

# Making Felt: Abstract

Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama — un-organizing otherness



‘For conceived in war, this book is of peace.’  
Léo Bronstein, *Fragments of Life, Art and Metaphysics*

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# *Abstract*

“Making Felt: Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama – un-organizing otherness” examines the histories and legacies of the 1982 meeting between the German artist Joseph Beuys and His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, an event that has gone all but unnoticed by historians and theorists. The history of the relationships between both the well-known and marginal figures who were involved with it serves as the connective tissue for the thesis’ interrelated objectives. These are: 1) to provide a historical account of the life and work of the meeting’s organizer, Dutch artist Louwrien Wijers, and her partnerships with Beuys, French artist Robert Filliou, and Dutch artists Ben d’Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker, which are a crucial part of the meeting and its legacies; 2) to theorize several post-war Western artists’ and philosophers’ engagements with Eastern thought and religious practices, primarily Zen and Tibetan Buddhism; 3) to historicize the Dalai Lama’s first visits to the West (1973 and 1981) which set the stage for his meeting with Beuys; 4) to provide a narrative of 20th-century Western artistic and philosophical practices in terms of encounters with cultural difference, and to use these practices to suggest a notion of ‘nonviolence’ viable in the 21st-century. The thesis employs the material felt – crucial to Beuys’ work – as a device for giving cohesion to its methodology and to the play of histories with which it works. Felt, a non-woven fabric, and the process of making it – which involves a methodical leaving-to-chance of the formation of the material – offers a mode of approaching the encounter with otherness that provides an alternative to the usual figuration of cultural knowledge as a regularized “weave” of various cultural practices. The thesis uses this distinction between woven and non-woven, making knowledge and making felt, to enable the productive “un-organization” of otherness.

# **Making Felt:**

**Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama — un-organizing otherness**

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# *Preamble*

‘In the beginning *kama* seized upon an unevolved cosmos and fashioned the imaginable out of the unimaginable. Sages, gazing with wisdom into their hearts, saw the all-permeating power take shape as an omnipotent god — Kama. They made obeisance to the deity, sang hymns of praise, and performed solemn sacrifices. But Kama, rejecting their offerings and songs, laughed. When he so mocked them with uproarious laughter, they were bewildered and asked the reason for it. The god forged his laughter into words: “If a man who is pious seeks merit through sacred acts, I laugh at him. If a man who is intelligent seeks understanding through knowledge, I laugh at him. If a man who is righteous seeks honor through virtuous deeds, I laugh at him. If a man, whether wise or foolish, virtuous or depraved, seeks satisfaction in love, I laugh at him as well. Though he fancies himself my ally, I laugh especially at him.” “But why?” the sages asked. And Kama laughed at their question.’ (The *Hasyalapa Brahmana* of the *Red Yajur Veda*)

## Past tense: an anecdoted ethnography of chance

“He’s drunk,” his wife said as she entered the room with my wife. “He always gets drunk when you show up.... And when he gets drunk he thinks he’s a poet or a philosopher.” (Siegel, 1995: 16-17)

Years ago, as an undergraduate student, I had one of many late night drunken conversations with a close friend and a fellow student. We had stumbled circuitously into discussing a short poem he had written.

‘I sit, motionless.  
A tree moves gently in the wind.  
What will move me?’

I told him, pulling forth pearls of the wisdom gleaned from several weeks in my *Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism* survey class, that it reminded me of something Lao Tzu had written. This prompted him to tell me of a phrase he had always loved, one that he felt sure came from the pages of the writings of some lost Taoist sage whose name he couldn’t recall. We delighted in this uncertainty as young undergraduates would: much more fitting that the author was unknown. The phrase, the jewel of Taoist insight, was: ‘It loves to happen.’ What matter who said it!, we two sages said. Bottoms up!

I have used this phrase here and there from that point to this. *It loves to happen*. In one early draft of a chapter of this thesis, I used it in reference to Joseph Beuys’ work, its quality of late-blooming epiphany, time-lag revelation — one has the feeling of having ‘happened’ along with and as a result of the phenomenal experience of his work: having ‘happened’, having existentially, ethically, aesthetically, even erotically *unfolded* along with the unfolding happening of the work, one has the sense of having engaged in something which loved to happen.

One of my Ph.D. professors read this draft chapter and was taken with the phrase. ‘*It loves to happen*... Where does this come from?’ the professor asked. ‘It’s from one Taoist text. I can’t remember exactly which,’ I said, as though I had read so many that my memory was now faltering. “It’s fantastic,” the professor said, and suggested that I get rid of some of the more clunky explanatory text around it and leave it at that. ‘It loves to happen.’ Taoist wisdom shot straight to the heart of Beuys’ work. This was 1998.

This past May, 2001, I was invited to deliver a paper at the annual graduate symposium at the University of California, Los Angeles. I took the very same American Airlines flight from Boston to LAX that had it been September 11 would have been a one-way ticket to the World Trade Center.

Entitled “Eurasianausea,” the paper looked at the 1982 Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting, and the grandiose notion of the East-West encounter. It asked whether, tucked away in the creases of such romantic utopian rhetoric, there might be fragments of another narrative of other possibilities for thinking through encounters with cultural difference. This has been rewritten as Chapter Four of this thesis. About half-way into the paper, I had again conjured up my favorite bit of Taoist wisdom to evoke the moment when Louwrien Wijers, weeks after the Bonn meeting had come and gone, sat transcribing her tapes of the discussions in the hotel café that had followed — meandering discussions, sometimes elated and sometimes somber, but continually coaxed along by that familiar cocktail of caffeine and hope — and suddenly, out of the blue sky, really *heard* Robert Filliou’s comment about organizing the Art of Peace Biennial. In my paper, to drum up the mysterious elegance of such epiphanies, I hauled out my Lao Tzu surrogate: ‘There is’, I wrote, ‘a Taoist saying: “It loves to happen.” As she sat alone and listened to the tape recordings of the meandering discussions that took place over those hours at the cafe tables, she picked up on Filliou’s comment, suddenly it hit her.’ The paper seemed to go well; I was asked one or two questions, and we moved on to lunch.

The symposium was a success. Afterwards, as is customary, a party was held at the home of one of the professors in the department. While I waited for one of my Ph.D. student hosts to clear up the extra programs, unused styrofoam coffee cups, put away the slide trays, and sort through the other detritus of the academic encounter, I stopped to check my email. There was one message waiting for me in my inbox. It was from my NYU friend, whom I had not heard from in almost a year.

‘Hi Chris-

Long time no speak. I made a discovery the other day that sheds some light on a question you asked me a few years ago. You asked me to find a quote I had repeated to you a long time ago, something along the lines of “It loves to happen”. I looked through all my various Buddhist and



quasi-Buddhist books, even a few Hindu books and one “Popular Mechanics” magazine. But I could not find the source of that quote. I quit, figuring it would pop up again in time.

About a month ago it did, as I was re-reading *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger. Except, I realized that I had misquoted. In fact, it is a quote attributed to Marcus Aurelius [sic], who stated that:

IT LOVED TO HAPPEN

past tense.

Strange source for Zennish words, huh? No wonder I couldn't find it. (In the book the main character is looking at a wall of quotes compiled by his two older brothers in their youth, one of whom has since committed suicide). In case you didn't read it. Sorry for the delay.

Otherwise, I hope all is well. Hope to talk to you soon.

j'

Not a Taoist, present sense, but Marcus Aurelius, past tense.

His email was dated the day before, Friday May 4. Had I bothered to check my messages before the conference on Saturday, I would have had the chance to fix the reference in the text, or even to remove it. But as it turns out, I had stood before a room full of fellow Ph.D. students — and the UCLA Art History Department's illustrious professors: Al Boime, Anthony Vidler, Miwon Kwon, and visiting artist Martha Rosler — and thoroughly misled them all. I wondered if anyone noticed.

It was my pleasure to return to check the primary sources. I read *Franny and Zooey*, and its overwhelming beauty<sup>2</sup>, combined of course with my now compelling personal connection to it, convinced me well before I got to the privately infamous Aurelius reference that the book deserved to be placed near the top of American literature's Top Ten. Near the end of the book, in case you didn't read it, Zooey wanders into his brothers' room. His plan is to use the telephone to call his sister Franny, his voice disguised to convince her that he is actually their still-surviving elder brother Buddy, whose advice she might be persuaded to accept as she lies in a cross between depravity

and ecstasy on the living room sofa in the family apartment, working her way through her first profound religious experience. Before he makes his rescue call, he stumbles upon his brothers' long unread wall of quotes.

'No attempt whatever had been made to assign quotations or authors to categories or groups of any kind. So that to read the quotations from top to bottom, column by column, was rather like walking through an emergency station set up in a flood area, where, for example, Pascal had been unribaldly bedded down with Emily Dickinson, and where, so to speak, Baudelaire's and Thomas à Kempis' toothbrushes were hanging side by side.

'You have the right to work, but for the work's sake only. You have no right to the fruits of work. Desire for the fruits of work must never be your motive in working. Never give way to laziness, either.

Perform every action with your heart fixed on the Supreme Lord. Renounce attachment to the fruits. Be even-tempered [underlined by one of the calligraphers] in success and failure; for it is this evenness of temper which is meant by yoga.

Work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done without such anxiety, in the calm of self-surrender. Seek refuge in the knowledge of Brahman. They who work selfishly for results are miserable. — "Bhagavad Gita."

It loved to happen.

— Marcus Aurelius.

O snail

Climb Mount Fuji,

But slowly, slowly!

— Issa.' (Salinger, 1991: 176-77)

I then read Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*; the oldest copy I could get my hands was the 1964 Penguin Classics edition, Maxwell Staniforth's translation. *Franny and Zooey* appeared serially in *The New Yorker*, "Franny" in January 1955, "Zooey" in May 1957. They were published together in September 1961, incidentally also the year that Emmanuel Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* was published and that Fluxus was officially founded.

I couldn't find 'It loved to happen.', but was in fact able to locate the missing Taoist insight in its 'original' form: 'loves to happen.' I considered, perhaps in the name

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<sup>2</sup> It's difficult to think of any words of praise that wouldn't make Salinger cringe. I picked 'beauty' because it seemed the one word of which at least Franny would have approved.

of repentance, searching through older translations for the occurrence of the phrase in the past tense. But had I done so, what would be next? Learning to read Latin? Tracking down the reclusive author and asking where he had come across it? These seemed increasingly perverse the more I thought about them. But surely these options are still open to me; the life of a scholar is long, and I may well one day be desperate enough to turn this into a sabbatical.

In the twenty-first entry of Book X of the *Meditations*, Aurelius contemplates a line from Euripedes:

‘Earth is in love with the showers from above,

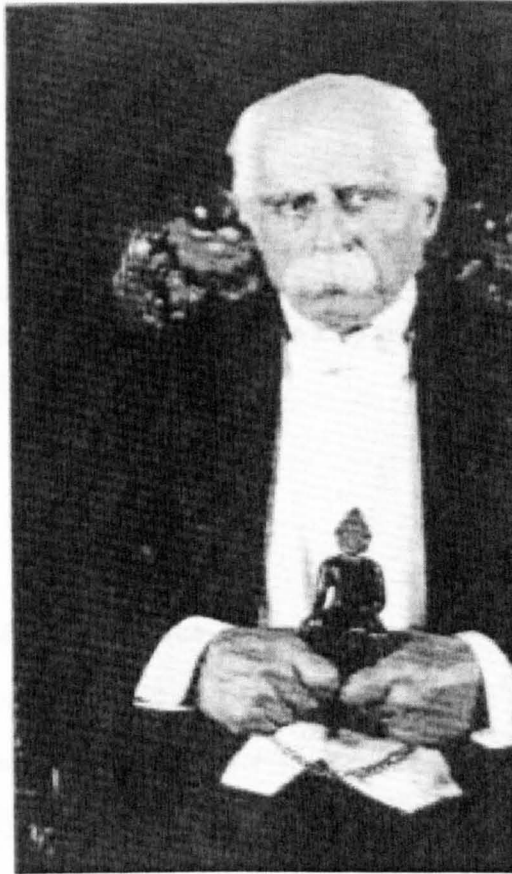
And the all-holy Heaven itself is in love’ [Euripedes, Frag. 890]

— that is, the universe is truly in love with its task of fashioning whatever is next to be; and to the universe, therefore, my response must be, ‘As thou lovest, so I too love.’ (Is not the same notion implied in the common saying that such-and-such a thing ‘loves to happen?’) (Aurelius, 1964: 158)

The Stoic man of Tao, who doing nothing leaves nothing undone, who did most lovingly conquer the Germanic barbarians.

‘Much, much more important, though, Seymour had already begun to believe (and I agreed with him, as far as I was able to see the point) that education by any name would smell as sweet, and maybe much sweeter, if it didn’t begin with a quest for knowledge at all but with a quest, as Zen would put it, for no-knowledge. Dr. Suzuki says somewhere that to be in a state of pure consciousness — *satori* — is to be with God before he said, Let there be light. Seymour and I thought it might be a good thing to hold back this light from you and Franny (at least as far as we were able), and all the many lower, more fashionable lighting effects — the arts, sciences, classics, languages — till you were both able at least to conceive of a state of being where the mind knows the source of all light. We thought it would be wonderfully constructive to at least (that is, if our own “limitations” got in the way) tell you as much as we knew about the men — the saints, the arhats, the bodhisattvas, the jivanmuktas — who knew something or everything about this state of being. That is, we wanted you to both to know who and what Jesus and Gautama and Lao-tse and Shankaracharya and Hui-neng and Sri Ramakrishna, etc., were before you knew too much or anything about Homer or Shakespeare or even Blake or Whitman, let alone George Washington and his cherry tree or the definition of a peninsula or how to parse a sentence. That, anyway, was the big idea. Along with all this, I suppose I’m trying to say that I know how bitterly you resent the years when S. and I were regularly conducting home seminars, and the metaphysical sittings in particular. I just hope that one day — preferably when we’re both blind drunk — we can talk about it.’ (Salinger, 1991: 65-6)

## *Tibetans in Oxford?*



**Francis Younghusband holding the Ganden  
Tripa's bronze Buddha (from French, 1994)**

‘I will never forget landing there. My mother brought me, in my felt hat, in my overcoat, with my steamer trunk. She brought me, as she thought, ‘home’, on the banana boat, and delivered me to Oxford. She gave me to the astonished college scout and said, ‘This is my son, his trunks, his belongings. Look after him.’ She delivered me, signed and sealed, to where she thought a son of hers had always belonged — Oxford. [...] I always wanted to study there. It took quite a while to come to terms with Britain, especially with Oxford, because Oxford is the pinnacle of Englishness, it’s the hub, the motor, that creates Englishness.’ (Stuart Hall in Chen, 1996: 489, 491-2)

‘I remember well an occasion of one of my early trips to the West. I was the guest of a very wealthy family who lived in a large, well-appointed house. Everyone was very charming and polite. There were servants to cater to one’s every need, and I began to think that here, perhaps, was proof positive that wealth could be a source of happiness. My hosts definitely had an air of relaxed confidence. But when I saw in the bathroom, through a cupboard door which was slightly open, an array of tranquilizers and sleeping pills, I was reminded forcefully that there is often a big gap between outward appearances and inner reality.’ (Dalai Lama, 1999: 6-7)

## *Part I: Of Security*

On November 8, 1973, Ms. Nancy Rice-Jones, Secretary of the Sponsoring Committee for His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s visit to England, sent a transcript to Committee Chair Archdeacon Edward F. Carpenter of a heated argument that had taken place two days previously in the House of Lords about a variety of issues raised by the Dalai Lama’s recent visit. His sojourn in England came near the end of his first ‘religious and cultural visit’ to the West, including thirteen European countries, between late September and early November, 1973. He began in Rome, where he had been received by the Pope, and later visited Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, England, Ireland, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Austria<sup>3</sup>.

The photocopied pages, along with a letter from Ms. Rice-Jones’, arrived in Carpenter’s hands not two weeks after the Dalai Lama and his entourage had already left

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<sup>3</sup> This itinerary is taken from a document entitled ‘Church Information Office Press Release’, written by Mr. John Miles, Chief Information Officer of the Church of England, on August 13, 1973. All archival records, official and unofficial, pertaining to His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama’s 1981 and 1973 visits to the United Kingdom referred to in this chapter come from the archives of Reverend Edward F. Carpenter, formerly Archdeacon and subsequently Dean of Westminster, held in the Archives of the Library of Westminster Abbey, London, England.

England. His Holiness' first impressions, such as they were, had been made. Several Peers of the House of Lords had taken time to reflect upon the emergent protocols and speculate about potential political pitfalls that might be anticipated should England again host His Holiness<sup>4</sup>.

The British Government had deigned to recognize the Dalai Lama's as a political visit, and had refused to offer to receive His Holiness in the 'official' capacity in which they would otherwise receive a visiting political figure. Rather, his visit was, as has quite consistently been the case in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States who would wish to obviate diplomatic tensions with the Chinese, considered to be of a religious and/or cultural rather than a political nature. This presented difficult circumstances for the Sponsoring Committee's attempt to take security measures for His Holiness. In a letter dated August 1, 1973, Rice-Jones informed Carpenter of confirmation that Sponsoring Committee member Sir Olaf Caroe<sup>5</sup> had heard from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. There had been some resistance on the Foreign Office's part to the provision of security, but 'presumably because of Mr. Neave's intervention at high level,<sup>6</sup> it has been argued in principle that the Dalai Lama shall be given an official measure of protection. Apparently this still has to have the concurrence of the Home Office but I should think that if there were any doubt, they would have let Sir Olaf know.'<sup>7</sup>

The tussle for security went on up until the eve of His Holiness' arrival, and indeed, as the House of Lords debate below indicates, continued even after his departure. On October 15, Mr. Anthony Royle of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office wrote Neave explaining the provisions that his office had undertaken. To date they had been limited to the realm of inquiry alone, though Royle's letter did much to trump this up to an appearance of thorough preparation. In fact, only days before His Holiness' arrival, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had done little other than check in with other countries

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<sup>4</sup> The passages below are quoted from Ms. Rice-Jones's photocopy of Hansard from November 6, p. 237-240, enclosed in her letter to Edward F. Carpenter.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Olaf Caroe was at the time the President of the Tibet Society, and had been Governor of the Northwest Frontier province in British India.

<sup>6</sup> Airey Neave, though not listed in any of the Sponsoring Committee's meeting minutes as a Committee member, is referred to several times in a range of records from the 1973 visit; in addition to having been persuaded to use his influence to enjoin the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to consider the Dalai Lama's visit as a special case, Neave seems also to have been a frequent participant in discussions about the program's specific details.

which His Holiness had just visited or was in the process of visiting, take mental notes of what these governments had been prepared to do, and request that they inform the Foreign and Commonwealth Office about anything had seemed out of the ordinary elsewhere along His Holiness' route. It is therefore likely that, apart from minor differences, His Holiness would have received the same semi-serious security reception throughout Europe. So, though they promised to stand at attention, neither police nor Her Majesty's government could be relied upon to provide active security. Royle wrote:

'We looked into what security measures, if any, were being taken by other countries. We concluded that to satisfy two main requirements, that is to ensure the Dalai Lama's safety, while at the same time avoiding giving any official blessing to the visit, we should take two steps.

The first involved the Home Office alerting the local police forces in all the places the Dalai Lama is to visit. The second step involved asking our posts in the countries the Dalai Lama will have visited prior to his arrival here, to inform us immediately if anything untoward occurs during his travels so that our police could be forewarned.

I am glad to say that our posts have so far reported that his visits have gone smoothly. I hope you will agree therefore that we are taking every reasonable precaution. I should emphasise once again that neither we nor the police expect any problems, but you may rest assured that they will keep the whole question under close review.'<sup>8</sup>

Such assurances as satisfied the Sponsoring Committee would have been wasted on Viscount Long, who in retrospect determined that the Dalai Lama's visit had been marked by flagrant errors, particularly concerning security. He initiated the debate about these matters in the House of Lords, the record of which Rice-Jones had sent to Carpenter, by asking 'Her Majesty's Government why they were not polite to the Dalai Lama'. To this, Baroness Tweedsmuir answered: 'My Lords, I said before that this was a private visit. It would not have been appropriate for Ministers officially to receive the Dalai Lama.'

In the resulting discussion, added to by others who were similarly upset by Tweedsmuir's official line, it emerged that, during the Dalai Lama's time in London, there had been 'a simultaneous visit to London of a Chinese delegation' who had held a 'function' in the Hyde Park Hotel, the very same hotel where the Dalai Lama had stayed. In light of this shocking revelation, Lord Hoy continued: 'My Lords, is it not a fact that

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from Rice-Jones to Carpenter, August 1, 1973.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Mr. Anthony Royle, of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to Neave, October 15, 1973.

the Foreign Office was so ill-informed that the delegation from China was put into the same hotel as the Dalai Lama?’

Baroness Tweedsmuir: ‘My Lords, the point is that they did not meet and there was no incident.’ Lord Belhaven and Stanton continued:

‘My Lords, do I understand my noble friend to say that the Chinese Embassy was consulted over the visit of the Dalai Lama of Tibet? Would not my noble friend agree that the brutal Chinese occupation of Tibet is one of the worst things that have happened in the world since the German occupation of Poland? Further, is she not aware that the Chinese Government was convicted of genocide in Tibet by no less a body than the International Committee of Jurists, and is that not reason enough for Her Majesty’s Government to welcome with courtesy a person of the eminence of the Dalai Lama?’

Redirecting the proceedings away from Lord Belhaven and Stanton’s comparative index of atrocities, Baroness Tweedsmuir retorted:

‘My Lords, the Chinese Embassy was not consulted on the visit. As I explained, they expressed the hope that perhaps the Dalai Lama should not come. We said that it was our normal practice to grant visas for such visits. So far as the status of Tibet is concerned, we have, over a long period, recognised Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. This has been on the understanding that Tibet is regarded as autonomous. It was proclaimed an autonomous region in 1965.’

‘My Lords,’ asked Lord Belhaven and Stanton, ‘does my noble friend accept the English suzerainty over Scotland?’

‘My Lords, that,’ replied Baroness Tweedsmuir of Belhelvie, ‘is another question.’ Perhaps averse to allowing this can of worms to be opened, Baroness Stocks brought the discussion back to a more pragmatic ground: ‘My Lords, since the Dalai Lama has now left England, is there anything that can be done about it anyway?’ Baroness Tweedsmuir: ‘No, my Lords.’

Lord Shackleton pressed the Baroness to set a precedent for future visits in admitting that the government had made a mistake in not welcoming His Holiness and his entourage. ‘My Lords,’ he proposed, ‘would the noble Baroness now admit that in fact the Government made an error of judgment and that there was a failing in courtesy? I know how concerned the noble Viscount, Lord Long, was in trying to find anyone at all to meet him. Perhaps she would look into the matter for the future.’



But Baroness Tweedsmuir refused to concede impropriety. ‘My Lords, I cannot accept that. The Dalai Lama was here, as a guest of the Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees, on a private visit.’

Lord Segal then tried a different tack, reproaching the British government for its failure to at least offer His Holiness a proper welcome befitting such a private religious visitor. ‘My Lords,’ he proposed, ‘may I ask the noble Baroness whether she is aware that the visit of the Dalai Lama on this occasion was not too happily organised, and would the Government be prepared to approach the proper authorities to see that he is given at least due religious recognition in the event of his paying a future visit to this country?’

This latter comment was taken as something of a provocation by Ms. Rice-Jones as well, and was the impetus behind her letter to Archdeacon Carpenter, which asked: ‘Do you think we should write to Lord Segal and perhaps also to Lord Long and explain the position?’<sup>9</sup> I should like to know what grounds Lord Segal has for saying that the visit was not too happily organised.’

Indeed, the Sponsoring Committee had worked diligently to organize His Holiness’ encounter with Great Britain.

### *Minutes*

It started at Westminster Abbey, although that is perhaps the *last* place it could be said to have begun. On Friday, July 27, 1973, at 5 Little Cloister, the Sponsoring Committee for the visit of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet met to redraft the itinerary for the Dalai Lama’s stay.<sup>10</sup>

The debates over what would and would not be included were to become intense, and would spread well beyond the Sponsoring Committee.

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<sup>9</sup> The Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees was not involved directly in the organization of the visit. His Holiness’ visit was organized by several individuals comprising an independent Sponsoring Committee, all of whom had a variety of connections to several organizations — including the Anglican Church, the Buddhist Society, the Tibet Society, the National Council of Social Service, and the Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes exist from a Sponsoring Committee meeting from Wednesday July 3; though it is likely that there were prior meetings, the July 3 minutes constitute the first record of a formal organizational meeting.

Under a heading in the minutes for the day of Wednesday, October 24 is a note stating that British Museum director Sir John Wolfenden had welcomed the idea of His Holiness visiting the museum. The Committee had also planned an event at the University of London which was to be arranged by Professor von Furer-Haimendorf himself, in which distinguished Indo-Tibetan scholar Hugh Richardson would also participate. It was also decided that on Thursday, October 25, the Dalai Lama would visit the Buddhist Society, that fifty 'leading Buddhists' would be invited, and that the Society's Chairman the Hon. Mr. Justice Christmas Humphreys would prepare the list of invitees. On Friday, October 26, His Holiness would attend an event at Christchurch College of Oxford University convened by Professor Henry Chadwick, who had invited a group of unnamed scholars to attend. It was then on to Cambridge for dinner, where the Dean of Trinity College, Bishop John Robinson, would receive them. 'It was agreed to ask Lady Egremont not to issue invitations to other guests at present until the Dalai Lama's comments on the programme had been received. It was urged that those guests suggested at the last meeting — Lord Mountbatten and Mr. Harold MacMillan, who had shown great interest in this visit, should at any rate be included.'

By October His Holiness would have a much more finely wrought schedule, including a number of visits and meetings not yet developed enough to make it into the official minutes. At this early stage it was sufficient to have outlined the major attractions, and to make some important preliminary administrative decisions. It was agreed that there should be a single media coordinator; all such inquiries were to be handled by Mr. John Miles. Secondly, it was important to come to a conclusion about the committee's commitment to security for His Holiness and his entourage. This has come to be among the most urgent considerations in planning the Dalai Lama's visits outside Dharamsala, both on the part of His Holiness' own staff and on the part of their foreign hosts in the countries they visit. The minutes from the Sponsoring Committee underline this: 'The Chairman emphasised that if the Government were not able to provide security this would be an expensive item for the Committee to meet but it was essential to do so.' Finally, Archdeacon Carpenter signed a 'formal letter of invitation for the Dalai Lama to

use in applying for an exit permit and a visa'. The immediately pressing business having been attended to, the next meeting was scheduled for Friday September 14, 1973.

In the period between these two meetings, a complex and civilized battle was waged for the authority to plan His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet's first ever visit to the United Kingdom. Having set upon the task of organizing the Oxford visit, just a few days after the Committee's meeting its Secretary, Mr. Hyde-Chambers, had already become flustered by the obstacles raised by some unnamed person outside the Committee and his or her overbearing aspirations for the Dalai Lama's calendar. In a letter to Committee Chair Ven. Archdeacon Carpenter he was already prepared to scrap the trip to Oxford:

'I thought the point of the Dalai Lama going to Oxford was for him to not only see one of our two most famous Universities, but primarily to talk to thinkers, theologians, etc.

I wrote to [Committee Secretary] Miss Rice-Jones that I know a tutor who is a Buddhist at one of the Colleges and perhaps something could be worked up, but on rethinking the situation I am inclined to think it better to drop Oxford altogether, and keep it as free time, which I am sure we or His Holiness will fill. How do you feel about this?'<sup>11</sup>

Though it was resolved to keep Oxford in the program, the debates that transpired in order to come to that conclusion gave rise to a much larger issue. Referring to an earlier exchange he had had with the Sponsoring Committee's Secretary Nancy Rice-Jones about the possible pitfalls relating to the Dalai Lama's visit to Oxford, Hyde-Chambers informed Carpenter that 'Miss Rice-Jones is concerned lest the programme fall into the hands of too many Buddhists and Tibetans. She need not worry as there are no Tibetans in Oxford'.<sup>12</sup>

### *There goes the neighborhood*

From the very start of the organization of the Dalai Lama's visit, it was the Tibetan community itself that began to emerge as one of *the* most troubling factors with which the Committee had to deal. The other factor, mentioned above, was the issue of *security*, which was something much more spectral than merely arranging for bodyguards, especially since the psychological security that might have been afforded by the granting

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<sup>11</sup> Letter from F.R. Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, August 2, 1973

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, c/o Ven. A.H. Woodhouse, August 8, 1973.

of governmental protection could now not be counted upon. The Sponsoring Committee was entirely responsible for security and any perceived threat to it, real or imagined.

In his critique of the genealogy of the contemporary usage of the term 'security' with respect to Cold War American military and political strategy, and to the development and funding of scholarship in such fields as Area Studies, Mark Neocleous notes: 'Not only must any appeal to security involve a specification of the fear which engenders it... but this fear (insecurity) demands the counter-measures (security) to neutralize, eliminate or constrain the person, group, object or condition which engenders fear. Securing is therefore what is done to a condition that is insecure. It is only because it is shaped by insecurity that security can be secure.' (Neocleous, op.cit: 12)

The security threats as understood and imagined by the Committee formed a constellation of concerns. These began with a body of wariness of the sort described above, which could be said to cluster around two poles: firstly, wariness of any possible harm to the health or the life of His Holiness (from sickness and accidental injury to kidnapping and assassination attempts); secondly, wariness of any possible mismanagement of the diplomatic moirass that was posed by his visit (such as failure to demonstrate to China that this was an 'unofficial' rather than an 'official' visit, or conversely failure to demonstrate to the Western public a concern for the condition of Tibet and its current and former residents).

Suffusing these more overt security concerns is a fabric of implicit and far more chaotic anxieties cohering around a desire to be seen to have produced proper hospitality; this in turn must, in the case of the Sponsoring Committee, be seen as a function of a larger concern with *propriety*.

Michel de Certeau, Luce Girard and Pierre Mayol define propriety as 'the symbolic management of the public facet of each of us as we enter the street.' This entails self-management, but also its extension into and as the management of any situation, provided that this extension is permitted reciprocally by the 'proper' recognition offered by the other participants in the encounter. Propriety is then at once the way 'in which one is perceived and the means constraining one to remain submitted to it; fundamentally,

it requires the avoidance of all dissonance in the game of behaviors and all qualitative disruption in the perception of the social environment.’

Proper behavior, such as the correct performance of hospitality, especially for an illustrious guest, is an orientational device enabling one to navigate the ‘relationship between the formal necessity of the encounter and the random aspect of its content’. That is, the encounter is inevitable, but it is at the same time impossible to say for certain when and where it will happen, and what will happen during and as a result of it. The relationship between necessity and randomness then compels he or she who enacts propriety ‘to behave as if “on guard” within precise social codes, all centered around the fact of *recognition* in the sort of indecisive collectivity — thus undecided and undecidable — that is the neighborhood.’

The neighborhood, quite fittingly for an investigation of the confluence of agendas and itineraries that characterizes such visits as His Holiness’ to London, is defined as ‘a collective organization of individual trajectories’. The proper navigation of the neighborhood is undertaken by avoiding, banishing, or eluding ‘disruption in the perception of the social environment.’ It is to this end that propriety ‘produces stereotyped behaviors, ready-to-wear social clothes, whose function is to make it possible to recognize anyone, anywhere.’ (de Certeau, et al., 1998: 15-17)

What can be seen in the Sponsoring Committee’s notes over the months preceding His Holiness’ arrival is such a desire for the creation of a situational ‘neighborhood’ inhabited by as few Tibetans as possible; or more precisely, with as few disruptions as possible by that brand of otherness that might be called ‘Tibetan’. Cambridge-educated Tibetans might well be counted confidantes and colleagues. Visits with refugee Tibetans might be welcomed as in so far as they would produce a situation in which the charity and philanthropy of their hosts might be recognized. But Tibetans inclined to practice everyday life in a way that would unsettle the presiding winds of propriety could only be security threats.

The Sponsoring Committee’s agenda, then, was to ensure that His Holiness came into contact first and foremost with the best and brightest of English cultural capital, that he ‘see one of our two most famous Universities... talk to thinkers, theologians, etc.’ It

was imperative that this take place in a tightly-ordered and impressive manner, without being disrupted by what they came to characterize as a hopelessly disorganized and naïve Tibetan community — excluding of course the handful of more prestigious Tibetans in consultation with whom the Sponsoring Committee worked. This was His Holiness' first visit to England, and indeed to the West. It would be unforgivable if anyone, Tibetan or otherwise, were to be permitted to disrupt the security — personal, political, intellectual, or cultural — of his tour. The final draft of the itinerary for the visit indicates an accordingly obsessive management, as can be seen in the following entry:

'6:05pm            When the plane draws to a halt, Sir Olaf Caroe, Lady Alexandra Metcalfe, Mr. Hugh Richardson and Mr. Waser Ngwang will be driven onto the tarmac to the steps of the plane, followed by two other cars.  
His Holiness will be greeted by the party. Mr. Ngwang presenting a scarf. His Holiness is quite used to shaking hands with Europeans.  
His Holiness and Entourage will enter cars. 16 pieces of luggage will be loaded into the cars and driven to the Kingsford Smith Suite.  
Outside, Tibetan Community will be able to see His Holiness and parking space will be available.  
(Weapons will be returned to bodyguards by Captain.)<sup>13</sup>  
The same procedure as above will be carried out in reverse order for the DEPARTURE.'<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note the range of considerations that intersect in this map of 6:05pm, from the number of suitcases to a reflection on His Holiness' experience with the Western handshake. Once safely inside his vehicle, the Dalai Lama was to be conducted to a V.I.P. lounge in the airport, where a small reception comprised of the Host Committee and certain select members of the Tibetan community would welcome him. A short press conference would take place shortly afterwards, also at Heathrow. Miles had provided Hyde-Chambers and Carpenter with a lengthy letter outlining his suggestions regarding the management of this event. This contained a detailed report on members of the media who had requested interviews with His Holiness, along with Miles' assessments of the various publications and organizations concerned.

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<sup>13</sup> Apparently surprised by the notion that the bodyguards would be armed, Carpenter made a '?' in the margin next to this item.

<sup>14</sup> From the 'Official Programme' in its final form, not dated — though likely from early October.

Miles began by pointing to the likelihood that journalists would try to coax the Dalai Lama into answering political questions.

‘My advice is that this should be dealt with in the way that His Holiness feels best, taking into consideration, as I know He will, the feelings of the Indian High Commissioner in London. It is quite easy for His Holiness to say to newsmen and broadcasters that the visit is purely religious and cultural. The newsmen will try to get His Holiness to alter his<sup>15</sup> mind, but I believe He will know best how to deal with them in his own gentle way.’

Miles felt that the conference should be given plenty of time, up to thirty minutes, in order to accommodate any television and radio interviews.

‘His Holiness can then proceed to his hotel. It is vitally important we do not curtail the conference, which would only irritate the Press. It is essential that we make friends with them from the outset, which will, I have no doubt, reap great benefits during the following ten days.’

The Chief Information Officer then turned to his press report. It seems that this report itself, minus his introductory comments above, was also submitted either to His Holiness or one of his secretaries or representatives for their approval.

Requests for interviews had come from a variety of publications. *Paris Match* submitted a questionnaire along with theirs. This included a range of exceptionally thoughtful questions, all of which Miles found suitable except for the following, which he was inclined to drop: ‘Do you think that there is any possibility of an understanding between you and the Peking government under which you could safely return to Lhasa? Are there any discussions taking place with this in view?’ Other questions related to the issue of reincarnation, and to a topic that has since come to be a fairly stock one in discussions of the encounter between Buddhism, namely the notion of a contemporary Western spiritual crisis. *Paris Match* hoped to ask His Holiness if he had any opinions about this putative crisis, and/or suggestions about how best to engage with it. It is worth noting that this questionnaire, the ‘China question’ included, would be just as pertinent and topical today without any alteration.

It is also interesting to pose the somewhat more polemical point that, while the presence of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism in the imaginations of the West have both proliferated dramatically in recent years, the mode of representation of Tibet and Tibetan

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<sup>15</sup> It is often the case in the documents written by the members of the Committee that the writer gets tripped up on honorifics: whether and when to capitalize the ‘H’ in pronouns relating to ‘His Holiness’, as seen here in the inconsistency between ‘his’ and ‘He’.

Buddhism have retained a distinct and strangely stable character. This mode of representation takes shape under the patronage of the West, entailing the attendant implications of behaving in a ‘patronizing’ and condescending manner, but also, crucially, of taking on the role of patron, the charitable supporter-student of the lama, looking to Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism for guidance out of the contemporary spiritual ‘crisis’.<sup>16</sup>

In his *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr. has voiced his conviction that the ‘idealization of Tibet — its history and its religion — may ultimately harm the cause of Tibetan independence’, highlighting the dangers of flattening the complex history of the relationships between Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, and the West. He touches upon the importance of refusing to ‘apportion praise and blame’ to the colonial and post-colonial histories that constitute this fraught terrain, preferring not

‘to distinguish good Tibetology from bad, to separate fact from fiction, or the scholarly from the popular, but to show their confluence. The question considered is not how knowledge is tainted but how knowledge takes form. The book then is an exploration of some of the mirror-lined cultural labyrinths that have been created by Tibetans, Tibetophiles, and Tibetologists, labyrinths that the scholar may map but in which the scholar also must wander. We are captives of our own making, we are all prisoners of Shangri-La.’ (Lopez, 1998: 11-13)<sup>17</sup>

Another press inquiry came from the *Church of England Newspaper*, an Anglican weekly with a circulation of nearly 21,000. That this paper would be permitted to join the list slated for interviews went without saying. To deal quickly and effectively with the range of journalists from major papers like the *Times*, *Guardian*, and the *Daily Telegraph*, Miles suggested co-ordinating a ‘Religious Affairs Correspondents Meeting’. Apart from the print media, Miles had had inquiries from BBC TV Open University, who hoped to arrange an interview with Peter Montagnon, with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and finally from Crown International Productions, one of the largest independent television production groups in Europe, who created programs and advertisements within the United Kingdom and internationally. Crown International

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<sup>16</sup> For a related investigation of the articulations throughout post-Enlightenment Western thought of the Indian other as at once threshold to the noumenal and to the archaic and the decadent — and the implications of this in and for post-colonial theory — see Bhatt, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Of early twentieth-century British descriptions of Tibet, Patrick French writes: ‘a patronizing attitude towards Tibet seemed to infest almost every historical account. [Quoting John Buchan:] ‘In 1903 the position of Britain and Tibet was like that of a big boy at school who is tormented by an impertinent youngster. He bears it for some time, but at last is compelled to administer chastisement’.’ (French, 1994: 219)



requested an interview that they could distribute worldwide to be used on various educational networks. Miles wrote: 'They would contribute a fee and any profits to the Tibet Society in this country. I recommend this project.'

Oddly enough, the only press inquiry that Miles recommended turning down had come from the most harmless and also the first publication to have requested an interview with the Dalai Lama: a small periodical called *The Vegetarian*. Miles reasoned: 'as I understand that His Holiness now eats a little meat for health reasons, it may be considered unwise to grant this interview. It would not be difficult to say 'no'.'<sup>18</sup>

In his book *Recognizing Islam*, anthropologist Michael Gilsenan draws attention to the tendency, common to the Western encounter with the 'non-Western,' to be at once quite taken with non-Western 'culture' and quite wary of the non-Westerners with whose culture one flirts. He outlines this position in terms of the 'classical' Orientalist view of Islam, one that could be extended to a wider notion of Orientalism whose distrust of 'natives' is by no means a thing of the past. He speaks of the frequency with which one encounters scholars who '[adore] Islam but [are] suspicious of Muslims, and frequently downright hostile to and uncomprehending of political movements in the Middle East.' (Gilsenan, 1984: 21) Similarly, in his discussion of the career of Brian Houghton Hodgson, a pivotal but largely forgotten figure in the history of 'Western' consumption of Buddhist knowledge (Lopez, 1998: 1-6), Donald S. Lopez, Jr. highlights Hodgson's relationship with the learned old Nepali Buddhist without whom he could not read the great number of Sanskrit and Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts he 'unearthed' but whose 'scholarly reliability' he never trusted. Lopez demonstrates, in his short narrative of the life and work of Hodgson, that the difference between Buddhist Studies and what are often seen to be its sibling fields like Classics and Egyptology, for example, 'has been present from its outset, namely: how to deal with the native, who also lays claim to the text.' (ibid: 3)

It goes almost without saying that Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism occupy very different positions in the history of the West and its encounters with Asian culture, and in the contemporary Western imagination, than does the 'Middle East'. And although the

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<sup>18</sup> Letter from Miles to Hyde-Chambers, copied to Carpenter, not dated.

specific resonances of Tibet and all things Tibetan for contemporary Western culture demand separate treatment, it can be argued that the tendency that Gilson describes with respect to Islam is generally applicable to the majority of encounters with cultural difference, particularly those that have historically taken place under the rubrics of 'Orientalism'. That is, these encounters can be seen to balance a taste for a culture, whether gourmet or gourmand, with a distaste for the dangers posed by any kind of intimate contact with those whose culture one wishes to taste.

This concomitant interest in things Tibetan and the intense or indifferent distrust of Tibetans themselves, except perhaps for those ordained as lamas and/or trained at Cambridge, is at the heart of the tensions that marked each of the Sponsoring Committee's dealings with the Tibetan community — both the 'real' Tibetans from the Tibetans in Britain Society and the imagined 'them' of the Tibetan diasporic community in Britain at large.

### *Clarification*

Hyde-Chambers' experience in working with the Tibetan community was extensive. He had served as Treasurer of the three-person Fundraising Committee that had established the Samye Ling Tibetan Centre at Eskdalemuir in Dumfriesshire, Scotland in 1969. In 1972, three years into its existence, Samye Ling had already had 3,000 visitors. He was also responsible for privately raising money for the education in the United Kingdom of four Tibetan refugees. One of them was *tulku* and Cambridge graduate Sogyal Lakar, known today as Lama Sogyal Rinpoche. In 1973, Lama Sogyal was the Dalai Lama's personal representative in the United Kingdom, President of the Association of Tibetans in the United Kingdom, and Honorary Advisor to the Tibet Society. Hyde-Chambers had arranged lecture tours for Lama Sogyal in America, Canada, and the Channel Islands, and raised the money for him to undertake a seven-month fact-finding tour in which he studied the conditions in Tibetan refugee centers in India. He was an elected member of the Tibet Society's Council, and was the youngest ever secretary of the Buddhist Society. His philanthropic engagement with the Tibetan diaspora seems not to have left him with the warmest of feelings towards the entirety of the community in exile.

Along with a short letter to Edward Carpenter dated August 28, he enclosed another letter he had written to Mr. Kunjo Tashi, head of the Tibetans in Britain Society. Hyde-Chambers had been incensed by a circular letter that Mr. Tashi had sent some days earlier, which was from Hyde-Chambers' point of view full of some egregious inaccuracies and outrageous requests. Chief among these was a request that the committee organizing His Holiness' visit give the Tibetans in Britain Society £600 in order to pay for a reception in honor of His Holiness.

'I was absolutely staggered', he wrote reprimanding Mr. Tashi, 'that you should need £600 for what is virtually a days entertainment of His Holiness, when the Host [Sponsoring] Committee are putting the Dalai Lama and His entourage up at one of the best hotels in London [the Hyde Park Hotel], supplying them with excellent transport [the Sponsoring Committee had arranged for the free use of a Mercedes to chauffeur His Holiness], quite lavishly giving hospitality to the Suite for ten days, although the cost to us is going to be quite considerable, it certainly is not going to be anything like £600 per day, and yet you also mention that Miss Joyce Pearce had very kindly offered you the free use of the Abbey [where the Tibetans in Britain Society was to host its reception]. For what use, I and indeed Lady Stockdale [a member of the Host Committee] and others who have seen this letter wonder, could £600 be needed?'<sup>19</sup>

He informed Tashi in no uncertain terms that it was the Sponsoring Committee and not he and his fellow Tibetans who were responsible for organizing His Holiness' visit and managing his schedule.

'I think I should make it clear that in matters of Security, these arrangements are, wherever the Dalai Lama travels, under the Authority of the Official British Security Officer. I am somewhat perturbed at your request that as many Tibetans as possible are at the Airport to welcome His Holiness, as I did point out to you His Holiness will be formally greeted in the V.I.P. lounge of the Airport by the Host Committee and Representatives of the Tibetan Community, and I have today received the names of thos[e] Tibetan Representatives from Mr. Phala [then an officer at the Tibet Office in Switzerland]...'

