and destruction in his heart, brandishing a lance above his head and shouting: "Traitor, you are dead!" And before the words were out of his mouth he had driven the lance through Cabestanh's breast. Cabestanh was powerless to defend himself, or even to utter a word, on being run through by the lance he fell to ground" [Boccaccio, *Decameron*, trans. G.H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin, 1972), 4.9]) as *thought's endless war of succession around the boundary of doubt and certainty*: "They embraced and kissed each other, after the manner of the times, with a glow of friendliness, and then walked up the church together towards the high altar, engaged, as it seemed, in earnest conversation. As they advanced their words grew high and keen. Bruce accused Comyn of having betrayed him to Edward. 'You lie!" said the impudent traitor. Bruce, without a word more, drew his dagger and struck him down on the very steps of the altar. It was the outburst of a moment. Bruce instantly felt shocked at the rash deed. He rushed to his friends, who waited him outside church. 'I doubt,' he said, 'that I have slain the Comyn!' 'You doubt;' cried Sir Roger Kirkpatrick; 'I mak siccar;' and running into the church, he dispatched the wretched man with repeated wounds. 'When you kill a man, do it well,' says the Koran; which also seems to have been the opinion of Sir Roger" (James Mackenzie, *The History of Scotland* [London: Nelson and Sons, 1867], 131-2). Note the uncanny opining of the word of God as internal engine and hermeneutic limit of the event. Corollary: thinking is the material where divine logos enters as weapon: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning [κριτικός] the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Whence criticism as cutting word (dis-cernere), self-naming of an awakened one the ultimate weapon: "MUAD'DIB: [*thinks*] My own name is a killing word. Will it be a healing word as well?" (*Dune*, dir. David Lynch [1984]). Commentary as weirding module. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. . . . I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh—with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy" (Deuteronomy 32:39-42). Playing God, the critic rains arrows on the globe: "Ad mundum mitto mea iacula, dumque sagitto; / At vbi iustus erit, nulla sagitta ferit. / Sed male viuentes hos vulnero transgredientes; / Consciis ergo sibi se speculetur ibi" [I send my darts at the world and simultaneously shoot arrows; / But mind you, wherever there is a just man, no one will receive arrows. / I badly wound those living in transgression, however; / Therefore, let the thoughtful man look out for himself] (John Gower, *Minor Latin Works*, ed. and trans. R.F. Yeager [Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005])—no collateral damage. These lines from the frontispiece to the *Vox Clamantis*:





Whence bombs as percussive prophecy: smart missiles raining wrath and reform on the earth (shock & awe), self-detonating auto-decapitating “voice[s] of one crying in the desert” (Mark 1:3) – all profanely belated heralds of presumed last prophets, martyrs (death-witnesses) to their own living deaths. But this photograph shuts my eyes to looking from either idealized end, to seeing the explosion arrive from heaven or earth. Here I no longer watch through the lens of the either/or, the filter of enemy/friend. Locating me on the endless continuum of the middle, in the living space of subtitled existence between two spear points that never touch (“Then the king gat his spear in both his hands, and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying: Traitor, now is thy death-day come. And when Sir Mordred heard Sir Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand. And there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foin of his spear, throughout the body, more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death wound he thrust himself with the might that he had up to the bur of King Arthur’s spear. And right so he smote his father Arthur, with his sword holden in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan, and therewithal Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oftymes” Malory *Le Morte D’Arthur*), it shows the real case (*casus*, befalling event): here

the sword of Damocles,<sup>24</sup> martyrically live to tell the tale,<sup>25</sup> and wander the burnt plains of being . . . a cephalophore: “Di sé faccia a sé

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everyone is ‘taken out.’ “When you’re wounded and left on Afghanistan’s plains, / And the women come out to cut up what remains, / Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains / An’ go to your Gawd like a soldier” (Rudyard Kipling, “The Young British Soldier,” *War Stories and Poems*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990], 56).

<sup>24</sup> “This tyrant [Dionysius II of Syracuse], however, showed himself how happy he really was; for once, when Damocles, one of his flatterers, was dilating in conversation on his forces, his wealth, the greatness of his power, the plenty he enjoyed, the grandeur of his royal palaces, and maintaining that no one was ever happier, ‘Have you an inclination,’ said he, ‘Damocles, as this kind of life pleases you, to have a taste of it yourself, and to make a trial of the good fortune that attends me?’ And when he said that he should like it extremely, Dionysius ordered him to be laid on a bed of gold with the most beautiful covering, embroidered and wrought with the most exquisite work, and he dressed out a great many sideboards with silver and embossed gold. He then ordered some youths, distinguished for their handsome persons, to wait at his table, and to observe his nod, in order to serve him with what he wanted. There were ointments and garlands; perfumes were burned; tables provided with the most exquisite meats. Damocles thought himself very happy. In the midst of this apparatus, Dionysius ordered a bright sword to be let down from the ceiling, suspended by a single horse-hair, so as to hang over the head of that happy man. After which he neither cast his eye on those handsome waiters, nor on the well-wrought plate; nor touched any of the provisions: presently the garlands fell to pieces. At last he entreated the tyrant to give him leave to go, for that now he had no desire to be happy” (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. C.D. Young [New York: Harper, 1899], ch.21).

<sup>25</sup> “Instantly the body of Saint Dionysius stood up, took his head in his arms . . .” (Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], 2.240). “Tunc erigens se sancti viri corpus exanime, apprehendit propriis manibus sanctum caput abscissum” [Raising itself, the lifeless body of the holy man then grasped with his own hands the sacred severed head] (Odone, *De sanctis martyribus Luciano episcopo, Maximiano presbytero, Iuliano diacono*, 5.21, *Acta Sanctorum Database* [ProQuest]). “Ubi es? ecce, mirabile auditu, caput martyris patria lingua respondebat dicens, *Heer, Heer, Heer*; quod est interpretatum, *Hic, Hic, Hic*” [*Where are you?* Behold, marvelous to hear, the head of the martyr responded in his native language, *Heer, Heer, Heer*, which is to say, *Here, Here, Here*] (Abbo of Fleury, *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, cited from *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi*, ed. Lord Francis Harvey [London: John Murray, 1907], 566). On John the Baptist: “The original martyr (witness) is neither a martyr nor not a martyr. He dies neither for the sake of what he testifies to nor not for the sake of what he testifies to. The original martyrdom is instead

stesso lucerna, / ed eran due in uno e uno in due; / com' esser può, qui sa che sì governa . . . levò 'l braccio alto con tutta la testa / per appressarne le parole sue, che fuoro: ' . . . Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso'" (*Inferno* 28.124-42).<sup>26</sup> Bertran's bellophilic body—"Que nuills om non es ren prezatz / Tro q'a maintz colps pres e donatz"<sup>27</sup>—displays the logic of war's dyadic vortexical intensity (2-becoming-1-becoming-2 *in perpetuo*: "He [Indra, war] can no more be reduced to one or the other than he can constitute a third of their kind")<sup>28</sup> as

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the supreme death of the supreme witness in relation to which other martyrs stay original, i.e. remain in proximity to their unrepeatable origin. It is the death of one who cannot survive his witnessing and the witnessing of one who cannot not die. John's identity is a severed identity which becomes the seed ensuring that each following death is a witnessing and that each following witness must die, the a-martyric ovum holding the Christian meaning of *martyr*. What enables this generation is John's uncanny intimacy—"There was a man sent from God whose name was John" (John 1:6)—with what he absolutely cannot be, with what he *must* say he is not: 'I am not the Christ' (John 1:20). In a strange and unspeakable way, the martyric meaning of John's beheading poetically approaches its precise impossibility. It becomes the performance of exactly what it can never be, the necessarily decapitative murder of the theological traitor, the killing of the one who says *I am God* [cf. Mansur al-Hallaj]" (Nicola Masciandaro, "*Non potest hoc corpus decollari*: Beheading and the Impossible," in *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in Medieval Literature and Culture*, eds. Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey [University Press of Florida, forthcoming]).