Hyde-Chambers enclosed for Mr. Tashi a photocopy of this list of Tibetan representatives that had been drafted by His Holiness' secretary. Further, he explained,

'I really feel that as the Host Committee, which largely comprises the Tibet Society and others interested in Tibetan affairs[,] has undertaken to bear the considerable cost of the visit, that rather than ask us for money, it would be more in keeping if T.I.B.S. offered to contribute financially

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<sup>19</sup> Tibetan Government in Exile put up more than enough money to defray such expenditures. After His Holiness had left England, he insisted that a check for £1000 be sent to the Sponsoring Committee. His secretary Mr. T.C. Tara wrote a letter to Carpenter along with it explaining that His Holiness 'was especially concerned at the large expense that had to be incurred for His visit and would like to contribute a token sum of £1000 (Pounds One Thousand only). I enclose a cheque for the above amount and hope that this contribution will be added to your funds.' Letter from Tara to Carpenter, not dated.

themselves towards the visit. Both the Tibet Society and myself, have done a lot towards obtaining money for T.I.B.S. and Samyeling Tibetan Centre, when they began and it would be rather nice if this could now be reciprocated, particularly as none of the money being raised by the Host Committee to pay for the visit is coming from our Refugee Funds, but is, in fact, coming from Organisations and individuals such as Sir Olaf Caroe and Lady Stockdale.'

Mr. Tashi's own letter (see below) had implied that there would be much more scope for the contact between the Tibetan community as a whole and His Holiness, and had, indeed somewhat wishfully, implied a greater involvement on the part of the Tibetan community in planning and organizing that visit. This demanded redress. 'As your circular letter is bound to give quite a false impression, I would be grateful if you would have this reply also duplicated and sent to all those with whom you have been in contact.'

Perhaps feeling that he had been a bit hard on Tashi, that he and his cohorts would not be able to accept being told by a coterie of Brits what sort of hospitality their leader-in-exile should receive, Hyde-Chambers invoked the wishes of His Holiness himself, and delivered them with a tactful equanimity, voiced with a properly pedagogical mix of condescension and empathy.

'Finally, let us end on a more constructive note. I understand that T.I.B.S. feels that it has been left out of the decision making for His Holiness' programme in this country. I think I should point out that when the Dalai Lama approached Sir Olaf Caroe and asked the Tibet Society for an invitation to England in His memorandum<sup>20</sup>, He stated that, firstly, he wanted to learn more about Western Religion and Culture, and finally, to renew contacts with Tibetans in this country. As you know, a Host Committee was formed, which from the very beginning, as requested by His Holiness, has kept in constant touch with the Office of Tibet in Switzerland. Also, some time before Mr. Phala made his visit at our request to this country, I visited and talked with Mr. [Ven. Thupten] Ngawang as he is one of the Senior Members of the Tibetan Community in this country.'

However, wishes of His Holiness aside, the most tellingly colonial condition for the exclusion of all but the most Venerable Tibetans from the planning discussions is the Sponsoring Committee's perception of the Tibetans as a people unable to work well together. This is most pronounced in the equation of the Tibetan diaspora in Britain with the community-in-exile in Dharamsala and elsewhere in India, a fusion quite likely made without much differentiation between the Tibetans and the rest of that hopelessly fractious sub-continent.

'Unfortunately, as in India, there is a tendency among the Tibetan Community in the U.K. towards factionalism, and because of this we decided not to invite a Member of the Community to sit on the Committee.

'However, as you know, it has been part of my duties to keep in constant touch with the Community and their views, and to pass these on to the Committee (Host), and to assist me in this, Mr. Phala asked that I refer to Tsewang Pemba and Sogyal Laker [later Lama Sogyal Rinpoche].

'In short, I think you will find that Mr. Phala agrees that the Host Committee has done its best to take into account the views of the Tibetans [in] this country, while bearing in mind the primary reason for His Holiness' visit.

'One of the reasons why we have left His Holiness free time almost each morning and most of the evenings, is so that he can receive people in audience and quite obviously this includes Tibetans.

'I hope this clarifies matters for you...'<sup>21</sup>

In the letter to Carpenter along with which this rebuke was enclosed, Hyde-Chambers had also proposed taking out an insurance policy on His Holiness with Lloyds as security in case His Holiness should become ill during his visit.<sup>22</sup>

Four days earlier, a letter from Lady Stockdale, the Sponsoring Committee's Treasurer, had first brought Tashi's circular to Hyde-Chambers' attention. Lady Stockdale's letter clearly compounds Hyde-Chambers' characterization of the Tibetans as a problematically quarrelsome, childlike bunch; to this she adds their more grave but related offense of decadence, plainly visible for her in their whimsical spending. In it she expressed her concern about Tashi's recent actions, feeling that he was

'being over ambitious, quoting Riki unfairly, and diverting funds that we badly need. Already Akong from the Perth Monastery has sent him £300-00 Riki tells me, and nothing for our fund. Another Tibetan, in Cambridge, Ato Rinpoche sent in £10-00 very kindly, but said they were putting all their efforts into raising money for Sutton Courtenay.<sup>23</sup> What can they be going to do with all the money! Riki says they like to have gargantuan Banquets as in the days of Henry VIII, but surely it hardly needs £600-! as you will see in this letter. I do think a copy of this [Mr. Tashi's circular, which she enclosed along with the present letter] should go to Mr. Phala [Head of

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<sup>20</sup> It is easy to forget that it was the Dalai Lama who initiated the idea of a visit to England. Indeed if not for Hyde-Chambers' letter it would seem from all of the extant records that the opposite was the case.

<sup>21</sup> There is no mention in the materials from the 1973 visit as to whether His Holiness did in fact receive many or any Tibetans who were not lamas or high-ranking officials.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from F.R. Hyde-Chambers to Edward Carpenter, August 28, 1973.

<sup>23</sup> A memorandum, without date and of uncertain authorship, though drafted presumably either by Rice-Jones or Hyde-Chambers after a meeting with the Tibetans in Britain Society, and forwarded to Carpenter, explains that it was the Tibetans in Britain Society's 'intention to make the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire like a Tibetan Home and they have raised £300 between them toward the cost.' F.R. Hyde-Chambers' notes from his discussion with the Committee of the Tibetans in Britain Society, not dated.

the Tibet Office in Switzerland] as am [sic] sure the Dalai Lama does not want to spend a night at Sutton Courtenay, and perhaps he would pour a bit of cold water on Kunjo. I have spoken to Kunjo once or twice on the phone, he is a very forceful personality, but not really a trained mind. The earlier secretary Chime Rinpoche would never have rushed into this sort of thing. Sir Olaf says to tell you he has written a very tactful letter to [Sponsoring Committee member] Joyce Pearce who is in charge of the Sutton Courtenay day. And he is very worried about again another programme being put out in contrast to the Steering [Sponsoring] Committee.’<sup>24</sup>

The following is the letter drafted by Mr. Kunjo Tashi himself, which Lady Stockdale had forwarded in its original form, along with her impassioned protests, to Carpenter.

‘On Tuesday 23rd October we have a block booking at Westminster Abbey, where His Holiness is speaking to the British public and on 25th His Holiness is giving a Public Audience to the members of the Tibet Society, and the Tibetans will be responsible for the organisation of tea and all the general arrangements. It is hoped that the T.I.B.S. will be able to host His Holiness for the evening at the Abbey.

On Saturday at Petworth, Lady Agrimont will be giving a dinner for His Holiness and a group of T.I.B.S. will be helping to prepare the dinner. There will also be, of course, a group of T.I.B.S. at the Airport to welcome His Holiness, and it is hoped that as many as possible will be able to go along for that. It would be appreciated.

An accurate programme of His Holiness’ visit will be sent to you as soon as the Tibet Society informs us. The above mentioned programme will be subject to alteration.

This is the biggest step the T.I.B.S. are venturing to take in Britain, and in order to carry out our plans successfully we need financial aid. Our present financial position is very low. We need at least £600 to organise all the aforementioned items, and therefore, as it was mentioned at the meeting, contributions are needed and so at this point, I approach you to make a generous contribution for this auspicious occasion. Please send your contribution as soon as possible to the address given later in this letter, so that we can, in fact, carry out all our proposals. This will only give us a matter of a few weeks to make our plans concrete, so please bear this in mind and try to send a contribution soon.’<sup>25</sup>

Tashi proceeded to list by name all those who would be taking care of certain enumerated arrangements, such as providing the throne for His Holiness, cleaning the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay, providing food, keeping account of expenditures, undertaking the general management of overall arrangements (which task would be performed by Mr. Lhakpa Pemba la and himself), and finally he invited anyone to ‘lend a hand, in any way, especially for ‘Security’.’ Indeed, Tashi and the Committee of the Tibetans in Britain Society had arranged to cover all of the eventualities that Carpenter, Hyde-Chambers and

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<sup>24</sup> Letter from Lady Stockdale (treasurer) to Edward Carpenter, August 24, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> Circular written by Kunjo Tashi of the Tibetans in Britain Society, to Lady Stockdale, August 22, 1973.

the 'official' Sponsoring Committee had predicted. Unfortunately for the Tibetans in Britain Society, their hopes about their role in hosting their leader were to be quite unceremoniously rendered illusory by Hyde-Chambers' letter.

More intriguing than the consolidation of the Committee's actions in order to shelve the wishes of the Tibetans in Britain Society, is the participation between the Committee, largely through Hyde-Chambers, and Mr. Thupten W. Phala, head of the Office of Tibet in Switzerland, His Holiness' Representative in Europe, to unofficially but very effectively dismiss Mr. van Walt, whom His Holiness had personally requested to co-ordinate his European tour. In a letter without date, Hyde-Chambers alerted Carpenter to the fact that Phala wished to minimize Mr. van Walt's role in organizing His Holiness' visit. The letter intimates that van Walt frequently insisted upon ways of doing things, and upon the inclusion of certain things in the itinerary, to which Phala was opposed.

Phala seems himself to have exerted a fair amount of influence upon the Sponsoring Committee, and not just where the jockeying with van Walt was concerned. The limited number of records of their correspondence makes it difficult to track the development of the relationship between Phala and the Committee. However, the few examples that are available show that by late August the Committee had come to take his recommendations seriously.<sup>26</sup> In a 'P.S.' to a letter to Carpenter dated August 15, Hyde-Chambers explains to him that he had 'picked Mr. Phala's brains as to what gift we should give His Holiness. He thought a really nice book on Britain. I wondered about Churchill's 'History of the English Speaking Peoples'?' Carpenter found himself in agreement with both suggestions. His handwritten note in response to the letter reads: 'Yes you are quite right about Winston Churchill's 'History''.<sup>27</sup> A letter from Rice-Jones to Carpenter dated August 20 underlines Phala's role as a key discussant in the scheduling conflicts, even if the Committee was not prepared to give itself over entirely to his judgments.

'I have also heard from Mr. Phala and have sent him a copy of the revised programme pointing out that the exact timings need working out still. He has asked that the programme should be less

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<sup>26</sup> It appears from Rice-Jones' letter below that the itinerary for His Holiness' visit was nearly complete by late August, and that Phala had been and would continue to be active in shaping its final form.

“tight” by which I suppose he means more flexible. Perhaps we could explain to him that whereas this may be possible for some of the arrangements [, it will be impossible for others,] e.g. for the Archbishop, where the timing will have to be exact, because of [his] other commitments. [¶] Mr. Phala asks that Sir George Trevelyan and Lady Eve Balfour should be given an opportunity of an audience. Their names were evidently suggested to him by Major Sweeny, who runs the Farm School for Tibetans in Wales.’<sup>28</sup>

The Farm School for Tibetans in Wales was a point of some contention. His Holiness had specifically asked to visit it. Van Walt’s insistence about seeing ensuring that this happened led to the quiet conflagration between he and Hyde-Chambers that led to van Walt’s removal from the planning of the England visit. As the correspondences in which van Walt is mentioned do not bear a date, it is impossible to be sure whether all of these tensions were resolved before the Dalai Lama arrived in Europe or whether they were unfolding even as he conducted his tour. It seems at any rate that van Walt remained a key figure in the planning until the month before His Holiness’ arrival, and possibly even longer: a letter to Carpenter from Rice-Jones, also without date, mentions van Walt’s imminent trip ‘to India on September 4 to tie up final details.’<sup>29</sup>

But the quiet wrestling match between Hyde-Chambers, Phala and van Walt continued even as van Walt liaised with his contacts in India. In a second note to Carpenter — which seems either to have been included along with or to have come closely on the heels of the letter mentioned above in which he noted Phala’s objection to van Walt’s way of running things — Hyde-Chambers resumed his preening catalogue of van Walt’s abrasiveness. This time it was he and not only Phala that had had his feathers ruffled. He drew Carpenter’s attention to recent arguments with van Walt over scheduling. In planning the itinerary for the day of the trip to Cambridge, Hyde-Chambers had overlooked the fact that His Holiness habitually rises early in the morning to meditate. Van Walt pointed this out, but Hyde-Chambers felt that, if it were interrupted on this one occasion, His Holiness could not possibly be all that disturbed, especially as he would have time to meditate when the party reached Cambridge later on that day. Van Walt had quite boorishly insisted that His Holiness’ meditation time not be interfered with. In the same discussion, van Walt

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, August 15, 1973.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Rice-Jones to Carpenter, August 20, 1973.



'restated, [sic] H.H.'s wish to visit Major Sweeny's [Tibetan Farm School in Wales], and I said, that Mr. Phala agreed with us, that this really was not practical, completely ruining our plans of allowing H.H. a restful period at Petworth House<sup>30</sup>, where he could recover from his eventful programme or see people as he wished. [¶] Mr. Van Walt persisted, and asked me to draw up plans for a visit to the farm in the event of H.H. deciding to go there. I explained to him, the complications of the journey, etc., the fact that in Scotland it would be wondered why H.H. could make the effort to visit such an out of the way place as the farm, and not the Monastic Centre [at Samye Ling] and the many difficulties it imposed, to which Mr. Van Walt's reaction was one of bland indifference.'<sup>31</sup>

Hyde-Chambers further informed Carpenter that Phala — seemingly in direct contradiction of His Holiness' wishes, who had in fact specifically requested van Walt as his European liaison, and therefore almost assuredly without his knowledge — had insisted that van Walt was *not* the Liaison Officer. Phala further insisted that van Walt should not be given further drafts or details of the program, and in his deliberately objective presentation of this fact it is fairly sure that Hyde-Chambers hoped that Carpenter would feel the same way. It would seem that this was just what happened. Apparently cut out of the network of information, this letter is the last that is heard of van Walt's name.

### *Good Housekeeping*

After a meeting with the Committee of the Tibetans in Britain Society, which also took place around August 20th, Hyde-Chambers forwarded the following memorandum to Carpenter. It is impossible to judge with certainty, but it appears that the talks with Mrs. R.D. Taring<sup>32</sup> that it refers to were participated in by both Hyde-Chambers and Rice-Jones. It seems that he drafted the memorandum in question, which details a thorough discussion of the preparations to be made in order to receive His Holiness at the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay. This thoroughness left Hyde-Chambers somewhat taken aback: "I was impressed by the seriousness with which they were taking the occasion."<sup>33</sup>

The memorandum describes the other jobs that the Tibetans had offered to perform, one of which would have been to act as London tour guides for His Holiness. In

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Rice-Jones to Carpenter, not dated.

<sup>30</sup> It was at Petworth House that His Holiness would meet Lord Mountbatten, of which more below.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, not dated.

<sup>32</sup> Taring was General Secretary of the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie, India.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, August 21, 1973.

one version of this memorandum, someone — presumably Carpenter — wrote in ink in the margins alongside this proposition: ‘A nice idea, but Tibetans are lamentably ignorant of English history’.

The Sponsoring Committee’s discussions with the Tibetans in Britain Society did produce at least one recommendation from the Tibetan community that was taken seriously; this was the suggestion from Taring that His Holiness stay at the Abbey at Sutton Courtenay near Abbingdon in Berkshire.<sup>34</sup>

‘Mrs. Taring felt that it could be done up accordingly to the Tibetan fashion and provide a peaceful haven for His Holiness. She was at great pains to emphasis[e] the simple manner of living His Holiness has and so felt the Abbey would be suitable. She expressed doubts of the suitability of a London Hotel, however she completely took my point that the drive to and from Sutton Courtenay to the majority of items on His Holiness’ programme would be very difficult, costly, and would allow His Holiness little free time. When I explained that the hotel was not of the modern garrish variety but was in fact a traditional English Hotel overlooking Hyde Park and that every facility is being made available to the party. Mrs Taring quite saw the reason for our Choice.’

She also recommended a small shrine be built ‘with a Tibetan Tanka [*thangka*<sup>35</sup>] and image of the Buddha to make him feel at home.’ It seems that Mrs. Taring provided a significant amount of information about His Holiness’ daily habits, and was also keen to use it to extrapolate about the best ways to order his time in England.

‘His Holiness always eats breakfasts alone and His main meal is at lunchtime after which He takes nothing but liquids. His Holiness prefers to go to bed early and it is extremely unlikely that He will want to see any Theatre shows or the like. However, He has a great love of plants and Mrs. Taring felt that it would be extremely nice if we could arrange a boat trip to Kew Gardens, The Tower of London and if possible Hampton Court.

‘It is in Tibet the custom not to smoke or drink alcohol in His Holiness’ presence but Mrs. Taring pointed out that if this was done in England He certainly would not take offence. However, obviously refraining from smoking and drinking alcohol would be a pleasant gesture of courtesy towards the Dalai Lama.

Mrs. Rating [sic] felt that an excellent gift to His Holiness would be a set of books on British History in as plainer [sic] English as possible and specially bound.

Mrs. Taring was also of the opinion that he should see Oxford as it would give him a wider view of Britain.

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<sup>34</sup> The memorandum notes that the ‘idea was suggested in part by Mrs. R.D. Taring’.

<sup>35</sup> The word *thangka* derives from Tibetan *thang yig*, meaning ‘annal’ or ‘written record’. (Trungpa, 1975: 16)

Mrs. Taring was impressed with the programme and only asked that it be sent to His Holiness in good time. It should be noted that Mrs. Taring is extremely well acquainted with the Dalai Lama. Mrs. Taring felt that in the double room leading to His Holiness' suite in the Hyde Park Hotel is where His Holiness' personal attendant and Chief security officer should sleep.

Mrs. Taring felt that Lady Egremont's idea of inviting Yehudi Menuhin to play for the Dalai Lama at Petworth House was not really worthwhile as His Holiness does not understand Western Music.'

It is once again worth marking the competition for authority and intimate knowledge of His Holiness' habits, preferences, and indeed his own knowledge, and similarly worth noting the endlessly complex nature of the struggles for possession of this contentious terrain on the part of *both* his English and his Tibetan hosts. Writing in the margins alongside Mrs. Taring's dismissal of Menuhin's recital exclaims: **'DISAGREE WITH HER HERE SO DOES MARCO PALLIS [the famous mountaineer, Sponsoring Committee member, and one of the Vice Presidents of the Tibet Society of United Kingdom] AS HH. HAS COME TO THE WEST TO LEARN SOMETHING OF OUR CULTURE + CAN DISCUSS MUSIC WITH YEHUDI MENUHIN WHO UNDERSTANDS EASTERN MUSIC.'**<sup>36</sup>

Although the debates about how his time ought to have been managed would continue until well after His Holiness had left the country, by August 13 the Sponsoring Committee had reached a sufficiently organized state for Mr. Miles to issue the official press release announcing His Holiness' visit. It announced that during his stay His Holiness would visit the University of London, Oxford, Cambridge, St. George's Windsor, Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, and the Pestalozzi Village in Sussex. One of the few things His Holiness had specifically requested be included in his program was a visit to the Museum of Science. Even as recently as August 1 the Sponsoring Committee had been in touch with the museum's director Miss M.K. Weston who welcomed the idea. In a letter to Carpenter, Rice-Jones noted: 'As His Holiness specially asked for this to be included, this seems rather important.'<sup>37</sup> This visit was nevertheless absent from the final program. The last item on His Holiness' agenda would be to attend

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<sup>36</sup> It is, again, impossible to be absolutely certain that these are Carpenter's notes, but given their authority and finality it seems unlikely that they were made by anyone else.

<sup>37</sup> Letter to Carpenter from Rice-Jones, August 1, 1973. The letter ended with the following P.S.: 'I hope the Cambridge programme is not too Buddhist orientated?'

an ecumenical service sponsored by the World Congress of Faiths<sup>38</sup> at the West London Synagogue. He would

‘thus have an opportunity of meeting prominent scholars, philosophers and religious leaders. He will have talks with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey, Cardinal Heenan and some leading Buddhists in this country.

Tibetan refugees in Britain will have a chance of meeting the Dalai Lama, who also hopes to take this opportunity of thanking those associations in this country which have helped these refugees with their continuing aid and understanding.

Sir Olaf Caroe, President of the Tibet Society and one of the sponsors of the visit, says: ‘His Holiness believes that Buddhist ideas might contribute to the solution of some of the difficult problems facing us today.’<sup>39</sup>

The widespread advance interest on the part of the English public in His Holiness’ engagement at the West London Synagogue was targeted by the Sponsoring Committee as a mark of their success and as evidence of the universal import of the visit itself. To this end, they had either solicited or been offered help from the Heather McConnell Public Relations firm. One unsigned and not dated correspondence with Carpenter enclosed the following press release:

**‘THE DALAI LAMA TO PREACH IN SYNAGOGUE**

The Dalai Lama’s most unusual engagement in this country is to deliver the sermon at the World Congress of Faiths’ Service for All Faiths at the West London Synagogue, Marble Arch, on Tuesday, October 23.

Requests for tickets have poured in to the World Congress, 1200 of which have already been issued. The date of the Society’s annual London service was changed to suit His Holiness’ programme. The occasion recalls the association of Sir Francis Younghusband, founder of the W.C.F., with Tibetan Buddhism, who in 1904 was sent by Lord Curzon on the famous mission to Lhasa to negotiate a Treaty with the British<sup>40</sup>.

The Dalai Lama of the time was missing, having withdrawn to Mongolia for three years’ spiritual contemplation, so General Younghusband had to make do with his deputy, the Ti

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<sup>38</sup> For an account of the life of the World Congress of Faiths, of which the Dalai Lama is now a Patron, see French, 1994: 360-399.

<sup>39</sup> Church Information Office Press Release, August 13, 1973; see also n.1 above. A dateless memorandum from the World Congress of Faiths, copied to Carpenter, Hyde-Chambers, Rabbi H. Gryn, Mr. T.W. Phala, and Miss Kathleen Richards, noted: ‘It is agreed that although the date of the service is known to the public, the fact that His Holiness will attend is not made public until the General Press Release is issued, although it may be mentioned privately to members.’

<sup>40</sup> When the Lhasa Convention was signed on September 7, 1904, ‘ten-pounder guns were trained on [the Potala Palace’s] walls in case trouble arose.’ (French, 1994: 246) Curzon sent Younghusband to deal with the ‘troublesome neighbours’ in Tibet, who ‘were not keeping to the terms of a treaty which China had made on their behalf, and were [so it was believed] now trying to have secret dealings with the Russians. ‘My dear Father,’ wrote Younghusband excitedly. ‘This is a really magnificent business that I have dropped in for.’ (ibid: 161) He would soon telegraph to his wife Helen: ‘Tibetans bolting like rabbits.’ (ibid: 226) On the invasion, see ibid: 175-246.

Rinpoche. For the honour of the British, Younghusband insisted that the signing of the Treaty took place in the Potala, whose sacred precincts no European had entered for nearly a century.<sup>41</sup>

The Ti Rinpoche presented Younghusband with a small image of the Buddha, saying: 'It is not the custom of our country to give the image of the Buddha to strangers, but you have shown such courtesy and peace-making that we ask your acceptance of the gift.' The statue was treasured by Sir Francis until his death in 1942. It was shortly after the Mission that he had a mystical experience on a mountainside overlooking Lhasa<sup>42</sup> which inspired him to found in 1936 a fellowship to promote understanding between the followers of the great world religions.'

The correspondence began with a personal note to Carpenter: 'Edward — this is a story I've done. K[athleen]. R[ichards]. thinks you might like to refer to the Younghusband connection.'<sup>43</sup>

### *Understanding Eastern Music*

Perhaps the most remarkable example of the struggle for legitimacy to speak for His Holiness' interests and desires comes from someone whose own scholarly reputation leaves one far from wanting for proof of expertise. The minutes from the Sponsoring Committee's meeting from Wednesday, July 3 refer to recent discussions with the famous

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<sup>41</sup> With the British army advancing on Lhasa, the XIII Dalai Lama *interrupted* a three-year meditation retreat in order to *flee* to Mongolia; see French, 1994: 239-240. "On the very day after our arrival," wrote Francis Younghusband, 'I and my staff donned our full-dress uniforms, and with an escort of three hundred men, including some of the Royal Fusiliers and a sort of band from the Gurkhas, we marched right through the city of Lhasa making all the noise we could.' The people of Lhasa were most impressed, [his wife] Helen was told, clapping and cheering at the sight of this 'grand show'. [A Tibetan account] gives a different interpretation of events [noting] that Tibetans clap their hands in order to drive out evil spirits — a perfect representation of the gulf between the two cultures' (ibid: 242).

<sup>42</sup> 'After the grand signing ceremony in the Potala they drank whisky and champagne and made toasts and played charades... General Macdonald gave a speech, saying that whatever else you might think about Colonel Younghusband, nobody could deny his boldness. Clear-the-line telegrams arrived from Brodrick and Amphill, from Curzon and Kitchener. The King Emperor sent the troops his highest praise and commendation, and Francis Younghusband beamed with pride and exultation. On their last day in Lhasa the Ganden Tripa [referred to in the press release as 'Ti Rinpoche'] arrived with a present for the British Commissioner. It was a small, bronze statue of the Buddha. Over the weeks the two men had discussed religion and philosophy, and developed a certain, rather unlikely, rapport. 'When we Buddhists look on this figure we think only of peace,' said the old monk, 'and I want you when you look at it to think kindly of Tibet.' Younghusband took the bronze Buddha. He was deeply touched. [¶] The next morning he rose early, tucked the little statue into his saddle bag and rode off towards the mountains. The unclouded sky was of the clearest Tibetan blue, the distant peaks bathed in a purple haze. When he was quite alone he dismounted from his pony, sat down on a rock and gazed out over the Himalayas. Suddenly he found himself suffused with the most intense, inexplicable, 'untellable joy. The whole world was ablaze with the same ineffable bliss that was burning within me.' It was one of the most significant experiences of his life, he wrote many years later: [¶] There came upon me what was far more than elation or exhilaration... I was beside myself with an intensity of joy, such as even the joy of first love can give only a faint foreshadowing of. And with this indescribable joy came a revelation of the essential goodness of the world. I was convinced past all refutation that men were good at heart, that the evil in them was superficial... in short, that men at heart are divine.' (ibid: 251-2)

<sup>43</sup> Unsigned correspondence with Carpenter from someone at Heather McConnell Public Relations, not dated.

Professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies David Snellgrove<sup>44</sup> regarding the feasibility of bringing the Dalai Lama to the British Museum. 'It was originally suggested that a visit to the British Museum should be included [...] Mr. Snellgrove now feels that this will overcrowd the programme and there would be difficulties with crowds etc. Perhaps we could discuss? The visit would in any case only be to the Tibetan section of the Museum.'<sup>45</sup> It is possible — as both the proposed British Museum visit and the proposed University of London meeting with scholars, including Snellgrove, were scheduled for the same day — that Snellgrove believed that the University of London meeting ought to take precedence and ought not be cramped by other demands on His Holiness' time. Shortly after it had taken place, Snellgrove wrote to Carpenter that:

'The Dalai Lama's visit to the School of Oriental and African Studies on the 24th seems to have been quite successful. To my knowledge this was the only occasion on which he was able to meet those in this country who are concerned with serious Tibetan studies, and as I had also invited a few colleagues from Paris, he was happily able to meet such scholars from both countries.'<sup>46</sup>

The visit to the British Museum did in fact also take place, with the blessing of the institution's director Sir Wolfenden, on Wednesday, October 24, and Snellgrove despite his earlier protest against its feasibility was also present. But in a letter thanking Archdeacon Carpenter for the supper party he had hosted for the Sponsoring Committee, Snellgrove could not hold back from reflecting upon both his experience of the British Museum visit and upon what he felt sure to have been His Holiness' experience of that visit.

'I hope that you did not find my protests at the meeting too churlish. Fortunately for myself I have had so many visitors and have been so busy, that I have not had time to reflect upon events which I confess privately to you now as having made a very unpleasant impression upon me. Admittedly the Tibetans put themselves into the hands of self-appointed hosts, and these hosts could only arrange matters as they could best conceive them, but when they then congratulate themselves on having done things the best of all possible ways and then applaud even their own

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<sup>44</sup> Snellgrove has been dubbed 'this century[']s most important figure in Tibetan Studies in Great Britain' (Lopez, 1998: 173)

<sup>45</sup> Minutes from the July 3, 1973 meeting of Sponsoring Committee. Though Snellgrove's name is not listed along with the other Committee members in any of its minutes, it appears that he was regularly consulted in planning the visit.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Snellgrove to Carpenter, October 27, 1973 — nine years to the day before the Dalai Lama's meeting with Beuys. Snellgrove extended this barely veiled contempt for the majority of the Sponsoring Committee and its cohorts into a postscript that at least set his respect for Carpenter into stark relief: 'I take the opportunity of enclosing a copy of a programme of lectures which we have arranged. If anyone else

inaneities, then I really am moved to protest. I write here primarily of the private dinner and lunch parties that were arranged, where the Dalai Lama served as a kind of social decoration amongst people who for the most part know nothing about his country and his problems, and who could contribute nothing to help him. Sir Olaf does well at his age, but while he knows much about the old N.W. frontier of India, he really knows nothing about Tibet, and he will never listen to those who do know something, not even to Hugh Richardson<sup>47</sup>. Thus in the end everything is organized by his lady-friends, who know even less. Walking through the British Museum the other day, I reflected how sad it was that the Dalai Lama had not been conducted around it quietly by someone who could explain things to him intelligently. Instead he was bored and exhausted by senseless parties. Still that is over, and everything you arranged seems to have worked out well. The letter does not invite a reply. Indeed I have written it just before leaving for the south coast of Spain. I shall be away a month, and by the time of my return the Dalai Lama's visit will be even more a matter of the past than it is now. I only hope that Sir Olaf does not provoke me by writing some balderdash in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*<sup>48</sup>. He probably will, but again I must hope that I shall be so busy with the two books which I should finish writing by the summer, that it will be quite impossible to reply.'<sup>49</sup>

While the creation of His Holiness' public itinerary had been wrought only with much effort, the construction of his secret itinerary was comparatively slick. The most efficacious dealings are those that are conducted in private, and that leave no trace in the form of the letter, email, or the equally indelible act of disposal of records that had once existed. For this reason, the following letter — perhaps something of a youthful indiscretion on Hyde-Chambers' part, a slip of the pen whose error consisted in not having been a tongue instead — is something of a delicacy. Hyde-Chambers' letter is surprising not because it contains a sensational revelation. On the contrary, it is sensational because what it reveals and makes explicit is so sensitive, and otherwise implicit. What is entrusted to confidence ought not be archived.

'Canon Verny said, he would try to find out if H.M. would do H.H. the honour of an unofficial meeting. We have been led to believe that Prince Phillip is interested. Windsor was spoken of as a good meeting place and Canon Verny mentioned speaking to H.M.'s Private Secretary.

'My doubts about this are that, once a request goes through the Private Secretary it become[s] 'Official' and therefore, in a sense, political, although this need not be so for H.H. is

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who has been associated with you in the matter of the Dalai Lama's visit has the time and inclination to learn a little more about the Tibetans, I will gladly arrange for other copies to be sent.'

<sup>47</sup> Richardson is also pivotal figure in the development of Tibetan Studies; he has been described by Lopez as 'Britain's leading expert on Tibet'. (Lopez, 1998: 97)

<sup>48</sup> The Central Asian Society was one of six societies that Younghusband either founded or helped to found — the proposal for its creation came from Alfred Cotterell Trupp — and continues to flourish (French, 1994: 360).

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Snellgrove to Carpenter, December 8, 1973.

meeting Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. We do have a case for a meeting as H.M. is Head of the Church, and the meeting, which would be secret, would fall within the declared aims of the D.L.'s visit.

It does seem to me better perhaps if initial arrangements were made through Miss Joyce Pearce's close contact with Lady Abergavenny, Lady-in-Waiting to H.M.

I believe that some interest has already been shown, and I think that you would agree that if such a meeting could take place it would give the greatest of pleasure to H.H.'<sup>50</sup>

There is no extant record indicating whether Her Majesty attended the officially 'unofficial' but officially secret and therefore — officially and unofficially — nonexistent meeting. But there is irrefutable, destructible evidence, handwritten by Carpenter himself, that the meeting took place.

'Dear Lord Mountbatten,

May I presume to say, as Chairman of the Committee which is sponsoring the visit of the Dalai Lama, with what pleasure I heard that you were able to accept Lady Egremont's invitation to lunch with him at Petworth. He will, I am sure, regard this as a great privilege. I am only sorry that it may not be possible for you to entertain him at your own home...'<sup>51</sup>

## *Part II: In Security*

'I remember my mother when I was a young child, telling me that our country was like a plate of meat. Around the plate sat three greedy cats: the British, the Russians, and the Chinese, all watching and waiting to pounce, ready to grab the piece of meat. That's what Tibet was like.'

'What did you hear about the British invasion when you were a child?'

'Some people said that the Inji were afraid of us, because we were so accurate with our sling-shots. In Tibet even a child can make a stone whistle through the air. That was why your army went home again so quickly, out of fear.'

'But didn't the British win?' I asked.

'Well, some people say that. But if they did win, why didn't they stay in Tibet? Nobody worries about their invasion anymore. There's a saying: 'When you have seen a scorpion, you look on the frog as divine.' You see, we've seen the Chinese scorpion now.'

The *shengo* was leaning forward, wheezing heavily, clicking his rosary.

'I have respect for the British, even though they abandoned Tibet when the Chinese came. It was they who taught me how to fire a gun. I was trained at Gyantse by the British officer in the 1930s. Yessah, Atten-shun. When the Chinese invaded I was able to join the Chusi Gangdruk, the Resistance. My British training helped me to fight, to kill Chinese soldiers.'

When I came to leave his room he took my hand and said he was both happy and proud to meet a Britisher again. Then he gave a lop-sided salute. I felt embarrassed as I stumbled outside.' (French, 1994: 248-9)

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from Hyde-Chambers to Carpenter, August 31, 1973.

<sup>51</sup> Letter to Lord Mountbatten from Carpenter, not dated.



Shortly after His Holiness had departed from London, an article about his visit appeared in the *Guardian*. The lack of any palpable signs that the Dalai Lama's visit had aroused the consternation of the Chinese Embassy had prompted the journalist to speculate about the possibility that His Holiness might soon return to Tibet. 'Is this silence,' Gittings asked, 'which applies to the whole of the Dalai Lama's European tour, a mark of indifference to a has-been in exile? Or does it indicate some more subtle plan to conciliate?' The question could only be posed rhetorically; Gittings was quick to undercut the hope that the Tibetan cause could be furthered by making the point that this could only transpire if it were to be expedient for China. The support of the American Central Intelligence Agency, he pointed out, 'which kept [Tibetan] rebels going in the 1960s, has dried up. [...] If negotiations are in progress, they must recognise the imbalance of motives. That is, that the Dalai Lama needs China a good deal more than China needs the Dalai Lama.' (Gittings, 1973: n.p.) The title of his article posed the still provocative question: "Chance of Dalai Lama's Return?"

### *Asylum seekers*

The Dalai Lama continues to hope that he may one day return to Tibet. He did return to England, eight years later, in June 1981. The Library of Westminster Abbey's folder of records for this visit is astoundingly thin in comparison with the records it holds for the 1973 visit. This runs against the grain of intuition, given the fact that the Dalai Lama was by 1981 far more well-known than he had been in 1973. Since there would have been considerably more requests for his time and attention, and since far more attention to issues of security would be necessary, it is inevitable that organizing the 1981 visit would have been a gargantuan and complex task when judged by the standards of the comparatively informal and relaxed organizational deliberations of 1973. It is also likely that the organization of the visit was itself much more organized the second time around. The number of cooks in the kitchen seems to have been reduced substantially, and it seems that more of the planning was undertaken by Tibetans themselves, especially now-Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, and the Tibet Office in Geneva, along with Carpenter of course, who was by now Dean of Westminster. The large group of people like Sir Olaf Caroe,

Lady Stockdale, Frederick Hyde-Chambers and Nancy Rice-Jones was dispersed; such a network was no longer necessary. The Dalai Lama had now already been to Europe and to America. Tibet's plight under Chinese occupation, the increased presence of the Tibetan community in exile, both in India and throughout the Western world as well, and increasingly Tibetan Buddhism, were all much more present on the Western public's radar screen.

The fact that His Holiness visited England again in 1981 is significant in that it coincided with the formation of the British Refugee Council, an umbrella for 'British voluntary organizations working with, and for, refugees and displaced persons in different parts of the world, including Britain.'<sup>52</sup> Or rather, what is significant is the fact that the timing of his visit and the launch of the Council was seen to be advantageous by his hosts. The British Refugee Council expanded upon work being done by the British Council for Aid to Refugees, which dealt with the reception of refugees and their resettlement in the United Kingdom. The Council also, through its Regional Committees and working groups, expanded upon the work of the Standing Conference on Refugees, discussing policy issues and co-ordinating joint action on behalf of refugee resettlement policy where it might be necessary.<sup>53</sup>

The Dalai Lama's 1981 visit, which lasted from June 29 through July 4, began quite like the 1973 visit. At 11:45pm he arrived at Heathrow Airport from Delhi. According to the itinerary, 'They will go straight to the Alcock & Brown VIP Suite to meet the welcoming party', followed, once again by a press conference estimated at half an hour. It was then off to the Deanery. At the close of the entry on the itinerary for June 29 is an asterisked note: '\*If convenient, the members of the Tibetan Community in Britain would like to greet His Holiness briefly as he arrives in Dean's Yard.'

The official press release issued on Tibet Office stationery announced that, at the invitation of the Very Rev. E. F. Carpenter, the Dean of Westminster, the Dalai Lama was to 'make a brief, private visit to London between June 29 and July 4. He is stopping on

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<sup>52</sup> British Refugee Council Press Release, 1981. That this was archived along with the records for the Dalai Lama's visit underlines the fact that for His Holiness' hosts this was a connection worth articulating.

<sup>53</sup> The Refugee Council is today the largest organization in the United Kingdom working to address the concerns of refugees and asylum seekers. For more information see the Council's website, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>.

his way to the United States where he will be giving a major Buddhist teaching. This will be his second visit to the U.K.’ Though ostensibly a private visit, His Holiness was also to attend and participate in a World Congress of Faiths service to be held June 30 at the Bloomsbury Baptist Church. There he would deliver a talk entitled ‘The Unity of All Religions’. On July 1 he would deliver a public talk on the subject of altruism; on July 2 he was to meet with the Tibetan Community in Britain, ‘who will make him the traditional Long Life Offering’. At 7:30pm that evening, in the Lecture Hall of the Library at Westminster he would give a teaching for the Buddhist community called ‘Training the Mind’. The press release concludes: ‘During his visit His Holiness will also meet other religious leaders, and he will take the opportunity to thank associations in this country that are helping Tibetan refugees for their continuing aid and understanding.’

This press release alone marks several important changes from the 1973 visit, highlighting the alterations in the way in which both were framed. Interestingly, it seems to have been drafted not by the Church Information Office, but by two of the visit’s organizers, Phuntsong Wangyal and Lama Sogyal Rinpoche’s secretary Patrick Gaffney.

The agenda as this press release presents it reveals far more attention to the visit’s orientation towards interfaith<sup>54</sup> and interdisciplinary discussion, and also towards consideration of the Tibetan community in Britain and their inclusion in His Holiness’ itinerary. There are two versions of the itinerary in the Library archives. One version contains a finalized list, complete with times and places where events and meetings with individuals and groups are to be held. An earlier draft, put together presumably before all of these details had been confirmed, gives a good indication of the attempts to cultivate an interfaith and interdisciplinary connections and debates.<sup>55</sup> The organization of such a schedule provides grounds for speculating that His Holiness’ hosts, and quite likely he himself, had come to realize and to articulate for themselves the necessity of constructing a tight and intricate net of interfaith and interdisciplinary relationships, which could be coupled with the continued efforts to raise Westerners’ consciousness about Tibetan Buddhism and the Chinese occupation of Tibet. It was primarily on the cultural front that

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<sup>54</sup> The convening of interfaith dialogues to coincide with the Dalai Lama’s travels has come to be a standard part of his global itineraries (Dalai Lama, in Wijers, 1996: 115).

such a struggle would have to be waged, and it would have to be framed in the language of a kind of post-colonial, global, spirituality.<sup>56</sup>

This is demonstrated by a short letter sent to Carpenter by Dawa Thondup, an administrator in the Tibetan Government in Exile, calling off His Holiness' meeting with Parliament, that had already successfully been arranged, in order to keep a meeting with Chief Rabbi Sir Immanuel Jakobovits that would not be able to be rescheduled.<sup>57</sup>

A memorandum from the Committee for the Visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to London's meeting with Carpenter<sup>58</sup> gives some sense of the nature of the brainstorming that preceded the visit, in which apparently each person present was called upon to come up with some illustrious figures for His Holiness to meet during his 'in-depth conferences'.

'The Dean suggested that this might include: Father Copperstone, professors from Oxford & Cambridge, someone from the Royal Society, someone from the Inter-Faith scene... and a political figure. He would draw up a list of persons whom he thought appropriate.'

Lama 'Sogyal Rinpoche would also have some suggestions, e.g. Yehudi Menuhin [who had met the Dalai Lama in 1973], Sir K[arl]. Popper.'<sup>59</sup> Lama Sogyal Rinpoche is today one of the most well-known Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the world, second only to the Dalai Lama himself. In 1973 the recent graduate of Cambridge University founded the meditation instruction center called 'Dzogchen Orgyen Chöling' in London. This has blossomed into the now multinational Rigpa Fellowship.<sup>60</sup> It seems that all correspondences from Dean Carpenter to His Holiness, at least initially, went through Lama Sogyal: 'All my mail... will be forwarded to me, and I look forward to receiving

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<sup>55</sup> It would appear that the first draft was developed out of discussions amongst all of the members of the Host Committee, and that responsibility for writing the final draft was entrusted to Wangyal and Gaffney.

<sup>56</sup> This notion of the engineering of intensive, intercultural, interdisciplinary, interfaith encounters is also the premise behind the later organization of the 1990 and 1996 Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy conferences, of which more below.

<sup>57</sup> Letter to Carpenter from Dawa Thondup, not dated. Sir Jakobovits later wrote to Carpenter: 'I was greatly honoured by the visit of the Dalai Lama and found the conversation really fascinating. I am indeed most grateful to you for your help in arranging this.' Letter to Carpenter from Jakobovits, not dated.

<sup>58</sup> It appears from the way this memorandum is presented that Carpenter may not have actually been a part of the Committee itself, but rather a consultant, in addition to being His Holiness' official host.

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum from the Committee for the Visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to London's meeting with Dean Carpenter, not dated.

<sup>60</sup> *Dzogchen* is an advanced practice of contemplation of the nature of reality, 'literally the 'Great Perfection', considered by many Nyingma lamas as the essence and culmination of the Buddha's teachings.' For more on Dzogchen and Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, see Batchelor, 1994: esp. 75. As will be discussed below, Lama Sogyal himself was instrumental in helping to arrange the meeting between Beuys and His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1982. See Wijers, 1996: 134-49, 162-73.

your letter to send on to His Holiness. I will keep in contact with you by telephone, and, during my absence [his three-week visit to India], all my personal affairs will be handled by my secretary, Patrick Gaffney, whose name I mentioned to your wife.’<sup>61</sup>

A second memorandum demonstrates the Committee’s continued concern with the provision of security for the Dalai Lama’s visit. It notes that special arrangements had been made for the Cannon Row Police to handle His Holiness’ security whilst at the Deanery, and that the involvement of the local police was to be dealt with under advisement with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if and when heightened security were deemed necessary. The minutes mention that ‘Phuntsog Wangyal would like to help follow up details on Visas & Security’ — there had been a specific request from His Holiness’ secretary Tsering Dorjee of the Tibet Office in Switzerland ‘that His Holiness’ two Tibetan security staff be accommodated simply near him.’<sup>62</sup> Carpenter would later write to Tsering, telling him how much he looked forward to the visit, and offering him the assurance he sought: ‘Preparations are now well in hand and I can assure you that the security has been attended to.’<sup>63</sup>

Ultimately, despite the active role played by the police, the Committee was still responsible for the security strategy itself. The second, more intricate draft of the itinerary is full of detailed logistical information: specifying routes that chauffeurs ought to follow, mapping the paths by which His Holiness ought to enter venues secular and religious, and information about properly utilizing parking spaces — indeed, there is a surprising amount of detail about parking and how and where it should be done. The comparative efficiency of the 1981 security machine to its 1973 counterpart is striking; along with the traffic plans, there is also a numbered list of members of the Tibetan community who are to be identified as ‘Security Volunteers’. First on that list is Kunjo Tashi himself, with whom Lady Stockdale and Frederick Hyde-Chambers had experienced such difficulties back in 1973, listed as the ‘organizer’ of the volunteers.