<sup>26</sup> "Of itself it was making a lamp of itself, and they were two in one and one in two – how this can be, He knows who so ordains. . . . he raised high his arm with the head, in order to bring near to us his words, which were, ' . . . Thus is the retribution observed in me.'"

<sup>27</sup> "For no man is worth a damn till he has taken and given many a blow" (Bertran de Born, "Bem platz lo gais temps de pascor," trans. Ezra Pound, cited from *Lark in the Morning: The Verses of the Troubadours*, ed. Robert Kehew [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005], 142-3]).

<sup>28</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 352). D&G's "can no more" corresponds to Dante's "e" [and], which joins by holding separate "uno in due" and "due in uno." I.e. Bertran is precisely not *both* 1-in-2 and 2-in-1, but the *and* of their non-intersecting identity, the touch of the split or heresy-choice that makes them. Cf. "Severing also is still a joining and a relating" ("[A]uch das Trennen ist noch ein Verbinden und Beziehen" (Martin Heidegger, "Logik: Heraklits Lehre vom Logos," in *Heraklit*, 'Gesamtausgabe,' Bd. 55 [Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970], 337).

thought's essential gesture: holding forth a speaking head. Raising the arm to press words towards another (*ad-pressare*) is a haptic nexus of striking and speaking that indicates war to be the writing of thought's weight on all bodies, a bloody texting of the general violence of dissatisfied embodiment: "war does not embody any special suffering. People really suffer all the time. They suffer because they are not satisfied—they want more and more. War is more an outcome of the universal suffering of dissatisfaction than an embodiment of representative suffering."<sup>29</sup> War does not typify suffering, but is the very writing of suffering that thought constitutes as its/our splitting-choosing (*haereses*) into desire/dream/reality.<sup>30</sup> "Writing is the dissimulation of the natural, primary, and immediate presence of sense to the soul within the logos. Its violence befalls the soul as unconsciousness."<sup>31</sup> Consciousness is the unconscious of war.<sup>32</sup> Your thoughts are its subtitles. And if thy head offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Cf. Matthew 5:30). The fog of war rises from black-biled earth, humus/humour, dark with organic matter for thought. War-genius is melancholic, a thought-sufferer, knower of its passions.<sup>33</sup> And plunges

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<sup>29</sup> Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 3.10.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the schismatic community of Dante's ninth *bolgia* to which Bertran de Born belongs, headed by arch-self-splitter Mohammed, who identifies himself as a visual third-person: "Mentre che tutto in lui veder m'attacco, / guardommi e con le man s'aperse il petto, dicendo: 'Or vedi com' io mi dilacco! / vedi come storpiato è Mäometto'" (*Inferno* 238.28-31) [While I was all absorbed in gazing on him, he looked at me and with his hands pulled open his breast, saying, "Now see how I rend myself, see how mangled is Mohammed!"]

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 37.

<sup>32</sup> "Get on the ground! Get on the fucking ground! Now! [Thinking] This great evil. Where's it come from? How'd it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doing this? Who's killing us?" (*The Thin Red Line*, dir. Terrence Malick [1998]).