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<sup>61</sup> Letter to Carpenter from Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, April 8, 1981.

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum from The Committee for the Visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to London’s meeting with Carpenter. The memorandum also gives the following details, which make it possible to suggest that Carpenter was in 1981 more of a liaison and advisor than an active organizer: ‘The Dean said he would be approaching the office of H.M. the Queen, in case any members of the Royal Family might be interested in meeting His Holiness. Also Lord Carrington, David Steel, and other political figures.’

<sup>63</sup> Letter to Tsering from Carpenter, not dated.

The tides had shifted, too, in Her Majesty's Government's attitude towards the import of security for the Dalai Lama. Although the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was still bound not to offer His Holiness the protection befitting an officially recognized political figure, his security was taken much more seriously than it had been in 1973. Just under a week before the Dalai Lama was to arrive, Carpenter received the following letter from Mr. Roger du Boulay of the Protocol & Conference Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

'Further to my letter of 8 June, I can now confirm that Special Branch, New Scotland Yard have completed their threat assessment. In their view there is no specific threat to the safety of His Holiness and they will not be providing a personal protection officer. [¶] This judgment will of course be kept constantly under review. They will be informing Police Divisions. We would very much like to have a copy of the firm programme for this visit and this will be passed to Special Branch.'<sup>64</sup>

*Oseh Shalom bimromav*  
*Hu ya-aseh shalom*  
*aleyenu*  
*ve-al col Yisrael*  
*ve-al col benai Adam*<sup>65</sup>

At the end of his second day in London, the Dalai Lama, along with eight other officiants<sup>66</sup>, participated in the All Faiths Service<sup>66</sup>, held under the auspices of the World Congress of Faiths, at the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. After the organ had played, the Minister of the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Dr. Howard Williams, gave the official welcome. The evening then proceeded into a placid ecumenical whirlwind, beginning with an invocation from the Rig Veda, moving on into the wisdom of a few lines from Guru Nanak, sampling from Matthew, a Hebrew prayer for peace and unity, Zarathustra's prayer that he might 'perform all actions in harmony with Righteousness and acquire the Wisdom of Good Mind so that I may bring solace to the soul of the Universe', and so on. During the singing of one interfaith hymn a collection was made, part of which was to be donated — after expenses — to the Tibetan community, and also

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from du Boulay to Carpenter, June 23, 1981

<sup>65</sup> 'May the Most High, source of perfect peace, grant peace to us, to all Israel, and all mankind.' Program of the All Faiths Service, World Congress of Faiths, June 30, 1981, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> These were: Swami Purananda, Mr. A.S. Chhatwal, Mr. S. Rawhani, Mr. A.K.M.H. Rashid J.P., Rev. Barbara Stanford, Ven. Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, Mr. A.J. Reese, Mr. Cyrus P. Mehta, and the Dalai Lama.

to the World Congress of Faiths, of course. Just prior to the hymn, His Holiness had addressed the group. Reverend Marcus Braybrooke, the Chairman of the World Congress of Faiths, welcomed him — following a thorough reading from the *Dhammapada*.

In his recent book *Buddhist Without Beliefs*, Stephen Batchelor has noted the tendency in encounters between Buddhism and Western culture for the *dharma* to be thus ‘treated as a religion — albeit an “Eastern” one. The very term “Buddhism” (an invention of Western scholars) reinforces the idea that it is a creed to be lined up alongside other creeds. Christians in particular seek to enter into dialogue with their Buddhist brethren, often as part of a broader agenda to find common ground with “those of faith” to resist the sweeping tide of Godless secularism. At interfaith gatherings, Buddhists are wheeled out to present their views on everything from nuclear weapons to the ordination of women and then scheduled to drone Tibetan chants at the evening slot for collective worship. [¶] This transformation into a religion obscures and distorts the encounter of the *dharma* with contemporary agnostic culture. The *dharma* in fact might well have more in common with Godless secularism than with the bastions of religion. Agnosticism may serve as a more fertile common ground for dialogue than, for example, a tortured attempt to make Buddhist sense of Allah.’ (Batchelor, 1998: 16-17)

The next night, at 7:30pm on July 1 — after a day that included a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury in Lambeth Palace from 4:00-5:00pm and, on its heels, a meeting with Chief Rabbi Jakobovits at his home in North London from 5:30-6:30pm, followed by a quick stop back at the Deanery — the Dalai Lama delivered a second talk, to an audience of two and a half thousand people.<sup>67</sup> After a warm introduction that included thank you’s to him and to all of those who had made his visit in England possible, in which he mentioned Tsering Dorjee, Phuntsog Wangyal, Lama Sogyal Rinpoche and Patrick Gaffney, Carpenter handed the stage to His Holiness. His talk, as he pointed out from the outset, was not to be concerned with expounding upon the *dharma*. This he would do the following evening, July 2, when he gave a teaching specifically for the *sangha*, members of the Buddhist community in the United Kingdom.<sup>68</sup> In the public talk, he focused on a subject that he has returned to time and again in his lectures and his writings. A decidedly secular message, the Dalai Lama refers to his version of engaged ethical practice using a specially-coined term: ‘Universal

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<sup>67</sup> For the transcript of the talk, see Wijers, 1996: 119-126.

<sup>68</sup> This talk took place at 7:30pm in the Central Hall of Westminster Abbey, immediately following a special blessing he had conducted for the Nepalese Buddhist members of the 7th Gurkha Rifles regiment, which had itself immediately followed a two hour meeting with a number of Buddhist teachers.

Responsibility'. In the conclusion to his talk, the Dalai Lama defined what the practice of 'Universal Responsibility' means to him, and considered its viability:

'...we must develop and train ourselves in the kind of thought that shares in other people's suffering.. We must arouse more concern for other people's welfare.. And we must grow less selfish.. If I were to say completely destroy selfishness, that would rather impracticable.. So, I shall say: Be less selfish.. Have more respect for other people's benefit.. Along with this goes a clear realisation of the oneness of all humanity.. We are one single person, but mentally we have to carry the responsibility of all mankind.. Usually I call this our 'Universal Responsibility'.. We need this sort of attitude.. this kind of thinking.. This is my usual feeling.. Sometimes I tell people that my religion is very simple.. My religion is kindness..' (Dalai Lama, in Wijers, 1996: 123)

### *Metta-narrative*

'For hate is not conquered by hate: hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal.'<sup>69</sup>

In his 1996 essay "Unpacking my library... again," Homi Bhabha offers a thorough critique of a position of cosmopolitan liberalism as put forward in an article by Martha Nussbaum. Bhabha characterizes Nussbaum's ethics as a sort of didactic kindness<sup>70</sup>, a position he feels poses the danger of both deluding itself about and diluting the intricacy of the manifold conflicts that any contemporary cosmopolitanism must address. She proposes a kind of cosmopolitan compassion based on a "vivid imagining of difference"... [demanding] a *spatial* imaginary: the 'self' at the centre of a series of concentric circles that move through the various cycles of familial, ethnic, and communal affiliation to 'the largest one, that of humanity as a whole'.' (Bhabha, 1996: 200) Bhabha finds her notion of enacting the link between the local and the global, beginning at a putatively centered self and working outward, to be highly problematic: 'In her attempt to avoid nationalist or

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<sup>69</sup> Passage from the *Dhammapada*, taken from the program of the All Faiths Service, World Congress of Faiths, June 30, 1981, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Other responses to her article were less civil: 'Martha Nussbaum is one of the most eminent female philosophy professors of our time, but when it comes to politics, she's a girl scout.' (Mansfield, 1994: 10) For a spectrum of responses to Nussbaum's article, from which Bhabha's is absent, along with Nussbaum's rebuttal, see the *Boston Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 5, October/November 1994. It should be said that Bhabha's critique of Nussbaum entirely ignores the fact that her article is an intervention into a debate that had been ongoing in the United States about nationalism and pedagogy, and a rebuttal of Richard Rorty's argument for 'a national conversation to discuss American identity' in particular. She develops a nuanced reading of Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*, and its suggestion that the use of national identity as the basis for politics is untenable, as the matrix for her argument — another vital fact that is left out of Bhabha's trenchant commentary. However correct Bhabha may be to point to its inadequacy as *tactics*, Nussbaum's argument is more properly a strategic one. Ultimately, despite the article's problems, he both shortchanges the impact of her intervention and, in dwelling on the imperial resonances of a 'Stoicism' that



patriotic sovereignty, Nussbaum embraces a ‘universalism’ that is profoundly provincial. Provincial, in a specific, early imperial sense.’ (ibid: 201)

In fact, even if unintentional, the closeness of Nussbaum’s suggestion to a tradition entirely other than that of the liberal humanist one which Bhabha is quick to mark as suspect, at least hints at the fact that her extension of compassion might be able to be approached using a slightly different register than the one Bhabha so elegantly excoriates. Nussbaum’s position reads quite like an enactment of a certain technique of *vipassana* meditation based upon one of the four *Brahma-vihara*, or ‘measureless states’. This state is called *metta*, which translates into English as ‘loving-kindness’. The variation on the practice of compassion involves the meditator extending “a circle of benevolence to others ‘like a skilled ploughman marks out his territory and then covers it’, incorporating his family, the neighborhood, town, state, nation, and in due course all the creatures in the six directions.” (Keown, 1995: 96)

Bhabha’s casting of her position as a naïve imperial investment in universalism makes her a straw man that he tosses to the winds: ‘Are the Stoic values of a respect for human dignity and the opportunity for each person to pursue happiness adequate cosmopolitan proposals for this scale of global economical and ecological ‘disjuncture’?’ (Bhabha, 1996: 201) Whether such values are Stoic, or only Stoic, is debatable:

‘When you recognize that all beings are equal and like yourself in both their desire for happiness and their right to obtain it, you automatically feel empathy and closeness for them. You develop a feeling of responsibility for others: the wish to help them actively overcome their problems. True compassion is not just an emotional response but a firm commitment founded on reason. Therefore, a truly compassionate attitude towards others does not change even if they behave negatively.’ (Dalai Lama, 1997: n.p.)

What might not be adequate as an exhaustive mode of addressing this ‘scale of disjuncture’ may nevertheless be necessary for beginning to do so in anything approaching the comprehensive and multi-front manner that is required if any lasting solutions to these problems are to be imagined.

The Dalai Lama’s position with respect to these issues has been a much-debated one. His advocacy of the notion of universal human rights, most specifically as put

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he does not begin to take seriously, ignores the critical point that hers is an argument for a global *responsibility* that would take shape in one’s localized efforts and commitments.



forward by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948, has been attacked on the grounds that it represents cultural imperialism. The official position of the Peoples' Republic of China towards the notion of universal human rights is that it is 'a Western creation that is inapplicable in an Asian context and that is rejected by Asian peoples.' (Powers, 1998: 196)<sup>71</sup> Indeed, it goes without saying that the Dalai Lama's presentation of the notion of compassion, his championing of universal human rights and his calls for 'Universal Responsibility' have been crafted quite pointedly in response to the language of the Western liberal democracies which he most often addresses. But that does not necessarily mean that this position is in any way inconsistent with the vast philosophical, philological, psychological, religious, political and cultural practices that are collectively called 'Buddhism'. Indeed, experts Buddhist and non-Buddhist are quite at odds about what exactly can be said to constitute the Buddhist ethical and moral traditions, and how it might or might not accord with the similarly heterogeneous Western liberal humanist democratic tradition. John Powers points out that:

'If the Dalai Lama is correct in his assertions that Buddhism is also concordant with human rights thinking and that Buddhist notions of karma and interdependence inevitably lead to conclusions congruent with those found in the Universal Declaration and similar documents, this would indicate that although the history of human rights thought is strongly linked with Western thinkers and nations it is also compatible with at least two important Asian traditions [namely Buddhism and Confucianism] that have profoundly influenced Asian thought and society.' (ibid)<sup>72</sup>

Further, regarding the intersection of the Buddhist and the Western liberal democratic traditions in the Dalai Lama's public performances, Garfield notes that the Dalai Lama's 'view that moral life is grounded in the cultivation and exercise of compassion' is 'grounded in... the tradition of Buddhist moral theory rooted in the teachings of the Buddha', and that he has been quite consistent with these teachings when he has 'urged in many public religious teachings, addresses, and in numerous writings that the most important moral quality to cultivate is compassion, and that compassion, skill in its exercise, and insight into the nature of reality are jointly necessary and sufficient for

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<sup>71</sup> For a thorough analysis of the Eurocentric and phallogocentric foundations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see Irigaray: 1994.

human moral perfection.’ (Garfield, 1998: 111) Here, as a way of regrouping so as to be able to encounter this initially highly worrying notion of ‘human moral perfection’ with a somewhat more developed toolkit, it may be worth a lengthy detour to consider the notion of compassion, a word that when used in the English and American languages rarely entails the serious ethical demands that are a necessary part of the word’s fabric. In response to a question from the Westminster audience about the conundrum of practicing compassion for those defined as ‘enemies of humanity’, the Dalai Lama responded:

‘[C]ompassion, or tolerance does not mean that you accept your defeat.. or you let the wrongdoing triumph.. It does not mean that you may not take a strong reaction.. or a strong counter measure.. in order to stop that which is wrong.. Meanwhile though, deep down, you should not lose your compassion.. That is the way of practice.. For example a good parent is sometimes furious, very angry, towards a naughty child, but deep down one does not lose one’s compassion.. With that compassion you have to take strong measures.. in order to stop that naughty child’s action.. Similarly, without losing any deep compassion towards anybody, particularly the enemy.. with that strong motivation.. with that strong compassion.. not due to anger, but due to compassion.. you sympathetically try to stop the bad behaviour.. That is the way.’ (Dalai Lama, in Wijers, 1996: 124-5)

### *Freedom from liberty*

‘This something has no name. It is beyond love and hate, beyond feelings, a savage joy, mixed with shame, the joy of submitting to and withstanding the blow, of belonging to someone, and feeling oneself freed from liberty.’ (Lyotard, 1993: 65-6)

It is in this sense that a notion of responsibility must be conceived, not so much as concept, but as that which is felt. The condition of responsibility is at once un-organized and cohesive. It entails a social fabric that is anarchic in operation but not in name; a condition that is held to be chaotic when approached from the organizing orientation of the concept, but that is the embodiment of an organization whose nature can only, literally, be made *sense* of in the making of the ethical bonds that make it felt. To extend this condition of ethical unorganization to the project of critical thinking, of the exercise of a knowledge not of but *for* the other and the other’s other, is to conceive a sensual cognition. Conceptual knowledge is only one of its media. In terms of the exercise of knowledge, the question that this raises, one that Bhabha’s critique of Nussbaum poses as

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<sup>72</sup> The debate surrounding the intersection of Buddhist ethics and notion of human rights is too vast to tackle here. For the most comprehensive collection of essays on this topic, see Keown, Prebish, and

well, is this: to what extent is it viable to talk about ethics without its entailing moral critique, and to what extent is it possible to begin to formulate a moral critique that does not engage in didacticism or moralizing? A response to these questions is offered by sociologist Barrington Moore, Jr., who suggests that ‘a general opposition to human suffering constitutes a standpoint that both transcends and unites different cultures and historical epochs.’ (Moore, 1973: 11)

He continues, posing the argument that by means of active inquiry into the causes and the necessity of suffering, ‘it becomes possible to escape from the trap of accepting each culture’s self-justification at its face value while retaining a capacity for sympathetic insight into its torments and perplexities.’ (Moore, 1973: 11) This is the articulation of the possibility of a compassionate critique; a path that is not relativistic, deterministic, nor essentialist.

Conversely, what is at stake in posing this question is not an argument for complexity, which seems unavoidable in articulating and engaging with the problems and pleasures bound up in the negotiation of economical, ecological, and indeed interhuman disjuncture. Rather, what seems to be at stake is the development of an exploratory ethics that is sufficiently elastic to be adequate to this complexity, and to accommodating our desire for and attachment to it. In this regard, when the notion of ‘Universal Responsibility’ is read not as exhortation so much as exploration — when it is seen not so much as categorical imperative but as a narrative device for articulating, for example, the Dalai Lama’s own enactment of daily ethical practice — what is easily perceived as a simple and ostensibly moralizing position becomes something more inflected.

Irit Rogoff has argued for the urgency of a ‘shift from a moralizing discourse of geography and location, in which we are told what ought to be, who has the right to be where and how it ought to be so, to a contingent ethics of geographical emplacement in which we might jointly puzzle out the perils of the phantasms of belonging as well as the tragedies of not belonging.’ (Rogoff, 2000: 3)

This shift is impossible without a much more developed language in which to frame and unframe what is understood by the notion of the ‘ethical encounter’ itself. In

order to begin to catalyze such a shift, there is the necessity of a language that permits an un-organization of that otherness that we seek to subsume within knowledge, that process of domestication of the other that is the first and most microscopic act of violence.

The practice of compassion, beyond and before making known, is the way in which the ethical encounter must unfold if it is to produce *ahimsa*, as a nonviolence that consistently finds the fortitude to pick itself up, brush itself off, and continue onward. Gandhi famously wrote: 'Who that has prided himself on his spiritual strength has not seen it humbled to the dust? A knowledge of religion, as distinguished from experience, seems but chaff in such moments of trial.' (Gandhi, 1993: 70) Such humility produced the possibility of the insight that could itself produce the understanding that a religious act is inevitably also a political act: 'I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.' (Gandhi, 1993: 504)

The connection between these cannot be settled except on the basis of one's own existential grapples. But the question over the interconnectedness of contemporary critical practices and some notion of faith, whether it takes a religious or secularized form, has important implications for the intersection of the personal and the political. The extent to which an academic debate is framed in order to resist the articulations of faith, which is seen as an anathema to critical practice, bespeaks the severity of its limitations. Critical positions such as Bhabha's, which foreclose upon the possibility of the contribution of 'spiritual exercises' to critical debates, seem increasingly untenable in a world whose difficulty, complexity, and radical disjunctures owe to political and ecological crises, to be sure, but also to ones of a more spiritual nature.

At a certain point the question must be addressed regarding the difference between a piety, religious or agnostic, that presumes to dictate its ethics to other cultures, and a politics that refuses to remain silent in the face of what it perceives as unethical actions on the part of another or others. As Garfield explains, 'to demand of a society that it respect some fundamental set of such rights is not an instance of illegitimate cultural imperialism but an instance of mandatory moral criticism, even if it is not so experienced by those to whom such an effort is directed at the time.' (Garfield, 1998: 111) The framing of this

question is bound to be problematic; it cannot but be anything other than a question of spirituality. The word 'spirituality' denotes that which, in the phenomenality of the ethical encounter, permits the self to feel itself to be the Other's Other (Levinas, 1998). The absence of an alternative word for what is spoken of as the 'spiritual' is unfortunate; the word 'spiritual' certainly carries pious perfumes and nauseating New Age-ness. A less fraught word would perhaps be preferable, but the risk of using such a co-optable term is inseparable from the interhuman intrigue that makes its use desirable, and that makes the absence of another word propitious.

In his recent book *Ethics for the New Millennium*, the Dalai Lama suggests that religion is ultimately far less important than spirituality. This utterance is not compelling so much because of its novelty as because of its having been uttered by someone seen to be a prominent religious figure.

'[W]e humans can live quite well without recourse to religious faith. [¶] These may seem unusual statements, coming as they do from a religious figure. I am, however, Tibetan before I am Dalai Lama, and I am human before I am Tibetan. So while as the Dalai Lama I have a special responsibility to Tibetans, and as a monk I have a special responsibility toward furthering interreligious harmony, as a human being I have a much larger responsibility toward the whole human family—which indeed we all have. And since the majority does not practice religion, I am concerned to try to find a way to serve all humanity without appealing to religious faith.' (Dalai Lama, 1999: 20)

He characterizes religion as that which is 'concerned with faith in the claims to salvation of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality, including perhaps an idea of heaven or *nirvana*.' He conceives spirituality, on the other hand, as that which is 'concerned with those qualities of the human spirit — such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony — which brings happiness to both self and others.' (ibid: 22) He concedes the import of what are called 'religious' elements, but only in a relative sense; this is not to say that they are superfluous in themselves, since for many people, himself as a Buddhist monk included, they are crucial. But they are not essential to ethical practice. The personal nature of religious faith, the embrace, rejection, or indifference to it, is no less important than the personal nature of spirituality, but it is differently important, and the valuation of one with respect to the

other has to be conceived with respect to a particular aim. If that aim is the construction of a contingent ethics that can be adequate to the task of engaging with the disjunctures and fractures in interpersonal, intercultural communication, of ecological, economic and political catastrophe, then the dimension accessed by the notion of spirituality is by all means a much more relevant one.

‘While ritual and prayer, along with the questions of *nirvana* and salvation, are directly connected to religious faith, these inner qualities need not be, however. There is thus no reason why the individual should not develop them, even to a high degree, without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system. This is why I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are these basic spiritual qualities.’ (ibid)

The substrate of these basic spiritual qualities is the practice of compassion.

‘In Tibetan, we speak of *shen pen kyi sem* meaning “the thought to be of help to others.” And when we think about them, we see that each of the qualities noted is defined by an implicit concern for others’ well-being. Moreover, the one who is compassionate, loving, patient, tolerant, forgiving, and so on to some extent recognizes the potential impact of their actions on others and orders their conduct accordingly. Thus spiritual practice according to this description involves, on the one hand, acting out of concern for others’ well-being. On the other, it entails transforming ourselves so that we become more readily disposed to do so. To speak of spiritual practices in any terms other than these is meaningless.’ (ibid: 23)

It is similarly meaningless to speak of any sort of ethics without doing so in terms of the compassion without which ethical engagement means little. In his reflection upon the uses of these qualities, the Dalai Lama explains that the privileging of the spiritual ‘is not to say that all we need to do is cultivate spiritual values and [all of the other problems of the world] will automatically disappear. On the contrary, each of them needs a specific solution. But we find that when this spiritual dimension is neglected, we have no hope of achieving a lasting solution.’ (ibid: 24)

### ***Family values***

Rogoff has argued that the task of cultural criticism has to be rethought in light of the realization that debates can thankfully no longer be ‘positioned within the suffocating binarism of First World/Third World cultural relations’, nor is it any longer possible to

‘maintain the illusion that there is an authentic inside from which we can view an outside that imposes alien concepts. And most certainly, we no longer need the wholesale importation of unreflected cultural models with their nostalgic hankering for the “Family of Man.” Instead, by

putting the desires for such on display as the emergent subject of our work, we may be able to elicit an alternative set of ideas about what constitutes cultural gratification.’ (Rogoff, 1998c: 49)

The encounters between the Dalai Lama and his entourage and his English hosts represent a study in cultural gratification. This thesis maps the confluence of agendas, desires, aims and objectives that come together in such encounters: the conflicts between disparate notions of propriety, protocol, and politics; the gaps and interstices between bodies of knowledge, desires for non-knowledge, practices of wisdom and compassion: the thought to be of help to others and its often painful encounter with its impracticability. The meteorological meeting of all of these competing currents begins to stage a constellation of conditions brought into contiguity by the encounter between the West (in this chapter, upper-middle-class English culture) and the East (in this chapter, the cultures of Tibetans in diaspora inside and outside England). Chapter Two attempts, through a critical reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of nomadism, to develop an approach to such encounters that remains open to their messy and chaotic nature. It does this by elaborating the notion of ‘making felt’, using the earliest human technology as a mode of engagement with contemporary ethical and existential challenges. These are not resolvable within the space of a chapter, a thesis, a lifetime, nor indeed several of them. But they can perhaps be arranged such that they offer the possibility of approaching such encounters in terms other than those made available through the hopelessly tired language of the ‘East-West’ meeting.

It is important to remember that what appears to be a geographical mode of conceiving the moment of cultural translation — the moment of existential, ethical and erotic engagement between other and other’s other that is the ‘meeting’ — is and ‘has always been a form of positioned spectatorship’. Designations like ‘Eurasia’, like ‘East-West’,

‘are viewed from positions (in this instance centers of colonial power) which name and locate and identify places in relation to themselves as the center of the world. Like spectatorship in the filmic arena, geographical naming of this kind equally reflects certain desires for power and dominance and certain fantasies of distance and proximity and transgression which come into expression in the act of geographical naming.’ (Rogoff, 2000: 11)

The struggle to orchestrate the Dalai Lama’s visit, the urge to reinvent an interfaith, interdisciplinary, post-colonial East-West relationship, can be viewed as an extension of a



geographical naming that is ultimately an epistemological act: an enactment of the struggle for the position of provider of cultural knowledge through the facilitation of the experience of the encounter. In its most productive form, the encounter translates the struggle into the playful condition of joint puzzlement. At its least productive, it moves from joking into jockeying — for power and dominance, even as filtered through the drive to be charitable, philanthropic, ecumenical, scholarly.

Chapters Three and Four orchestrate two approaches to what in Chapter Four is referred to as the ‘obliteration’ of the intellectually, ethically, and existentially limiting notion of ‘Eurasia’, particularly its hopes for the finality of the age-old Romantic dream of East-West synthesis. Chapter Three does this by tracing the history of the life and work of Louwrien Wijers, the Dutch artist who organized the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting, in relation to her own intellectual, ethical and existential lineage. This moves into a consideration of the 1982 Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting, its aspirations as well as its ostensible failures, and the emergence, by fate or by chance, of an alternative series of still-ongoing but rarely-discussed projects, led by French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou and Wijers, aiming at open-ended and experimental dialogues and initiatives between artists, scientists, economists, and spiritual figures. This thesis therefore attempts to historicize the commingling of loose-knit but intimate individuals and groups who found themselves working together on what Filliou would come later to call the ‘Art of Peace’. It seeks also to theorize this peace in such a way that it remains *unarchic*, without governance by concept or even by the ethics that opens to it. Emmanuel Levinas wrote that ‘it is in the knowledge of the other (*autrui*) as a simple individual — individual of a genus, a class, or a race — that peace with the other (*autrui*) turns into hatred; it is the approach of the other as ‘such and such a type.’ (Levinas, 1996: 166).

At 1:00pm on Saturday, July 4, 1981, the Dalai Lama and his entourage boarded Airlines Flight 111 from Heathrow bound for New York. A few months later, in a letter of November 20, 1981 to Ian Maxwell, Esq. of the Rigpa Fellowship, Carpenter fondly recalled the World Congress of Faiths interfaith service at the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, requesting that Maxwell share any photographs of the event: ‘It was a great event in the life of the community there and they would like to have a permanent reminder of

it.’ But his primary reason for writing to Maxwell was to express his gratitude for a gift that he had already presented to Carpenter. ‘Thank you so much for your great kindness in sending to me the two tapes ‘Training the Mind’ and ‘Good Heart’ [which had been the title of his talk at Westminster’s Central Hall], recording His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his visit to London. I shall treasure them.’<sup>73</sup> A note, pencilled in at the bottom of the letter, probably by the archivist into whose confidence it has been entrusted, explains: ‘The tapes, seemingly, were kept by the Dean personally.’<sup>74</sup>



**His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama next to his wax portrait at Madame Tussaud’s in London (Warner, 1995: 195)**

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<sup>73</sup> On November 18, Maxwell wrote to Carpenter: ‘On behalf of Ven. Lama Sogyal Rinpoche and all the students of RIGPA, I am sending you, at Rinpoche’s request, copies of the tapes of the teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in London. Please accept them with our deepest thanks for all your hard work and hospitality, which contributed so much to making the whole visit such a memorable one.’ Letter from Maxwell to Carpenter.

<sup>74</sup> Letter to Maxwell from Carpenter, November 20, 1981.

## Ground Zero

‘The past resembles the future more than one drop of water another.’

- Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*

**Ramadan, 2001:** America’s leader will be hamming it up and pissing in the wind with his father in their seaside fortress right down the road in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Junior has been given a war. This world is new, it is his, and he is giddy. It is difficult to say how he would respond to it being demonstrated to him how precisely, as if he had himself been scripted, his every move since his ‘election’ fits into place with a prediction offered by Paul Virilio in his series of discussions with Sylvère Lotringer several years ago, published under the frighteningly apt title *Pure War*.

Virilio foretold complete investment in a war economy; logistical necessities of this economic development result in a conflict that takes place on a technological level: weapons, weapon systems, military technologies must forever be strengthened, and this sort of post-futuristic techno-development leads to economic depletion. The dizzying development of the war machine produces a concomitant *non*-development in society. ‘On one hand,’ Virilio says, ‘it’s a matter of not depleting resources, on the other of not developing civilian society because it hinders the development of military society, the means of waging war.’

The problem is not so simple as combatting underdevelopment elsewhere. ‘The underdeveloped countries are not developing: we are all becoming underdeveloped.’ (Virilio and Lotringer, 1997: 58) This underdevelopment has been the product of the post-deterrence world, which Virilio locates at the point where the second major phase in the development of weaponry gave way to the third. The first phase he characterizes as being constituted by weapons systems that were determined by obstruction: including ramparts, shields, fortresses, and so on.<sup>75</sup> The second consists of weapons of destruction.

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<sup>75</sup> For his study of the development of military fortifications, see Virilio, 1994.

This marks the lineage beginning with projectiles and artillery and concluding with thermonuclear weapons. Finally, or at least final given the bounds of the contemporary imagination, is the third phase, now in its fledgling state, of a 'weaponry of communication'.

Critical to his assessment of the post-deterrence (or neo-deterrence as the case may be) planet is his articulation of the term 'logistics'. He notes that this term was first used by Henri Jomini, strategist under Napoleon, whose treatise on war was the first to conduct a proper *inquiry* into logistics. Along with the Napoleonic Wars' demand for effective mobilization of millions of troops came complex questions of their material support. Logistics is not only subsistence, but transportation of goods and people, the arrangement of supply chains, and so forth; it entails a vast, ideally exhaustive flow-chart. Virilio quotes a Pentagon statement from between 1945-50, when Eisenhower created the blossoming network of highway systems across America in order to facilitate precisely this rapid mobilization: 'Logistics is the procedure following which a nation's potential is transferred to its armed forces, in times of peace as in times of war.' (ibid: 23-4)<sup>76</sup>

In a time of the weaponry of communication, logistics must be concerned with the management of information. Virilio explains that while this particular weaponry

'had been in at the start with spies, messengers and signals like the Indian smoke signal, and so forth [...] there has been no really significant development since the Chappe telegraph in Napoleon's time. It took the period of deterrence for everything to take off. Besides, that corresponds to the development of information technology, the invention of the computer, satellites' capacity to transmit information instantly, and to the advent of the C3i — there are four of them now — namely, Control, Command, Intelligence, C3i, the war room, which is the body that anticipates war because it anticipates the profile of the enemy. I remind you of Goebbels' phrase: "He who knows everything is not afraid of anything." It's an incredible statement, because Goebbels is a man of information. Maybe not of information in the computer age, but of

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<sup>76</sup> On the French Revolutionary government's development of the 'total war effort', see Hobsbawm, 1996: 67. Further, it must be noted that, though Jomini may have been the first to provide both the name 'logistics' and its proper critique, the sphere of concern it articulates was perhaps first elaborated in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. The consideration of supply lines, material support, and indeed morale, were crucial considerations for this ancient strategist. Sun Tzu, who in *Pure War* Virilio calls his great teacher, is the name by which the author (Sun Wu) of the legendary ancient Chinese military manuals of the Warring States period is more commonly known. His *Art of War* is a properly interdisciplinary text, read by executives of Fortune 500 companies and hip-hop artists alike (not that the two are mutually exclusive).

information all the same. And that's exactly what the Americans are trying to do. In my opinion, they are misguided. For that sentence offers only a relative truth...' (ibid: 176) <sup>77</sup>

What makes its truth relative is the fact, also understood by Sun Tzu, that total *knowledge* is insufficient. In the *Sun Tzu*, this great totality that is sought by Goebbels is approached in somewhat different terms, by means of a words without English equivalent: *shih* and *tao*.

*Shih* is that power that is inherent in a situation, carried in its shifting dynamics, changing continually along with its multifarious conditions (Sun Tzu, 1999: 104). Because *shih* exists only in the moment, the sage general, the individual to whom the *Sun Tzu* is addressed, cannot hold onto it. 'What can be stored, however, is knowledge. In the *Sun Tzu* knowledge is the ability to see *shih*.'<sup>78</sup> Thus does Sun Tzu say: 'And so one skilled at battle / Seeks it in *shih* and does not demand it of people. / Thus one can dispense with people and employ *shih*.' (ibid: 124) One cannot be taught how to use *shih*, precisely because its masterful use entails attunement to the specificity of the situation, which by its nature is incomparable to those which have unfolded previously.

*Shih* is made use of through what is translated as 'the node'. Where *shih* can be thought as 'the rush of water, to the point of tossing rocks about', the node is 'the strike of a hawk, at the killing snap. [...] *Shih* is like drawing the crossbow. / The node is like pulling the trigger.' (ibid: 25) The two are inseparable. Without the node that permits the instantaneous shift from the tensile string to the arrow's release, the change from one state to another, *shih* cannot be used to the general's advantage: 'The *shih* of battle do not exceed the extraordinary and the orthodox, / Yet all their variations cannot be exhausted.' (ibid)

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<sup>77</sup> Though they are sufficient to warrant a study of their own, the parallels between Virilio and Sun Tzu are striking. Sun Tzu devotes an entire chapter, the last, to the discussion of intelligence, particularly with respect to the employ of spies. The general who does not commit himself to the proper management and treatment of spies, and to the expedient and just use of the information they provide, 'is utterly inhumane. / He is not the general of the people. / He is not the assistant of the ruler. / He is not the ruler of victory.' (Sun Tzu, 1999: 174) He explains that 'the means by which an enlightened sovereign and a wise general act, and so are victorious over others and achieve merit superior to the multitude's — This is foreknowledge.' It 'cannot be grasped from ghosts and spirits, / Cannot be inferred from events, / Cannot be projected from calculation. / It must be grasped from people's knowledge.' (ibid: 180) Citations from Sun Tzu come from the Denma Translation Group's 1999 manuscript *Victory Over War: the Wisdom of Taking Whole*, later published as *The Art of War: A New Translation* (Sun Tzu, 2001); thanks to Kidder Smith for making the manuscript available.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of the varieties of ways in which *shih* is presented in the *Sun Tzu*, see ibid: 68-69.

The ability to see *shih* only fructifies in the knowledge of *tao*. *Tao* is the wholistic set of energy relations, that which is composed ‘of multiple *shih* — of all *shih*.’ (ibid: 70) Knowledge of *tao* comes only through the painstaking mastery of *shih*. The great obstacle to this is our attachment to habits, even ostensibly virtuous ones: ‘Pure and honest, she can be shamed. / Loving the people, she can be aggravated.’ (ibid)

Most importantly, while attachment can prevent the sagacity necessary to accomplish the almost impossible — the victory over war, which can only be achieved through a perpetual struggle — the sage general is nevertheless grounded by her ethical obligation to the people. It is only when this is enacted without attachment to its specific, nameable modes, like love or honesty, that it is genuinely *responsible*. That is, it permits a response, to whatever situation in which the commander finds herself, which is able to be unfettered by fixation to particular habits or attachments. One can therefore, and without contradiction, love the people without loving them.

What binds the commander to the ruler is therefore only secondarily political, developing as it does from their shared ethical bond. Like the ruler, the general ‘seeks only to preserve the people, / And his advantage accords with that of the ruler.’ (ibid) And so the general who acts in accordance with *tao*, even though she be in the employ of the ruler, is not bound to obey the ruler if it is clear that the ruler’s position is not itself in accordance with *tao*. ‘Thus when according to the *tao* of battle there is certain victory, / and the ruler says do not do battle, / one can certainly do battle. [...] When according to the *tao* of battle there is no victory, / and the ruler says one must do battle, / one can not do battle.’ (ibid: 71) If it truly serves the cessation of conflict, it is unethical to desist from battle.

The aim of the general who would effectuate the cessation of aggression must be a mastery that can be so ‘skilled at attack, [that] the enemy does not know where to defend’, so ‘skilled at defense, [that] the enemy does not know where to attack.’ (ibid: 27) This is a question of engineering the *enemy*’s knowledge of one’s logistical composition, constitution, and strategic and tactical agenda. This is itself a ‘*tao* of deception — / Thus when able, manifest inability. / When active, manifest inactivity. [...] Thus when he seeks advantage, lure him. / When he is in chaos, take him.’ (ibid: 14) The general who is ‘skilled

at moving the enemy / Forms and the enemy must follow, / Offers and the enemy must take. / Move them by this and await them with troops.' (ibid: 124) In this way, though 'the fight is chaotic, yet one is not subject to chaos.' (ibid: 25)

This management of chaos continues to be of pivotal importance to the American military. In *The Framework of Operational Warfare*, Clayton R. Newell discusses the emergence of the term 'operational art' into the United States Army's official discourse. It was the revised edition of "Field Manual (FM) 100-5", published in 1986, that introduced this term, which it defined as 'the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations.' While the terms 'strategy' and 'tactics' are often taken outside the military to encapsulate the entirety of the conduct of war, Newell explains that 'they alone are not adequate to explain many of war's activities [and] that while operational art may be new to many students of war, the concept of operational art is not.' (Newell, 1991: xi)

Newell quotes Sun Tzu's claim that to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill (Newell, 1991: 92). For Newell the contemporaneity of deception takes the form of a kind of posturing: it must be apparent to both sides that both forces are actually willing to engage in combat (ibid: 92). A product of the language of deterrence, Newell's treatise is concerned with the plausibility of the *threat* of strike, counterstrike, or that most perverse, ingenious invention, the 'pre-emptive counterstrike'.

Born also of the age of deterrence, the operational sphere is a necessary response to the logistical complexities faced by the modern military. The operational is concerned with the mediation between strategic objectives and their tactical application, which demand imagination as well as calculation; operations must be at once art and science (ibid: 28) It is in this respect that, while the term itself may be new, the concept to which it refers, the meeting of art and science, is far from it. As he explains, both are necessary in the actuality of war. Even if there were not an enemy to contend with,

'the employment of a modern military force with its vast array of complex weapons and equipment is difficult at best. The addition of an enemy who wants to disrupt that already complex employment of military forces makes the difficult become next to impossible without

detailed plans to provide at least a starting point for tactical commanders, since virtually no plan survives its first contact with the enemy in the chaos of war.' (ibid: 93)

An example of a contribution made by the operational arts is something called the 'Five-Paragraph Format', a standardized way of communicating strategic objectives to tactical commanders, and reporting tactical results to strategists. Another is the campaign plan, a kind of logistical 'road map' developed from the operational perspective that outlines how tactical forces will achieve necessary tactical objectives that will lead to the fulfilment of a larger strategic objective. By means of this map, which as in Deleuze and Guattari's *On the Line* is similarly concerned with 'establishing contact with the real experimentally' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 25-6), tactical commanders learn where and when they will fight. Such technologies — for such a format is as much a technology as a guided missile — are invaluable to military commanders in helping them to

'be able to deal with the fog of war. Although the planning process is important, it is the fog of war, featuring incomplete intelligence on the enemy and imperfect information on friendly forces, which dictates that commanders have the flexibility and capability to change plans even in the midst of the chaos of war. [...] In fact, good military planning from any of the three perspectives of war must include plans to change plans. This is simply a method of saying that military leaders and commanders, regardless of their perspective, must be prepared to adapt their plans to the situation.' (ibid: 93-4)

Its voicing of the persistence of the desire to endure chaos without succumbing to it, also Goebbels' preoccupation, makes Newell's book in many ways a reiteration of the basic military concerns of Sun Tzu. For Sun Tzu, the desire for exhaustive knowledge, and, critically, for the structures which permit its ordering, is indeed something to be aimed at. Greater depth and breadth of knowledge permits greater sensitivity to the possible range of tactics. The use of spies is perhaps the most important mode of such sensitivity: it is the only way to attain reliable 'foreknowledge'. (ibid: 175)<sup>79</sup>

However, there is a deeper current in Sun Tzu, one that, as Virilio notes, is lost on the Nazi propagandeur his counterparts in the American military brass. This is the fact that the general only attains excellence who strives at all costs *not* to fight. Once engagement becomes *absolutely* necessary, it is critical to capture victory without taking or losing a life; thus information that spies can provide is invaluable because it enables the

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<sup>79</sup> On the significance of Sun Tzu's teachings for the modern military, see De Landa, 1991: esp. 179, 182.



general to accede to the knowledge of ‘the nature of the enemy’ without which it is impossible to avoid resorting to killing or death. A general who does not at all costs seek to avert violence is ‘utterly inhumane’ (ibid: 174). ‘Taking a state whole is superior. / Destroying it is inferior to this. Taking an army whole is superior. / Destroying it is inferior to this. [...] Therefore, one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not skillful. / Subduing the other’s military without battle is skillful.’ (ibid: 19) Victory over an enemy can and must, for the humane general, be only a moment in the struggle to achieve victory over war. In pursuit of this greater victory, Sun Tzu enjoins the general to be:

‘Subtle! Subtle!

To the point of formlessness.

Spirit like! Spirit like!

To the point of soundlessness.

Thus one can be the enemy’s fate star.’ (ibid: 27)

It could be said that the general’s challenge is therefore at once epistemic, ethical, and existential. ‘The all-victorious sage commander doesn’t attain victory by bringing the enemy over to her side but by creating the existence of a larger view that includes both sides.’ The more immersed one is in the fog of war, the more difficult it is to carve out such a view, which must be prepared to release fixation to attachment. That is, this ‘larger view’ does not equal the creation of a metanarrative into which others are forced to slot themselves. Rather, it entails preparing oneself to have one’s cognitive and intuitive map entirely undone by the terms of the encounter with the situation, and yet somehow to remain sufficiently ethically grounded to identify what will *preserve the people*, and to act upon it effectively, without hesitation.

Whereas Deleuze and Guattari’s experiential map is reversible and can be taken apart (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 25-6), the map that could be seen to be that of the victorious general is neither. It retains every trace of its encounters, and is entirely binding. In a position of responsibility for the well-being of others, of every other, even those who, as her ‘enemies’, would wish her ill, every word or deed impacts upon her map such that it cannot be undone. This map is the source of knowledge, the record of the experience of situational *shih*, the means by which *tao* is found to be intellegible; it permits the invention of strategy and the skilful tactical measures to carry it out. But it also is an ethical yoke; like Deleuze and Guattari’s map it is also capable of constant

modification, but this modification only strengthens it further. In this respect, despite its surface similarity, the *Sun Tzu* is a world apart from Deleuze and Guattari's war machine.

### *A Lost Dynamism*

The chapter entitled "1227: Treatise on Nomadology: — The War Machine" could be said to be *A Thousand Plateaus'* avant-garde. It performs in writing the arrangement of fragmentary examples and historical moments into a tight formation led into a blinding counter-attack against what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the State apparatus. The chapter is a co-ordinated fury of moments of tactical engagements between embodiments of the opposition between the appropriating and conserving State apparatus and the ungraspable experimental war machine, whose logic remains intimately Spinozist: the 'fusional multiplicity that effectively goes beyond any opposition between the one and the multiple.'

This opposition is clear from the outset, in the first of a number of intercultural appropriations that cover every inch of the earth in their ahistoricizing sweep. The three Hindu gods Mitra, Varuna and Indra become examples that legitimate a conflictual overcoming action that is itself legitimated by the great fusional *fabrica* taken from Spinoza. Deleuze and Guattari configure a relationship, drawing upon the 'definitive analyses' of Georges Dumézil, which posits Indra's function as one of literally radical opposition to both Mitra and Varuna. They say that Indra 'can no more be reduced to one or the other [to Mitra or Varuna] than he can constitute a third of their kind. Rather, he is like a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, an irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis. *He unties the bond just as he betrays the pact.*' (Deleuze and Guattari, op.cit: 351-2) But what permits him to be seen as that which unties the bond and betrays the pact is in actuality an ethical bond that binds all three gods. Indra may not be one of them or a third of their kind, but then neither is Mitra or Varuna. His untying of a bond acts as the construction of a stronger one — as in the process of making felt, where each unpicking of bits of wool permits the felt fibers to be even more densely interconnected.

In Deleuze and Guattari's work, the fickleness of their curating practices make it easy to insist that, for instance, Indra is not really like this, nomads never actually did that, and so on. And so it is important to mark the recognition that their project is not concerned with writing accurate history, but with the construction of a *fabrica* that can be mobilized for *revolutionary* cultural struggles. In this respect, while it is by no means wrong to fire such objections at their work, it is nevertheless beside the point. But actually attending to the details of the historical and cultural contexts to which Deleuze and Guattari's appropriations pay lip service but which their writing abuses, provides a way of teasing out both the beauty of their work, which was a work of and for a particular historical moment, and a different way of conceiving the ethics of intimacy to which their work owes its very life, and which the war machine for all its talk of creativity can only ever destroy.