<sup>33</sup> "Lastly, we come to men who are difficult to move but have strong feelings—men who are to the previous type [choleric] like heat to a shower of sparks. These are the men who are best able to summon the titanic strength it takes to clear away the enormous burdens that obstruct activity in war. Their emotions move as great masses do—slowly but irresistibly" (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 53). Kleemeier comments: "A melancholic in the

us back in: “the emerging battlespace—the *intermezzo* where/in we make contact with the SIMAD—is a locale in which an ungrounding of the Earth is in process and, as such, is a vertiginous soft spot on the surface of the Earth.”<sup>34</sup>

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Clausewitzian sense is . . . someone who will act in exactly the right way, because his passions form a strong and solid foundation for action. So melancholy is not an illness at all, but a source of successful action. There is a certain ring of paradox here. On the one hand, you cannot eliminate the element of suffering from the notion of passion (*Leidenschaft*). Having a passion, as distinct from having a spontaneous emotion or affection, means being driven by a constant and powerful mental need, and to be in permanent need of something certainly indicates suffering. On the other hand, passions can become the very basis of great actions. This is so, because passions can combine with reason in a way spontaneous feelings cannot. . . . The link between passion and reason is will power” (Ulrike Kleemeir, “Moral Forces in War,” in *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herber-Rothe [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 112-3). Cf. “In most persons the mind accepts ends from the promptings of wants, but this means denial of the life of the spirit. Only when the mind accepts its ends and values from the deepest promptings of the heart does it contribute to the life of the spirit. Thus mind has to work in co-operation with the heart; factual knowledge has to be subordinated to intuitive perceptions; and heart has to be allowed full freedom in determining the ends of life without any interference from the mind” (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 1.140).

<sup>34</sup> Manabrata Guha, “Introduction to SIMADology: *Polemos* in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Collapse VI: Geo/Philosophy* (2010): 327.



003505

A trunk and a package of junk, tied with string. Let's go. They do not move. 'S' is the letter that denotes me in this glossing game. And here is 'my' letter stencilled on a cardboard box flattened to provide some loose casing for—what—wrought iron gates, a fence? This picture, which falls to me by the law of numerical series and sequencing that allots my place, has 'my' letter on it prominently placed and underlined. But of course this picture has absolutely nothing to do with me. I have never seen this alley, street or those objects. Then again, what does the letter 'S' have to do with me? Arbitrarily, according to the rules of the game, I am put into the picture as the letter 'S', a letter as alien to me as this picture. Has someone arrived

or are they about to travel? Has someone died?<sup>35</sup> ‘S’ is visible but at the expense of ‘me’ who am absent, like the owner of these objects. “The signifier, whose first purpose is to bar the subject, has brought into him the meaning of death. (The letter kills, but we learn this from the letter itself)” (Lacan, *Ecr.* 848). The letter marks the point of division wherein one locates one’s place as an effect of the chain, SAEND, arranged in couples at four corners, “in a form homologous to a pyramid”, a tomb.<sup>36</sup> It is this form of fatal couplings that determines the destiny, if not the destination, of ‘my’ desire in the

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<sup>35</sup> When I first saw this image I was reminded of Freud’s tattered hat and coat that hangs above a weather-beaten monogrammed suitcase in the Freud Museum in Vienna. These signs of imminent departure are virtually all that is left of Freud in the house from which he fled from the Nazis. Almost everything in that house is now in Hampstead. But these objects did not leave, they were abandoned.