1227: This year is chosen by Deleuze and Guattari to locate the chapter on the war machine, a central current in the careful discordance that is *A Thousand Plateaus*. Brian Massumi has explained that each chapter

'carries a date because each tries to reconstitute a dynamism that has existed in other mediums at other times. The date corresponds to the point at which that particular dynamism found its purest incarnation in matter, the point at which it was freest from interference from other modes and rose to its highest degree of intensity. That never lasts more than a flash, because the world rarely leaves room for uncommon intensity, being in large measure an entropic trashbin of outworn modes that refuse to die.' (Massumi, 1993: 7-8)

In his introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the same words are followed by the explanation that 'Section 12, for example, the "Treatise on Nomadology," is dated 1227 because that is when the nomad war machine existed for a moment in its pure form on the vacant smooth spaces of the steppes of Inner Asia.' (Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: xiv)

James Clifford has drawn attention to the fact that 'nomadism' is 'often generalized without apparent resistance from non-Western experiences', and asks whether 'Nomadology [might be] a form of postmodern primitivism?' (Clifford, 1997: 39) It might be more aptly called a postmodern futurism.

The nonsequential dates comprise an attempt to connect historical moments when some revolution or other was in its triumphant infancy, before securative State powers

could kill its promise and send its cultural and political experimentalism back underground. *A Thousand Plateaus*' decontextualizations are less a deliberate attempt to flout something called 'cultural specificity' than they are an effort to make a weapon out of moments whose momentum was lost.

It is difficult, in *A Thousand Plateaus*' "1227: Treatise on Nomadology — The War Machine" to pull past the language of conquest. Indeed it is ultimately impossible to mobilize the war machine to nonviolent ends, but not because of its language.

In describing-while-inventing the war machine's properties, Deleuze and Guattari write: 'The question is not one of quantities but of the incommensurable character of the quantities that confront one another in the two kinds of war machine, according to the two poles.' The first of these polarities that constitute the war machinic continuum is the mode of the war machine which is constituted in the 'actuality' of war. Here where the war machine engages in war with the State apparatus, where the State attempts to appropriate the war machine, the object of the war machine is war itself.<sup>80</sup> The second polarity could be considered the war machine's 'essence': this is manifest in its pure form when the war machine has not war as its object but rather 'the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth space and of the movement of people in that space.' It is crucial that the war machine *meets war*; *actual* combat, at least according to Deleuze and Guattari, is not its *nature*, but something to which it is provoked. It meets it 'as its supplementary or synthetic object, now directed against the State and against the worldwide axiomatic expressed by States.' (ibid: 422-23). Thus, they argue, actual aggression is not essential, but given the conditions of oppression, a *necessary* supplement:

'It is not the nomad who defines this constellation of characteristics; it is this constellation that defines the nomad, and at the same time the essence of the war machine. If guerrilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary and popular war are in conformity with the essence, it is because they take war as an object all the more necessary for being merely 'supplementary': *they can make war only on the condition that they simultaneously create something else*, if only new nonorganic social relations. ... [War machines] bring connections to bear against the great conjunction of the apparatuses of capture and domination.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 423)

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<sup>80</sup> The 'sedentary' vs. 'nomadic' opposition comes directly from Ibn Khaldūn, who uses it to differentiate between groups amongst the Arabs and Berbers; see Ibn Khaldūn, 1978: 9.

Where for Michael Taussig, not mimesis itself but the *mimetic faculty* is the ‘nature which culture uses to make second nature’ (Taussig, 1993: 233), here the war machine is likewise a creative — a manipulated and manipulatable — faculty.

The terms of the war machine dictate that the encounter with the State function can only be read in terms of an economy of violence, and proscribes the possibility of a response that does not itself resort to violence. That violence against violence is not unjust is beside the point. In his discussion with Lotringer, Virilio suggests that any attempt to respond with violence to a greater violence can only entrench violence itself. Lotringer had put the question to him in distinctly Deleuze-and-Guattarian terms: ‘Do you think we can still use the war-machine against the State-machine? Is it possible to fight the State with war (urban guerrilla tactics, in particular)?’ Virilio’s response:

‘I don’t think so at all. The national states already have too many means in their possession. National states are kernels of states in their pure forms, conglomerated bits of pure State. One cannot use violence against what is already violence, one can only reinforce it, take it to extremes — in other words, to the State’s maximum power. [...] Today, the only recourse is non-violence. (Virilio and Lotringer, 1997: 56)

Its inability to be other than violent binds the war machine to only ever sell itself out; at bottom, its logic is also that of the state, which is to secure itself, as both a condition and a process. As useful a resource as the war machine might seem to provide by performing the figure of what can never be co-opted, the fact remains that it remains a function of the conflictual consciousness that suffuses any combatants and makes them a single function, and that violent resistance can only effectuate the diversification of the violence it combats. This conflictual consciousness is what Sun Tzu’s general must defeat. ‘Taking whole is a victory over aggression. It arises in the unique moment of each circumstance. It preserves the possibilities. Victory can only be ongoing, a way of being rather than a final goal. It means embracing all aspects of the world. Trying to reject parts of it perpetuates the sense of struggle, in oneself and the world. Victory over war is victory over this aggression, a victory that includes the enemy and thus renders further conflict unnecessary.’ (ibid: 87)<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Although it seems impossible to imagine that Deleuze and Guattari were not familiar with Sun Tzu, especially given their close reading of Virilio (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 554n22, 558n63), and although his work seems to be the ghost in their war machine, his name is not mentioned anywhere in “1227”.

The line between Pure War and victory over war is so fine as to be nearly imperceptible. The difference is that victory over war is primarily ethical. Sun Tzu thus raises a radical and difficult idea: the possibility of battles that can be seen to be nonviolent. The danger of this idea should not prevent its consideration. Surely Goebbels may also have imagined that the Third Reich, once achieved, would be a 'peaceful' reign, and that any tactics were justified in order to attain it. But this is closer to Machiavelli than Sun Tzu, in which the end is and must always be defined not in the language of politics but that of ethics. To pick up again, finally and circuitously, on Virilio's initial point, 'anticipation of the profile of the enemy' and the drive to know everything so as to fear nothing entail an informational mapping of a theoretically finite but actually inexhaustible totality. They are questions of knowledge only of 'things that are subject to ready calculations — the physical elements of warfare, logistics, that which can be counted.' (Sun Tzu, 1999: 71) The *Sun Tzu's* profundity lies elsewhere. On one level it is the pre-eminent guide for the conduct of war. But above and beyond that, it is the means to war's cessation. Such a peace is therefore not the *opposite* of war. The overcoming of war that issues in peace cannot be reduced to being 'against war'.

Within the economy of violence, there is also the possibility of a 'peacetime'. It is no less violent, however bloodless. This is Virilio's 'Pure War'. 'It's not actual war, but logistical war. So the real problem is to oppose the war machine as the machine of societal non-development. [...] Today, the only recourse is non-violence.' (Virilio and Lotringer, 1997: 119, 56) In the postscript to *Pure War*, Virilio explains that, ultimately, 'pure war wasn't tied down to the confrontation between East and West, but to the development of science as *technoscience*. What has been forgotten is that during the period of deterrence, science became technoscience, that is, experimental science became one with technology. It became a sort of art for art's sake of science. Performance replaced philosophical reflexion. Technology performing for its own sake finally legitimated science.' (ibid: 167) Once legitimated, science was cut loose in a sprint to the death (ibid: 168).

Whether this race will, literally, find its finish is a question whose terms will have to be addressed in ways that will be adequate to the avatar of the 'Internet' that is to come. For him the Internet of the today 'is only a side road compared to the highway that

the real Web will become, a Web that will be controlled by the military. And don't tell me that the Internet will bring about world democracy. I split my sides at that. There's nothing more ridiculous.' He predicts that the neo-Net 'will become a war machine in the sense that Deleuze understands it of course.' (ibid: 180)

Indeed, the suggestion that this technology will promote democracy is laughable. But might it indicate not *simply* that the Internet is on a crash course with its Pure War application, although it may well be, but that this next thing might need to be thought apart from the question of democracy? Might its primary impact, though contained in and promoted by the form of this medium, occur elsewhere: in encounters that are not firstly political; in moments of resistance that, while they may make recourse to politics, are not defined in the language of politics? Could it be instead that this still barely imaginal medium, or agglomeration of media, can nourish other considerations? That the strands of experimental uses of technology could be manipulated to permit not so much a return from techno-performance to 'philosophical reflexion' but a provocation to thinking that will demand a philosophy that takes the form not of techno-knowledge — that which can be utilized in order to fear nothing and mobilize everything — but of the engagement with wisdom: 'the search for justice and the search for happiness' (Jean-François Revel, in Revel and Ricard, 1999: 186)? Such a suggestion would seem to pose the naive as palliative for the apocalyptic. But where does triteness end and the most broad urgency begin? The very difficulty of imagining what such a consideration of 'justice' and 'happiness' might look like, act like, and aim at — especially when coupled with the urgency of doing just that — demands its attempt.

In another time and place, to which this thesis will journey repeatedly, in a moment whose prophecy this thesis tries only to begin to discover<sup>82</sup>, the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou put this conditional condition succinctly: 'We are bound to succeed because we cannot fail, if you see what I mean.' (Filliou, in Wijers, 1996: 204-5)

We recall from above that Virilio posed three stages in the development of humans' war capabilities, culminating both in the weaponry of communication and in

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<sup>82</sup> The reference here is to Léo Bronstein, who writes: 'Maturity is the discovery of childhood's prophecy. History is the discovery of prehistory's prophecy. [...] One may say that it is not so much the adult's

what he called the ‘information bomb’. He predicted that, when this danger ‘is recognized as such, as a power that overwhelms military staffs, it may well be that a number of states, America, but certainly Japan and Europe as well, will impose a form of information deterrence, a *societal* deterrence. No longer nuclear deterrence, preventing the use of such weapons, but deterring the masses faced with flashpoint situations.’ (Virilio and Lotringer, 1997: 178)

In November, 1987, Robert Filliou posed the possibility of a fourth stage in human being’s war-making capabilities. At the time he was in the midst of a three-year, three-month, and three-day meditation retreat under the tutelage of His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. In lieu of his presence at their meeting, he wrote the following letter to the other members of the organizing group of the Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy conference:

‘Dear friends,

At Louwrien’s suggestion, I wrote down a few thoughts to share with you at your meeting.

Today is Labour Day, isn’t it? So first of all ‘Good Day’ and ‘Good Labour’. NOW:

This world of ours, so familiar and so nightmarish — this immature technological civilization we dreamed in our minds and built with our hands — can’t go on for very long, it seems.

Through strange yet predictable ways, it has become the catastrophe it bravely set out to avoid. It is doomed don’t you think, either through war, alas, or through peace. One way or the other it is as good as gone, give or take a few decades away.

Now we have been shown so many times — in factual studies, in film, in fiction — what the earth and living on earth would be like following a thermo-nuclear war or ecological disaster. But what would it be like if the clouds of incoming disaster were blown away by the gentle winds of what Bernard Benson calls in his Peace Book, the ‘Peace Bomb’? We don’t know, and it might be interesting to find out. If we want peace, we must prepare for peace, inwardly and outwardly.

[...]

The aim is not to fuel the right/wrong, good/bad or even ignorant/wise, explosive conflict, quite the opposite, and there is no need to consider ourselves as doves amidst hawks. Artists and others who disagreed with us<sup>83</sup> can contribute greatly to our venture by letting us know why they disagree. Beyond duality, we are aiming at a subtle and more profound ‘prise de conscience’, from everybody, for everybody.

Meanwhile, what of the old ‘if you want peace prepare for war game’? I suspect it will go on as before. But it will have stopped being the only game in town.’ (Filliou, in Wijers, 1996: 274-5)

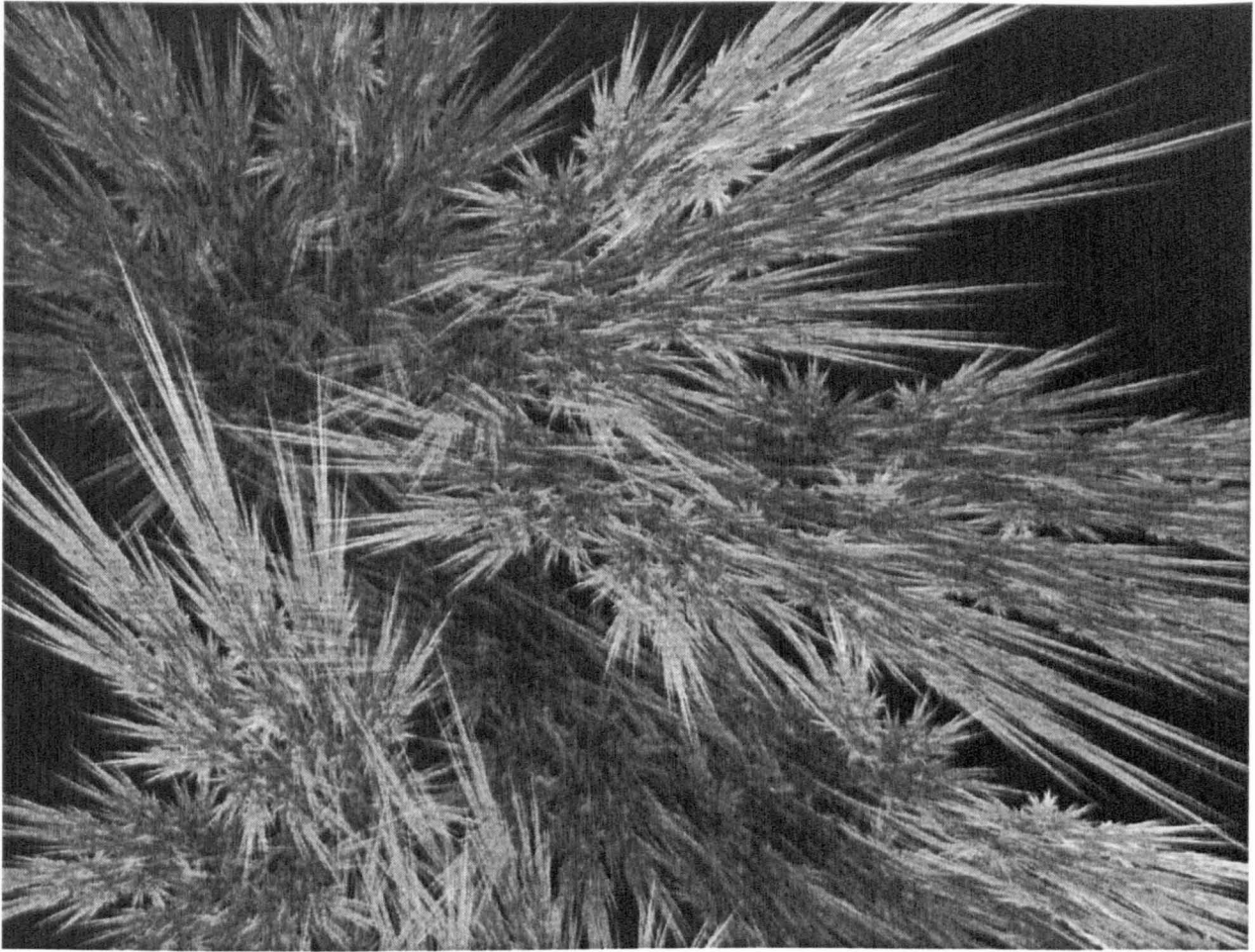
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character that is prefigured in childhood’s behavior as that childhood’s value and real character await discovery in the adult’s achievements.’ (Bronstein, 1995: xvii)

<sup>83</sup> Filliou’s reference is to the Art of Peace Biennale, held in Hamburg in 1986; see Chapter Four below.



*E-incarnation*



Scott Draves, "Electric Sheep" (Boutin, 2001: 49)

Scott Draves explains his computer project "Electric Sheep" as 'a vortex.' (Boutin, 2001: 49) It consists of a tangle of fractal animations that are 'modeled in a 26- to 65-dimensional space and executed by the collective power of connected Unix machines. As your unattended computer runs the screensaver, it crunches frames for the next new animation in the background.' Every fifteen minutes or so, a central server sends out 'rendering assignments and [then] assembles the results', producing ever more complex fractal images (ibid). The e-flock is thus at once meticulously administered and entirely haphazard. Its shepherd explains that it was his interest in the organic, 'biological nature of fractals' that got him interested in unleashing his flock on the Net. The resultant image becomes more cohesive the more heterogeneous it becomes: 'As more users join,' Draves

says, 'the available computing cycles increase, so the resolution and quality of the sheep increase.' (ibid)

This flock has compelling implications. One is that it enlists the anarchic arrangement of input to produce something that is not resistant to but actually depends upon that *unarchy*, and takes on greater structural integrity the more complex the input becomes. "Electric Sheep" thereby offers up a way not of bringing order to chaos, but of opening to its enactment. The second implication is one to which the project's name makes obvious reference: the fact that Internet technologies create a situation in which the totality of their users constitute and behave like a kind of planetary flock. Or rather, the technologies enhance an already existing herd-effect, giving us, as it were, a seemingly horizonless multi-dimensional pasture on which to roam. The products of our self-extensions into cyberspace might therefore be thought of — counter-intuitively, perhaps, because of their high-tech packaging — as a kind of organic residue.

These first two implications are developed, in somewhat different terms, in Thomas L. Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, which suggests that the global economy can be conceived of as an 'Electronic Herd' (Friedman, T., 2000: 114-23), whose volatility, scope, and potential for almost instant global impact, heedless of borders, makes its behavior appear to have more in common with meteorology than sociology or demography. The fabric of this new frontier that has been made possible by the convergence of three 'democratizations': the democratization of technology, of finance, and of information (Friedman, 2000: 46-67) This triologue has produced what is perhaps less a triply-complex democracy than an emergent profit-driven *unarchy*, one whose techno-existentialist refrain, like Sartre's condemnation to freedom, could be the mantra for the fledgling era of globalization: '*There's nobody to call.*'<sup>84</sup> Who is responsible? Or more accurately: Who isn't?

Finally, there is "Electric Sheep"'s third and most significant implication, one that binds the first two together and both goes beyond them and helps to account for them.

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<sup>84</sup> 'Global integration has raced ahead of education. Thanks to globalization, we all definitely know "of" one another more than ever, but we still don't know that much "about" one another.' (ibid: 127) Similarly, in a recent interview artist Glenn Ligon voiced a concern about the way in which the increased encounters between cultures has arguably diminished rather than enhanced the possibility of their intimacy (Ligon, in Firstenberg, 2001: 47).

This is that what he describes, Virilio describes, we all describe, as the 'Net' is actually not a 'net' at all. The Internet may, at one time, have been able to be conceived using the metaphor-model of the net, which is itself an ordered textilic construction, a weave of connections. But with the triplicate democratizations (technology, finance, information) and their resultant *un*archy, characterized so eloquently by Virilio's laughter at the notion that Internet equals democracy, it becomes clear that neither cyberspace nor indeed the globe can be seen to be a network in any sense of the word. A network demands an orderliness that is nowhere to be found. The global village does not consist of a web at all, but of a series of irregular, uneven, unorganized but tightly interlocking spirals.

In 1964 Marshall McLuhan made the argument that the 'formative power in the media are the media themselves' (McLuhan, 1964: 35) This power owes to the fact that media are effectively 'extensions [of] our human senses'; the senses, like the media which extend them, or indeed like any other technological resource, 'are also fixed charges on our personal energies'. That is, 'they also configure the awareness and experience of each one of us.' (ibid: 35) What is called 'New Media' is therefore a mix of media that are 'technological' but also, simultaneously and inseparably, ethical, existential, erotic.

But what if new media were not 'new' at all? What if the model for this newest staple, the form that this most formless, imperceptible, fast-paced race toward a post-digital tomorrow could be seen to take, were at the same time the most ancient? What if, as we watch the future become the past before it even has time to take shape as the present, it were as though the shape of that future had been already dictated, millennia ago, by the first technology ever created — arguably created by accident? What if the past and the present were now seen to be outdated technologies themselves, and those events, ideas, individuals, artifacts, ephemera that have comprised both of them, their 'fixed charges' past and future, could be seen to be part of the same dense, tangled, timeless, matted mass? What if that mass were without organization, and yet had properties such that the more it was pulled, tweaked, torn, and agitated, the more integrity it had? What if our attempt to free ourselves from that which binds us only further intensified the bonds' integrity; what if that were itself the formative power of this global medium? Knowing that becoming free was illusory, that the nature of our

interrelation was at once undeniable, unknowable, and utterly palpable, what would violence and nonviolence be but shades of the same mode of enacting those bonds? What kinds of questions could such a fabric of peace make possible?

### *The World Wide Felt*

‘For any question of language is a question of moral philosophy. Why do words get along together the way we want them to? Why do people? Those questions are the same. The languages are different.’ (Chin, 1998: 403)

In 1868 a treatise, written by someone referring to himself as ‘A Practical Hatter’, was published in Philadelphia and in London under the title *A Treatise on Hat-Making and Felting, Including a Full Exposition of the Singular Properties of Fur, Wool and Hair*. It began thus: ‘It is conceded as an axiom, that theory and practice, in the pursuit of any object, are in their natures essentially different and distinct. But at the same time they long for a mutual understanding each to conform to the assertions of the other, the consummation of all practical results being the mutual embrace and perfect reconciliation of these two attributes.’ (Thomson, in Pufpaff, 1995: 67) He went on, combining explanation with exhortation, to observe: ‘Theory without practice, or practice without theory, is like groping in the dark, and perfection in no trade can be attained till every effect can be traced to its cause, and *vice versa*.’ (ibid: 68)

He argued that ‘the attempt to illustrate the most useful branches of an art often results in crude and even erroneous descriptions of things of the greatest moment’; conversely what is passed off as accurate knowledge is ‘always at variance with the truth.’ (ibid) The author turned for illustration of this assessment to the recent ‘supplement to the third edition of that most respectable work the Edinburgh “Encyclopedia Britannica”,’ which offers apology for the previous edition’s ‘defective and erroneous’ treatise upon the subject of the ‘Hat’. The author worries about the implications of such a retractment, but sees it as an indication of the urgency of his own venture and its methodology: ‘Such a confession, and from such a source, sufficiently exonerates any one from egotism in an attempt to write a more perfect and correct description, coupling theory with practice; relieving the felting process from its misty obscurity by a faithful expose [sic] of the whole system: well knowing that an increase of

business, like free trade, will be the result of a right understanding of a formerly supposed mystery, viz., the True cause of Felting.’ (ibid: 68-9)

The process by which wool felts is still sometimes mysticized. In her “20th Century Update” to the volume that includes the 1868 treatise referred to above, editor Susan Pufpaff says: ‘No one completely understands why animal fibres make felt even in this age of modern research and technology.’ According to her the only consensus is that ‘Animal fibres felt and plant fibres do not [...] The fibres must be agitated in some manner [...] and] Some moisture is required to make the process work. Beyond those three statements, our knowledge of what makes felt has not changed much in the last 100 years.’ (ibid: 136) When asked about the veracity of Pufpaff’s claim, one contemporary felt-maker noted, firstly, that there is in fact a felt-making process that does not require moisture — synthetic felts can be made by a process called ‘Needle Felting’ whereby a number of needles agitate the fibers — and suggested that Pufpaff’s assessment was misleading. But she went on to add, however, that whether or not it is true to assert that ‘no one completely understands why animal fibres make felt’ (ibid) ‘depends upon what level of understanding you’re talking about. At one level, it *is* mysterious in that at one moment you have a chaotic mass of fibres and suddenly you have a material with intense structural integrity.’<sup>85</sup>

Donald suggests that ‘feltmaking could go back almost to the dawn of consciousness, and would be part of man’s earliest technology.’ (Donald, 1983: 65, 61) Although commercial production of wool felt, which was first effectively mechanized during the Industrial Revolution, began to decline around the mid-20th century (ibid: 66), felt is by any measure an extraordinarily prolific material. A variety of ‘wool, hair, and fur fibers can all be used in making felt’, but ‘wool from sheep is the most frequently employed fiber, as it possesses the best felting properties. Animal fibers of any kind can be combined with a wide variety of nonfelting fibers in the production of felt fabrics. The majority of felts made today do include fibers other than the animal hair fibers.’ (Joseph, 1986: 257) In more recent history, felt manufacturers have been developing these fiber blends into an impressive product line (as an example, see the web-page for Boston Felt’s

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<sup>85</sup> This comes from my conversation with feltmaker Kendra Rafford of Halcyon Yarns in Bath, Maine.

alphabetical menu of '500 Uses for Felt', 1999). By 1983, 'use of nonwovens... was estimated as worth \$1.3 billion. Each year this section of the textile industry increases in importance.' (Joseph, 1986: 259)

But it was not until the turn of this century that the process by which wool becomes felt was fully understood. Only a few years ahead of the 1868 *Treatise on Hat-Making and Felting*, Tomlinson's 1854 *Encyclopedia of Useful Arts and Manufactures* noted that pressed felt is one of the oldest forms of non-woven fabric, and that while the woolen fibers 'become stably intermeshed by a combination of mechanical work, chemical action, moisture and heat', the actual reason why felting occurs was unknown. It was speculated that it had to do with existing tension in the wool, or the unique jagged shape of its surfaces.

It was the French scientist Gaspard Monge<sup>86</sup> who first described the ability of wool fibers, grouped in a mass, to felt — an ability attributed to the way in which they *creep* in a tip to root direction when pressure is exerted on them, itself caused by their scaly surface. The scales 'overlap from the root of the sheep's wool fibre up to the tip', and 'when you pour hot water onto the wool fibres', or otherwise introduce moisture into the mix, 'the scales open up. Then when you rub it, roll it, pound it or tread it, the scales interlock and close up tighter than ever.' (McGavock and Lewis, 2000: 7) Combining the rigidity of its scales and the elasticity of the fiber, and a natural curling of the fiber that differs depending upon the breed, age and diet of the sheep, each strand is a mixture of two different tensile and textural properties: comprised mainly of the protein keratin, the strand is made up of two longitudinal bundles. One is hard and stiff and the other soft and supple, and because each bundle twists on its own axis inside the fiber, the hair is not simply curled but slightly spiraled as well, which gives the strand its 'crimp' — a natural wave or curl (Donald, 1983) More recent microscopic investigations reveal

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<sup>86</sup> Monge is one of the curiosities in the cabinet of Deleuze and Guattari's "1227: The War Machine: A Treatise on Nomadology". Though they conduct a comparison between felt and quilts in the chapter in *A Thousand Plateaus* entitled "1440: The Smooth and the Striated", which directly follows "Nomadology", they do not connect Monge with the discovery of the felting process. Their focus is upon felt's potential to materialize what they intend by their notion of the nomadic, in the construction of which felt plays an important role, but has the effect of both dehistoricizing and domesticating Mongol culture past and present (see Phipps, 1999: 76). As for Monge himself, he figures into Deleuze and Guattari's development of something called 'nomad science' which they track through its encounters with the 'excesses' of 'dominant

that the keratin molecules themselves spiral on their own axes as well as with one another, which means that a strand of wool is like a coiled helix of coiled helices. Cross-links between these molecules keep them folded as well as intact when they are pulled and stretched. The repeated exertions of firm pressure, heat and moisture during the preparation process make the grouping of strands more and more tangled, and eventually a layer of felt is made. (Burkett, 1979: 1; Donald, 1983)

Citing evidence of references to wool usage ‘in the detailed narratives of the Old Testament as well as in the works of Homer, Herodotus and other classical authors, and also in vase paintings’ Agnes Geijer writes that ‘[t]he oldest civilizations of the ancient world may be termed ‘woolen’ cultures.’ (Geijer, 1979: 3-4) Felt is certainly the world’s oldest fabric. ‘People learnt to make felt before they could spin, weave or knit, probably during the Bronze Age. It is quite possible that sheep were the first animals to be domesticated after dogs, providing milk and meat and, as a by-product, their skins for clothing.’ (McGavock and Lewis, 2000: 10)

J. Kay Donald refers to one account, now long anonymous, of the ‘story of the origin of felt [that] attributes its discovery to the early practice of wearing animal skins with the wool or fur closest to the body for warmth. Continual warmth, sweat and wear would have caused the inner layer eventually to felt.’ (Donald, 1983: 57) In the (King James Version of the) Old Testament, in Genesis 3:21 we find that God clothes Adam and Eve in hides as they leave Eden (see also *ibid*: 61). ‘Unto Adam and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.’ (Genesis 3:21)<sup>87</sup>

Donald notes that the ‘Biblical Joseph’s coat of many colours may have been made of felt’, and refers to yet another uncited story which holds ‘that Noah laid down fleece to make a soft resting place for the animals in the ark. Warmth, trampling and urine would certainly have done the rest, and the story claims that by the journey’s end the floor covering had become the world’s first felt rug.’<sup>88</sup> Human beings’ realization ‘that they could take wool fibers, apply heat and water, and then pound the fibers with rocks

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science’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 370-71 and 555-6, n36, especially). It is interesting to wonder at the part that his studies of the properties of felt might have played in Monge’s work.

<sup>87</sup> From *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, Philadelphia: National Bible Press, (date not given), p. 8

to create a cloth that would hold together' occurred '[l]ong before recored history' (Joseph, 1986: 257). The veritable menu of felt's Biblical originary myths continues with a story of Abel, the son of Adam and 'first' shepherd, who is supposed to have had the idea that the fleece from his sheep would make a similarly fine coat for men if he could devise a way to make the wool stick together. 'He cut some and tried various ways without success. Finally he grew angry and jumped up and down on the offending fleece, thus achieving his objective.' (Donald, op.cit: 57, 61, 62)

It is fitting that, no matter which Biblical or historical figures are featured in them, all of the stories of the birth of felt 'attribute [its] origin ... to happy accident rather than conscious intent' (Donald: 1983: 62) From France hails the story of St. Feutre of Caen, who is the the patron saint of feltmakers. He is said to have 'discovered' felt as a result of wearing fleece as padding in his sandals. 'Other European countries also have stories of saints or of itinerant monks discovering felt in the same way.' (ibid) Indeed, McGavock and Lewis tell another variant of this tale: 'In early Christian times, St Clement (the patron saint of hatters) and St Christopher (the patron saint of travellers) were each on the run at different times. It is said that the fleeing saints took off their sandals and wrapped their sore feet in scraps of fleece plucked from the hedges, then replaced their sandals and continued on their hot and sweaty way; at the journey's end, the wool had turned into a felt sock. This proves that all you need to make felt is a fleece, warm water and a measure of agitation' (McGavock and Lewis, 2000: 9) — for which religious persecution seems to have done nicely.

This material, the process of making this material, and the uses of this material were an intimate part of the lives of the people of the felt and the animals from which they harvested it. Felt was as much pragmatic as cosmogenetic; the patterning of its ornamentation and embroidery, 'especially when the pattern covered the entirety of the fabric, actually helped to hold the felt together. This was particularly important when more hairy and less easily feltable wool was the only kind available.' (Donald, 1983: 27) These patterns were frequently 'based on circles and curved shapes such as spirals,

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<sup>88</sup> McGavock and Lewis also mention the story of Noah's Ark as an early felt factory; they point out that Mount Ararat 'is in Eastern Turkey where felt may genuinely have originated.' (McGavock and Lewis, 2000: 9).



scrolls and volutes. Simple animal forms, mythical beasts, and signs to ward off evil were common, and also used curved forms. Curves of stitchery or quilting on the finished piece strengthened it, where straight lines might have caused the felt to split.’ (ibid: 28)



Genealogical diagram, New Guinea (Schuster and Carpenter, 1996: 114)

‘To retain those connections, start with a line of unattached figures: Then enlarge one arm and the opposite leg of each figure, interlocking these spiral limbs with those of adjacent figures...’ (ibid)<sup>89</sup>

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari subject the games chess and Go to their State-Nomad logic. Chess is for them an example of ‘a game of the State, or of the court: the emperor of China played it’. While chess is ‘an institutionalized, regulated, coded war, with a front, a rear, battles... Go is war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy, whereas chess is a semiology.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 352-3) Schuster’s theory of the origins of chess contributes to the demand for the rethinking both of Deleuze and Guattari’s chess-Go opposition and of the model of nomadism that this opposition enables. As is frequently the case with respect to the material appropriated for use in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the book’s totalizing logic and insistence on a purity (whether of strategy, of violence, of exteriority) overlooks complexities of the specific examples they employ. The game Go, for instance, originated either in India or in China as far back as 2356 BCE, was brought to Japan in approximately 500 CE. During the Tokugawa period the game was accorded special status by the government, who began and operated four competitive schools to teach Go (“go”, 2001: n.p.) The implication that Go is not ‘a game of the State’ is therefore somewhat misleading.

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<sup>89</sup> Carl Schuster gave the following, rather lovely, description of his project: ‘My feeling is that chronology... is apt to be deceptive, and that archaeology often yields a completely false impression of the

Chess, by contrast, at least in the form in which we know it today, has a relatively shorter history. All evidence suggests that there was no version close to the modern game until the 6th century CE. There are a great number of earlier games which are thought to be possible forerunners. One of these was 'chaturanga', a Sanskrit name referring to a particular battle formation named in the *Mahabharata*. Chaturanga is a four player war game that by the 7th century CE had become popular in Northwestern India. It is seen to be the first precursor of modern chess as such because it involved, for the first time, two features that would later be found in all of the variations of the game: powers were different for different pieces, and victory or defeat hinged upon a single piece, now called the king ("chess", 2001: n.p.).<sup>90</sup> The Mongols played chess, too, a version of it in which war was just as 'institutionalized, regulated, coded' as it was for Deleuze and Guattari's 'Chinese emperor'. 'In Mongol chess, the king on the 'good' side was a Mongol noble, with male warriors (stallions or he-camels). The king on the 'bad' side was a Chinese viceroy, with female warriors (mares or she-camels).' (Carpenter and Schuster, 1996: 284)

Schuster believes that chess in fact originally 'developed out of genealogical iconography, specifically out of re-birth gaming boards: eg a pawn, reaching the far side, Heaven, is auspiciously reborn a Queen, while a rival King is killed by 'dis-membering' his social body (kingdom). Genealogical games reverse this: rebirth is achieved by 're-membering' a deceased ('dismembered') body.' (Schuster, in Carpenter, 1986: 34)

The presence of the body, however radically it might be abstracted, and more importantly, the presence of various expressions of kinship underlying it, was central to his work. Schuster was guided in his searches by the belief that art moves and develops through the practice of artists who retain 'silent assumptions' regarding 'rules obeyed without understanding'. He 'held the old-fashioned belief that a son learns a great deal from his father and a daughter learns even more from her mother. The power of tradition,

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course of events. I tend to [rely] more on the internal evidence of the designs themselves, using broad comparisons, which often lead back to symbolic origins.' (Schuster & Carpenter, 1996: 115)

<sup>90</sup> Schuster's research has suggested a number of versions of early chess that 'combine boards & dicing: the number of 'eyes' revealed by the dice determines which figure moves[...]; in Tibet, the Dalai Lama and the King of the Demons played cosmic dice for spiritual supremacy; [...] The *Rig-Veda* describes gods going around like *ayas*, ie casts of dice, while the names of the Indian world ages (*Yuga*) comes from dicing. Astrological & cosmic symbolism was all-pervasive in Egyptian games. In Chinese chess, the Milky Way divides the board into two camps. Even checkers was originally territorial & cosmic. [¶] Today the right of

he felt, was especially strong among nomadic tribesmen, in the way, say, mothers taught daughters to make fur clothing. In fact, the arts of native women proved to be his primary sources, providing him with his strongest evidence of continuity in cultural history.’ (ibid: 33)

### *Left to chance*

Pressed, rolled, tugged and torn, rematted. With its breathable and irregular spaces, its cross-lapped coiling textures, filaments and spiralling strands and clumps and bunches so finely integrated — but where exactly this integration *is* is unlocatable — the inter-*texture*-ality of felt refuses the simplicity of ‘planes’, even a thousand of them. Felt owes its consistency to its irregularity. And this owes to a *process* at once rigorous and haphazard. The making process has a specific aim, whose ‘imperfection’ has been perfected. But this itself, on the other hand, involves the leaving-to-chance — even if it is a methodical and meticulous leaving-to-chance — of the combination of the textures and interstices of the wool. It is made in such a way that its strength, one might even go so far as to say its virtue, is its irregularity, its pattern made up as much of space as of animal hair, enabling it to act as insulation, armor, filter, idol. Its status as, literally, the social fabric permitted it to be used for coronations, weddings, and funerals. Spoken and unspoken oaths were sworn on the basis of it. It is interesting to think that perhaps the more pragmatic significance of keeping your family warm is distinguishable *neither* from keeping evil out of your tent, *nor* from keeping your word.

‘Is it perhaps a strange coincidence that the spiral, the main single motif employed in felt decorations, is in fact so closely related to the actual scientific process through which each single hair passes in becoming, along with the other hairs, felt.’ (ibid: 30) Burkett writes that ‘[i]n almost every prehistoric culture the spiral as a single structure appeared as a decorative motif. Its frequent occurrence on stone images, rocks, pottery and even upon the body extended from certain tribes of Australian aborigines, to Central America, the steppe lands of Central Asia and to the British Isles. Double spirals were carved by Megalithic man. This latter is the most familiar as the Yin Yang of the Far East.

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asylum has only political meaning, but it once meant saving a life by timely arrival at a definite spot on a

That man was at an early stage preoccupied with the spiral order and his own spiral development is obvious from the labyrinth of the nineteenth century BCE in Egypt, Minoan Crete and Paleolithic rock engraving.' He suggests that, where it can be seen in all manner of seashells, plants and natural formations, in the 'spiral processes of wind, water, cloud and many other natural forces', the spiral has for tens of thousands of years 'ordered man's wanderings both before and after death in time and space.' (Burkett, 1979: 30)

The art of feltmaking began in Central Asia. From there it spread to China and to Japan, India and Sri Lanka, Russia and the Baltic, and Greece and Rome. The spread of the Roman Empire and Christianity seems to be responsible for carrying the art of making felt throughout Europe (Donald, op.cit: 65). Preserved records 'concerning the sheep-breeding and wool trade of the Roman Empire indicate that manufacture was organized on an international basis.' This distribution lasted through the Middle Ages, after which '[w]ool and woollen products then became one of the most widespread commodities of world trade and were of the utmost political and economic importance'; wool and woolens production and their export became increasingly important for Spain and Portugal and the 'British Isles... and new towns based principally upon the woollen industry sprang up along the Channel coast.' (Geijer, op.cit: 3-4)

Byzantium's and later Islam's spread brought feltmaking to North Africa (Donald, op.cit: 65). Chinese literary references to the use of felt go back as far as 2300 BCE, when it was used by warriors to make protective shields, hats, even boats. In the time of the Roman Empire, newly-free slaves would shave their heads and don felt hats, and so the word 'felt' became another word for 'freedom' (Burkett, 1979: 19). But it is from the Central Asian steppes that the oldest examples of felt have been found.<sup>91</sup> During the rule of the Mongols there was far more documentation of kinds of felt, its ornamentation, and its uses than there had been to date. Until the 19th century there was never 'any social distinction between the users of felt; it could be found in a palace or a *yurt*... It was only in this century when so much of the ritualistic belief of the sophisticated classes was

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field of play.' (Schuster and Carpenter, 1996: 285)

<sup>91</sup> These comprise the Pazyryk Finds, from the Altai Mountains, housed at Leningrad's Hermitage Museum. (Donald, 1983: 64)

eroded by outside influences and modernisation, that felts became solely the fabric of nomads — those who, from earliest times, have wandered back and forth over the steppes and other parts of Asia.’ (ibid: 20)

It is interesting to note the closeness between the Hungarian, Iranian, Georgian and Khotanese words for felt: *nemez*, *nemed*, *nabadi*, and *namadi* respectively, and the word ‘nomad’. Chingis Khan gave as the collective name for all the Central Asian (Turko-)Mongolian tribes which he unified: ‘the generations that live in felt tents’ (ibid), and for centuries the Chinese had identified these people with this material. One such identification from the 4th century BCE described the expanse of territory in which the Asiatic nomads made their homes as ‘the land of felt’. (ibid: 20) Indeed, this material provided not only, in terms of the physical demands of life on the steppes, virtually complete protection from all ailments, elements, and from battle – but had a spiritual and cosmological import. ‘Felt was [Asia’s nomads’] all-weather protection and had ritual and magical significance.’ (Donald, 1983: 54)<sup>92</sup>

### *Like stones in a quarry*

The Thirteenth Ecumenical Council was convened by Pope Innocent IV in June 1245. Rome had been surrounded by soldiers of the Holy Roman Empire and Innocent had fled with his court to Lyons under the protective aegis of King Louis. Among the most urgent points on Innocent’s agenda was ‘to seek a remedy against the Tartars.’ (Chambers, 1979: 115) The Mongols had sacked Moscow in 1238 and Kiev, the headquarters of the Orthodox Church, in 1240. In April 1241 a combined army of Poles and Germans were wiped out by the Mongols in Silesia. By December of that year, having reduced Pest to rubble, and decimated the last army capable of posing any threat to them as far as England, they had pushed to just a few miles shy of Vienna. Pope Gregory IX — who had long ignored pleas for help from Eastern Europe believing that the invasions were the work of Divine grace sent to punish the Eastern churches so that they would realize the

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<sup>92</sup> ‘The Mongols made felt idols which they believed guarded their sheep, watched over their families and took care of their ancestors. When a tomb at Pazyryk was opened, four fabulous white felt swans were found perched on the corners of a covered wooden wagon: it is thought that these were considered to have symbolic powers, and were there to transport the souls of the dead.’ (McGavock and Lewis, 2000: 9)

error of their ways and return to the Catholic flock — and other European rulers knew that it was only a matter of time before they would be attacked.

What saved them was neither ingenious strategy, nor brilliant tactics, but that inversion of divine intervention known as chance. The death of the Great Khan Ögödei required the leaders of the army to return to the Mongol capital Karakorum<sup>93</sup> for the succession of power. The Mongol army indefinitely postponed their ‘reconnaissance’ mission turned ‘exploratory invasion’ of Europe. But in their absence, their quite unexpected arrival and its horrific heraldings left its mark upon the feuding Christian rulers of Europe. Newly elected Pope Innocent IV called upon the Italian Franciscan friar John of Plano Carpini to undertake the papacy’s first ambassadorship, to travel into the unknown, across the steppes to the Mongol court. On Easter Sunday in 1245 the Italian Franciscan Friar John of Plano Carpini left Lyons, along with Friar Stephen of Bohemia (who was not to make the entire trip), and later joined by another Franciscan, Benedict the Pole (of Silesia), for what would be a year’s journey to Karakorum. They were armed with little else but letters from the pope intended for the newly elected Güyük Khan, which explained the finer points of the Christian faith and enjoined him to embrace them and their one true Church, but which were something of a smokescreen for the mission’s actual aims, which were to ‘discover the extent of the Mongols’ power, to observe the methods of their army’ (ibid: 116)

The interfaith encounters between the Mongol elites and their Christian emissaries constitute a remarkable narrative, one in which it is not the Mongols but their would-be Christian pastors who represent the nomad war machine.

Friar John was to deliver firm messages of warning to Güyük Khan. These represented something between a prayer and a bluff, because it was clear by this point that there was not an army in Europe that could mount a match for the Mongols. The first message summarized the finer points of Catholicism and demanded that the ‘Tartars’ acknowledge Christ and practice Christianity. The second threatened that Mongols must

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<sup>93</sup> At the time of William Rubruck’s visit to Karakorum, ‘it covered an area of one and a half square miles with suburbs beyond its four gates... It contained twelve Buddhist, Taoist and Shamanist temples, two Moslem mosques, one Nestorian church and palaces for members of the imperial family and court officials.’ It was a cosmopolitan capital through and through, ornate and eclectic, including a silver

‘humble themselves of their own accord’ because if God refrained himself from punishing their pride in *this* world, he would surely punish it in the next.

Güyük Khan’s response was to question how exactly the Pope knew that the words he spoke carried God’s sanction, to point out that surely he, Güyük, could not have conquered nearly all of Asian continent, and part of its European peninsula, unless God was on his side. He then invited the Pope, as the head of all Christian princes, to come and serve him, and said that if he did not observe this one of God’s commands, he could count himself among the Khan’s enemies. ‘If you do otherwise,’ he said, ‘God knows what I know.’ (Batchelor, 1994: 86-8) This was a threat that, luckily for Western Europe, was never carried out.

Just as the scramble for power after Ögödei’s death that had diverted the Mongols from completing the conquest of Asia’s westernmost peninsula, the death of Güyük Khan in 1248 gave rise to another intense jockeying for power. This was far from being merely a secular struggle.

During his reign, Chingis Khan’s defeat of the Chinese to Tibet’s northeast persuaded the Tibetans to submit to him and pay tribute. After his death in 1227, the payments stopped. In 1240, his grandson Godan mobilized 30,000 soldiers and invaded Tibet. Four years later he made the Tibetan lama Sakya Pandita an offer he couldn’t refuse, ‘inviting’ him to come and act as his people’s moral and spiritual leader. Sakya Pandita, along with his nephew Phagpa, set out for Godan’s court, arriving in 1247. So impressed was Godan with Sakya Pandita that the Khan gave him

‘temporal authority over the whole of Central Tibet. As Godan modified some of his more ruthless policies in accord with the precepts of Buddhism, so Sakya Pandita instructed his fellow countrymen not to resist the Mongols but to pay them regular tributes. This was the first time in the history of Buddhism that a monk was conferred with political power, and the beginning of the Buddhocratic government of Tibet, which was to last, with interruptions, until 1959.’ (Batchelor, 1994: 92-3)<sup>94</sup>

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drinking fountain designed by a Parisian master goldsmith named Guillaume Buchier, who had also provided impressive ornaments for the Nestorian church. (Chambers, 1979: 139-40)

<sup>94</sup> In 1578, with the *pax mongolica* a distant memory, Altan Khan, leader of the Tumed Mongols, who ‘had political aspirations of the order of Genghis Khan’, invited Sonam Gyatso, the most renowned lama of the Gelugpa order, to his ‘nomadic outpost on the Mongolian steppes’ (Batchelor, 1994: 188). ‘Recalling the encounter between Sakya Pandita and Godan Khan more than three hundred years before, the two men came to an understanding. In return for his teachings, Altan Khan bestowed on Sonam Gyatso the title ‘Dalai Lama’ (‘Dalai’ meaning ‘Ocean’ in Mongolian — as does ‘Gyatso’ in Tibetan). In return Sonam

Güyük's death in 1248, was succeeded as Great Khan by Möngke, his cousin; Möngke was the brother of Kublai, who succeeded Godan. The connection between the Mongol ruling elites and the Sakyapa order of Tibetan Buddhism continued when in 1253 Kublai invited Phagpa, then nineteen years of age, to his own court became his dharma student (ibid: 93) In Tibet, two orders, the Sakyapa and Kagyupa, both of which had begun officially in the eleventh-century, were competing for secular authority and so actively sought Mongol patronage. When Kublai had invited Phagpa to come to his court, he also invited Karma Pakshi, second Karmapa, head of the Kagyu tradition. Pakshi, 'being in Tibet rather than on Kublai's doorstep', as was Phagpa, 'took two years to reach the Khan, by which time Phagpa had been given supreme authority over Tibet. Karma Pakshi was greeted courteously at Kublai's court, but his presence gave rise to sectarian tensions and he soon decided to leave.' The choice of Phagpa was auspicious for the Sakyapa. But on his return journey to Tibet, Karma Pakshi was subjected to an even more auspicious detour: intercepted by a representative of the Great Khan, he was invited to Möngke's court at Karakorum.

### *Ecumenical encounters*

During his visit, William of Rubruck's active missionary work had provoked Möngke's attention, and he received the following request:

'Here you are, Christians, Saracens and *tuins* [which referred to both Buddhists and Taoists, those of *the way*], and each one of you claims that his religion is superior... The Khan would like you all to assemble together and hold a conference, ... to enable him to learn the truth.'" So it was, explains Batchelor, that on May 31, 1254, that things came into place 'for the world's first attempt at interfaith dialogue.' (ibid: 90)

The debate finally concluded, after heated arguments between William and the *tuins*, 'largely at cross purposes' — with William trying to refute the Buddhist and Taoist positions; with his fellow Nestorian Christians, who were not versed in rhetoric, unable to offer argument that did not take the form of recitation of scripture; and with the *tuins*

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Gyatso gave Altan Khan the title 'Religious King, Brahma of the Gods' and concluded with the ominous prophecy that within eighty years the khan's descendants would dominate Eastern and Central Asia. [...] Sixty-four years later (1642) Gushri Khan, leader of the Qoshot Mongols and head of an alliance of Mongol tribes, invaded Tibet, defeated the rulers of Tsang, displaced the Karmapa, and installed Ngawang Losang Gyatso, the 5th Dalai Lama, as ruler of the land.' (ibid: 188-9)



directing their arguments less at William or the Nestorians than to points aimed at pleasing the Khan ('Are there not great rulers in your country, and is not Möngke Khan the chief lord here? It is the same with gods, inasmuch as there are different gods in different regions.') William felt convinced that the *tuins* had been 'finally silenced by superior Christian reasoning', but was nevertheless perplexed and confused by the result of the debate: "for all that no one said, 'I believe, and wish to become a Christian. When it was all over the Nestorians and Saracens alike sang in loud voices, while the *tuins* remained silent; and after that everyone drank heavily.'" (ibid: 91)

The Khan's decision was delivered the following day: 'We Mongols believe that... just as God has given the hand several fingers, so he has given mankind several paths. To you God has given the Scriptures and you Christians do not observe them.' As Batchelor notes, '[d]espite the Khan's tolerant attitude, William's uncompromising approach was unwelcome. One wonders if he had got wind of the friar's private intentions, confessed in his report to Louis IX: 'for my own part I would, if permitted, preach war against them.'" (ibid) Friar William's

'theology was intolerant and dogmatic and his arguments were academic and philosophical. In desperation he attempted to browbeat his bewildered audience into embracing his faith by threatening them with hell fire. On more than one occasion [Möngke had] advised him to introduce his new doctrines more gently and simply and suggested that there might be more than one road to heaven, but to no effect.' (ibid)

The Great Khan himself told the proselytizing Christian to go home at once. Despite his grandiose aims for mass conversion, in his eight months in Karakorum he had managed to save no more than six souls (ibid). It seems that all six of these belonged to German children, whom he had succeeded in baptizing (Chambers, 1979: 141).

In 1255, a year after William had departed, Möngke held another debate, this time between Buddhists and Taoists, to permit him to determine which faith he would choose as his own. There was not a single representative of monotheism: no Muslims, no Christians, whether Nestorian or Catholic. The Buddhists emerged victorious, but since the matter that had been debated — a claim in a Taoist text that the Buddha had been a wayward adherent of Lao Tzu — remained unsettled, another debate was arranged in 1256, the year that Karma Pakshi arrived in Karakorum.

The Tibetan records of the debate claim that Karma Pakshi invited Taoist masters to debate with him, but that “none were equal to it and they all accepted his teaching.” A Chinese account explains ‘that the Taoists refused to appear and the Buddhists stated their case uncontested.’ (Batchelor, 1994: 94) Mōngke came to the inevitable conclusion that Buddhism was the most adequate choice. He announced:

‘The literati say that Confucianism is the first of the doctrines; the Christians who honour the Messiah believe in celestial life; the Muslims pray to heaven and thank it for its blessings. If all these religions were carefully examined as to their origins, one will see that no one of them can be compared to Buddhism.’ Then, returning to the same metaphor he had used with William of Rubruck, Mōngke held up his hand and said: ‘Just as the five fingers all project out from the palm, so Buddhism is the palm from which all the others stem.’ (ibid: 94-5)

### *Ethnographies*

In addition to being the first of several of European ‘emissaries’, it was Friar John de Plano Carpini that became the first European ethnographer of the Mongols. He noted that they made idols of felt in the image of humans and put them at either side of the door of their tent. Above this, they placed felt in the shape of teats, which they believed to guard their flocks and to insure that both milk and colts would be provided. ‘Whenever they began to eat or drink they first offer these idols a portion of their food or drink.’ (Carpini, in Burkett, 1979: 21) He noted that black felt was routinely placed inside Mongols’ tents to keep out evil; further, when one of the Mongols became deathly ill, a spear was placed outside their tent wrapped with black felt, and no strangers were permitted to enter the dwelling (ibid: 22)

The ethnographic tradition was duly carried on by William of Rubruck, who devoted much space in his accounts of his eight months among the Mongols to detailing Mongol culture. In Chapter XXV, entitled “Of Their Temples and Idols and How They Comport Themselves in the Worship of Their Gods”, he explained that while the ‘Mongols or Tartars belong to [the Uigur priests’] sect as far as their believing in only one God is concerned... they do, nevertheless, make out of felt images of their dead and they clothe these in the most precious materials and place them in one or two carts; these carts

nobody dares touch and they are in charge of their diviners who are their priests' (Rubruck, in Dawson, 1955: 141).<sup>95</sup>

De Rachelwitz notes that the 'Mongols made idols of felt and other stuff and believed that the spirits dwelt in them. They were kept inside the yurt as tutelary gods, or placed outside in special carts for general worship.' (de Rachelwitz, 1971: 47)<sup>96</sup> The Mongols used black felt inside tents to ward off evil, and seated brides — and also sacrificed animals — on white felt. Red and blue felts were used as well, for funerals, mourning, and so forth. Felt coats were a mark of status and were given as gifts on state occasions. (Donald, 1983: 63) William of Rubruck described the use of felt figures to create protector doubles for the man and woman of the house, and described the practice of making well-dressed images of the dead out of it, and putting them in the death carts. (Burkett, 1979: 21)

However much Thirteenth century Europe had been shaken by 'the disastrous menace of Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hordes', the effects of the reorganization of trade that it permitted more than compensated for putting the Holy Fear back in Christendom. 'The Levantine trade, now dominated by the Italians,' a situation for which the Mongols had been directly responsible, 'was soon reorganized after the period of disruption.' The Mongol missions 'had the effect of stimulating the influx of goods and art forms from the East. This is reflected by the many silk fabrics of East Asian origin mentioned in the written sources (church inventories) though less frequently preserved, and above all by the new style, inspired by Chinese motifs, which came to revolutionize the Italian silk industry during the fourteenth century.' (Geijer, 1979: 227)

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<sup>95</sup> Rubruck, unaware of the finer points of Buddhism, notes that many carry 'in their hands wherever they go a string of one or two hundred beads, just as we carry our rosaries, and they always say these words, "On man baccam", that is "O God, Thou knowest" so one of them translated it for me and they expect to be rewarded by God as many times as they make mention of Him by saying this.' (Rubruck in Dawson, 1955: 139) In fact this is the mantra '*Om mani padme hum*', and Rubruck was by no means alone in his confusion over its meaning; on the long history of ironies, misunderstandings, and mistranslations regarding the meaning of this phrase, usually rendered into English as: 'Om, the Jewel in the Lotus', see Lopez, 1998: 114-134; Rubruck's translation is mentioned specifically on p. 116.

<sup>96</sup> De Rachelwitz contextualizes the Mongols' religious practice in terms of a series of beliefs that 'revolved around the hazy notion of an all-powerful Tengri... or Heaven' (ibid: 46-7). De Rachelwitz' understanding of the Mongol concept of Heaven (*tengger*, which de Rachelwitz calls *Tengri*) and of the 'spirits' that 'dwelt' in felt, is itself rather 'hazy'. It suggests quite condescendingly that their own cosmology was something beyond their comprehension, whereas what seems more likely is, as Humphrey and Onon discuss, the existence of a world view that was pragmatically open-ended, 'epistemologically and ontologically versatile'. (Humphrey and Onon, 1996: sections 1, 3 and 5 especially)

When Chingis Khan's generals Subedei and Jochi, the Khan's son, were leading the Mongols' first European reconnaissance, they met their very first Western Europeans, who happened to be Venetian merchants. The Mongols and the Venetians became fast friends, both sides aware of the value that a partnership would bring. From then on, in exchange for supplying concise and detailed reports of the economic and military strength, and spreading whatever propaganda the Mongols required, in all of the countries that the merchants visited, the Mongols agreed that wherever the wind took them they would destroy all trading stations they encountered except for those of the Venetians, enabling them to have a series of incredibly lucrative monopolies. Their first act of good will was to destroy a Genoese station on the Crimea. Those lucky enough to escape fled to Italy, and gave to Europe its first report of these 'merciless horsemen.' (Chambers, 1979: 24-5).

Trade routes that had long been closed were reopened by the Mongols. Geijer notes that 'the papal inventory of 1295 tells us that large quantities of 'Tartar' fabrics, meaning Iranian as well as Chinese products, were accumulated in the papal stores by that time.' Another result of the Mongol Empire, 'which still included southern Russia in the early fifteenth century, was the transfer of Chinese craftsmen to its western territories. Silk manufacturing enterprises were developed in which Chinese motifs and techniques mingled with alien themes, especially Mohammedan character, such as fabrics with colourful stripes embellished with Cufic letters.' (Geijer, 1979: 114-15) Although it seems that the European importation of Chinese silks all but ceased after the middle of the fourteenth-century, the century of westerly flow of Chinese textile designs and techniques, facilitated by the Mongol empire, makes it difficult even now 'to determine in particular cases whether a fabric was made in China or further west.' (ibid: 114-15,124)

### *Intertextuality*

We readily employ metaphors of the woven in our thinking and speaking. The words 'text', 'texture' and 'textile' all come from the Latin verb '*texere*' which means 'to weave'. We often speak of one idea-thread that is 'woven' along with another idea-thread; a complex history will be spoken of as a weave of different voices; we write and think with warp and woof, a pliant grid (but a grid nonetheless, with its x, y, z axes). However vast

and intricate it may become, a weave is always organized in a state of regularity. Whether it is called a network or a meshwork (de Landa, 1997), this milieu operates as if it were the loom on which becoming is woven. Therefore no matter how vastly abstract or how nano-managed such thinking becomes, its products remain yoked to a body that is organized with warp and woof.

The problems with such constraints can be seen in a provocative study like Sadie Plant's *Zeros + Ones*, which attempts to marshal the digital universe into such a regularized structure. The style of the writing, fast paced and apparently anarchic, is at odds with its thesis, which rests on her demonstration of the equivalence of textile production and computer technologies, each of which is a manifestation of this great weave. She argues for a kind of otherness — one embodied primarily but not only by the women who have throughout history been integral if continually overlooked contributors and innovators in the long and seamless move from textile to digital technology — that has and can develop the capacity to manipulate and navigate the new world of this timeless weave.

In picturing this otherness, she relies on a version of the habitual evocation of that East that eternally holds the wisdom the West lacks. Lopez has noted the way in which 'Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism have long been objects of Western fantasy. Since the earliest encounters of Venetian travelers and Catholic missionaries with Tibetan monks at the Mongol court, tales of the mysteries of their mountain homeland and the magic of their strange — yet strangely familiar — religion have had a peculiar hold on the Western imagination.' (Lopez, 1998: 3) Similarly, Plant explains that '[t]he ways of the new world are long familiar to Pacific Asia'; quoting Daniel McNeil and Paul Freiberger's *Fuzzy Logic*, she suggests that: 'Indirectness, suggestiveness, evasion or evasiveness, the smile rather than the logical argument, sentiment rather than logic and objectivity, a polite affirmative answer rather than frankness or challenging opposition' are the way of the future. She caps this with McNeil and Freiberger's claim that: 'A strong sense of identity and direction gets one nowhere in cyberspace.' (Plant, 1997: 170)<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> In a recent lecture, Kuan-Hsing Chen mentioned a study conducted in Singapore that researched peoples' perceptions of the relationships between certain character traits and qualities and the geographical regions to which they could be said to belong. One of its conclusions was that the most characteristically Asian place

Her articulation of a sort of *shih* of femininity, slipping with unconscious age-old familiarity through the weave of the real, while the work of Irigaray and Lyotard are also central, depends heavily upon the nomadic as developed in Deleuze and Guattari. The confluence of the woven and the nomadic are visible in her evocation of prehistory's conquering Amazon tribes and their 'smooth, fast, and rhythmic' practices of war, 'silently weaving through defenses, slipping past without warning, unforeseen, unseen, camouflaged. Moving as flocks, advancing as packs, they operate with the sheer force of numbers, not the long arm of the law.' (ibid: 139)

From the outset of her study, Plant uses textiles to give form and shape to both the history that she organizes, one that is a cross-fertilized evolution of women and the net-works (from looms to computers) that they have conceived, worked, and developed. There are mentions of the nonwoven, but implicit in them is the assumption is that the textilic is a more evolved form. She mentions the felting process at work in the making of paper, but this only exemplifies the turn to cheaper cost-effective materials, with a *lumpen* wood pulp paper replacing finer woven papers (Plant, 1997: 61). Since its appearance on the planet, dated to 20,000 BCE, string came — through 'sophisticated textile production [around] 6000 BCE in the southeast regions of Europe' — to be 'the unseen weapon that allowed the human race to conquer the earth' (ibid); Leonardo da Vinci's 'intuition that textiles were "more valuable than the printing press" really put him ahead of his time' (ibid: 63). Again we must thank Europe for inventing global advancement in the form of a fabric spanning pre-history, Renaissance genius, and contemporary technology. It is perhaps necessary to imagine, as Plant does, such a transnational, translational milieu to deal with the intricacy of the interconnectedness of the contemporary world. But it is also worth attention to the fact that her description of Pacific Asian interpersonal tactics could also be straight out of Machiavelli, and that the imposition of warp and woof reifies the confinement from which she seeks freedom.

By contrast, 'making felt', like Taussig's mimetic faculty, takes 'us bodily into alterity'. In its enactment, 'It is the artful combination, the playing with perplexity, that is necessary; a magnificent excessiveness over and beyond the fact that mimesis implies

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on the planet was Latin America. Chen, unpublished lecture, Goldsmiths College, University of London,

alterity as its flip-side. The full effect occurs when the necessary impossibility is attained, when mimesis becomes alterity. Then and only then can spirit and matter, history and nature, flow into each others' otherness.' (Taussig, 1992: 40, 198) Taussig notes that it has become a rote response 'to lambast mimesis as a naïve form or symptom of Realism. It is said to pertain to forced ideologies of representation crippled by illusions pumped into our nervous systems by social constructions of Naturalism and Essentialism. Indeed, mimesis has become that dreaded, absurd, or merely tiresome Other, that necessary straw-man against whose feeble pretensions poststructuralists prance and strut.' (ibid: 44) In his work, however, mimesis operates as a moment of knowing that, 'in steeping itself in its object', is thus overflowed by it (ibid); one flows into the Other's otherness, and is able to become the Other's Other.

Felt works inclusively, as this 'sensate skin of the real' by embodying many possibilities at once. It is entirely different than liminality, than 'in-betweenness', 'because it is both positions ['inside and outside, part of, yet also observer of'] at one and the same time' (ibid: 111). Consequently it draws positively, continually, and irreversibly from each and all of them as an *intersectionality* at one particular moment. This is the difference between the war machine which permits no Other and making-felt in which Self and Other are separate but inseparable, cut from the same cloth.

Given the amassing of references that constitute *A Thousand Plateaus*, it should not be surprising to find that Deleuze and Guattari make room in their system for felt. It becomes for them the 'anti-fabric', the 'smooth space' that is opposed to the 'striated space' which woven fabric, with its warp and woof, is taken to embody. Felt, for them,

'implies no separation of threads, no intertwining, only an entanglement of fibers obtained by fulling [...] An aggregation of this kind is in no way *homogeneous*: it is nevertheless smooth, and contrasts point by point with the space of fabric (it is in principle infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction; it has neither top nor bottom nor center; it does not assign fixed and mobile elements but rather distributes a continuous variation).' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 475-6)

Here they offer their compliments to the horde: 'Even the technologists who express grave doubts about the nomads' powers of innovation at least give them credit for felt: a splendid insulator, an ingenious invention, the raw material for tents, clothes, and armor

among the Turco-Mongols.’ (ibid: 476) And here they also offer the pretense of attention to cultural specificity, an attention which serves here, as at other moments throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, to appear to dissolve rather than deal with a paradox, one that holds for, indeed *constitutes*, all of *A Thousand Plateaus*’ comparable figures (the nomadic, the Body without Organs, the Rhizome, and so on). The paradox — ‘that one must maintain both that [any of these figures] is an entirely artificial construct, the product of an extreme formalism and that it is entirely unformed, natural’ (Goffey, 1998: 72) — may be simply stated, but the tactical moves it demands for Deleuze and Guattari are anything but simple. Their pursuit of elaborate complex arrangements — ‘There are many interlacings, mixes between felt and fabric. Can we not displace the opposition yet again? In knitting, for example...’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 476) — becomes necessary in order for their ethics not to deal with the threat of the Infinite. While Levinas’ ethics insists upon the primacy of the Face-to-Face encounter, Deleuze and Guattari could be said to have more affinity with Plant’s characterization of face-to-face communication as ‘the missionary position so beloved of Western man’ (Plant, 1997: 144)

If what is at stake is the articulation of nomad *thought*, why is it necessary to conceive it on the basis of the (almost exclusively exaggerated and oversimplified) practices of ‘real’ nomads?

The ostensible ‘feltlikeness’ of Deleuze and Guattari’s writing is less an attention to the haphazard and a relation to the infinite than a deliberate, surgical sloppiness whose carefully constructed appearance of haphazardness erases the possibility of that which is absolutely Other. It precludes the possibility of the encounter described by Taussig and congruent with Levinas of the ‘flow into each others’ otherness.’ (Taussig, 1992: 40, 198) For the war machinic, nothing is *not* war machinic; the war machine is the means by which infinity is choked out of exteriority.

This can be observed by following their extension of the ‘smooth space’ to include also ‘the smooth space of Zen’ by way of the inexplicable but not necessarily inaccurate assertion that in this smooth space of Zen, ‘the arrow does not go from one point to the other but is taken up [fittingly rhizomatically] at any point, to be sent to any other point, and tends to permute with the archer and the target’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 377)



and then two pages later go on to raise the enticing notion of the ‘marriage of the Celt and the Orient’, a ‘strange composite that sweeps up English literature and constitutes American literature.’<sup>98</sup> The Celtic and the Oriental are brought together in a relationship that stands like a ‘tribe in the desert’ as against or ‘instead of a universal subject within the horizon of all-encompassing Being.’(ibid: 379)

This relationship is one that they describe, following White, as a ‘dissymmetrical complementarity’ including the ‘race-tribe (the Celts, those who feel they are Celts) and a milieu-space (the Orient, the Gobi desert...)’ (ibid). The Celtic-Oriental represents a way to elucidate ‘nomad thought’, which ‘does not ally itself with a universal thinking subject but, on the contrary, with a singular race; and it does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is a smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea. An entirely different type of adequation is established here, between the race defined as “tribe” and smooth space defined as “milieu.”’ (ibid).

There are two currents at play in this passage. The first is the project of articulating a tribal multiplicity rather than a unified subject, an urgent project which has permitted the elaboration of that ‘nomadism’ which many have found so seductive (Gabriel, 1990; Kaplan, 1995). The second current is a bit more cloudy, and though the structure of the passage makes it appear otherwise, the viability of the ‘nomadic’ itself does not depend upon it. This current entails the rhetorical differentiation between the ‘all-encompassing totality’ and the ‘horizonless milieu’. The all-encompassing totality is for Deleuze and Guattari that whose intelligibility the universal thinking subject ‘converts into being-for-us’ — the striated space of State philosophy against which the nomad war machine always, in its very nature, stands opposed. The horizonless milieu appears, on the other hand, to be something else, something decidedly other than a totality, a vast plateau without a horizon ‘that is a smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea’. Why then give it a geographical bearing: steppe, desert, sea? What is the difference between an all-encompassing totality and a horizonless milieu? The question is a false one. There is no difference, there is no *other hand*, something which ultimately cannot be obviated either

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<sup>98</sup> Deleuze and Guattari take this notion from an unpublished work by Kenneth White entitled *Intellectual*

by the text's protestations to the contrary, nor by its exhaustive 'other-handedness', its incessant invention of and shifting between so many other hands that even Krishna would be envious.

There is no means of differentiating between an all-encompassing totality and an (apparently) infinite milieu, between a totality without an outside and a milieu that is only outside. There is not the difference between these that there is between totality, even an 'infinite' totality, and infinity. Deleuze and Guattari compose their milieu in such a way that it takes on the attributes of the infinite (horizonlessness). Naming it as a desert or steppe or sea (but not an *actual* desert, steppe or sea, of course, since these all have horizons) permits them to trade on the 'collateral of eternity' (Caygill, 1998: 137): depending upon an infinity (horizonless) to inform their imaging (desert, steppe, sea) of that which must, in order to be plausibly *neither* an infinity *nor* an all-encompassing totality, mime elements of both to mask a paradox which it cannot accommodate — and with which users of the figures of the rhizome, the nomad, the Body without Organs, the anti-fabric, rarely engage.

It must, following Andy Goffey's point, 'maintain both that it is an entirely artificial construct, the product of an extreme formalism' — the milieu of the nomadic war machine — 'and that it is entirely unformed, natural' (Goffey, 1998: 72) — desert, steppe, sea. Further, it must people its steppes with nomads, who are themselves simultaneously presented as historical beings and as fictional inhabitants of an imagined-imagined tribe.

The 'horizonless milieu', despite the use to which the notion of the war machine can be put in theorizing the politics of minoritarian struggles without leaders<sup>99</sup>, though its body may lack *organs*, though it may be 'without hierarchical organisations, without clear cut program or blue print for social change', is nevertheless an *organizing* body. In organizing it offers a security that forecloses the possibility of properly ethical encounter. The issue is not so much one of naming the unnameable but of organizing otherness. A properly ethical shared politics has nothing neat to guide the two or more individuals who cross boundaries of race, class, gender, culture, and who forego doubts and irreconcilable

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*Nomadism* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1997: 379, 556n47).

differences, in order to struggle together. The problem with the war machine, the becoming-minor, and every other permutation of this figure that appears throughout the pages of *A Thousand Plateaus*, is an ethical one. The milieu pre-reconciles the terms of the encounter with difference, organizes it as concept.

The properly ethical encounter is altogether different. For Levinas, this encounter with the unknowable other is amorous, and must be thought in terms of the movement by which it is experienced: 'profanation'.

'Profanation, the revelation of the hidden as hidden, constitutes a model of being irreducible to intentionality, which is objectifying even in praxis, for not taking leave of "numbers and beings." Love is not reducible to a knowledge mixed with affective elements which would open to it an unforeseen plane of being. It grasps nothing, issues in no concept, does not *issue*, has neither the subject-object structure nor the I-thou structure. Eros is not accomplished as a subject that fixes an object, nor as a pro-jection, toward a possible. Its movement consists in going beyond the possible.' (Levinas, 1998a: 260-1)

Levinas insists upon holding onto a form of the interiority that Deleuze and Guattari seek to undo (although his notion of the interiority of the self could not accurately be called a 'universal subject'), refusing to think it as becoming, precisely because it is in the encounter with the Other that the interiority of the self is overflowed. In this way, by opening to the Infinite, and not by refusing its actuality, Levinas develops a notion of becoming that, in its refusal of freedom and insistence on the moral, is ethical first and foremost.

### *a thousand Platos*

When Temüchin assumed the title of Chingis Khan in 1206 he was made to sit upon a mat of felt and was told to direct his eyes upon it and behold. Then it was told to him that if he were to govern well, his rule would be glorious and the world would obey him. But if he were to do otherwise, he would become 'so indigent that thou wilt not even have a piece of felt on which to sit.' (Burkett, 1979: 23) A pact sworn on felt, responsibility assumed in the name of the people of the felt, for the land of the felt. Oath and felt bound in a singly pervasive social fabric.

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<sup>99</sup> See Richardson, 1998.

‘...declaring themselves *anda*, loving each other, banqueting and feasting, they rejoiced and, at night, in their covering they passed the night together alone.’ (Cleaves, 1984: 50)<sup>100</sup>

Is philosophy itself anything but a love story? Despite Deleuze and Guattari’s eloquent statement of mutually-assured expression, underneath its cool-headed tone, is a record of such intimacy: ‘Creation is all about mediators. [...] I need my mediators to express myself, and they’d never express themselves without me: one is always working in a group, even when it doesn’t appear to be the case. [...] Félix Guattari and I are one another’s mediators.’ (Deleuze, 1992b, op.cit: 285) Our bondage to others permits us to create the impossible situation that yields endless possibilities, and conversely to remain tied to the infinitely familiar possibilities that make imagining beyond them seem impossible. A student who visited and spoke with him in his Paris home recalls Deleuze having ‘said that Félix was one of the men he loved the most in the world, that he was enormously talkative, with opinions on everything, and that was completely opposite to Deleuze.’ (Charles Stivale, in “Deleuze Lists,” 2000: np)

‘Their words flowed on inexhaustibly, remarks following anecdotes, philosophical insights following individual considerations. They ran down the highways department, the tobacco monopoly, trade, the theatres, our navy and all the human race, like men who have much to put up with. Each as he listened to the other rediscovered forgotten parts of himself. Though they were no longer at the age of naive emotions, they felt a novel pleasure, a sort of opening out, the charm of affection in its initial stages. [...] Thus their meeting was important enough to be an adventure. They had at once become attached to each other by secret fibres. Besides, how can sympathies be explained? Why does some peculiarity, some imperfection, which would be indifferent or odious in one, seem enchanting in another? What is called the thunderbolt of love at first sight is true for all the passions. Before the end of the week they were on Christian name terms.’ (Flaubert, 1976: 23, 27)

Gilles, Félix, the bliss of mediated life, love and text sowing one’s seeds in the heart and mind of another. This long quote comes from Gustave Flaubert’s swansong novel, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. Two Parisian copy clerks meet and fall most Platonically in love, one comes upon a large inheritance and both move to the country where they begin a series of curious experiments in the production of knowledge and livelihood. Always drunk with the promise of new frontiers of knowledge and experience, and bolstered by

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<sup>100</sup> The reference is to Temūjin, soon to be Chingis Khan, and his *anda* Jamuγa; in the passage prior to making this renewal of their brotherhood, the *Secret History* explains that they recalled the words of the

the bond between them, they produce majestic failures whose scale and hilarity are made possible by their undaunted perseverance. '[Pécuchet] failed with the broccoli, aubergines, turnips, and watercress, which he had tried to grow in a tub. After the thaw all the artichokes were lost. The cabbages consoled him. One in particular aroused his hopes. It spread outwards and upwards, finished by being prodigious and absolutely inedible. No matter. Pécuchet was happy to possess a monster.' (ibid: 46)

If Bouvard and Pécuchet's labors of love parody a 'faith in the possibility of ordering the museum's "bric-a-brac"' (Crimp, 1995: 54), and produce delightful monsters in the process, Deleuze and Guattari's efforts, like their monsters, were rather more lustful.

In one interview Deleuze described his early career in a way that at once sheds some light upon *A Thousand Plateaus'* position with respect to the intimacies of philosophizing. 'What got me through that period was conceiving of the history of philosophy as a kind of ass-fuck, or, what amounts to the same thing, an immaculate conception. I imagined myself approaching an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nonetheless be monstrous.' (Massumi, 1993: 2; Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: x)

It is tempting to engage with this role Deleuze has created for himself of a divinity whose rape-romance with the fraternal philosophical canon takes on a Biblical mix of the punitive, the benevolent, and the omniscient. But what is more suggestive is the notion that *A Thousand Plateaus* might, as *ethics*, be a productive experimental *failure*.

Charles Stivale, who visited the great nomadic thinker at home, recalled: 'When I told Deleuze that I was working through *A Thousand Plateaus* and this work was what interested me most, he laughed as if this were the funniest thing he had ever heard, that someone would continue delving into *A Thousand Plateaus*.' (Stivale, in "Deleuze discussion group", 2000: np)

'Then he tried what seemed to him the ultimate in the gardener's art: melon growing. [...] The cantaloups ripened. At the first Bouvard pulled a face. The second was no better, nor the third. For each one Pécuchet found a new excuse, until it came to the last, which he threw out of the window, saying that he simply could not understand it. In fact, as he had grown different species

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elders who had said that for 'persons [which are] *anda*, [their] lives [are] one. Not forsaking one another,

side by side, the sweet melons were mixed up with water-melons, large Portuguese with Grand Mogul, and with the proximity of the tomatoes completing the anarchy, the result had been abominable hybrids tasting like pumpkins.’ (Flaubert, 1976: 46-7)

‘Can we not displace the opposition yet again? In knitting, for example...’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 476)

‘After trying his hand at vegetables, Pécuchet turned to flowers. (ibid: 47)

### *A faith in form*

Even though his armies were almost without exception outnumbered by the foes they faced, ‘Chingis Khan knew how to gain his objectives with the minimum amount of force. Relying on a vigilant intelligence network, he advanced his armies on a wide front, controlling them with a highly developed system of communication and using their supreme mobility to concentrate them at the decisive points.’ (Chambers, 1979: 43)

Where in modern times Jomini and Clausewitz differed on the essence of war — Jomini believing that dominating the geography of the enemy was paramount, versus Clausewitz, his theoretical adversary, who believed that crushing the troops themselves was of primary importance — this distinction quite ingeniously did not occur to the Mongols, for whom these concerns were inseparable. Their success had to do with evolving a sophisticated operational practice long before it was conceived as such; the coordination of the Mongols ‘was faultless, but the timing of the decisive engagements was astonishing. It can not be dismissed as coincidence, and since the uncertainty of the enemy positions would have made pre-planning impossible, the only explanation seems to be the speed of the Mongol messengers and in particular the efficiency of their signalling system.’ (Chambers, 1979: 101)

The ‘nomad war machine’ figures prominently in Manuel De Landa’s categorization of war in human history into a schematic diagram separating two distinct kinds or ways of waging war and their respective logistical and operational methods for organizing forces. The first, for him, is the the war machine assembled by the nomads of the Steppes, by which he means the armies of Genghis Khan which invaded Europe in thirteenth century. The second is the war-making machinery of sedentary people

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they are [the one for the other] a protection for [their] lives’. (Cleaves, 1984: 49)

(Assyrians, Greeks, Romans) from which modern armies have evolved. He characterizes the tactics of nomads as consisting of the combination of psychological shock and physical speed. 'They were the first to integrate the swift and sudden movements of loose cavalry formations with the deadly effects of intense missile power. The nomads combined the skills of highly mobile archers and horsemen with a flexible tactical doctrine that utilized every feature of the battleground for ambush and surprise.' (de Landa, 1991: 11)

In actuality, this passage entirely misses what is perhaps the most important factor in the Mongol's success: the ability to *coordinate* these factors with *clarity*. Their armies employed a communication system that was, relative to everyone they fought, instantly intelligible. Using different kinds of arrows, banners, messenger-relays, they could maintain a front of hundreds of miles, and concentrate their power at the right points at the right times to deadly effect. The Mongol's methods show an ability to virtually eliminate the uncertainties that comprise what Newell refers to as 'the fog of war'. Thus, to the insistence upon the importance of speed and flexibility, we must add intelligibility and clarity; to the extent that the 'information bomb' that Virilio foretells will be utterly crippling, it will be because it will literally explode the cohesion of our informational systems such that they are unintelligible.

It seems possible to argue that the clarity that the Mongols were able to achieve in their campaigns owed to a network of ethical bonds which may have been flexible, but only in the sense of a fabric that because of its integrity can be flexed without breaking. Thus while a device like the 'Five-Paragraph Format' deals with the fog of war by demanding a faith in form, the Mongols — while their might, speed, and precision routed their enemies, to be sure — employed a form of faith, the oath, that enabled these things to coincide. One example of this was the importance placed upon upholding the commitment to having one's troops arrive at a pre-arranged location on time.

'And these Temūjin, To'oril Qan, and Jaqa Gambu having likewise made ready their troops, coming unto one another and, moreover, recognizing one another, when Jamuḡa spake, he said, "Said we not unto one another, 'Let us not be late  
at the appointed place of meeting,  
even though in a snowstorm?"

At the assembly,  
Even though there be rain?

Are not the Mongyol ones which have an oath [pronounced only with the word] “yea”? We said  
unto one another,

‘Let us expel out of [our] ranks

The one which shall be fallen behind from [his] “yea.”’ (Cleaves, 1982: 43-4)<sup>101</sup>

It is precisely here, at the moment of the articulation of responsibility, that felt is invoked. Subedei was until his death one of Chingis Khan’s most trusted generals. It was he who was chosen to plan and to lead the invasion of Khwarizm that was ultimately to be the first step that the Mongols took in their westward sweep. Called before the Great Khan, Subedei, who ‘as a strategist had no equal’ — indeed, as Chambers notes, Rommel and Patton were both attentive students of Subedei — swore to him the following oath: “As felt protects from the wind,’ he said, ‘so will I ward off thine enemies.’” (Chambers, 1979: 67, 8)

In the passage of the *Secret History of the Mongols* in which Temüjin is made Chingis Khan [Cinggis Qahan], those closest to him pledged their word and swore their oath to him. Subedei [Sübe’etei Ba’adur] said:

‘Becoming a rat  
I shall gather with [others].  
Becoming a black crow  
I shall assemble with [others]  
Those which are outside.

Becoming the felt which covereth [a horse]  
I shall assay with [others] to cover [thee].  
Becoming the felt which restraineth the wind  
Toward [thy] tent  
I shall assay with [others] to serve as shelter.’ (Cleaves, 1984: 57)

### ***The Indranet***

Deleuze and Guattari insist that Indra can neither be reduced to Mitra or Varuna, nor can he be thought to make up a third of their kind. ‘*He unties the bond and betrays the pact.*’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 352)

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<sup>101</sup> Cleaves explains that this ‘yea’ is ‘an oral promise which takes the place of an oath’ (Cleaves, 1982: 44n16)



It was not a pact-betraying practice, but an incredibly wrought condition of being bound by pact, that contributed to the productive impossibilities that created the Mongol empire. In his introduction to his translation of the thirteenth-century *Secret History of the Mongols*, Urgunge Onon has pointed out that ‘Chinggis Qahan established his empire and held it together on three vital ties, expressed in the words *quda*, *anda* and *nökör*. These were familiar concepts to the nomad tribes, but he used them with enormous skill and foresight as the means of uniting a sprawling and shifting population and making them into a superb fighting machine.’ (Onon, 1990: xii)

The first of these, *quda*, ‘was the tie of marriage. Chinggis Qahan made many skilful marriage alliances, as for instance when he gave one of his daughters to [one Khan because he] had submitted to him without a fight. A potential enemy was now a son-in-law.’ (ibid)

The second, *anda*, ‘was the tie of sworn brotherhood, ratified by a valuable gift [...] In this case too, an unbreakable bond was created that only death could sever’ but which sons often renewed.

Finally, *nökör* ‘was the tie of friendship that held Chinggis’s followers to him in a relationship rather like that of medieval lord and liegeman. With these three ties he created a vast network of loyalty, and had the confidence of knowing that he could rely on many far flung tribesmen when he needed their support, held as they all were in the strong web he had woven so skilfully.’ (ibid) Or that he had made felt. Interestingly, such oaths were often sworn on the basis of one’s liver, heart, and other viscera. After Temüjin’s bride Börte had been captured and stolen by the Merkids, he said to his ally the Ong Qan:

‘As to my breast,  
I have been rent in twain.  
Are we not kindred of liver?<sup>102</sup>  
How shall we requite  
Our requital?’ (Cleaves, 1982: 39)

The Ong Qan vowed to help go after her:

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<sup>102</sup> ‘The liver denotes intimacy and close relationship.’ (Cleaves, 1982: 39n4) Jamuya, Temüjin’s *anda*, said at the hearing of Temüjin’s despair: ‘My liver did pain.’ (ibid: 41)

'I shall set forth from hence, twenty thousand [in number], becoming the right hand. Let Younger Brother Jamuḡa, being twenty thousand [in number], set forth, becoming the left hand. Let our appointed time be [decided] from [the part of] Jamuḡa.' (Cleaves, 1982: 39)<sup>103</sup>

These organ-ized networks he nourished with information which flowed through five different channels: spies, Mongolian caravans, prisoners of war, those who voluntarily surrendered, 'subjugated natives of countries or tribes who were neighbours of those about to be attacked.' (ibid: xiii)

It was such a feltwork, and not a pure yet-unmanifest violence in their nomad nature, that led to the actuality of the Mongol war machine. 'Chingis never saw himself as the aggressor; with the exception of the reconnaissance into Europe, which Subedei persuaded him to allow, whether in defence of an ally or as the result of a threat or a broken treaty, the Mongol army always marched in answer to at least some provocation.' (Chambers, 1979: 44)

Before embarking on any campaign, Chingis Khan deployed spies to find out as much as possible about 'the political, economic and tactical situation of the country or people he meant to move in on. When he learned of the religious conflict between Buddhist and Muslims in the Qara Kitad region, for example, he instructed his commander-in-chief [...] to proclaim complete religious freedom in 1218.' (Onon: xiii) It was through mobilizing, compounding and reifying oaths, not undoing them, that the nomad war machine organized itself.

Though this point does not appear in *A Thousand Plateaus* — indeed none of the dates assigned to each chapter are traced for us — 1227 was the year that Chingis Khan died. Not from an arrow that pierced his thick felt armor whilst in the pursuit of his enemies, and certainly not cut down while embodying 'the nomad war machine...for a moment in its pure form on the vacant smooth spaces of the steppes of Inner Asia'

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<sup>103</sup> Having been captured by the Tatar Jūyin people as he was accompanying his betrothed daughter to the Ayiri'ud Buiru'ud Tatar people, Ambayai Qahan sent this warning by messenger to the middle son of Qabul Qahan, named Qutula, and to his own son Qada'an Taisi, the two men whom he had designated as candidates to succeed him as Qahan: 'Beware, [instructed] by [what hath befallen] me, of yourself accompanying your daughter, when ye will be qahan of all and... Lord of the Nation. I have been seized by the Tatar people.

Till the nails of your five fingers  
Disappear through wear;  
Till your ten fingers  
Are worn away through rubbing;  
Strive to avenge me.' (Cleaves, 1982: 11)

(Massumi, in Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: xiv). This exemplary horseman died on August 18, 1227, having sustained a fatal injury after an accidental fall from his mount.

### ***Lucidity***

In the opening passage of his preface to his *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas posed the question that is the Peace Bomb's ground zero. 'Everyone will readily agree that it is of the highest importance to know whether we are not duped by morality.' Then he fired a provocation with which his entire book would wrestle: 'Does not lucidity, the mind's openness upon the true, consist in catching sight of the permanent possibility of war?' (Levinas, 1998a: 21) Across their disciplinary distance, Filliou's answer: 'If we want peace, we must prepare for peace, inwardly and outwardly.' (Filliou, in Wijers, 1996: 274)

One wonders whether the only way truly to overcome your enemies is to overcome enmity.

## *Preambulance*

'A Play Called FALSE!

DISHONEST FAITHLESS!  
DECEITFUL MENDACIOUS!  
UNVERACIOUS!  
TRUTHLESS! TROTHLESS! UNFAIR!  
UNCANDID!  
DISINGENUOUS SHADY SHIFTY  
UNDERHAND UNDERHANDED!  
HOLLOW HYPOCRITICAL INSINCERE  
CANTING JESUITICAL  
SANCTIMONIOUS PHARISAICAL!  
TARTUFFIAN DOUBLE DOUBLE-  
TONGUED DOUBLEFACED!  
SMOOTHSPOKEN SMOOTHSPOKEN  
PLAUSIBLE!  
MEALY MOUTHED INSIDIOUSLY  
DESIGNING DIPLOMATIC  
MACHIAVELLIAN!  
BROTHER!  
(Filliou, 1967)

In 1979, Beuys introduced the relationship between the permutations of his notion of sculpture.

'My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture... or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture can be and how the concept of sculpture can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone.

THINKING FORMS —                    how we mold our thoughts or  
SPOKEN FORMS —                    how we shape our thoughts into words or  
SOCIAL SCULPTURE —                how we mold and shape the world in which we live:  
SCULPTURE AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS; EVERYONE AN ARTIST.

That is why the nature of my sculpture is not fixed and finished. Processes continue in most of them: chemical reactions, fermentations, color changes, decay, drying up. Everything is in a STATE OF CHANGE.' (Beuys, in Kuoni, 1990: 19)

Apart from the general distaste, itself fairly monolithic and unnuanced, for 'totalizing systems' such as Beuys', the insistent cohesion of his 'system' is perplexing. But it owes not so much to a 'naive certainty of an absolute transparency between form and matter

and the “idea” (Michaud, 1998: 39)<sup>104</sup> as to an unaddressed uncertainty on his part regarding the implications of maintaining his position amongst the multiple roles he adopted. Some of these he fabricated for himself, either in outspoken explicitness or in a less conscious process of growth into the skin prepared for him by his sculptures and installations; some of these were thrust upon him by the post-1968 cultural and political climate in which he matured<sup>105</sup>, which is not to say that he did not actively seek and devour them; and some remained unformed, partially articulated in his imagination. They would tug at him as if the engines of his engagement with his students, his friends, his adversaries, and would indeed remain in an unordered state at the time of his death.