<sup>36</sup> This refers to the five-pointed geometrical form that structures the *dESIRE Gloss*: “Imagine a pentagram with vertices SAEND, in order of the continuous tracing of their five-pointed star. Each vertex represents a ‘who’ or person. The form is homologous to a pyramid (square + point suspended above it). Imagine ten continuous tracings of all the lines joining these vertices: S-A-E-N-D-S-E-D-A-N-S x 10 (each dash corresponds to a line between vertices; the first five trace the star, the second five trace the pentagonal perimeter). This is a geometrical representation of a unit (100) of intangible dESIRES in a form that communicates each desire as a line or force between two points. This form simultaneously articulates how: 1) desire always comes bundled with other desires; 2) how desire subsists as a circulation within such bundles; 3) how desire is essentially personal, involved with desire to be desired, a mode of answering *who am i?* Furthermore, as an iteration (10, 10, 10, . . . = 100), the form communicates how desire exists as a repetition of itself. Whence desire as the ground of habit, as opposed to whim or *incognitum hactenus*, which is absolutely spontaneous and utopically free. By commentarily submitting ourselves to such an arbitrary (?) regimen or absolute regularization of desire, we seriously/ridiculously desire to collectively realize, like monks in conjoined cells, desire’s inherent freedom. This freedom is anticipated in the structure of the photograph as an undetermined determination of a relation between subject and object, a purely commentarial or deictic act (look!). Dialogic (or double-sided or self-mirroring or Narcissistic or *Romandelaroseian* or speculative, i.e. so beautiful that it does not at all resemble itself, what Guillaume de Lorris gives as birdsong ‘Qu’il ne sembloit pas chans d’oisiaus’) commentary, commentary on one object by two voices/selves, thus has the potential to realize all at once the nature of the image, the origination of anything/everything as our ownmost ecstasy, and the practice of photography as the technic-erotic perpetuation of love-at-first-sight.”

context of this game. Appropriately the image seems to comprise, again, of a series of dualities: a dark alley, an opening, where all the lines tend, into the light. Propped up against the wall, the objects look set to travel, but just sit there. This could simply be a pile of rubbish. I see a couple, although there are many more than two objects: the sealed trunk, smug, inscrutable, sphinx-like; the other(s) ragged, dishevelled, letting it all (nearly) hang out. A game of even and odd, odd couples: Oscar and Felix, Jacques and Jacques, Félix and Gilles, Didi and Gogo. (Didigogo? No, he did not move. Yet desire is movement even in stasis; it is anticipation, imaginary flight, fantasy).<sup>37</sup> I see a trunk and a wrought iron-cardboard-string machine bearing a letter that has arrived by chance, as always, at its destination. **S**

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<sup>37</sup> 'By The Time I Get to Phoenix' is a song of imaginary flight. It is another repetition in a series of failed departures—"I've left that girl so many times before." His anticipation is always displaced by nostalgia, the (love) sickness for home. "By the time I get to Phoenix, she'll be . . ." but he never gets to Phoenix.





003506

“In the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am” (Foucault). A photographer, is this *the* photographer, Kristen Alvanson? At first sight, naively, it looks like a photograph of a woman, the street behind her, taking a photo of some desirable object in a shop window. But it could be a reflection, yes, the glass is angled relative to the picture plane; the photographer is the ‘desirable object’ looking at herself in the ‘shop window’. Even if it is not a reflection, this is the ruse of the double, setting up the desire to photograph the photographer looking at herself looking at herself. And here I am like her—like anyone—in the place where she discovers her absence, looking at herself looking at herself. The place of the shopper and the commodity is the same. Her left eye, not the camera lens, seems to look into that space from which she is now absent and from which I am looking, being drawn into this play of glances, this exchange of narcissisms. It is a look of intimacy, but it is not intimate. A smile plays on the photographer’s lips as she glances at herself and through herself into the virtual point, the empty space not of symbolic mediation but economic exchange, from which I look back at her. I notice the fractures in the glass hinting at the disunity of the body that is normally veiled by the specular image but is here disclosed. I

fragment in turn. This commentary is too facile, don't you think? I see a hurried yet studied impersonation of feminine desire. On impulse, she pulls back the thick curtain, as heavy as death, unwinds her veil, takes a quick snap of something that catches her eye (herself). Transgressive feminine jouissance is on display even as it takes place out of the sight of the King and his police (Purloined Letter). It is not an image of female narcissism, but an advertising of feminine desire and jouissance that appeals to the narcissism of the viewer, his idiotic cleverness. This is desire pimping itself in the form of its own semblance all the better to remain hidden. Abject, I don't know how long I can go on playing the role of the (Lacanian) punter. It is time to unwind that veil, but what is behind it? Nothing but another semblance of an imitation of a semblance . . . S