Following his 1958 exhibition of emptiness, Yves Klein, speaking words that Beuys would come also to embrace, explained that he felt that art was something that should be broken through, and that everybody ought ‘to work for himself in order to return to real life, a life in which thinking man is no longer the centre of the universe, but the universe the centre of the man.’<sup>106</sup> (Klein quoted in van Tuyl, 1979: 5) It is in this rather more anarchic sense that the notion of ‘human absolutism’ in Beuys’ thinking should be understood. Beuys was keen to experiment with the implications of setting the universe at the center of the human.<sup>107</sup> Beuys’ practice of the expanded concept of art must be understood as an active meditative expansion.<sup>108</sup>

The problem for Beuys was not so much remaining silent: he waxed prolific on every existing subject, and even invented subjects in order to keep up with his discursive drives. The problem lay in maintaining the consistency between symbolizing social change

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<sup>104</sup> A variation on this argument is made through Bataille’s notion of the ‘formless’ in Bois and Krauss, 1997. Despite the challenge they hope to pose to academic explanation by enlisting Bataille’s arch-antihumanism, to *articulate* the formless (in a tag-team scholarly publication) is to strike the deciding blow for academic knowledge. Krauss notes that, ‘Laughing about the pun it incarnated, since German for chair (*Stuhl*) is also the polite term for shit (stool), Beuys was happy to give an excremental spin to his celebrated sculpture *Fat Chair* (1964)’ (ibid: 143); perhaps it is in the form of laughter, and not in the form of shit, that the formless *happens*. Perhaps it is true, as Mark Twain said, that ‘a German joke is no laughing matter.’

<sup>105</sup> For an analysis of this climate, see Rogoff, 1995.

<sup>106</sup> Beuys had exhibited and participated in public dialogues with Klein when he had come to Düsseldorf and Krefeld in the early Sixties with his ‘Blue Revolution’ (Levin, in Kuoni, 1990: 3)

<sup>107</sup> Beuys’ experiments with the realms of natural science were rich and vast and have been chronicled in a range of sources. See for instance Murken, 1979; and Kemp, 1998.

<sup>108</sup> Although its terms are inverted, this is much like Batchelor’s description of meditation, particularly in its insistence on *craft*: ‘The meditator is akin to the artist: proficient in his craft, an adept in creating love and wisdom.’ (Batchelor, 1990: 43)

and enacting it. Unlike Cage or Duchamp, who chose tactical silence, Beuys felt it impossible, unconscionable, not to speak, and speak again.

In 1973 Beuys released as an edition of 180 prints the photograph of his 1967 *Eurasianstab* action. The multiple itself, entitled *From Eurasianstaff: Action with Fat on the Body*, shows Beuys with a lump of fat being squished inside the crease of his bending right knee.



Joseph Beuys, *Eurasianstab Fettaktion am Körper*, 1973

Andrea Duncan has written that ‘Beuys has an approach to the body which is physiologically untenable: he is using the body to think... This is a departure from the history of Western dualism, opening up a discourse with the body in which thinking is also a process of descent — it moves from head, to chest, to pelvis through knee to foot. We are reminded that Beuys said that he ‘thought with his knees.’” (Duncan, 1995: 83) Such openness must persist despite ‘the associated fear of the moist, for there is no wounding without moisture’s escape: dissolution and loss of objectboundaryhood’; it must do so in order to ‘remain open to discourse, to risk, not to foreclose on the subject *in process*...’ (ibid: 86, 91). Beuys’ inscription on a 1954 piece, two stacks of layers of felt each topped by a copper plate collectively called ‘Double Fond’ reads: ‘The iron lumps are so heavy in order to prevent me escaping lightly from this hell.’ (Duncan, 1995: 86)

### *Orientation*

*1957: A man, ashen and weak despite his frame and its young years, sits covered in a ragged felt blanket, huddled inside a black rubberized box of his own construction. Since he would later intentionally alter the dates of his works, it is impossible to say for certain what month it is.*<sup>109</sup>

*He had served as a radio operator and a dive-bomber pilot in the Luftwaffe, and was later taken prisoner of war.*

‘SHARP: And when the war ended?

BEUYS: During the last year of the war I was stranded on the Western front. There were no more planes, no more fuel. When peace was declared I became a British prisoner of war.’ (Beuys, in Kuoni, 1990: 79)

‘Ernst Dwinger in his *Siberian Diary* mentions a German lieutenant — for years a prisoner in a camp where cold and hunger were almost unbearable — who constructed for himself a silent piano

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<sup>109</sup> Today the box is a sculpture comprising one part of the exhibition *Block Beuys* in the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, in the gallery adjacent to the sculpture *Fat Chair*; the black box is by contrast all but unknown, hardly mentioned by art history, and easily overlooked amongst the more dramatic piles of felt stacked to create the *Fonds*, the *Felt Suit* hung on the wall like a soul caught mid-departure, and the great copper tables and plates that Beuys installed and arranged in the gallery. The black box sits among these other objects, ‘private artifacts of an aesthetic history’ (Kort, 1994: 28) as if it were responsible for them being there and so must itself be there but it does not call attention to itself. In his discussion of this object Juan Antonio Ramírez describes the box as a chamber ‘inside which he could ‘cease to exist’, as if he had been a larva awaiting his own ‘resurrection’ in the darkness and silence.’ (Ramírez, 2000: 85; Beuys’ words are taken from Stachelhaus, 1991: 55-6 ) As to the date, Beuys was notorious for scrambling the chronologies of his works (Kort, 1994); though the “Block Beuys” exhibition had been ‘provisionally closed in 1970’, Beuys did subsequently ‘rearrange the contents of the vitrines’ (ibid).

with wooden keys. In the most abject misery, perpetually surrounded by a ragged mob, he composed a strange music audible to him alone' (Camus, in Marcus, 1990: 47).

*After the war he had returned to Kleve, his hometown, and had left from there in 1947 to study monumental sculpture with Ewald Mataré at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie<sup>110</sup>. He finished in 1951. He won a commission to sculpt the doors for a church, and had a few exhibitions.*

**1952 Düsseldorf 19th prize in 'Steel and Pig's Trotter'<sup>111</sup>**

**(consolation prize, a light-ballet by Piene)**

**Wuppertal Museum of Art Beuys: Crucifixes**

**Amsterdam Exhibition in honour of the**

**Amsterdam-Rhine Canal**

**Nijmegen Museum of Art Beuys: Sculpture**

**1953 Kranenburg 'Van der Grinten Collection' Beuys:**

**Painting<sup>112</sup>**

**1955 End of Artists' Union 'Profile of the Successor'**

*In 1955 he had entered a competition to design a memorial for Auschwitz. He didn't win, which meant that he lost. He would not include this in his "Lifecourse/Workcourse" when he composed it two decades later.*

**1956-57 Beuys works in the fields**

*Had peace been declared?... A pitchfork stood with its teeth in the earth. Eyes shielded by makeshift felt hood, he opened his mouth into the wind.*

*'From the beginning the work of Joseph Beuys has shown his interest in the ancient cultures of the Eurasian continent, and looking back at his oeuvre we can already discern some early connections with Tibet too. Several pieces refer to Genghis Khan, the Mongolian nomad leader who conquered large parts of Asia and Europe in the thirteenth century. The biography of Joseph Beuys lists: 1929 Exhibition at the grave of Genghis Khan, 1958 Watercolour of Genghis Khan's daughter riding on an elk, 1960 Watercolour of Genghis Khan's daughter.'* (Wijers, 1996: 151) *There had been a pregnant woman—*

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<sup>110</sup> Mataré had told Beuys: 'You will never be a sculptor, you are a painter.' (Mizusawa, 1993: 36) In 1958 Beuys applied for a professorship at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, and Mataré 'impaired his appointment.' (Kort, 1994: 23; Stachelhaus, 1991:79)

<sup>111</sup> These entries in boldface come from Beuys' *Lebenslauf/Werklauf (Lifecourse/Workcourse)*, reproduced in Kuoni, 1990: 261-265; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four below.

<sup>112</sup> From February 13 - March 15, 1953 Beuys had his first one person exhibition, "Zeichnungen, Holzschnitte, Plastische Arbeiten," at the Haus van der Grinten in Kranenburg. Beuys finished his studies with Mataré in 1951, and from 1952-1954 was a master student at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. (Cooke and Kelly, eds., 1994: 278)



SHARP: You must have travelled as a soldier.

BEUYS: Yes, I took part in the whole war, from 1941 until 1946. I was in Russia.

SHARP: What did you see there?

*her eyes still looked alive*

BEUYS: Certainly not art! (*Laughs.*) What can I say? I was a fighter pilot. I cannot talk about the war. There were dead people lying around, everywhere. (Beuys, in Kuoni: 79)

*Peace. It was late in 1955, autumn and cool. His head, underneath the skin, was a patchwork of bone and metal, and it throbbed. When he could think of it he tried to think of it as a trepanation, as if the shaman had driven a hole in his skull to give his mind some lebensraum. But ice was forming in the folds of his brain. No room... but no one close, how could that be possible?*

'felt hat because the metal plates used to repair his damaged skull needed insulating from the chill pain of cold' (Tisdall, 1998: 30)

*who had won the commission? His skin was chalky on the inside. The sensation was not unbearable—*

**1942 Sebastopol Exhibiton of my friend**

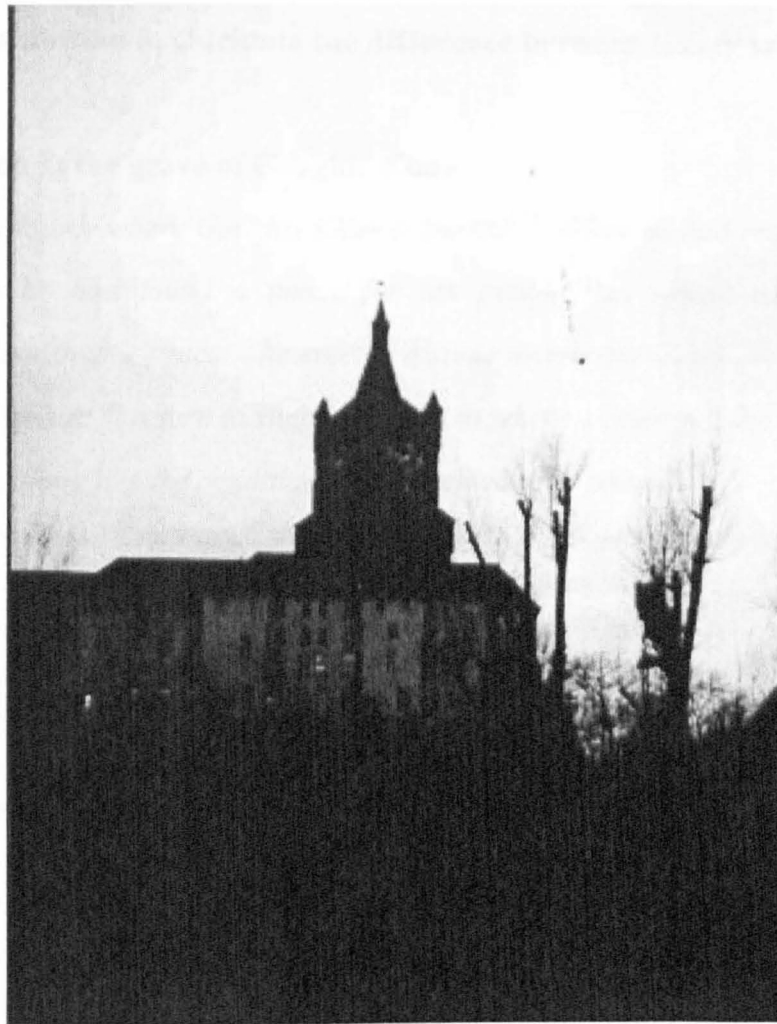
**1942 Sebastopol Exhibiton of my friend**  
**1942 Sebastopol Exhibiton of my friend**  
*filz: felt insulated him, itching filter, der filzer, feltmaker, like a wool blanket, he felt... 'like felt', he said to himself in English*

Ivo [played by James Mason]: 'The German always had to learn languages; the army never knew where it would be going. We still learn English in our schools, but it might be rather a waste, who knows.' (*The Man Between*, 1953)

**1942 Sebastopol Exhibition during the interception of a Ju-87**

'In Caroline Tisdall's Guggenheim catalogue we are presented with three totally different photographs showing a severely damaged and tipped-over plane that under no circumstances can be identical with the one given in Adriani's book. Beuys' own recollection (or updated version of the *fable convenue* in Tisdall's book) reads as follows:' (Buchloh, 1980: 38)

*a cross on a goddam churchdoor. What's the use? He had not spoken in at least a week, and turned his mouth in the direction of the Schwanenbourg, to let the autumn inside. Autumn: when the past talks—*



Schwanenbourg, Kleve (photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

'I believe there are ruins from the Mongol invasion from the east near Beuys's hometown...'  
(Hariu, 1991: 74).

*He remembered that when the Mongols had swept through Pest they had destroyed all of the fields, which were full of horses without riders, thousands of them, and a wake of bodies that had been described by one of the surviving Hungarians as a litter of stones in a quarry.* The great heath outside Pest 'had become a mass of riderless horses and for thirty miles beyond it the road back to Pest was littered with Hungarian dead'. 'What had begun as a fierce contest between two extraordinary armies had ended in a rout, and the most conservative estimate of the Hungarian men was sixty thousand men [of one hundred thousand who had taken the field]'. (Chambers, 1979: 101-103)

'As for Beuys himself, aside from his childhood fantasies about Genghis Khan (he carried a cane with him everywhere and imagined himself to be a nomad herdsman), his first encounter with shamanistic practice was as patient rather than as "doctor"' (Ulmer, 1984: 234)

## **1928 Kleve First exhibition of an excavated trench**

## **Kleve Exhibition to elucidate the difference between loamy sand and sandy loam**

### **1929 Exhibition at the grave of Genghis Khan**

*Nobody knows precisely where Genghis Khan is buried<sup>113</sup>. When he had returned from his conquests, when he had found a peace for his people that would commit them to generations of bloodshed... peace... he erected a stone monument on which was written, in Mongol and in Chinese: 'I return to simplicity'. From what he could tell the Mongol notion of peace was something like the condition of a contented herd animal*

'Again when Ögödei Qahan spake, when he sent, saying, "[We] shall not make to suffer the nation which my father Cinggis Qahan established with labour. Making [them] to set

    Their feet

    On the ground,

    Their hands

    On the earth,

[We] shall make [them] to rejoice. [As We are] sitting on the [throne made] ready of Our father the Qahan, not making the people to suffer, for broth, from these peoples, in year after year, let one give one sheep of two years old of [every] flock. Let them, bringing forth one sheep from a hundred sheep, give [it] unto the poor and the needy...' (Cleaves, 1982: 223-4)

### **1945 Kleve Exhibition of cold**

### **1946 Kleve warm exhibition**

*Simplicity. Rejoice and give to the needy. He sat in the box. There was nothing else. Underneath the felt was only raw nerves, held together not by a single fleshy body or its sinews but only by a flat lukewarmth, colorless and bare, unlike anything. It was as if he were somehow temperature only, sentient temperature, indivisible from the air around him which was becoming colder like bone too quickly for him to acclimatize himself. Not himself as a temperature, but just temperature, edgeless and steppelike. It became impossible not to be aware of it, not to be rubbed ever more raw by it and especially by voices, sounds. Only Satie. The idea that someone might help him was implausible and perverse, urgent, which in turn led every someone to have a chilling and abrasive effect. His sheets, blankets, and even his clothing seemed to be full rough fibers and sharp edges as if woven of human hair or scraps of fingernails. Bed repulsed him. Standing made his*

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<sup>113</sup> Neither does anyone know the location of the curved shepherd's staff Beuys used in his *Eurasianstab* actions (Cooke and Kelly, eds., 1994: 268)

*cold bones ache and feel like straw. Mongol ponies could actually root beneath feet of snow to find grasses underneath and could thus survive the winters on the steppes whereas European horses could not.*

‘Who could, or would, pose for photographs after a plane crash, when severely injured? And who took the photographs? The Tartars with their fat-and-felt camera?’ (Buchloh, 1980: 38)

*Boxbound he rode with Batu and Subedei into Pest, and was merciless with the enemies of the Mongol; they swore oaths to each other, timeless pacts.*

‘Becoming the felt which covereth [a horse]  
I shall assay with [others] to cover [thee].  
Becoming the felt which restraineth the wind  
Toward [thy] tent  
I shall assay with [others] to serve as shelter.’ (Cleaves, 1984: 57)

*A cross on a fucking churchdoor.*

“And then one day, something inside you dies.”

“What do you mean?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know. Something. Day after day you watch the sun rise in the east, pass across the sky, then sink in the west, and something breaks inside you and dies. You toss your plow aside and, your head completely empty of thought, begin walking toward the west. Heading toward a land that lies west of the sun. Like someone possessed, you walk on, day after day, not eating or drinking, until you collapse on the ground and die. That’s hysteria siberiana.” (Murakami, 2000: 176-77)

*The rubberized box permitted two things, one of which he had anticipated: the disturbing frequencies around him were kept out, but since he could keep his head above it, covered with felt, he could still hear sounds and see. Also, when the sun shone it held its heat, and with the felt wrapped around him the box was like a node where warmth could cohere.*

*Maybe peace*

‘[L]ove — that is to say the affinity of being with being — is not peculiar to man. It is a general property of all life and as such it embraces, in its varieties and degrees, all the forms successively adopted by organised matter. [...] Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come into being. This is no metaphor; and it is much more than poetry. Whether as a force or a curvature, the universal gravity of bodies, so striking to us, is merely the reverse or the shadow of that which really moves nature. [...] We are often inclined to think that we have exhausted the various natural forms of love with a man’s love for his wife, his children, his friends and to a certain extent for his country. Yet precisely the most fundamental passion is missing from this list, the one which, under the pressure of an involuting universe, precipitates the elements one upon the other in the Whole — cosmic affinity and hence cosmic

direction. A universal love is not only psychologically possible; it is the only complete and final way in which we are able to love.' (DeChardin, in Appleman, 1979: 335-42)

'Energy means warmth and creativity. In physical terms it represents love, and sociology becomes simply the science of love. In mental terms it means an evolutionary drive unknown to physics...' (Beuys, in Tisdall, 1998: 36)

*The van der Grinten brothers, who were his friends and his first collectors, had brought him to their family home<sup>114</sup>. It was there that he had built the box. Sitting in it: he was the lock and it was the key. It was the first thing in a long time that seemed to have been generated from inside of him, which built an inside of him. For hours he sat there silent and motionless, gazing straight ahead but at nothing in particular, feeling himself to be radiating. He stopped on occasion to enjoy the fact that he was building something again. It heartened him, indeed it made him laugh out loud, to think that this thing was sculpture. So was he! Who wasn't?! And what wasn't?! Was she—*

#### **1957-60 Recovery from working in the fields**

*Silent. For the next few months he would stick to a simple routine: he rose early, placed the box outside in the grass in the direct sunlight, and ate a little something while he waited — blutwurst, bread, black coffee. 'Make a box, even one which will contain something, and leave it in a field.'<sup>115</sup> He took the box to the western end of one of the van der Grinten's fields, and climbed inside it. In the beginning he would have to sit all day but gradually he found his quietude more easily like wind across fleece: nothing to cling to*

#### **1957-60 Recovery from working in the fields**

BEUYS: [...] all these interpretations of the future, especially the interpretations of time, have a lot to do with a new understanding of the human being as a spiritual being. If you have the spirit in focus, you also have another concept of time... you see time on earth is a physical reality. It takes place in space so it is the space/time relation which Einstein is speaking about. This already gives a kind of allusion to another dimension, but I think this other dimension is something we still have to detect... When I say we still have to detect it, it has already been detected. It is there

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<sup>114</sup> One authoritative biography explains that during 1955-57 Beuys 'lives through a phase of depressive exhaustion, from which he recovers by doing fieldwork at the van der Grinten family estate.' (Cooke and Kelly, eds., 1994: 278) For an account of Beuys' "nervous breakdown" and his having been taken in by the van der Grinten family, see Stachelhaus, 1991. Beuys seems never to have given an explicit account of this chapter of his life, at least not to anyone whom he felt might put it in print.

<sup>115</sup> These instructions were written by Robert Morris in a 1960 letter to LaMonte Young; in 1961 Morris had proposed another perhaps related event: 'Tomorrow 8am to 12pm: To be looked at in a state of shock: nearly anything in a state of shock' (Morris, in Flynt, 1993: n.p.).

as one dimension in my work which I will show in the Anthony d'Offay Gallery. This is the warmth quality...

DEMARCO: The quality of warmth.

BEUYS: The quality of warmth. This dimension is, in fact, another dimension which has nothing to do with the space and time relation. It is another dimension which comes to exist in a place and which goes away again. This is a very interesting aspect of physics, since until now most physicists are not prepared to deal with the theory of warmth. Thermodynamics was always very complicated stuff.

Love is the most creative and matter-transforming power. You see in this context it is very simply expressed. Now it is not shown in very interesting diagrams which one could also bring to this discussion... But to promote this interest for all these necessities to the real anthropology and not this fashionable way of speaking about anthropology... in this relationship I start with the most simple looking activity, but it is a most powerful activity; it is planting trees.' (Beuys in Kuoni, ed., 1990: 115-116)

### **1957-60 Recovery from working in the fields**

'What interests me in felt is not its haptic nature as has often been thought, but insulation.' (Beuys, in Wright, 1987: 16)

### **1957-60 Recovery from working in the fields**

'Felt as used in all the categories of warmth sculpture... does have a bearing on the character of warmth. Ultimately the concept of warmth goes even further. Not even physical warmth is meant. If I had meant physical warmth, I could just as well have used an infrared light in my performance. Actually I mean a completely different kind of warmth, namely spiritual or evolutionary warmth or the beginning of an evolution.' (ibid)

### **1957-60 Recovery from working in the fields**

'[to] be fully ourselves it is... in the direction of convergence with all the rest that we must advance — towards the 'other'. The personification of the universe does not mean as it might appear that the universe might become thought of as a person, but rather that the universe(s) might be seen to be governed by the attractions and energies by which we are governed.' (de Chardin, in Appleman, 1979: 339 n3)

*If I take care of you, others will take care of me. His pockets full of toenail and fingernail clippings*

*"There, over there," the boy begged. "See the fires there — there, take me there; warm me by those fires." He was so cold that he felt no fire could burn him, that he could walk on coals or dive into a sea of flames and not be melted or consumed.*

*"No, not those fires, my son — over there's the cremation ground, the city of dreadful night. Those are fires that feed on corpses and deliver them." (Siegel, 1995: 43-4)*

*It might strike people as a bit drastic to go to such great lengths — layers of felt and black boxes and the like. It was not so cold outside and besides it would seem simpler to sit by the fire. It would not be possible to explain why he would go nowhere near the fire.*

**1961 Beuys is appointed Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art**

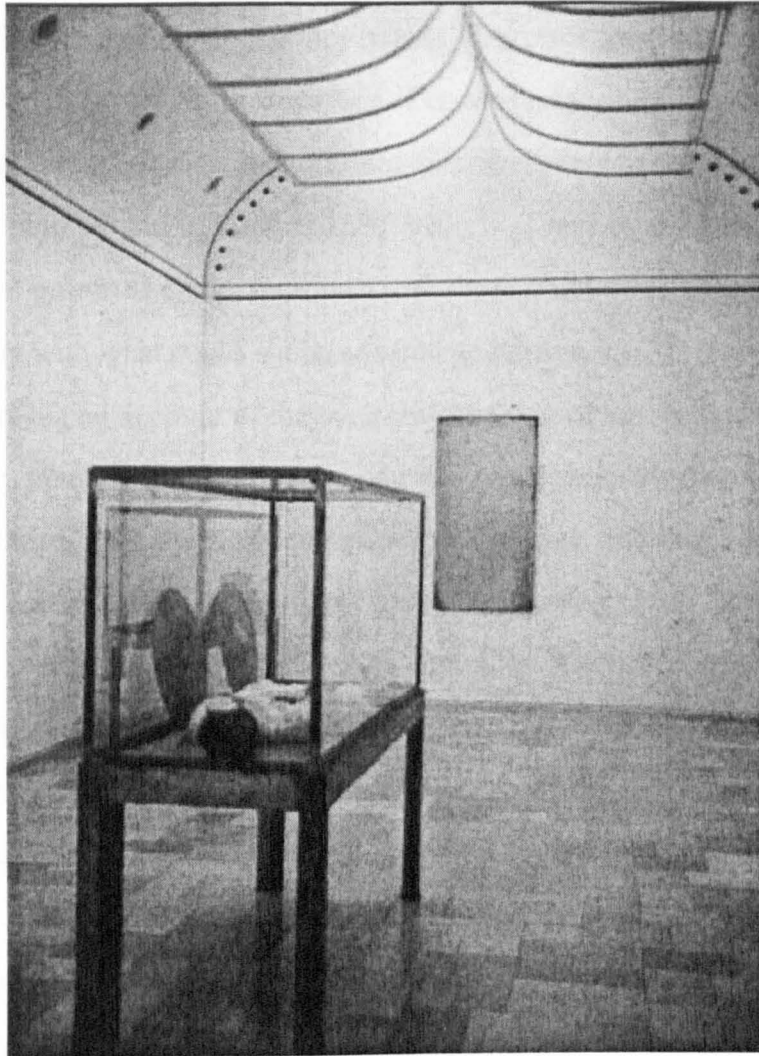
**Beuys adds two chapters to ‘Ulysses’ at James Joyce’s request**

‘Lo behold! *La arboro, lo petrusu*. The augustan peacebetothem oaks, the monolith rising stark from moonlit pinebarren.’ (*Finnegan’s Wake*, in Claus, 1998)<sup>116</sup> *I wish to be free, to set you free*

‘people never think far enough ahead to say well, if he’s working with felt, perhaps he means to evoke a colorful world inside us?... Nobody bothers to ask whether I might not be more interested in evoking a very colorful work as an anti-image inside people with the help of this element, felt.’ (Beuys, in Wright, 1987: 20)

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<sup>116</sup> Beuys’ interest in Joyce can be traced at to at least 1958. It was then that he began what would later comprise six books of drawings that were the basis for his addition to *Ulysses*. In 1972, Richard Hamilton recalled a lengthy discussion with Beuys about Joyce that began with Beuys cooking sheep’s kidneys: ‘Being in London somehow reminded him that Leopold Bloom fried kidneys in *Ulysses*. My comment that Bloom had eaten pig’s kidneys provoked a torrent of Joycean erudition. Though Beuys’s fluency in English, at that time, was not great, his knowledge of a masterpiece of English literature was intense and deep’. (Hamilton, in Kort, 1994: 32n35). As Kort notes, Beuys’ engagement with Joyce has yet to be explored in depth. She has given this effort a sound beginning by highlighting the parallels between Beuys’ and Joyce’s use of the medium of biography; through this, Beuys ‘found a means to come to terms with his past by reshaping the very experiences that had at times cruelly shaped him. For both men, autobiography meant focusing upon the thoughts of their lives rather than its fortuities of act or occasion. By turning fact into fiction and fiction into fact, they reordered their lives and universes to fit the purposes of their production of art.’ (Kort, 1994: 24)



Joseph Beuys, *Palazzo Regale*, 1985, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfal, Düsseldorf (photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

### *Deincarnation*

Beuys' 1955 contribution to a contest soliciting submissions for the design of an Auschwitz memorial, a competition that incidentally<sup>117</sup> he did not win, demonstrates the way in which the fragmentary nature of the work anchors it in 'an alternative form of historical narrative' which, in contrast to most commemorative projects, 'is not heroic, monumental, present or possessed of a coherent narrative; rather it is a testament to absence, being small, fragmented, humble and requiring a prolonged process of reading and reconstituting.' (Rogoff, 1995: 121) The elements of the piece, now on display in a vitrine

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<sup>117</sup> While this loss is incidental in terms of art history, it was likely far from incidental for Beuys himself.



at the Hessisches Landes Museum in Darmstadt, consist of ‘blocks of tallow’<sup>118</sup> on a rusted electric plate, forms alluding to chimney stacks, electrodes and wires, maps of railroad tracks leading into the death camp, drawings of emaciated young women, rows of sausage-shaped matter alluding to waste and organic debris, repeated references to his declared desire to ‘show your wound’ (Rogoff: 1995: 121)<sup>119</sup>. These operate together by offering an assortment of points of entry, facilitating a compassion without empathy, a mode of dealing obliquely with what could not be squared up against.

It is perhaps on account of the suchness of the time that Beuys developed a two-pronged strategy involving the cultivation of every single possible platform that presented itself to fashion himself as the facilitator of cultural change, and at the same time crafting and elaborating a network of imaginary escape routes leading out of that specific time and place and into vast, timeless spaces with mythical, legendary, spectral inhabitants, radicals and revolutionaries: Anarchasis Cloots<sup>120</sup> and Ignatius Loyola, Genghis Khan and his sons and grandsons — an expansive Eurasian embrace, a psychic steppe in which animals crossed souls and purposes with humans real and folkloric, rippling into the real in ways that he alone could articulate, for which he alone had to bear responsibility but from which he also could take comfort.

Responsibility thus became a dwelling, the logic of which demanded that he bear that responsibility in increasingly grand and ultimately perverse forms. These roles multiplied in response to the seductive power exercised by a figure who could and would orchestrate a therapeutic commemoration. So too did his inability to invent these roles with the rapidity and indeed with the consistency necessary to undertake what was nothing less than the healing of the Western world, beginning with Germany. That such a project would strike most people as preposterous would in no way assuage his sense of his inability to shirk it.

Alain Borer may be right to argue hammer home the closeness of some of Beuys performative pronouncements to a kind of staged Christlikeness; he cites one interview

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<sup>118</sup> ‘It should be noted here what Beuys had to say about fat — that people ate it, yet had a horror of it.’ (Duncan, 1995: 86)

<sup>119</sup> ‘If we show our wounds to others, we can be healed. These wounds can be anything — desires, the unspeakable...’ (Beuys quoted in Hariu, 1991: 54).

with Beuys in which he was asked: 'Which of your works contributes most of all to the image of Christ?', and replied: 'The expanded concept of art.' (Borer, 1996: 29)<sup>121</sup> Indeed Beuys did, towards the end of his life, come to fill the role for an entire generation of artists and art students of 'the cult priest of the revolution of consciousness' (Rogoff, 1995: 122; see also Smith, 1995). That Beuys delighted in such affirmation is not surprising; Paik explains that 'Germany needed an uncle who would take care of dropouts in the wake of the [post-1968] German economic miracle. The role of an uncle, a psychologist, a psychotherapist, Beuys took upon himself, because temperamentally he was the general of the under-privileged who could not stand on the side of the establishment. In a certain sense Beuys was killed by all the kinds of love people threw at him.' (Paik, 1993: 61) In fact he died working to see to completion his 7000 Oaks project, which was in many respects the symbolic swansong of the 'Social Sculpture'.

In Caroline Tisdall's catalogue written for Beuys' 1979 Guggenheim exhibition<sup>122</sup>, his first solo exhibition in America, Beuys explained that works such as those in his Auschwitz vitrine were not 'made to represent catastrophe, although the experience of catastrophe has contributed to my awareness. But my interest was not in illustrating it.' His interest lay not in describing the unfolding of this particular catastrophe, 'but of the content and meaning of catastrophe.' Here, as his sentence comes to an end in his own ears, he shifts gears from an ethical orientation — in which his concern is to articulate *verbally* the fact that his work is focused upon the work's intersubjective possibilities and not upon a specific event — to an epistemological one, which as his words spiral forth into the ether already begins a diversion into a firm moral stance that becomes intensely illustrative in its criticism of his unnamed contemporaries: 'The human condition is Auschwitz and the principle of Auschwitz finds its perpetuation in our understanding of

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<sup>120</sup> For a polished speculation on Beuys' interest in and imagined intimacy with Anacharsis Cloots, see Kort, 1994: 30.

<sup>121</sup> Beuys' reflections on his and his work's relationship to Christianity, rarely taken seriously in discussions of his work, constitute a series of discussions far too complex to do more than touch upon here. See his dialogues with the Friedhelm Mennekes (Mennekes, 1989) and with Louwrien Wijers (esp. 1996: 38-58); see also Mennekes, 1995.

<sup>122</sup> Gregory Ulmer notes that Jacques 'Derrida did visit [Beuys' 1979] Guggenheim exhibition, choosing to ascend the museum's famous spiraling ramps. After climbing from station to station (as the display sectors were called), Derrida remarked to his son Jean that the exhibit experience replicated nicely the "Stations of the Cross."' (Ulmer, 1984: 227-8) It is intriguing that Derrida in his nonchalance would articulate what could well have been Beuys' most hoped-for connection.

science and of political systems, in the delegation of responsibility to groups of specialists and in the silence of intellectuals and artists.’ (Beuys, in Tisdall, 1979: 23)

Though it seeps through the statement at every pore, little is served in reproaching Beuys for indulging in pathos. Such a reprimand obscures a much more interesting phenomenon at work in commentaries like this one. His reflections on the intentions behind his Auschwitz vitrine point up not so much the primacy of his formal over his mental sculpture, of the visual over the verbal, but something much more compelling: they trace Beuys’ use of his interlocutor’s attention to help him bridge the gaps between his mental, verbal, and formal sculpture.

Artist Marilyn Smith wrote of Beuys that ‘[s]uccumbing to verbal explanations was ... the weakening of Beuys’ position. He seemed to listen to his own rationalising and to like what he heard. ... The potency of his ‘actions’ and objects was in a different language and of another order, and — significantly — was dependent on his remaining mute.’ (Smith, 1995: 180) Her description calls attention to the often uncrossable nature of intersubjective creases. For Smith Beuys’ potency may have depended upon his silence, but his sanity depended upon his commitment to the refusal of it. Her account sets up a comparative relationship that distracts from the fact that for Beuys the visual and the verbal constituted a seamless fabric.

Her passage is useful in that it casts light on the contours of a critique of the ‘Beuys-effect’<sup>123</sup> that has yet to be developed; to date such critical engagements with Beuys have taken forms grounded not even by critique but by criticism of his character. Such an approach cuts off the possibility of massaging the ‘Beuys-effect’ into a different form, one that does not permit itself to be enraged the audacity of Beuys’ ‘auto-intoxication’, incensed by his participation in the National Socialist enterprise, nor seduced by the comprehensiveness of his system. Rather, precisely because his symphonic arrangement of such broad coextensive concept-forms as ‘Eurasia’ and the ‘Social Sculpture’ was so globally and transhistorically overarching, because he took on so much in his Lifecourse and his Workcourse, a mapping of the ‘Beuys-effect’ — that fabric

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<sup>123</sup> This term seems to have been coined by Terry Atkinson: ‘In my view, the ‘Beuys effect’ has put the cognitive competencies of the practice back years by virtue of the success of his presentation of auto-intoxication as practice.’ (Atkinson, 1995: 166)

from which Beuys fashioned his gauze for contemporary wounds — offers the opportunity to use Beuys' work to explore the confluence of the political and the ethical in terms of the notion of responsibility.

It is less accurate to say that the personal is the political than it is to say that the personal, which is by definition interpersonal, is ethical, and that it is the ethical that is the ground for politics, and indeed for religion. It is in these terms that we might return to Smith's description of Beuys' enjoyment of listening to himself explain himself. In order for his system to hold he had to be able to hear the connections between 'thinking forms' and 'spoken forms' traced aloud in a way that appeared to him, intuitively, to operate in a mode that gave him the same sort of sense of aesthetic peace that he could reach through the working of fat and felt. With respect to Michaud's claim that Beuys' system depended upon 'naive certainty of an absolute transparency between form and matter and the "idea"', it could be said that his was not a system at all in the rather more ideological sense which Michaud intends. The 'Social Sculpture' and its components were a medium to be used in crafting his comportment towards the world. It is neither naïve nor possessed of certainty, nor is its successful operation contingent upon transparency, relative or absolute, between form, matter and idea. It is by contrast all-too-humanly desperate and uncertain, and entails the management of a range of opaque conjunctions of form, matter, and idea. More accurately, there is for Beuys no 'between' between form, matter and idea; his engagement with the world is enacted on the basis of his intuitive insistence that this world operate as a fabric in which idea, spirit, matter, and so forth, are not divisible or separable, but are suffused in an intimate immanence. His desperation is somewhat closer to the state of fear and trembling probed by Kierkegaard, whose work Beuys held dear to his heart, and whose 'insight that existence is the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, and that man is the absolute' (Stachelhaus, 1991: 16), the crux of the Christian mystery, was one of his navigational principles.

Of the Social Sculpture, Michaud writes: 'Beuys identified his artistic activity with human labor in general: in so doing, he made of it the law to be adopted by man so as to attain the highest freedom, or absolute autonomy. But his "social sculpture" can, I believe, mean only the subjugation of the real world and real men, which it reduces to the

mere instruments of its free exercise.’ (Michaud, 1998: 46) If the ‘social sculpture’ *could* be ‘made the law’, which it of course could not — just as the Bodhisattva’s vow could not be legislated — and which Beuys did not intend, it would only lead to subjugation of subjects lacking the barest measure of skepticism; for those inclined to subjugation, any halfway decent story will do. The practice of Social Sculpture,<sup>124</sup> like any religious practice, requires what Batchelor has called ‘the faith to doubt’ (Batchelor, 1983).

Michaud’s judgment obscures some compelling moments in Beuys’ work and thought, fragments of which begin to appear in his more sustained discussion of Christianity and contemporary art with Friedhelm Mennekes.<sup>125</sup> It is in his dialogue with Mennekes that Beuys offered an explanation of the notion of ‘everyone is an artist’ that includes a subtle but integral component which is frequently overlooked. Mennekes had asked him: ‘without these thoughts as to increasing and mobilizing creativity, humanity and the world don’t have a good future. In your view, who would be the carrier of such creativity?’ To which Beuys answered: ‘Every person in the same manner. Thus the formula: each person is an artist by potential. The possibility exists.’ (Mennekes, 1989: 51)

Mennekes was struck by the charm of Beuys’ expression of this idea, and pursued it by insisting that Beuys qualify the statement further with respect to the reality that, while this indeed sounds like a fine proposal, ‘most people live in a kind of embarrassment and in a spiritual powerlessness’, while artists have the privilege of ‘harbor[ing] a liberated creativity. Would you say that generally speaking the artist participates in this liberated creativity or is part of it?’ Here Beuys shot back with a thoughtfully caustic reply:

‘The artist has become completely suspect for me, above all because he feels reduced to and, so to speak, part of the old systems: the artist must be a painter or a sculptor or a dancer or a poet or anything that people call “cultural”. I really don’t mean that at all. Rather, each person is an artist who demands much more from humanity than what artists are able to attain if they paint

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<sup>124</sup> Despite the ways in which his ‘Social Sculpture’ has presented problems for those with attachments to what Atkinson calls ‘the cognitive competencies of the practice’, criticisms made on behalf of these attachments tend to ignore the importance that this notion has held for artists outside the Euro-American art world that Beuys referred to as a ‘little pseudo-cultural ghetto.’ On the Social Sculpture’s impact on young Indonesian and Thai artists, see Poshyananda, 1999: 144.

wonderful pictures. O.K. that has a certain value. But for the future of humanity that is not crucial. What is crucial, shall we say, is relating the concept "artist" to every person and simply to his own work. [...] The extended concept of art stating "Each person is an artist" is not easy, although it is very necessary for art. A trash collector can accomplish this in the sense of an anthropological art sooner than a painter, but that remains open. We cannot say who accomplishes this in his line of work. For the time being, it looks as if the artists wanted that least.' (Beuys, in Mennekes, 1989: 51-53)

Mennekes moved with him, attuned to the differentiation Beuys had made between a more familiar discourse of creativity as a kind of engine of cultural capital 'and a creativity that directly refers to the aspects of liberation and redemption. What is decisive here? Who then establishes liberated creativity in the event of doubt?' Beuys responded by tracing a path between the desire to work for social change and the aversion to undertaking such work in a moralizing voice. As someone who was intimately involved in the culture of radical pedagogy,<sup>126</sup> Beuys was vociferous about his belief in the responsibility of artists to maintain direct engagement with the cultural politics of their time.

At the same time, the explicitness of his performance of an increasingly far-flung and disparate range of political positions (from peacemaker in Northern Ireland to imagined facilitator of the Eurasian metasynthesis through his encounter with the Dalai Lama) led to an increasingly problematic gulf between the complex realities of the cultural politics in which he sought to intervene, and the role of 'change agent'<sup>127</sup> that he sought to craft for himself in order to be the engine of such change.

Beuys displayed foresight in his assessment, made over twenty years ago, that the primary concern on the part of most people with the management and exploitation of material resources to the detriment of spiritual or ethical ones is a properly 'international dilemma'. It may be that Beuys' attempt, to varying degrees of success, to generate a series of interconnected performative, intellectual, affective, and material modes of addressing this international dilemma represents his most serious contribution to debates concerned with the relationships between contemporary critical and artistic practices and

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<sup>125</sup> A Jesuit, a Professor of Pastoral Theology and the Sociology of Religion at Frankfurt/Main, Pastor since 1987 of Sankt Peter in Köln, and Director of its 'Kunst-Station', Mennekes has also served as editor of *KUNST UND KIRCHE*, an ecumenical publication for art and architecture.

<sup>126</sup> See Stachelhaus, 1991

<sup>127</sup> Thanks to Ken Friedman for bringing this term to my attention with respect to Beuys. He has noted that 'Joseph Beuys was a great artist in many respects. [But the way in which] he acted out his philosophy

global culture. His contributions seem in many respects to have gone largely untapped, perhaps in part because of the problems that both his friends and his opponents had with Beuys' own rhetoric and its failure to develop a sensitivity to complex political and cultural tensions when he inserted his own performative presence into their midst.

It is these concerns, which must be addressed if Beuys is to be imagined to be something other than either shaman or charlatan, that Terry Atkinson raises in his trenchant critique of Beuys' rhetoric, which he refers to as 'Beuyspeak.' Atkinson explains that it was Beuys' 'self-regarding homilies to the Irish in Belfast' that constituted what came to be 'only the first of a number of last straws' in the maturation of his contempt for such positionings. (Atkinson, 1995: 166) During his visit to Northern Ireland, with his entourage and cameraman in tow, Beuys was interrogated by an old Protestant woman in Belfast. 'From Germany?', she asked quizzically, and continued: 'They're all here — Japs, Germans — all pickin' Ulster's bones, pickin' the carcass. God help this country.' Beuys protested amiably: 'We could all help.' The woman replied: 'Help? You don't understand the situation at all.' (Tisdall, 1998: 44)<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, as Atkinson argues, '[t]he grim historical reapers of the Provisional IRA, for example, were never likely to find Beuys' discourse on 'deep Celticism' very persuasive — this is absolutely obvious. Beuys never seemed at all aware of the vanity of his position.' (Atkinson, 1995: 166)

Here it is important to note the ways in which Beuys' globetrotting interventions have been packaged. For instance, Tisdall's *We Go This Way* is a quasi-catalogue that organizes Beuys' oeuvre geographically, looking at voyages to specific places (America, Italy, Ireland, Japan) and melanging his words, written and spoken, with her summaries and images of works, actions, and informal photos of him embodying his gravitas in various locales. In the introduction to the section on his visit to Northern Ireland in 1974, the following quote is given as if to explain his reason for traveling there: 'We have reached a crisis of materialism in the Western world. We have to break through the wall of

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in practice — his behavior — made it difficult for him to achieve much as a change agent and an activist for social creativity.' Email from Ken Friedman, June 2001.

<sup>128</sup> In the 1995 symposium at the Tate Gallery Liverpool at which Atkinson presented his critical reading of Beuys, there were two other presentations that looked specifically at Beuys' engagement with Irish history and Celtic lore (Tisdall, 1995; Kockel, 1995).

analysis. It's like Brecht's poetry, we are still isolated, we are still sitting in the garbage can. This is one of the problems of Christianity. It's easier with Buddhism. I am who I am. Investigation of the mind.' (Beuys, in Tisdall, 1998: 44)

This quote demonstrates the ease with which Beuys' ideas and words can be mismanaged by his supporters just as easily as they can be by his detractors. The idea that this would say anything of substance about Ireland is absurd, and takes away from the important current in the statement itself, which demonstrates, with more precision than is often available in his recorded words, the way in which Beuys connected what he felt represented remedies to the crisis of Western materialism: here Brechtian existentialism and (a reductive portrayal of) Buddhist meditation. He was almost Deleuze-and-Guattarian in his hyper-connectivism. An obverse of their 'nomadism', his 'Eurasia' could represent a recovery of the split between Eastern and Western Germany, Eastern and Western Europe, Eastern and Western spirituality, Eastern spirituality and Western materialism, and so forth, depending upon the context in which he might feel called upon to offer up a diagnosis.

His intuitive connection of Brecht and Buddhism is as suggestive as it is underdeveloped. It is precisely this connection that Stephen Batchelor has developed in his recent work. In his questioning of what Buddhism can offer to its encounter with Western culture, he argues against a notion of Buddhism as a kind of spiritual technology that must be imported with its ritual trappings intact and applied uncritically by its adherents. For him, the most productive way for the West to approach the encounter with Buddhism is in terms of a kind of 'existential, therapeutic, liberating agnosticism' (Batchelor, 1998: 15).<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, Beuys' lack of attention to historical and cultural specificities is certainly problematic. Another glaring example of his tendency towards overlooking the complexities of political struggles is given by Benjamin Buchloh in his essay, by now the

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<sup>129</sup> This attempt to think the connection between Buddhism and Western thought and culture in terms of a critical existentialism has been the central current in Batchelor's writing (see Batchelor, 1998; 1994; 1990; 1983). This has led to a mixed reception from the Buddhist community; Bhikku Bodhi has expressed the concern of many in the Buddhist (and Buddhist Studies) establishment in cautioning that 'Batchelor is ready to cast away too much that is integral to the Buddha's teaching in order to make it fit in with today's secular climate of thought.' (Bodhi, 1998: 3)



backbone of Beuys criticism, “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol – Preliminary notes for a critique”. In this essay that some view as a masterful debunking of the Beuys legend (Atkinson, 1995; Bois and Krauss, 1997) and others consider to be an attack whose intensity borders on the hysterical (Levi-Strauss, 1999), Buchloh writes: ‘Beuys’ supposedly radical position, as in so many aspects of his activities, is primarily marked by his compulsive self-exposure as the messianic artist (think, for example, of his preposterous offer at a women’s liberation gathering in New York: What can I do for You?’) (Buchloh, 1980: 172)

Whether Beuys’ comments, and indeed his presence, could be said to represent misguided compassion, deluded generosity, or vain posturing could be argued forever. The implication that one of these precludes the other is as mistaken as it is beside the point. What is crucial to note is Beuys’ attempt to open himself personally to, and to articulate his role with respect to, the assumption of responsibility, even if he lacked the means to carry out that encounter with polished sensitivity.

Despite the fraught terrain of frequently fruitless deliberations about artists’ intent, it is important to mark the way that Beuys attempted to invent for himself the discipline, the inter-discipline, that would permit him to work for the social change for which he so frequently argued. His spiritual exercises comprised a range of possible modes of exploration and elaboration, intuitive leaps and bounds made in an effort to create a total fabric of intelligibility. In his grappling with the construction of what he called ‘overall substance’, he sought to suffuse the entirety of his experience, from reality at its barest and most raw to the ‘supra sensual level’ (Mennekes, 1995: 155). This highly personal and idiosyncratic discipline makes mind and body operate as pliant media for shaping and responding to the encounter. To the extent that Beuys permitted the terms of his invention to be shaped in an active and dynamic way by that otherness which he encountered, his work proved incisive and powerful. But to the extent that he insisted on teaching instead of learning, his work and his words became the vehicle for a banal form of violence directed towards the other(s) with whom he shared his encounters.

Beuys’ positionality was, as Christopher Phillips has noted, borne of his immersion in what one of Beuys’ earliest critics articulated as a ‘postwar Christian

existentialism'.<sup>130</sup> His work and his public persona are concerned with questions of faith and mortality, impermanence; they 'dramatize the search for fleeting signs of transcendence amid the terrifying succession of accidents, the flux-toward-death, that defines human life.' (Phillips, 1994: 58) The difficulty of navigating the terrain marked out by something called German postwar Christian existentialism, particularly to scholars averse to wandering in the putative mire of faith and spirituality, could perhaps account for the paucity of sensitive readings of Beuys' Christianity. Beuys insisted upon attention to the subtle differentiations between notions that can often easily be conflated, particularly by contemporary critics when any reference to religion presents itself. When in their 1979 discussion Louwrien Wijers asked him about his position with respect to the word 'mysticism', a word that, as she noted, had been tossed around quite frequently in American reviews of Beuys' retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in New York that year (which had provoked Buchloh's article) Beuys' sensitivity to these differentiations found immediate expression.

Wijers had asked: 'Reviews on your show... say that people over there are especially attracted by the mysticism in your work. In the 'Soho News' art-critic John Perrault writes that you bring a totally new feeling to America with this mysticism that your work has. How do you look at mysticism yourself?'<sup>131</sup> Beuys answered curtly: 'There is no mysticism. The first distortion of the idea [of the work] is that it deals with mysticism. Perhaps there are some mystics in it, but not mysticism. And there is a difference between mystics and mysticism.' Continuing in his consideration of the response of his American audience, he said: 'I don't know what they call mysticism, it is in truth perhaps the interest of the spirit; that the work expresses the spirit, and not the formal aspect.'

He went on to outline a concise and perceptive reading of the nature of the difference between European and American responses to his work. In the context of American art, 'a lot of art production runs along the line of formalist art; what one could call Post-Modernism, a kind of formalist intention like Don Judd, Carl Andre, Robert

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<sup>130</sup> Phillips credits Monsignore Otto Mauer, 'one of Beuys's most perceptive early critics', with this point (Phillips, 1994: 58, 62n.27).

Morris', whereas Beuys' work, in his own estimation, gave his viewers the feeling that there was on his part 'a real other intention to go on with art, an intention which is related to the problems of the world and related to the questions existing on [the issue of] ecology and on powers, you know. My work is mostly related to creative powers.' (Wijers, 1996: 38-9) He suspected that the reason for the imprecise choice of the word 'mystical' on the part of many critics owed to their sense that he was conducting experiments that, while their vehicle was form, were nevertheless not primarily *formal*. How else to describe something that was neither Pop nor High Modernist, neither kitsch nor avant-garde, or at least not avant-garde in any of the right ways, but to make recourse to the nameable ineffable made accessible by 'mysticism'? Beuys went on to impute a *readiness* on the part of his American audience for 'a real other context', one that Beuys, navigating an inflected English like Blavatsky would a séance, felt was '*variated* to all directions, to the existing problems of humankind; nature, society, psychology, creativity. The existing questions have to bring up the consciousness and then the consciousness has to be researched again and has to be brought up to a real other, higher level of understanding of what culture means.' (ibid, italics added) The people could *feel* this new context, even if they lacked a vocabulary to articulate it. And it was *variated* in such a way that it demanded respondents who themselves wanted something more, something that would be receptive and responsive to their creativity. A collective test-drive of everyday life. It lay outside of language, but it was on the cusp of it: 'That they feel. And I think they quote it sometimes with the word mysticism. But there is perhaps not a clear idea about the differences of mysticism and mystics and spirit and consciousness. I think that's perhaps the excuse for the application of the word mysticism in the intentions of the writers.' He added: 'So I refuse ever to be interested in mysticism.' (ibid)

In one of our discussions, Wijers told me: 'you shouldn't put words on things too easily, because you may rob it [of its] content. Especially 'mysticism', because as soon as you call something 'mysticism', the mysticism of it is gone.' (Wijers, 1/1998: n.p.) In their 1979 interview, Beuys was very clear on this point; asked whether, despite the problems of naming such things, he could say a bit more about what 'mystic' meant to

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<sup>131</sup> The use of the term 'mysticism' is still hard at work in discussions of Beuys' work; see for example

him, he replied squarely: 'Yes, mystic means the undeclared secrets of life. But I do not call it mystics, I call it the unsolved questions in the whole culture.' Beuys considered that the direction that 'culture' had taken had masked, but not eliminated, possibilities for notions of ecological equanimity, for cohabitation and collaboration between individuals, species, and ways of articulating their respective realities. It was at once grand in its perception of possible modes of interdependence and intensely speculative and inventive in its way of giving form to these instantiations of inter-personal, inter-species, international, 'supra-sensual' (Mennekes, 1995: 155)<sup>132</sup> confluence. It was therefore, like the *Lifecourse/Workcourse*, not accountable to verification or fact-checking, but was, however, infinitely debatable, because though it operated as politics, in the sense of political process and also the subtler politics of intersubjectivity, it was primarily *ethical*. Since the basis of his approach to the ethical was his own reinvention of a Christian love-economy, it is correct to say that, for Beuys, the ethical is indivisible from the religious, in that the religious is understood as a mode of being-in-love-with the other.

It is for this reason important to bear the following quote from Gandhi in mind in considering Beuys' notion of a primarily ethico-religious politics: 'I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.' (Gandhi, 1993: 504) Similarly for Beuys, politics and religion — or more precisely, that daily practice of it which is more often referred to as 'spirituality' — were inseparable. Beuys' field of experimentation was therefore at once religious, in the sense intended by Gandhi, and *unarchic*, operating outside of social contract, but intimately bound to the political in the most palpable sense.

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Parcellin, 2001: 87.

<sup>132</sup> For Atkinson, Beuys' *Coyote* action 'is one of Beuys' *pièces de résistance*. As an exercise in supersensibility this will take some beating, as it will as an exercise in vainglorious metaphysical posturing.' (Atkinson, 1995: 175) In "Mystical Elements in Art", Sixten Ringbom engages with the unwillingness of most scholarship to deal with that which seems to fall under the rubric of mystical, visionary, and occult experience — in short, the 'supersensible' (Ringbom, 1987: 73). Atkinson is a case in point. His indictment of Beuys could peel paint off a wall: 'He alleges he made good contact with the coyote — whatever this might mean. Whatever it might mean, we can be sure it will be of a more profound character than when I consider I have made good contact with our cats, Heidi and Snowy.' (ibid: 174) And yet, to his credit, surely Beuys would be the first to believe him. See Tisdall, in Kuoni, 1990: 168-169 for a description of Beuys' interactions with the coyote.

### *East-West nomad*

In his 1967 action *Eurasian Staff*, performed with composer Henning Christiansen in Vienna and in Antwerp, a work which was meant to encourage co-operation between people of the East and people of the West, Beuys positioned himself as an 'East-West nomad'. He positioned shoe soles in the form of a cross, upon which this nomad identified the four cardinal directions — East, West, South, and North. 'These...were meant not only as geographic pointers but also as directions of mind.' Von Graevenitz notes that Beuys attached

'a lump of fat in the upper corner of the room and in the opposite bottom corner, [implying] that the room itself required a deposit of warmth for the traveler. Fat in the form of a triangle or a pyramid was synonymous for Beuys with thought, production, and the creative act. Fat and its form were thus synonyms for energy and thought.' (von Graevenitz, 1996: 69-71)

She writes that '*Eurasian Staff* was a kind of staged story that had nothing in common with the reality of the room in the gallery. It was a story told in fragments that included healing materials, fragments of movement, sacred objects, and written words.' (ibid: 72) Fat and felt: here were the crucially colorless materials of East-West co-operation.

### *Rainbow's gravity*

In his book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Lama Sogyal Rinpoche<sup>133</sup> notes that the 'ancient Tantras of Dzogchen, and the writings of the great masters, distinguish different categories of [an] amazing otherworldly phenomenon, for at one time, if at least not normal, it was reasonably frequent.' Lama Sogyal relates a famous instance of this phenomenon in Eastern Tibet which was witnessed by many people. It happened with the death of Sönam Namgyal, the father of his tutor.

'He was a very simple, humble person, who made his way as an itinerant stone carver, carving mantras and sacred texts. Some say he had been a hunter in his youth, and had received teachings from a great master. No one really knew he was a practitioner; he was truly what is called "a hidden yogin". [...] When [his] illness got worse, his family called in masters and doctors. His son told him he should remember all the teachings he had heard, and he smiled and said, "I've forgotten them all and anyway, there's nothing to remember. Everything is illusion, but I am confident that all is well."' After he died, the family "placed his body in a small room in the

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<sup>133</sup> Beuys' first prototype for the *Fettecke* (*Fat Corner*) was made in 1963. On April 28, 1982, when Lama Sogyal Rinpoche visited Beuys' atelier at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, Beuys made an improvised 'Fat Corner for Room 3' and installed it in the upper corner of the room (Wijers, 1996: 162-173).

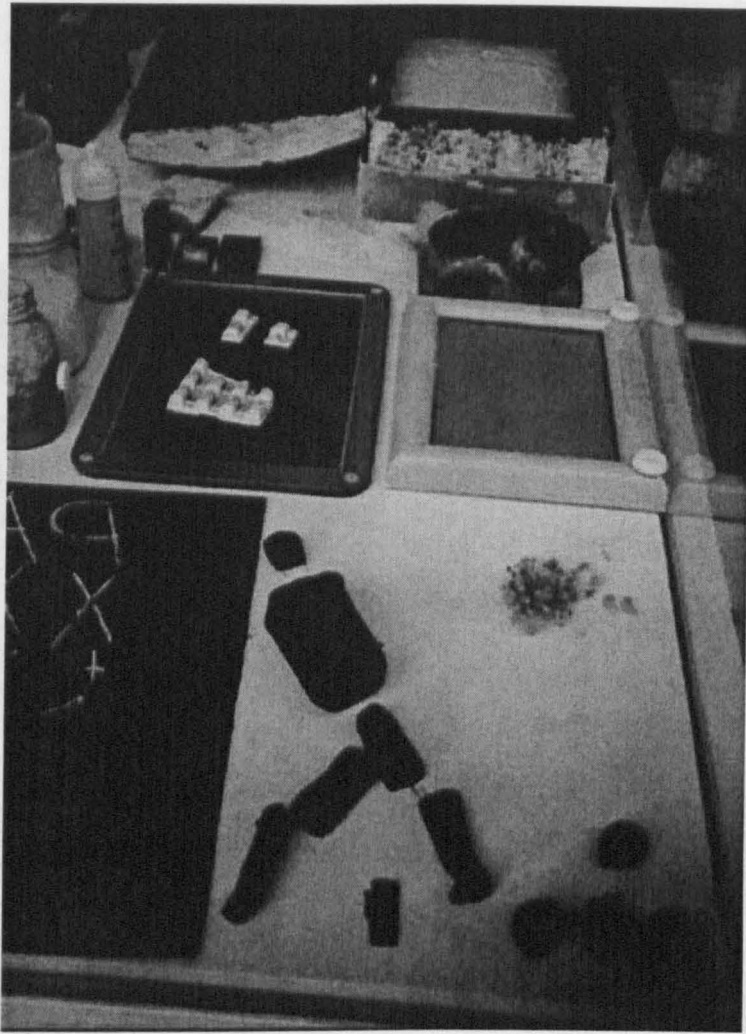
house, and they could not help noticing that although he had been a tall person, they had no trouble getting it in, as if he were becoming smaller. At the same time, an extraordinary display of rainbow-colored light was seen all around the house. When they looked into the room on the sixth day, they saw that the body was getting smaller and smaller. On the eighth day after his death... the undertakers arrived to collect his body. When they undid its coverings, they found nothing inside but his nails and hair. My master Jamyang Khyentse asked for these to be brought to him, and verified that this was a case of the rainbow body.’ (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1992: 167-169)<sup>134</sup>

It is said that when an enlightened being, which in Tibet means often — although not without exception — a lama, dies, the consciousness exits the body instantly through the crown of the head, often with such force as to leave a tiny hole, like a trepanation, in the skull. And in some of these cases a remarkable thing happens, to which many witnesses are said to have testified. The body of the just-deceased does not undergo the usual process of decay and decomposition, but seems to disappear entirely. Now, as the body dissolves and is ‘reabsorbed back into the light essence of the elements that created it’ (Sogyal, 1992: 167) there is produced simultaneously a rainbow in the sky above. The only things that remain of the realized being, then, apart from the brilliant and ephemeral rainbow body, are the person’s hair, fingernails and toenails.

In Tibet, in the case that a death does not produce a rainbow and a disappeared corpse, the body of the deceased may very likely be given a sky burial. Taken to a place outside of town, reserved especially for this rite, the body will be cut up and offered, by those who do this work at their karmic expense, to the gathering vultures. The bones will be hammered to pieces and ground to a fine powder. This will be mixed with grain to feed the crows who arrive for the burial’s second round. (O’Kane, 1998: 32-36)

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<sup>134</sup> Other instances of this miraculous light body are found in Tibetan tales of enlightened beings; see Batchelor, 1994: 95. There are also allusions to this transubstantiation in the Western tradition. ‘Salvation in the 16C[entury] and long after was understood as “resurrection of the flesh.” The promise of the gospel was literal: the body would come into being again. As the learned told those who asked, St. Augustine had explained that the hair shed in life and the fingernails cut would be restored in full, though invisibly, in the new heavenly body.’ (Barzun, 2000: 25)



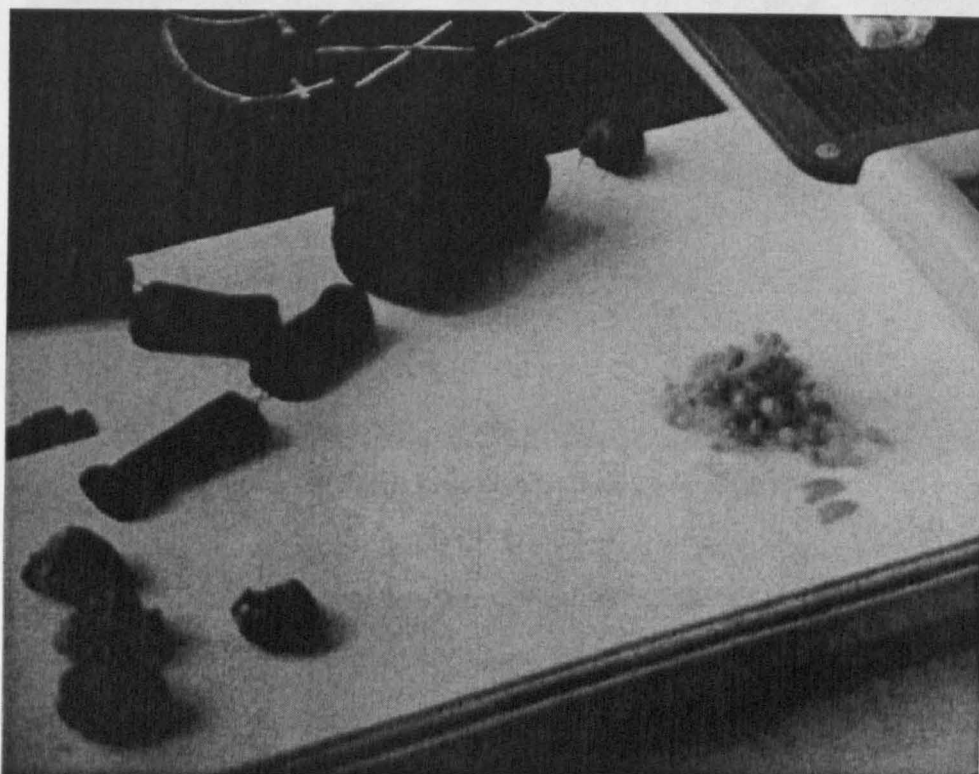
Joseph Beuys, *Vitrine 7*, detail (photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

At the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt Beuys installed his permanent exhibition “Block Beuys”. It houses the contents of his Auschwitz memorial submission, as well as a collection of items inside a vitrine whose name is only a number: ‘Vitrine 7’, dated 1954-67. (Beuys, Eva, Beuys, Wenzel and Beuys, Jessyka, 1990: 200) Among its contents: ‘Astronautin’ (1961): a figure that has been chopped into bits at its major joints, fit for disposal.

‘Haare (Atom-Modell) und Zehennägel Aus >>Vehicle Art<<’ (1963): tangled clusters of hair and clippings of finger nails: all that is left over. The title ‘Vehicle Art’, as Alain Borer has noted in relation to another work altogether,<sup>135</sup> has Buddhist connotations (the

<sup>135</sup> ‘The meditative wealth provided by [Joseph Beuys’ ‘Bicycle’ (Venice 1984)] symbolizes his idea of the path to be taken, and as such represents the entire body of his work, to which in 1964 he gave the general title — with strong Buddhist overtones — of *vehicle-art*.’ (Borer, 1996: 23)

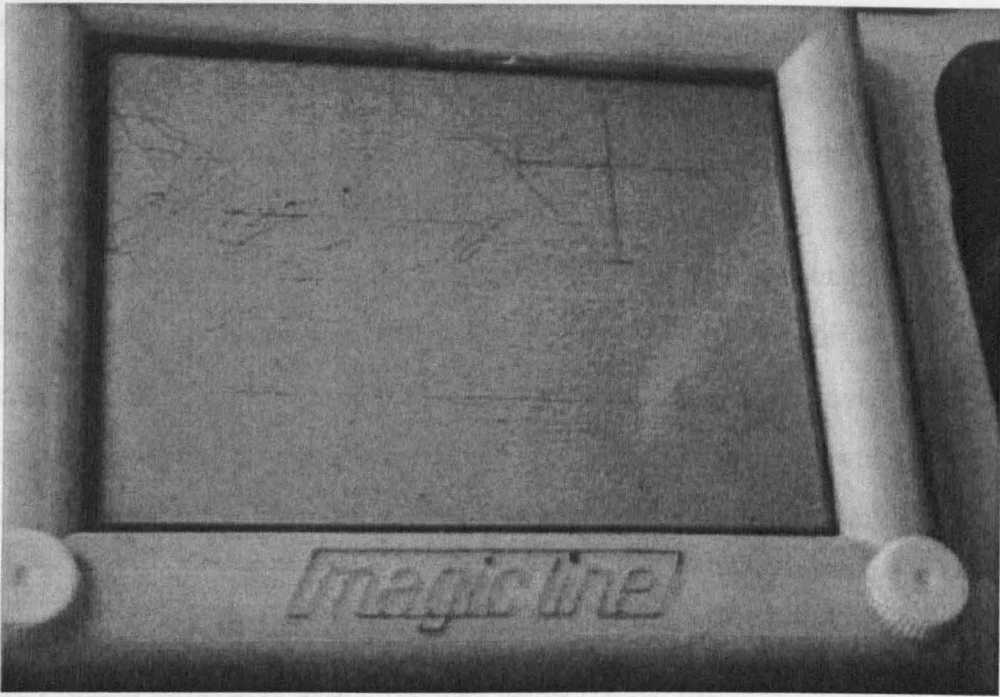
Sanskrit suffix ‘-yana’ is translated as ‘vehicle’, as in ‘Hinayana’, ‘Mahayana’, ‘Vajrayana’).



**Detail of Vitrine 7 showing *Astronautin* and *Haare (Atom-Modell)* und *Zehennägel*  
*Aus >>Vehicle Art<<* (photo Chris Thompson, 1999)**

‘Magic Line’(1965): a combination of axes and spiraling lines, sketching out the directions that ash of the dead might take when thrown to the ‘four directions’ of the wind, a child’s toy that need only be shaken for these lines to disappear.





Detail of Vitrine 7 showing *Magic Line* (photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

The possibility of connections here is palpable, all the more so because it can only be evinced through intuition and anecdote. To insist that these are deliberate connections to ‘Tibetan’ healing and funerary practices would detract from the intensity of this confluence which remains infinitely more gripping if it is permitted to remain accidental, much as Beuys wished his personal Eurasia to be: an almost meteorological imaginary zone of contacts, residues of ideas, figures, and forms, real and invented connections into which he could escape and from which he would draw in his life, his speech, his sculpture.

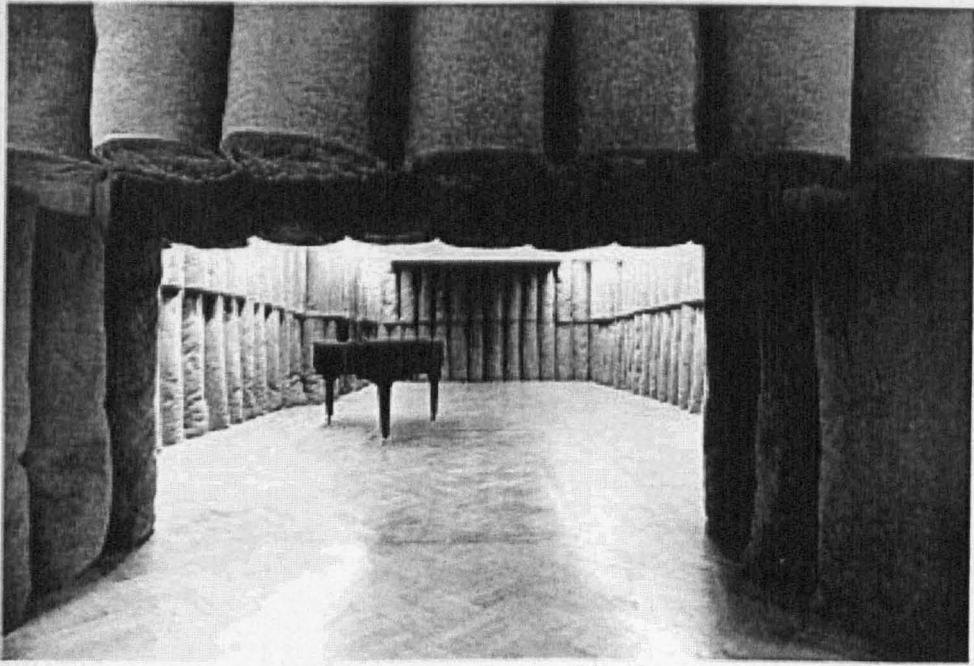
His figuration of Eurasia is often traced to his even more often-quoted tale of his plane crash in the Crimean during the war, from which he was rescued, so he maintained, by ‘Tartar’ nomads, covered in animal fat and wrapped in felt in order to keep him warm as he underwent his healing process, and ultimately accepted as one of them:

‘I remember voices saying “Voda” (“water”), then the felt of their tents and the dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in. [...] “Du nix njemcky [you are not German], they would say, “du Tatar,” and try to persuade me to join their clan...”’ (Beuys, in Tisdall, 1979: 16).

The veracity of this story has been debated with sufficient rigor and frenzy elsewhere (Buchloh, 1980). In any case the tale is most productively read as a more or less true

fiction; what seems not to have been pointed out is the fact that, in choosing the area between the Crimean and the Black Seas as its setting, Beuys' founding fiction, whether knowingly or not, unfolded amidst the lives of 'Tartar nomads' who would have been Tibetan Buddhist.

This land is home to the Kalmyks, Tibetan Buddhist Mongols who settled there in the seventeenth century in the wake of the gradual Mongol withdrawal from their conquest of Eastern Europe. As Lopez notes, as the Kalmyks had been severely oppressed by the Soviets, they backed the Germans during World War Two; when the Germans withdrew from the Soviet Union, a large group of Kalmyks followed them in their retreat to Austria.<sup>136</sup> So, whether by choice or happenstance, it was Tibetan Buddhist Mongols, ones who were particularly sympathetic to Germans in general and to the German military in particular, who saved Beuys' life.



Joseph Beuys, *Plight*, 1958-1985, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London

<sup>136</sup> Many of these Kalmyks, rather than be forced to repatriate and thus have 'to suffer Stalin's revenge', were permitted to settle in the United States, in Freewood Acres, New Jersey. Having established this community in exile, in 1955 the Kalmyks called upon an established Tibetan Buddhist monk, named Geshe Wangyal, then in Sikkim, to be their religious leader. Geshe Wangyal was instrumental in the subsequent development of Tibetan Buddhist Studies in America, counting Jeffrey Hopkins (who as will be discussed in Chapter Four below served as translator in Louwrien Wijers' audience with the Dalai Lama) and Robert A.F. Thurman as his students. For a more thorough discussion of Geshe Wangyal and his role in the emergence of Tibetan Buddhist Studies in American academia, see Lopez, 1998: 163-180, esp. 163-165.

According to Wijers, Beuys visited the Wisdom Publications bookshop when he was in London in October of 1985 installing both *Lightning (Blitzschlag)* at the Royal Academy of Arts for the exhibition “German Art in the 20th Century”, as well as his work *Plight* in the Anthony d’Offay Gallery (Nairne, 1987: 93).

Wisdom Publications was founded in 1975, initially as a ‘publishing organ’ for the work of ‘Lama Yeshe’<sup>137</sup> (Lopez, 1998: 177). The London office and shop of Wisdom Publications — though now headquarters have moved from old to New England, residing today in Boston, Massachusetts (ibid) — used to be located in the same building as the d’Offay Gallery, a short elevator ride up from d’Offay’s ground floor. Wisdom’s then-proprietor recalls Beuys making several visits, amassing armloads of books on Tibetan Buddhism (Wijers, 2/1999).

For *Plight* Beuys lined

‘the walls of the gallery with large rolls of felt, two rolls high, in specially manufactured groups of five. The two rooms of the gallery were thus padded, insulated and isolated. In the centre of the larger room a grand piano was positioned, with a blackboard and a thermometer on top of its closed case. [...] As the felt rolls were lifted, positioned against the walls and fixed in place, the temperature in the room began to rise. The walls and windows were gradually covered in, and the felt, a mixture of rabbit’s hair and sheep’s hair, dominated, creating a dull, grey, womb-like, but also tomb-like, space.’ (Nairne, 1987: 93-5)

He met his death three months later, on January 23, 1986.

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<sup>137</sup> The Gelugpa *tulku* Thupten Yeshe was, along with Lama Thupten Sopa, a founder of a number of dharma centers throughout the world, and a charismatic teacher who spoke and wrote on a staggering range of topics from Buddhist philosophy to Christmas carols. In addition to his and Lama Sopa’s writings, Wisdom Publications published works by the Dalai Lama and, among others, Jeffrey Hopkins (Lopez, 1998: 177), whose important contribution to Tibetan Buddhist studies, *Meditation on Emptiness*, was first published in 1983, making it conceivable that it was among Beuys’ purchases.



## *Overgave*

‘No, I would forget about all that is being written about Beuys. I don’t think you need to go into that. I think that what is actually *said* by him and how you react to that, that is more... *valuable*.’

— Louwrien Wijers, to Chris Thompson, January 2000

On January 23, 1998 Thompson made his first visit to Amsterdam. Following the canals, he managed to find his way easily to Louwrien Wijers’ home. She welcomed him warmly, showed him to the living room where they were to have their discussions — both during that visit and the two that followed, in January 1999 and February 2000 — and told him he could sleep in the bed in the corner of that room.

Atop the dresser at the foot of the bed were photographs of the Tibetan lama who had stayed at her house during his visits to Amsterdam since the early 1980s, and her mother, now deceased. Perched on the table at the head of the bed was an image of the Buddha.

Wijers wanted to run an errand before they began their discussions about serious matters, so that they would not need to interrupt their discussion later.

He looked forward to the opportunity to see a bit of Amsterdam, and agreed to accompany her on her errand. They stepped out onto the pavement paralleling the canal. As they walked, to make conversation in the way one does when one is a first-time visitor to a new place, Thompson asked her a question about Amsterdam. It was a question to which he already knew the answer, because on the flight from London that morning he had already begun to study the city map, which was marked with a number of tourist attractions and places of interest. He asked Wijers whether she lived near Anne Frank’s house. She smiled and said ‘Yes, it is very near.’ He asked whether she had ever been to see it. The sky was grey with the hint of a snow that never came. ‘No. No, in fact I have never been inside there.’ He saw a smile connect her cheeks. He imagined that she had

rediscovered that smile some years before, after having lost it for a time, and had resolved never to lose it again. She told him that the whole of Amsterdam was Anne Frank's house.

### *Gift from Buchenwald*

Louwrien Wijers was born in 1939 to parents who ran a small bakery in a village near Arnhem, Holland. She tells of an early childhood spent surrounded by people carefully working on all kinds of confections, baking breads, measuring and improvising with ingredients. One of her earliest and fondest memories is of watching her father practice the art of marzipan-making, an art that, with its requisite balancing of pounding and kneading with the finess of handling and shaping, as she has said, has much in common with the art of felt-making. When later in her life she came to work as a sculptor, she took pleasure in the realization that working with metal — at turns following and resisting the metal's properties, its tendencies to fold, bend and break in certain ways — was in fact not much different from working with marzipan (Wijers, 2/2000: 37)<sup>138</sup>.

More generally she remembers a childhood surrounded by beauty, a memory which ironically was fostered rather than quashed by having grown up during the years of the Second World War and the 'restoration' of Europe which followed, and which survived despite the wartime destruction of her family's home, which also housed the bakery. Both were flattened not by the invading Nazi army but by the 'friendly fire' of liberating Allied bombers. But beauty, she said, 'beauty was something that was around us all the time in... early life, although... times were hard, after the war, but beauty was the most important thing. I don't know why, but... people were happy, and people were... really... working on beauty. It's a different thing now.' (ibid: 31)

She remembers her uncle taking her to see her first piece of modern sculpture, by British sculptor Henry Moore, at the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, Holland, the first of a flood of new works that came into Holland after the war. '[I]t was a great feeling to see those things, because they were so different, such new shapes...those shapes I really appreciated... the whole time of the late 40s and early 50s was devoted to art, and

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<sup>138</sup> Hereafter, references to transcripts of discussions between Thompson and Wijers are given with the month and year: 1/1998, 2/1999, or 2/2000. Where the reference is to a discussion that has not been transcribed, no page number is given.

to dancing and music... Boogie-woogie was of course the music, and... it was very important. We couldn't do without art.' (ibid) Her uncle nurtured her interest in this nascent post-war culture. She refers to him as 'the Buchenwald uncle'. He was among approximately two thousand Dutch people, none Jewish, that the Nazis gathered and sent to Buchenwald in the early days of their occupation of Holland. They were for the most part 'important' people — artists, musicians, poets, scholars, and so on — taken from various cities and towns throughout the country. These people were something like an indefinitely-held cultural ransom: 'they would be killed if anything went wrong in Holland' (ibid).

But their period of internment in the camp was one of relative comfort. As a collective insurance policy they were neither sent nor worked to their death. They were actually allowed to continue their creative pursuits within the camp's confines, and could communicate with their families and friends. Wijers fondly remembers getting parcels in the mail from a far away place called Buchenwald. They contained little things her uncle had made for her, mostly sketches and paintings and little figurines — like one carved little wooden 'girl with an umbrella, nicely painted red, and a nice yellow coat' (ibid) — with which she covered the walls of her room. She speculates that 'the beauty of those things made in war time... in the most horrible circumstances, must have radiated something, because I didn't know about Buchenwald and we... actually nobody knew I think, at that time, they just knew they were in camps' (ibid). The inmates were not permitted to tell their loved ones about what went on inside the camp. Wijers and her sisters like most children with relatives there knew it only as a place from whence nice things magically appeared. From them the name 'Buchenwald' evoked not curses but exclamations: 'Aha! A new parcel!' (ibid).

Where children today might collect pictures of fashion models, athletes and movie stars, in the post-war days in Holland, Wijers like many others collected things to do with art. She and her sisters had stacks of postcards of art, clippings of writings about art, and arrays of small exhibition booklets. 'Oh, we collected anything on art!' (ibid) At an early age her father gave her a box of paints and a palette. She began to use them in an earnestness that continued into her teenage years. She excelled in her drawing classes, for

which she received perfect marks. When the time came for people her age to commit to decisions about their further education, the art teacher at her school came personally to her house to speak with her father and attempt to convince him to send his daughter to art school. '[M]y father said, "She will go to art school if she feels like it."' (ibid). But for her attending art school was out of the question. There were a few art schools nearby, the closest in Arnhem, and she had older friends who had attended them. She was disappointed in the work that they made there, feeling that the schools taught them the 'craft, but not the art' (ibid).

Like many people before and since who have occupied themselves with making art and studying its history, she recalls an epiphany in front of an astounding work as that which convinced her that her path lay in the pursuit of further, more profound experiences of this kind. In the mid-1950s she saw one of Piet Mondrian's late paintings, she does not remember precisely which, on display at the Kröller-Müller Museum. In order to give Thompson a sense of the power of this moment for her, at this moment in their discussion she clasped her hands dramatically and performed the quietened thunderstruck state that she had been in when she met Mondrian's canvas for the first time. 'When I saw that he cut it up into... just little bits, I thought, "Ah! Much more wise than I was doing!"... I was amazed how somebody could get to that point, and still it is amazing to think how Mondrian was... in 1917 actually showing quantum mechanics, or... the *reality* of how things are'. She patted the kitchen table where she and Thompson sat, and told him that while its wooden mass might seem solid, in fact it was not<sup>139</sup>. She

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<sup>139</sup> The table's quivering actuality has a long but little-discussed history. Much as Socrates seized upon the bed to illustrate participation and the poverty of representation, Marx utilized the table to illustrate the strangeness of the commodity, that thing which 'appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing [but which in fact abounds] in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties... It is absolutely clear that, by his activity, man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends consciousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.' (Marx, quoted in Marcus, 1989: 106)

In an explanation of the differentiation made in Tibetan Buddhist *mahamudra* literature between the notions of the 'ultimate' and the 'conventional' levels of reality, Tibetan Lama Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche also turns to the fateful wooden table, saddling it with the burden of non-existence in order to teach the unenlightened the truth of impermanence. Explaining that neither 'we' nor 'our minds' have a locatable essence or permanent reality — but because we experience the mind as 'an unbroken stream of awareness, thoughts and feelings', nor can the mind be seen to be 'nothing' — he notes that it is through the process of meditation that we can 'come to appreciate that on a relative level our mind's thoughts, sensual experience and appearances come and go through a play of interdependence. [...] We find that



had realized that the ‘Mondrian painting was saying exactly that... it looks solid but it isn’t.’ (ibid)<sup>140</sup>

But her perception of the closeness of Mondrian’s formal experiments and those of the physicists of his generation came later for her, following an equally intense and intensely different experience in 1967, when she saw Joseph Beuys’ *Raumplastik (Plastic Space)* installation at Documenta 4 in Kassel, Germany (June 27-October 6)<sup>141</sup>. This is the only other work that has ever moved her to tears.

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nothing has a nature we could ever seize, no ultimate, lasting nature, and so on...’. Behold the wooden table: ‘If we look at a wooden table we see a solid object of a brown color. This is the conventional truth and everyone will agree with us that that is what it looks like. However a physicist would tell us that the table is made of atoms moving at high speeds and that the table is actually 99.99% empty space with the color being nothing other than a certain wavelength of radiation. This then is closer to the ultimate level.’ (Thrangu, 1994: pp. 1, 36-40)

Though the point would extend to all things, including our perceptions of ourselves, the wooden table – at the hands of everyone from phenomenologists and popular scientists to artists and Tibetan lamas – seems to have been singled out as the object most exemplary of its own suspect reality status. In his introduction to His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s teachings on “The Four Noble Truths” at the Barbican Centre in London in 1997, Robert A.F. Thurman also used the wooden table to demonstrate the same point, though in less detail (see, or hear, the four-volume audio set “The Four Noble Truths: His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama”, Mystic Fire Audio, 1997)

The use of the language of (often partially) digested approaches to quantum physics in particular, and scientific inquiry generally, is ubiquitous in contemporary ‘Western’ engagement with ‘Eastern’ thought. It can be seen explicitly in sources from a range of disciplines, from Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics* (1975) and Leonard Shlain’s *Art & Physics* (1991), to Thurman’s own *Essential Tibetan Buddhism* (1996). This book, in particular, while operating as a thorough primer on Tibet’s vast Buddhist thought and practice, loses the line between introduction and indoctrination by uncritically reinforcing and even at times spearheading this tendency to frame Tibetan Buddhism in terms of the most future-bound scientific practices (see Lopez’ critique of contemporary ‘Western’ academics’ fixation on the possible ‘scientificity’ of Tibetan Buddhism; Lopez: 1995, p. 1-29; 251-95). Thurman’s presentation in that book of advanced Tibetan Buddhist meditators as ‘psychonauts’ (his own neologism) is one troubling instance of this inversion of primitivism.

<sup>140</sup> See Mondrian’s “Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: An Essay in Trialogue Form”, a remarkable short text first published serially in Dutch in *De Stijl* between June 1919 and July 1920; Mondrian, 1995: esp. 55-57.

<sup>141</sup> This was the year before his fellow professors at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie filed their first “mistrust manifesto” against Beuys, which would lead to his eventual dismissal and his subsequent successful lawsuit to keep his place there (Cooke and Kelly, eds., 1994: 278-9).



**Joseph Beuys in front of *Plastikraum*, Documenta 4, Kassel, 1967**

She saw the piece early on the day she visited. She returned to look a second time in the evening, when the crowds would be thin. The gallery was empty except for a single figure leaning against the door jamb. Something made her feel certain that it was Beuys, whom she had never met. They began to talk about the work; for her the room, with its symphonic stillness of felt-wrapped objects leaned against the gallery walls, conveyed the un stirring silence of the aftermath of large-scale violence. A flashback to her family's house, gutted by Allied bombs, was tied for her by Beuys' work to images of disemboweled 'Eurasian' cities from Dresden to Stalingrad. But what was most powerful for her was not the representation of this calculated destruction, but rather the 'soft touch' Beuys had developed in order first to take responsibility for the macro- and micro-effects of this violence — not as a former Luftwaffe bomber pilot nor as a German first and foremost, though he was both of these, but as a participant in a community that was

in his view no less shattered during ‘peace’ than during the ‘war’ that led to it — and to attempt to contribute to its therapeutic rehabilitation. Wijers saw, in this early work, a determinedly gentle ‘wound-healing... How you put on a wound very softly,’ and here she mimed for Thompson the act of placing a bandage on a fresh injury, ‘a gaze... Oh how do you call it, gaze or gauze... *gauze*.’ (Wijers, 1/1998; 2/2000: 74)

### *Agaze*

Beuys published the following statement in the catalogue for Documenta 7 in 1982, to which the Dalai Lama had been invited (and was expected by many) to attend:

‘Let us examine our concepts according to which we have shaped the conditions in the East and West. Let us reflect whether these concepts have benefitted our social organism and its interactions with the natural order, whether they have led to the appearance of a healthy existence or whether they have made humanity sick, inflicted wounds on it, brought disaster over it, and are putting today its survival in jeopardy.’ (Beuys, 1982: 370)

The concepts of ‘East’ and ‘West’ themselves must be seen to be included in this indictment as well. That it came nearly fifteen years after *Eurasianstab* complicates but in no way undoes its relevance in imagining what Beuys understood himself to be doing in his work. The earlier engagements with ‘Eurasia’ ought to be seen from at least two perspectives. In Beuys’ work in the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the notion is on one hand bound specifically to the division of Germany, and Europe generally, into Eastern and Western sectors, and on the other hand to an expansive steppe netherworld that was part of Beuys’ refuge and creative reservoir, which opened from the lower Holland, Kleve and the Neiderrhine into the timeless realms of the Mongol empire.

Later deployments of ‘Eurasia’, such as this one from 1982, not only reflect Beuys’ occupation with the Cold War geopolitical chessboard and its reinvention of the ages-old ‘East-West’ division; they also include another tangle of references and experiences regarding his new connections, opened up by Wijers, with Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. Wijers’ characterization of Beuys oeuvre, and his life, as a healing practice that drew deliberately and unabashedly selectively from anything he considered a ‘resource’ — whether a biography of Paracelsus or a meeting with a Tibetan lama, with a view to the creation of a fitting mode of address for whatever he diagnosed as a problem — in effect links his earliest and his final concerns. So the previous quote inviting re-examination of

our concepts of East and West, while it belongs to the more limited context of his involvement in Documenta 7 in 1982 and his impending meeting with the Dalai Lama, is nevertheless rather more panoramic with respect to the concerns that occupied him throughout his life.

So, if in her narration of her own lineage Mondrian's painting represented a general awakening of Wijers' consciousness, Beuys' 1968 installation was the reactivation of that awakening and the means to its reinvention as a call to action. But the question of how, then, to proceed with her own work was a daunting one. She 'decided that I should not just go... for the... obvious, but I should go for a deeper insight into art. And of course it is confusing for yourself not to go and get an education. But this is what I specifically wanted *not* to do.' (Wijers, 2/2000: 33) She went instead to Groningen, where she got a job with a local newspaper in hopes that she would have the chance to write about art. This bubble was quickly burst by her editors, who told her that she ought not occupy herself with things that she wasn't hired for in the first place (ibid).

She finally decided to enroll in the local art school; after attending six part-time classes there she began to see the kind of drawing that she was required to do there as a waste of time, and became equally convinced of her inability to continue painting: 'I had a feeling that I had already gone into painting far enough... and *knew* what was happening there. I had no feeling for learning more about painting.' (ibid: 33) Since she had begun in journalism, she determined to tackle it fully, wherever it took her.