003513

BEWILDERMENT. “So rational speculation leads to bewilderment [*hayra*] and theophany leads to bewilderment. There is nothing but a bewildered one. There is nothing exercising properties but bewilderment. There is nothing but Allah.”<sup>38</sup> Bewilderment means

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<sup>38</sup> Ibn al ‘Arabi, *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz, trans. William C. Chittick & James W. Morris (New York: Pir Press, 2005), 198.2. Chittick explicates the concept: “To find God is to fall into bewilderment (*hayra*), not the bewilderment of being lost and unable to find one’s way, but the bewilderment of finding and knowing God and of not-finding and not-knowing Him at the same time. Every existent thing other than God dwells in a never-never land of affirmation and negation, finding and losing, knowing and not-knowing. The difference between the Finders and the rest of us is that they are fully aware of their own ambiguous situation. They know the significance of the saying of the first caliph Abū Bakr: ‘Incapacity to

perplexity as a not-knowing-where-one-is-going/not-knowing-where-to-go that never stops moving, in any direction, or without direction, or in a direction that cannot be decided, a direction that might be either, but is absolutely neither, right or wrong: a direction that is pure direction and not direction at all.<sup>39</sup> Beyond *from* and *to*,<sup>40</sup> bewilderment relocates movement, making it “the omnipresent term of equation between anywhere and everywhere.”<sup>41</sup> “The term *hayra* (perplexity) often renders *aporia* in Arabic translations from Greek. *Aporia* means that no passage (*poros*) has been found to the solution of a puzzle or impasse.”<sup>42</sup> Bewilderment is the unfinishably perfect perpetuation of *aporia*’s stalling, the pure anti-freezing of impasse into a plenitude of beautiful procession and flow. “Water. Millions of decaliters. A treasure. Greater than treasure, Usul. We have thousands of such caches, and only a few of us know them all. And when we have enough, we shall change the face of Arrakis.”<sup>43</sup> Bewilderment is the mood of ultimate architecture: totalitarian porosity. All is passage, every way is the way because “*the way after*

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attain comprehension is itself comprehension” (William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989], 3-4).

<sup>39</sup> Counterpoint: Dante’s Belacqua, who stays still precisely by knowing where he must go: “O frate, andar in sù che porta? . . . Prima convien che tanto il ciel m’aggiri / di fuor da essa, quanto fece in vita, / per ch’io ‘ndugiai al fine I buon sospiri” (*Purgatorio* 4.127-32) [O brother, what’s the use of going up? . . . First must the heavens revolve around me outside it, so long as they did during my life, because I delayed good sighs until the end]. Sloth’s contrapasso is the self-imprisonment of being a profane *qutub*.

<sup>40</sup> “For the bewildered one has a round [*dawr*] / and a circular motion around the *qutb* / which he never leaves / But the master of the long path / tends away from what he aims for / seeking what he is already in / A master of fantasies which are his goal / He has a ‘from’ and a ‘to’ / and what is between them / But the master of the circular movement / has no starting point / that ‘from’ should take him over / and no goal / that he should be ruled by ‘to’ / He has the more complete existence / And is given the totality of the words and wisdoms” (Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-hikam* [Bezels of Wisdom], chapter 3, cited from Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 101-2).

<sup>41</sup> Nicola Masciandaro, “Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy,” *Collapse VI: Geo/Philosophy* (2010): 31.

<sup>42</sup> Joel L. Kraemer, “Maimondes, The Great Healer,” *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008): 10.

<sup>43</sup> David Lynch, *Dune* (Universal Pictures, 1984).

all—it does not exist!”<sup>44</sup> All is process, the perpetual flashing of unending interstitial interchange between problem and solution, branch and intersection. “This conjunction [and] carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be.’ Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions.”<sup>45</sup> Follow me!<sup>46</sup> This is the only way of staying with the center: constantly succeed to the furthest boundary of its infinite outside.<sup>47</sup> The motional essence of bewilderment—on this point the English etymology is ideally confused<sup>48</sup>—is captured in the unspelled difference between *hayra* and *hira* (whirlpool).<sup>49</sup> This image likewise locates you at the fountal threshold between spectatorship

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<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>45</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 25.

<sup>46</sup> “. . . Swaying drunkenly to and fro like the branches, fresh as raw silk, which the winds have bent. *Gloss*: ‘Swaying drunkenly,’ in reference to the station of bewilderment (حيرة)” (Ibn Arabi, *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq* [Interpreter of Desires], trans. Reynold A. Nicholson [London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911], 22.13).

<sup>47</sup> “That bewilderment is achieved in the continual transformation from form to form and in the circular motion beyond the dualism of origin and goal” (Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 102).

<sup>48</sup> According to the OED: from *wilder*, meaning “to cause to lose one’s way, as in a wild or unknown place,” “of uncertain origin: prob. (by an unusual process) extracted from *wilderness* on the analogy of the form of *wander*.” I.e. *wilder* turned *wilderness* into a verb on the motional model of *wander*.

<sup>49</sup> “The [Universal] Order is perplexity, and perplexity is agitation and movement, and movement is life’ [*al-‘amr hīra wa-l-hīra qalaq wa haraka wa-l-haraka hayāī*]. I read the Arabic word حيرة here as *hīra* not *hayra* following Ibn ‘Arabī’s intention to identify ‘perplexity’ and ‘whirlpool’. حيرة ‘perplexity’ can be read as *hīra* not *hayra*, Arabic dictionaries tell us, and ‘whirlpool’ (*hīra*) is one of the favourite images of universal life and order in Ibn ‘Arabī’s texts. The *hā’ir* ‘perplexed’ human being finds himself in constant movement. He cannot gain a foothold at any point, he is not established anywhere. This is why Ibn ‘Arabī says that he is ‘perplexed *in* the multiplication of the One’: this ‘multiplication’ is not just epistemological, it is ontological as well, and the perplexed human being is moving in the whirlpool of life and cosmic Order and at the same time realises that he is at that movement” (Andrey Smirnov, “Sufi Hayra and Islamic Art: Contemplating Ornament through *Fusus al-Hikam*,” paper presented at *Sufism, Gnosis, Art: The Thought of Ibn Arabi and Shah Nimatullah* [Seville, 22-23 November 2004]).

and existence. Not his drawable face, but something like this is what Narcissus really sees, an object of supreme confusion between image and self, line and substance. Only by standing over here, on this side beneath impassible overhanging barriers, does the eight-sided star convexly dip to kiss my crown.<sup>50</sup> Simultaneously, these marbly horizontals are absolutely steps that I am walking down, into the drowning death of living.<sup>51</sup> Image, dESIRE, is the guide: “guidance means being guided to bewilderment, that he might know the whole affair is perplexity, which means perturbation and flux, and flux is life.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> “The Cosmos is like a net which takes all its life, as far as ever it stretches, from being wet in the water; it is at the mercy of the sea which spreads out, taking the net with it just so far as it will go, for no mesh of it can strain beyond its set place: the Soul is of so far-reaching a nature—a thing unbounded—as to embrace the entire body of the All in the one extension; so far as the universe extends, there soul is” (Plotinus, *Enneads*, 4.3.9).

<sup>51</sup> “For if anyone follow what is like a beautiful shape playing over water—is there not a myth telling in symbol of such a dupe, how he sank into the depths of the current and was swept away to nothingness? So too, one that is held by material beauty and will not break free shall be precipitated, not in body but in Soul, down to the dark depths loathed of the Intellective-Being, where, blind even in the Lower-World, he shall have commerce only with shadows, there as here” (Plotinus, *Enneads*, 1.6.7).

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Bezels of Wisdom* [Fusus al-Hikam], trans. R.W.J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 254.

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