'[S]o I fought hard and I worked hard to remain myself, but [I was] very much ill in the years that I was in journalism, because I couldn't cope with the situation... it was too *harsh*... on me. I lost all... trust in people, really, at that time. And suddenly I saw how the world really was, it was very hard to keep up with, to keep the two things next to each other: your feeling for art, and the reality... it was... maybe you know that feeling too? It was very hard to believe that the world was... as it was.' (ibid)

Her job led her to London, then on to Paris. There, she said, though still 'just a little girl' of twenty-two, walking around the streets, 'for the first time I saw... artists'. The sight was quite striking for her '[b]ecause I had never seen real artists, I had always seen people who were at art schools, or trying to make art, but very provincial'. In Paris, 'I got... for the first time a glimpse of a very different kind of art, which I could carry home in me because then I understood that you can do anything in art; that it could be done with any

kind of material and also with *ideas*.' (ibid) When she returned to Holland, she moved to Amsterdam, where serendipity was waiting for her. The first house she moved into was also the home of Wim Beeren, who would later become the curator of the Stedelijk Museum.<sup>142</sup> The group of friends and acquaintances of which his social circle consisted became hers as well. This brought her into contact with the *Museumjournaal*, where the editors were impressed that she had spent time amidst the Paris arts community and enlisted her to write articles for their publication. Then twenty-four years old, she found herself in 'the best position to "go to art school", you could say... I see all those years that I was writing on art, as the real art school, because now I could talk to [artists like Robert] Rauschenberg and... everyone.' (ibid) She began writing for *Museumjournaal* in 1962, and continued to do so until 1970.

In 1968, the year after her encounter with Beuys, a friend returned from New York and told her that it was imperative that she go there and see the work that artists were making. For everyone in Amsterdam, she says, 'New York was in the *air*, of course' (ibid: 46). Beerens armed her with a letter of introduction to the gallery owner Leo Castelli, asking Castelli to open doors for her and help her become acquainted with and welcomed into the New York art world. 'He made three appointments a day for me. Three or four. Yeah! I was running like crazy, I had even appointments [at] nine o'clock in the morning... I came to his office, he said "Okay, I'll give you two weeks in New York, completely full."' (ibid) She met with, in her words, '*everyone, everyone*': Carl Andre and Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt and Dan Flavin, Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Smithson and Lawrence Weiner, among others. She wrote a series for *Museumjournaal* drawing from these meetings, called "Avant-garde New York".

Despite, or perhaps in part because of the exhilaration of being the first writer to provide exclusive coverage of the developments in contemporary American art for a Dutch audience, she ultimately found herself at a loss for the emotional and epistemic toolkit to bridge the gulf of difference between the kind of work being made in America and the work of her European contemporaries. This was contributed to by the fact that the circle of friends she had in Amsterdam, who were invested in the agenda of a

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<sup>142</sup> Wim Beeren was curator of the Stedelijk until 1992, when Rudi Fuchs took over the position (Walinga,

'conceptual art' the nature of which she found highly dubious, actively discouraged her from having contacts with artists like Rauschenberg or Beuys. These two represented a way of working and a concomitant way of thinking that seemed to her friends to be at odds with their work. She felt that it was possible to find patterns connecting what was compelling and radically challenging about all of these works, no matter what side of the Atlantic they came from. But the reluctance of many of her contemporaries to accept her close relationship with such artists, and the absence of discursive networks or partnerships, whether intimate or public, to help her to work through these conflicting cultural practices, left her feeling unable to establish her intuitive sense of their interconnectedness in an intelligible form. Her inability to pull these divergent projects into some kind of fusion, even a provisional fusion that might function only to temporarily reconcile them within her own consciousness, led her to 'a kind of nervous breakdown, or a crisis in my life.' (ibid: 23)

### *Enforcing the thinkable*

Tony Godfrey notes that around 1972 in Europe 'the once radical galleries became more like businesses: those such as Konrad Fischer or Art & Project acquired bigger premises and took on extra staff. They tried to poach each other's artists. There were more collectors about, but they were less adventurous. To many it just was not exciting any more.' (Godfrey, 1998: 257) That year, Wijers' friend Anny De Decker, who owned and ran the influential White Wide Space Gallery in Antwerp<sup>143</sup>, which had brought the first show of American Conceptual Art to Europe, complained about 'seeing fewer and fewer artists and more and more dealers. [...A]rtists were having more and more shows, and I was forever seeing the same things all over again. I couldn't stand it. I found it futile. I'd pretty much had enough of Conceptual Art. Because of the uselessness of those repetitive works. I was starting to find it all a bit dry, a bit boring.' In 1975 she closed her gallery (ibid: 257)

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1994: 304-5)

<sup>143</sup> It was here that on February 9, 1968 Beuys had performed the *Eurasianstab 82 min fluxorum organum* aktion with Henning Christiansen; they had performed an earlier version on July 2, 1967 at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna (Cooke and Kelly, eds., 1994: 268-269)

Wijers contends that this sterilizing trend towards commercialization was a backlash against radically experimental work, where any practices that could be were 'pulled back with very much strength into the *thinkable*'. Since 'the unthinkable couldn't be handled', many of the practices that resisted packaging, and were concerned to explore realities other than those that were packageable, were ignored (Wijers, 2000: 23). She found it almost impossible to navigate these waters, as the rate of change of artistic explorations as well as the attempt to reterritorialize them moved 'so fast. A *baby* was growing here, you know, it was almost crushed under the feet of people who were thinking in political [and economic] terms... art was suddenly misused, and was put in a form, whereas it cannot have a form.' (ibid)

She distinguishes the art that was in fashion at the moment, in the latter part of the 1960s, the 'so-called Conceptual Art', from work that she believes was 'actual *conceptual* art'. To do so she often points to a statement made by physicist David Bohm, one of the participants in the 1990 Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy (AMSSE) in Amsterdam which she organized: that 'art' means 'to fit'. In his AMSSE interview, Bohm explained: 'I think that fundamentally all activity is an art. Science is a particular kind of art, which emphasizes certain things. Then we have the visual artists, the musical artists and various kinds of other artists, who are specialized in different ways. But fundamentally art is present everywhere. The very word 'art' in Latin means 'to fit'. The whole notion of the cosmos means 'order' in Greek. It is an artistic concept really.' (Bohm, in *Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy*, 1990: 62-3) In one of his discussions with Wijers, Thompson pointed to the closeness between this notion of fittingness and Sun Tzu's sage general. He said: 'By this kind of fittingness, the *kind* of situation tells you what it needs somehow'; fittingness demands a 'knowledge' that must 'forget about what it knows to react to something new and spontaneous.' Wijers responded: 'That is actually the most important part of [Beuys'] 'Everybody is an Artist'. That is the main word... *Fittingness*. That is where you have to speak with people about, how do you fit, you know... Everybody is an artist, yes, *when* you... can make yourself *fit*.' (Wijers, 2/2000: 17-18) Its ability to be called 'art', as Beuys also felt, was superfluous.

In his *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, Michael Taussig explains that if the healer is not to fall prey to soul loss and death, he must allow the illness-causing 'trauma', as well as the other person helping to heal *him*, 'to reweave the creative forces in his personality and life experience into a force that bestows life upon himself and others through that bestowal.' (Taussig, 1987: 447-8). He notes, with a measure of glee, the difficulty of 'interpreting' shamans' healing songs, of 'observing' the relationship between a patient and a healer, because this interpretation is nothing more

'than a projection into a magical ritual of the unstated ritual of academic explanation, turning chaos into order, and that this magic of academe stands opposed, in its upright orderliness, to the type of sympathy necessary to understand that the healing song, magical or not, is but part of a baroque mosaic of discourses woven through stories, jokes, interjections, [images] and hummings taking place not only through and on top of the actual séance but before and after it as well. Moreover, this play cannot be understood without taking into account the patient's partnership in the medley of image-making activities in which the song rests.' (ibid: 461)

Taussig's description of the *craft* of healing offers an oblique way of approaching Beuys' intention behind his often misread statement: 'Everyone is an artist.' As he was wont to insist, even though his own work could most easily and readily be translated into the context of artistic practice, he thought of the concept of art as an obstruction to the implementation of the lessons learned as a result of the creative encounter. The issue sometimes drove him to frustration: 'I am no longer interested in the art world,' he once said, 'in this little pseudo-cultural ghetto. That's why I have no declarations to make about the creativity of artists and the modern art world but would like to make declarations about the creativity of human work in general.' (Beuys, in Wright, 1987: 20)<sup>144</sup>

So, whereas the 'so-called Conceptual Art' operated within the confines of something called 'art', and so reinforced rather than undermined its limitations and the machinations of the 'little pseudo-cultural ghetto' called the 'art world', for Wijers the 'actual *conceptual* art' managed to offer a mode of disengagement from the proliferating spectacle and engagement with something else. This 'else' was for Wijers that moment's

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<sup>144</sup> It is important to point out the fact that by the late 1970s Beuys had surpassed Robert Rauschenberg in fetching more money per year in sales than any other artist in the world; though this does not of itself neutralize his criticism of the international art market as pseudo-cultural ghetto, it does make it difficult to accept at face value his suggestion that he might be somehow outside of it.



great unknown, which she can describe only as the beginning of a loosely communal experiment in what she calls 'nondual thinking'. Wijers' distinction between these notions becomes a bit clearer when considered in relation to the conceptual and performative vocabularies generated by the Fluxus 'non-movement'<sup>145</sup>, whose work from 1961 — when it was officially founded by George Maciunas — onwards became a crucial inspiration to her own thinking.

The difficulty in accomodating 'non-dual thinking' has at least two folds. The first is readily apparent and has been to non-dual thinkers from the Buddha to the present: how to use concepts without being imprisoned by an attachment to them, and following from that, how to avoid the pitfalls inherent in engaging in visual, verbal, or textual discourse about one's experiments in 'non-duality'? Although we herald Marcel Duchamp as the 20th century's savant-garde genius for bringing us the 'ready-made', the Buddha beat him to it by about 2500 years. In fact, the artist formerly known as Prince Siddhartha also gave us what is probably history's first, and definitely its most unsurpassable, act of performance art. Having reached enlightenment, the Buddha decided to go forth and try to share his experience with others. One fine day in the deer park in Sarnath, India, in front of a small audience, he sat silently and held up a single flower. He uttered no words at all — and that was the lesson: how could words even come close to approximating the intricacy, the mystery and the beauty of that tiny blossom? As profound as this might be, it is only the beginning; where to go and what to do with such experiences becomes an ethical and an existential question, the answers to which can only be provisional, and must be posed anew in every new situation or 'non-situation'.

The second difficulty in accomodating the notion of nonduality expressed in Wijers' assessment is also discursive, but in a very different sense. That is to say, the difficulty that goes hand in hand with her differentiation — between 'Conceptual Art' as an art historical period and 'conceptual art' as a way of labeling a specific way of making

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<sup>145</sup> In addition to the numerous publications and editions that were from the outset part of Fluxus' enormous output, a burgeoning body of scholarly attention has grown around Fluxus in recent years. In that a history of Fluxus amounts to a history of the lives of everyone involved with it, a task well beyond the scope of this project, this thesis will focus only selectively on a few of its participants — Yoko Ono, Robert Filliou, Wijers, more of a student of Fluxus than a participant in Fluxus as such, and Beuys, whose connections with Fluxus were loose and sporadic (Smith, 1998). Some useful if often contradictory

what some would call ‘art’ by way of attempting to engage playfully and experimentally with one’s concepts — is substantially enhanced by the dearth of sustained engagement with the role of ‘Eastern’ thought and religious practice in the lives and works of a number of those ‘Western’ artists who are generally considered to be the wellsprings of post-1950s avant-garde experimentalism.<sup>146</sup>

‘Zen Buddhism’, for instance — though usually just ‘Zen’ — often becomes a kind of catch-all term for anything in a given artist’s work that looks Japanese, or for that matter ‘Asian-but-not-Indian’, and/or anything that seems in some way to have something to do with ‘chance’, ‘simplicity’, or ‘chilled-out detachment’. Zen Buddhism was and continues almost without exception to be seen in the ‘West’ as a transcendent mode of existence, of direct perception and experience of the nature of reality. Zen was primarily brought into the purview of Western culture by the ‘proselytizing activities’ of men, like D.T. Suzuki, whom Robert Sharf calls ‘native’ elites.<sup>147</sup>

Other Buddhist traditions have by contrast tended to have been ‘introduced to [Western] scholarship through the efforts of... Western historians and philologists who edited, translated, and interpreted Buddhist scriptures from classical languages’. Donald S. Lopez’ introductory essay to the volume in which Sharf’s essay appears points to the way in which contemporary Western Buddhist Studies ‘tends to replicate the practices, tropes, and conceits located in Buddhist texts and institutions, where Buddhism is represented as a self-identical dharma that has moved from one Asian culture to another, unchanged through the vicissitudes of time. The share of complicity of Buddhists and Buddhologists in this universalist vision remains to be apportioned.’ (Lopez, 1995: 8) Interestingly, what is here at stake is a ‘Buddhism’ that, despite or indeed because of the

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introductions to and narrations of Fluxus’ histories are: Friedman, ed., 1998; Paik, 1993; and Williams and Noël, 1997.

<sup>146</sup> A few notable exceptions are Doris, 1998; Richards, 1996; and Munroe, 2000; see also Gombrich, 1995: 604.

<sup>147</sup> The ‘Zen Buddhism’ that is known to the ‘West’ is not a millennia-old mystical tradition, but a reinvention of various pan-Asian traditions and practices that were given a new cohesion during Japanese modernization. ‘Zen Buddhism’ in general, and the role of D.T. Suzuki in particular, continue to be exempted from critical and historical investigation. On the early 20th-century construction by Japanese intellectuals — in the face of the multi-front attack known as *haibutsu kishaku*, or ‘abolishing Buddhism and destroying [the teachings of] Sakyamuni’ — of a purged and reinvigorated ‘New Buddhism... “modern,” “cosmopolitan,” “humanistic,” and “socially responsible”’, see Sharf, 1995. D.T. Suzuki’s work has had what is now pictured as a legendary role in communicating a Zen packaged for American consumption to a generation of artists from Jack Kerouac to John Cage.

efforts of its various champions to claim for it the status of something pure and permanent, contradicts the fundamental 'Buddhist' teaching of the impermanent and conditioned nature of all things.

It is this realization, and the operation on the basis of it, that could be said to be what was at work in the work Wijers referred to as '*conceptual art*': an art in which one's mode of ethical engagement with the world was at once the material, the process and the product. Henry Flynt offers a similar perspective. Considering himself 'a philosopher above all', Flynt has said that he 'never had any connection with Fluxus as an art movement. The connection was rather that Maciunas published important documents of mine in Fluxus publications at a time when nobody else would touch them.' (Flynt, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 92) The notion of 'concept art' was set forth by Flynt in a 1960 essay. This was 'published widely by 1963 in the influential *An Anthology*, edited by Jackson Mac Low and La Monte Young and designed by Maciunas himself. Flynt wrote, "Concept art is first of all an art of which the material is concepts, as the material of e.g. music is sound..." (Frank, 1985: ii)<sup>148</sup>

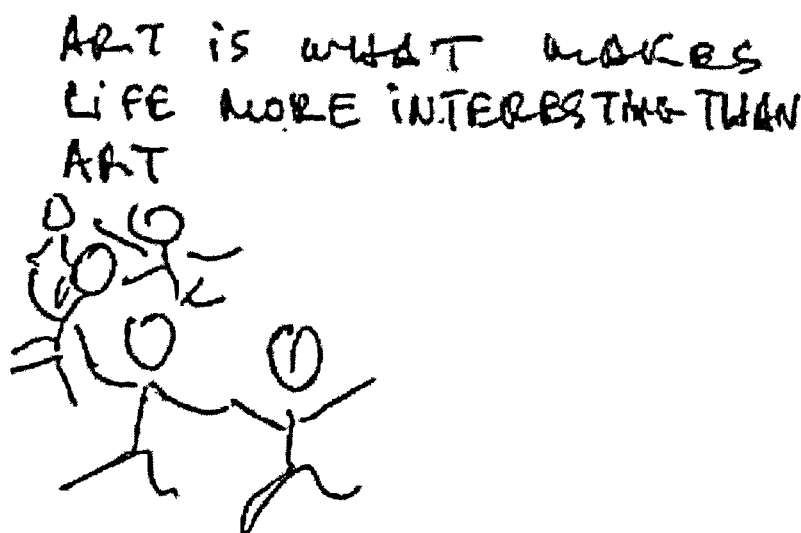
In their discussion of *conceptual art*, Thompson used the term 'beyond-language' to describe the nature of this engagement with concept as material. 'I don't think I follow your way of putting this *completely*,' said Wijers, 'but also in *tantra* what I feel is, as soon as you leave your *ego* you have gotten rid of your thinking-in-language, and [in] images. You have no way of connecting to language and images as soon as you get rid of your being as you are today in relative situations. So at that point is where I say *art* starts. There you are in an area that has no language, and no image. Actually its very much like emptiness.' She laughs. 'The whole emptiness thing is also another thing which we can look at in the terms of *today*, instead of saying its something of another culture. ... You know, it *is* today.' (Wijers, 2/2000: 20)

Reflecting upon the work of her friends and colleagues, she said: 'in my feeling we were there in '65, we were already at this area of nondual thinking. And then the whole thing collapsed again. [...] Because nobody was ready for it.' (ibid: 21)

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<sup>148</sup> For Flynt's own essay, and his revisions and revisitations of the notion of Concept Art with respect to his philosophical and critical writings, see [www.henryflynt.org](http://www.henryflynt.org); for a discussion of the production of *An*

She brings her 1993 essay “Fluxus Yesterday and Tomorrow: An Artist’s Impression” to a close by making precisely this distinction between ‘Concept Art’ and ‘Conceptual Art’. ‘Roughly said, ‘Conceptual Art’ could be called idea art, whereas ‘Concept Art’ is based on direct visual perception. This direct perception is experienced mentally in a level of consciousness more subtle than language cognition.’<sup>149</sup> (Wijers, 1993: n.p.)



Robert Filliou, *ART IS WHAT MAKES LIFE MORE INTERESTING THAN ART*, postcard, not dated

This is a distinction that Robert Filliou put in perhaps its most distilled punchlined form when he said: ‘Art is what makes life more interesting than art.’

### *Middle paths*

For the Gelugpa tradition<sup>150</sup> — the tradition in which Wijers received the majority of her dharma teachings — ‘direct perception’ does not purport to know phenomena in an

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*Anthology*, including Robert Morris’ early participation and his subsequent withdrawal from the project as it was going to print, see Flynt, 1993.

<sup>149</sup> Again, Wijers’ usage of *conceptual art* is to be distinguished from the work of artists who have been associated with the term Conceptual Art. A discussion of Conceptual Art as such is beyond the scope of this project. An essential resource on the subject is Alberro and Stimson, 2000, which opens a dialogue with Conceptual Art and the artists associated with it whose complexity can only be hinted at here. What is important to note with respect to a discussion of Wijers’ thinking is that, for her, Conceptual Art — to the extent that it could be characterized as a category of practices that articulated themselves within the terms of a distinction between art and not-art — was an obstacle to the conception of a creative practice informed by non-dual thinking.

<sup>150</sup> For a short history of the Gelugpa tradition, see Batchelor, 1994: 184-204.

unmediated way, but by means of specific kinds of 'sense data'; these data 'are not related solely with objects but commingled with projections from the side of the subject.' (Klein, 1987: 89) The three higher systems of Buddhist thought with which the practiced Gelugpa student would be familiar — Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamika — are agreed on the point that the phenomenal world of 'everyday' experience, 'is a complex enmeshment of objective and subjective elements.' (ibid) According to the Madhyamika or 'middle path' perspective put forward by the renowned third-century Indian sage Nagarjuna, which considers that direct perception of both internal and external objects is possible, perception for most 'ordinary persons [is] so completely submerged in erroneous over-reification that phenomena are [nevertheless] not perceived as they actually exist.' (ibid) In his study of Nagarjuna's *Verses from the Center*, Batchelor explains that their crucial insight is the 'understanding of emptiness as inseparable from the utter contingency of life itself.' Nagarjuna argued that the experience of emptiness resulted from 'easing one's obsessive hold on a fixed self or things'; this was, in his view, the Buddha's 'Middle Way', of which he wrote:

'Contingency is emptiness  
Which, contingently configured  
Is the Middle Way.' (Nagarjuna, in Batchelor, 2000: 29)

Emptiness itself is 'inseparable from the world of contingencies, it too is "contingently configured"'; in that it cannot be seen to be separate 'from life itself, emptiness cannot be experienced apart from things.' (ibid)

Anne Klein explains that for Tibetan Buddhist thought, just as for some phenomenological investigations in Western thought, these principles 'raise difficult questions about the status of 'real' things.' (ibid) The difficulty is one of accounting for the obvious 'functioning, and continuous' status of perceivable things while simultaneously analyzing the experience of the perception of these 'real' things in such a way as to formulate a critique of this experience itself, and to understand 'the causal conditions for and machinations of perceptions.' (ibid) Yet Klein notes that the issue of paramount importance is not to arrive at an 'uncontestable description of mundane reality' but instead 'to articulate the limitations and depictions of ordinary cognition in order to depict a model of mental development that purportedly leads to liberation from

precisely these errors.’ (ibid: 89-90) At stake in the creation of such a model is a ‘deep conviction in the alterability of the perceiving subject, and in the superior mode of behavior — ethical, serene, compassionate, and wise — that necessarily unfolds as the subject’s misperceptions are dispelled.’ (ibid: 90)<sup>151</sup> And yet, according to Nagarjuna, fixation upon emptiness is one of these errors, perhaps the most imperceptible.

‘Buddhas say emptiness  
Is relinquishing opinions.  
Believers in emptiness  
Are incurable.’ (Nagarjuna, in Batchelor, 2000: 29)

Thus the intention to cease attachment can quickly turn into ‘an insidious form of entrapment.’ Nagarjuna used the example of a venomous snake to elucidate the way in which emptiness is like ‘a dangerous but fascinating creature that elegantly negotiates the trickiest terrain. While a handler knows exactly how to pick it up, one who does not will be bitten and killed.’ (ibid) Similarly, the articulation of these ideas has to deal with the poisonous possibilities of their mode of expression. This demanded that Nagarjuna employ a style that was both ‘playful and provocative’; the *Verses* manifest ‘the movement of a supple but disquieting intelligence, which constantly has to sidestep the logical traps of the language Nagarjuna cannot help but utter.’ (ibid: 29-30) Nagarjuna wrote:

‘Believers believe in buddhas  
Who vanish in nirvana.  
Don’t imagine empty buddhas  
Vanishing or not.’ (Nagarjuna, in ibid: 30)

‘Direct perception’ entails this existential investigation of this emptiness that, while it ‘may seem an intolerable affront to one’s sense of identity and security, it may simultaneously be felt as an irresistible lure into a life that is awesome and mysterious.’ (ibid) In his essay on the game Go, William S. Cobb explains that emptiness ‘is very similar to that in Go. [...] The Go player discovers that the absence of an absolute fixed structure or of ultimate limits on reality is not the disaster you might expect. On the contrary, it makes things much more interesting.’ (Cobb, 1999: 64)

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<sup>151</sup> For a full discussion of this process, see Klein, 1987: 89-114.

While 'direct perception' is understandably problematic when it is engaged with in the terminology of contemporary academic discourse, it must be kept in mind that what is approached from the perspective of Tibetan Buddhism is entirely different from the 'illusions of transparency and realism' that Henri Lefebvre has sought to problematize.

For Lefebvre, no space, whether social, mathematical, or mental, can be thought to be apart from social relations. All space is socially produced; it is the play between two mutually sustaining illusions, one of transparency and the other of opacity or 'realism', that keep the socially-produced (conditioned) nature of space concealed. It is the illusion of transparency that permits the assumption that 'a rough coincidence [exists] between social space on the one hand and mental space — the (topological) space of thoughts and utterances — on the other'. Rogoff points out that this 'illusion of transparency naturalizes knowledge and power relations between subjects' (Rogoff, 2000: 24); however, despite the importance she accords to this first illusion, she does not mention Lefebvre's second illusion, that of opacity, or the 'realistic' illusion.

For Lefebvre, this second illusion entails the 'naïve attitude long ago rejected by philosophers and theorists of language' of the substantiality of things, 'the mistaken belief that 'things' have more of an existence than the 'subject', his thoughts and his desires'. Lefebvre holds that idealist philosophers, in rejecting this position, embraced 'an adherence to 'pure' thought, to Mind or Desire. Which amounts to abandoning the realistic illusion only to fall back into the embrace of the illusion of transparency.' (ibid: 29) Despite her argument that 'Lefebvre's negation of the illusion of transparency is of the utmost importance' in developing the means to deal critically with 'positivistic thought and with analyses which do not take on board issues of situatedness, of unmediated positionality, and which believe unselfconsciously both in exteriority and in the ability to define the realm of the known', and that such spatial analyses would entail 'a dialectical system in which opposing claims can be positioned in relation to one another which is not conflictual' (Rogoff, 2000: 24), the avoidance of the second side of Lefebvre's coin shortchanges the importance he places upon the dynamism between the two interdependent illusions. He writes:

'The illusion of transparency has a kinship with philosophical idealism; the realistic illusion is closer to (naturalistic and mechanistic) materialism. Yet these two illusions do not enter into

antagonism with each other after the fashion of philosophical systems, which armor themselves like battleships and seek to destroy one another. On the contrary, each illusion embodies and nourishes the other. The shifting back and forth between the two, and the flickering or oscillatory effect that it produces, are thus just as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation.' (Lefebvre, 1997: 30)

Rogoff's insistence 'on the multi-inhabitation of spaces through bodies, social relations and psychic dynamics' provides a suggestive mode of grappling with that unselfconscious belief in the ability to occupy a position of universality that Donna Haraway has called 'the god-trick' (Haraway, 1991: 195-6, referred to in Rogoff, 2000: 25). Yet in making a detour away from the crux of Lefebvre's problematic, which targets the often imperceptible shift from one illusion to the other, Rogoff's argument that the illusion of transparency *itself*— and not the symbiotic and *triological* bond between these two illusions and the third and most decisive illusion, namely that of the independent existence of the space-producing subject — is what 'naturalizes knowledge and power relations between subjects', serves to strip Lefebvre's argument of the very insight which would keep us vigilant against reifying this naturalization. Though Lefebvre might little approve of the connection, it is precisely this properly *self*-conscious attention that is meant by 'direct visual perception', both as used by Wijers' description of her practice and as elaborated by Klein in her discussion of the *Madhyamika* or 'middle path'. Significantly, the name itself owes to Nagarjuna's attempt to chart a path between idealism and materialism that avoided the pitfalls of both (Batchelor, 2000: 25-30).

With respect to direct perception, it must also be noted that Wijers' article speaks from the position of someone for whom the connection of contemporary art and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of which she has been a student is not only thinkable but highly productive. Furthermore, while it might offer some of its dilettante adherents the chance to have their own prayer beads and undergo exotic initiations, this does not itself detract from the fact that Tibetan Buddhism offers among the most rigorous, complex and sophisticated models available for the critical analysis of consciousness. Apart from its potentials in this regard, one that has been tapped by a number of contemporary scientists and philosophers<sup>152</sup>, the fact that a number of artists in the post-War world

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<sup>152</sup> See for instance Revel and Matthieu, 1999; Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1993; Wijers, ed., 1996; Hayward and Varela, eds., 1992.



have been interested precisely in Buddhism's potential for transformative self-investigation and experimentation underscores the need to take it seriously.

In his discussion of the relationship of his work to his dharma practice, Filliou told Wijers that what became apparent to him was that 'so-called conceptual art' tended to elide what was so powerful about working with concepts. He said: 'we can think in the past of examples of magnificent artists.. who were spiritual beings.. and who never forgot that art is a spiritual thing.. That is my little problem with so-called conceptual art.. I am not afraid of concepts.. but art is a spiritual thing..' To which Wijers answered: 'But even conceptual art finally becomes spiritual..' Filliou: 'Exactly.. Our generation has tried.. we have tried.. many, many of us.. in many ways.. to put art back on the right track, through an intuitive understanding of what it is all about.. Namely, that art is a spiritual adventure.. And once we put it back.. again the whole field is open.. while it looked like art was coming to a dead end..' She agreed. He continued: 'By putting it back on the right track, the whole thing is open again.. So, that's where our friend John Cage comes in.. our friend Joseph Beuys.. and George Brecht.. and people in Japan.. and men and women from here, from there, from everywhere..' (Wijers, 1996: 128)

In her article on Fluxus, Wijers quoted George Brecht's version of this spiritual-conceptual fabric: 'Human solidarity is in its feeling the same for all, namely to combat the immense simplicity, sadness and lack of insight, and create a world in which spontaneity, joy, humour and a new form of higher wisdom bring real social prosperity with the same self-evidence as the green of my wife's eyes.' (Wijers, 1993: n.p.)

### *Unarchy in the UK*

In one of the charts and diagrams for which he was famous, George Maciunas in 1964 listed Fluxus' ancestors. Fluxus was:

*'derived from*

*Vaudeville*

*Gags*

*Dada*

*Duchamp*

*some Cage*

*Japanese Haiku*

*" Zen*

*much Spike Jones.*' (Maciunas, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 121)

Ken Friedman argues that while it is in one respect accurate to consider '[i]ndividual artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage... as ancestors of Fluxus', it is more accurate to say that ideas, not individuals, 'played a larger role'. (Friedman, 1998: 242) In a 1962 statement, Robert Filliou pointed out that the similarities between dada and Fluxus were more cosmetic than substantive (Filliou, in *ibid*: 243). Fluxus (or more accurately, Fluxus' artists and non-artists) was, in addition to dada, influenced by a number of other movements, like De Stijl and Bauhaus; indeed 'Dada was further from Fluxus in many ways than either [of these]'<sup>153</sup>. Further, while 'Dada was nihilistic, a millenarian movement in modernist terms [...] Fluxus was constructive. Fluxus was founded on principles of creation, of transformation and its central method sought new ways to build.' (*ibid*)

Despite the frequency with which 'Zen' is mentioned as having something to do with Fluxus, this 'Zen-ness' is under-analyzed in writing on Fluxus and the work of its participants. The notable exception to this rule is David Doris' essay "Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus". Early in his essay, Doris raises an important reminder that in itself says more about Fluxus — and its affinities with Zen Buddhism — than the attempts to offer a scholarly definition of it. He observes of both Fluxus and Zen that '[c]ontradictions arose within each set of practices which systematically frustrated attempts to say anything *definitive* about either'; after struggling with his desire to arrive at 'some sort of closure, some sort of totalising definition', he had his *satori*: this desire was itself 'the result of the very pretensions which Fluxus and Zen perpetually mock. Words, to paraphrase a Zen adage, are so many fingers pointing to the Fluxmoon, and are not to be confused with the Fluxmoon itself.' (Doris, 1998: 94) His essay begins by voicing the spark that led to his investigation; he noticed early on in his reading of Fluxus histories 'that critics and even Fluxus artists would make the observation, now and again, that Fluxus was somehow *like Zen*, that Fluxus works were *similar* in some respects to Zen works or Zen koans' (*ibid*: 93-4), but found that no one had gone much further than

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<sup>153</sup> In a statement written to accompany the show 'Ubi Fluxus, ibi Motus', which he curated at the 1990 Venice Biennale, Italian curator and art historian Achille Bonito Oliva argued that Futurism and even the Italian Renaissance were 'as essential for Fluxus as the more commonly evoked German Dadaism.' (Higgins, in Friedman, 1998: 38)

pointing to this Fluxmoon. ‘How and why is it the case’, he wondered, ‘that Fluxus works so often bring Zen to mind?’ (ibid: 94) He turns to his two hands:

‘On the one hand, there is Fluxus: the name of a loosely organised group of contemporary artists (and non-artists) who were examining, in the most radical ways, the limits of what constitutes ‘art’. On the other hand, there is Zen: the name of a centuries old, non-theistic religion whose practitioners examine, in the most radical ways, the limits of what constitutes ‘consciousness’. Two distinctly *different* explorations of the limits of what defines us as human, true, but why even mention them in the same breath? And supposing there is some connection between the two, why the attendant critical silence?’ (ibid: 94)

Before turning to engage with this question, it is worth rethinking an intriguing parallel between Doris’ questions and those posed by music critic and historian Greil Marcus in his book *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. He begins this with attempt to describe the raw power of Johnny Rotten’s voice exclaiming ‘I AM AN ANTICHRIST!’ — as strong today as when Rotten first unleashed that ‘rolling earthquake of a laugh, a buried shout’ followed by ‘hoary words somehow stripped of all claptrap and set down in the city streets’ (Marcus, 1989: 1).

As London was set ablaze by the punk explosion, the press scrambled to make sense of it all. While dada — its negationist power still hovering in the fog of postwar Europe — had the honor of being regarded as an inspiration to some of those acting in and writing about Fluxus, it also became the touchstone for those seeking to interpret and historicize a phenomenon most of whose participants neither knew nor cared about it. At first, ‘one could hardly find an article on the topic without the word “dada” in it: punk was “like dada”, everybody said, though nobody said why, let alone what that was supposed to mean.’ (ibid: 19) The recent student-worker uprisings in Paris of 1968, even more fresh in the minds of some writers and critics, and the threat they promised to middle-class society, were excitedly reincarnated to try and make sense of punk. ‘References to Malcolm McLaren’s [whose brainchild the Sex Pistols was] supposed involvement with the spectral “S[ituationist] I[nternational]” were insider currency in the British pop press, but that currency didn’t seem to buy anything.’ (ibid) Punk seemed to be a fertile — or decayed, depending on one’s view — meeting ground of ‘dada’ and the ‘S.I.’; these avant-garde programs seemed to offer a key to understanding the power that punk promised to legions of young people. The threat posed by this wildness that

seemed to come from nowhere prompted a hysterical scramble in history's vault for explanations, but as punk's steam dissipated began to dissipate, so did the necessity of its containment. For Marcus, however, even though as a 'movement' punk ended almost as soon as it began, the recorded voice of Johnny Rotten never lost its urgency.

Marcus began to look into these connections — dada, the S.I., mystics and martyrs — which were for him no less spectral than they had been for the tabloid press. "Dada" was for him 'barely a word, only barely suggesting some bygone art movement', and he had 'never heard of the Situationist International'. The more he gathered information, 'the less I knew. All sorts of people had made these connections, but no one had made anything of them' (ibid). The mix of curiosity and perplexity at 'punk being like dada' and 'punk having something to do with the Situationist International' led him to uncover what, over the course of the book, becomes in effect a tracking of the third but unspoken side of this triangle: the relation between dada and the Situationist International. The various figures (Raoul Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck, Tristan Tzara, Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord) and their ideas, their disparate and often contradictory revolutionary agendas brought into a cohesion through the moments they shared, come through Marcus' study to comprise the (almost entirely implicit, even unconscious) body of social theory beneath punk's brash and intuitive nihilism.

And yet the first chapter of John Lydon's autobiography is entitled "Never Mind the Situationists; This Was Situation Comedy". In it he says that

'the talk about the French Situationists being associated with punk is bollocks. It's nonsense! Now that really *is* coffee-table book stuff. The Paris riots and the Situationist movement of the sixties — it was all nonsense for arty French students. There's no master conspiracy in anything, not even in governments. Everything is just some kind of vaguely organized chaos.' (Lydon, 1994: 3)

### *Afghanistan Meditation*

Punk was somehow 'like dada', and everyone in the know knew it, as they knew that Punk and dada both had something to do with the Situationist International and the upheavals it 'caused' in Paris in May, 1968. Fluxus is somehow 'like Zen', and everyone in the know knows it, just as they know that they come somehow together through 'influential figures' like John Cage, or Fluxus practitioners like Robert Filliou or Yoko

Ono. But what do these connections mean; as Marcus asked, what does this ‘insider currency’ really buy? What does it mean for forms of ‘cultural practice’ like Fluxus, Punk and dada, separated by six decades and as many labyrinthine degrees of differentiation, to be ‘like’ one another? And for that matter, what does it mean for them to be ‘different’ from one another?

In *Mimesis and Alterity*, Taussig quotes from Roger Caillois’ 1935 essay “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia”, published in the Surrealist journal *Minotaure*: ‘He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is the convulsive possession.’ (Caillois, in Taussig, 1993: 33) This is for him the extreme case of a world in which ‘slipping into Otherness, trying it on for size’ is possible; ‘mimesis is not only a matter of one being another being, but with this tense yet fluid theatrical relation of form and space with which Caillois would tempt us.’ (Taussig, 1993: 33-4)

‘From the very beginning of Western Civilization,’ writes J. Peter Burgess, ‘the concept in general — including of course the concept of the concept — has known no other means of defining itself than by marking the difference with what it is not, by setting a limit and by erecting a wall.’ (Burgess, 1994: 2) Caillois’ statement “‘I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I’m at the spot where I find myself’” (Caillois, in *ibid*: 34) permits this to be posed as the following question: what is the mode of intelligibility of my own concept of the Other? Consider the following exercise, posed by George Brecht in 1961:

*‘Two Exercises*

Consider an object. Call what is not the object ‘other.’

EXERCISE: Add to the object, from the ‘other,’ another object, to form a new object and a new ‘other.’  
Repeat until there is no more ‘other.’

EXERCISE: Take a part from the object and add it to the ‘other,’ to form a new object and a new ‘other.’  
Repeat until there is no more object.’ (from Doris, *op.cit*: 104)

A less vertiginous way of taking up the question of what it would mean for Fluxus, Punk and Dada to be ‘like’ one another would be to determine whether there were any glaring historical overlaps between them. The Situationist International and Fluxus both

'officially' came into being within a few years of one another. Both drew from a sprawling 'pool' of participants, almost entirely but not exclusively European in the case of dada and the S.I., and a fairly well-mixed international crowd in the case of Fluxus. Both the S.I., punk through the figure of McLaren, and Fluxus through most all of its participants counted dada as an influence of one kind or another<sup>154</sup>. Even if the S.I. and Fluxus were entirely inimical to one another — whether the S.I.'s and Fluxus' respective core and peripheral proponents and participants loathed, loved or were indifferent to one another, given their geographical proximities, their simultaneity, the fact that they were impacted by the same geopolitical concerns (Western capitalist culture and expansionism and its manifestation in conflicts like the Vietnam War, and of course the uprisings around Europe and America in the late 1960s) and similar cultural ones (which could for the sake of simplicity be reduced to the imagined erasure of the boundary between art and life) — one would expect that the 'historical record' would be full of evidence of contacts, cross-references, and meetings (actual or epistolary) between them.

But the two most recent and thorough studies of the dada-S.I.-punk lineage (Marcus' *Lipstick Traces*) and of the dada-Fluxus lineage (Friedman's *The Fluxus Reader*) seem to be almost perfectly disparate bodies of knowledge. What a read through their pages suggests, a flip through their indices confirms: the index of *Lipstick Traces* contains not a single reference to Fluxus, nor to any of its more well-known occasional participants.<sup>155</sup> Sadie Plant's thorough study of the S.I., *The Most Radical Gesture*, could be said to describe part of the impetus behind Fluxus in her claim that the 'radical trajectory begun by Dada has not accepted the petrifying conclusions of postmodern theory, and the awareness that even the most radical of gestures can be disarmed continues to encourage a search for irrecoverable forms of expression and communication. That a great deal of cultural agitation is hidden from the public gaze is sometimes indicative of its tactics rather than its absence.' Without naming names or pursuing the lead she picks up, she makes a general reference to 'radical artists' who have absorbed the

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<sup>154</sup> See Maciunas' early exchanges with dada's patriarchs over the term 'neodadaism' in Williams and Noël, 1997: 40-41.

<sup>155</sup> Yoko Ono is mentioned only by reference to John Lennon's *Plastic Ono Band* (Marcus, 1989: 42). John Cage, an important figure to Maciunas and the Fluxus artists, is mentioned; Marcus makes a glancing

lessons of this “horizontal” and anti-hierarchical networking characteristic of the contacts with mail art networks establishing loose, transitory systems of information exchange which evade hierarchy and sidestep bureaucratic control.’ (Plant, 1992: 176) *The Fluxus Reader* does not make a single mention of punk, the Lettristes or the Situationists.

The almost total absence from such thorough contemporary histories of obvious ‘indexical’ correspondences between Fluxus and punk and the S.I.<sup>156</sup> — despite having the same zeitgeist as the wind in their sails and especially despite their acknowledged and shared, if contested, debt to dada — can be complicated further by a question as amusing as it is serious: if dada has something to do with both Punk and Fluxus; if Punk is like dada, dada is like Fluxus and Fluxus is like Zen... can there be Zen Punk? At first glance this notion would seem to invite a Fluxus performance as its final answer; perhaps something along the following lines:

Zen Punk

What is the sound of Zen Punk?

Piss off.

Indeed, Fluxus never produced an overt Zen-Punk confluence, perhaps owing to its position on the creation versus annihilation continuum posited by Friedman, wherein dada represents the ‘destructive character’ and Fluxus its opposite. Despite the deftness with which Fluxus artists deployed a vast range of pieces covering just about everything under the Fluxmoon — like in pieces such as Ken Friedman’s *Zen Basketball*<sup>157</sup>, George Brecht’s *Exercise*<sup>158</sup> and Yoko Ono’s *Sun Piece*<sup>159</sup> to name a few — it was actually within

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comparison between Cage’s 4’33” and Debord’s film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (Howls for Sade), both of which were first introduced in 1952.

<sup>156</sup> The Situationists are mentioned by RoseLee Goldberg in her famous but America-centric history of performance, though they are not connected to Fluxus (Goldberg, 1998: 19).

<sup>157</sup> Zen Basketball

Which is the dribbler and  
which is the dribbled?

(Friedman, in Frank, 1985: 28) Though conceived when Friedman was in Salt Lake City, Utah, in September, 1965, it was not until September, 1966 — shortly after Friedman came to New York — that the piece was performed, at the “Avenue C Fluxus Center”. A ‘revised’ version was manifested at Flux Kolhoz, 80 Wooster Street in New York, in October 1967 (ibid: 28)

<sup>158</sup> *Three Telephone Events*

I. When the telephone rings, it is  
allowed to continue ringing, until it stops.

II. When the telephone rings, the receiver  
is lifted, then replaced.

the realm of Punk, not Fluxus, that Zen-Punk might be seen to have been taken up. It happened in 1982, the same year that Joseph Beuys and His Holiness the Dalai Lama met in Bonn. By then the Sex Pistols were long gone.

1982 was the year that The Clash released their now legendary album *Combat Rock*. It came one year after Brixton had been set alight by what Darcus Howe has insisted were not so much riots as ‘an insurrection against the British police’ — one that would soon come to articulate itself in local forms across most of London, from Peckham and Southall to Notting Hill and Finsbury Park, spreading thereafter to entangle communities across the entirety of England. (Howe, 2001: n.p.).

The songs from the first side of the LP — like *Rock the Casbah* and *Should I Stay or Should I Go?* — are by far the more well known; the album’s B-side is terra incognita by comparison. The tenth track on the album, *Ghetto Defendant*, is an anthem for history’s lost urban resistances; its refrain, ‘GHETTO DEFENDANT... IT IS HEROIN PITY... NOT TEAR GAS NOR BATON CHARGE... WILL STOP YOU TAKING THE CITY’, an echo of Sid Vicious’ recent death.<sup>160</sup> But beneath the wail of the main lyrics, there is a soft and measured American accent:

‘STARVED IN MEGALOPOLIS... HOOKED ON NECROPOLIS... ADDICT OF METROPOLIS... DO THE WORM ON ACROPOLIS... SLAMDANCE COSMOPOLIS... ENLIGHTEN THE POPULACE’.

The voice belongs to Allen Ginsberg. As the song unfolds the words spoken by him and those sung by *The Clash* coil around each other in a tangled cadence:

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III. When the telephone rings, it is answered.  
Performance note: Each event  
comprises all occurrences  
within its duration.

Spring, 1961’ (Brecht quoted in Doris, 1999: 97) Brecht called works like these ‘very private, like little enlightenments I wanted to communicate to my friends who would know what to do with them.’ (Brecht, in *ibid*)

<sup>159</sup> *‘Sun Piece*  
Watch the sun until  
It becomes a square.  
– y.o. 1962 winter  
(Ono, in *ibid*: 113)

<sup>160</sup> On the dissolution of the Sex Pistols and Sid Vicious’ death, see Lydon, 1994: esp. 260.



*Clash:* 'THE GHETTO PRINCE... OF GUTTER POETS... WAS BOUNCED OUT OF THE ROOM.../'

*Ginsberg:* 'JEAN ARTHUR RIMBAUD'

*Clash:* 'BY THE BODYGUARDS OF GREED... FOR DISTURBING THE TOMB/'

*Ginsberg:* '1873'

*Clash:* 'HIS WORDS LIKE FLAMETHROWERS/'

*Ginsberg:* 'PARIS COMMUNE'

*Clash:* 'BURNT THE GHETTOS IN THEIR CHESTS... HIS FACE PAINTED WHITER... & HE WAS LAID TO REST/'

*Ginsberg:* 'DIED IN MARSEILLES'

And the refrain begins again: 'GHETTO DEFENDANT.../'

*Ginsberg:* 'BURIED IN CHARLEVILLE/'

'IT IS HEROIN PITY... NOT TEAR GAS NOR BATON CHARGE... THAT STOPS YOU TAKING THE CITY/'

*Ginsberg:* 'SHUT UP IN ETERNITY'

Again the refrain...

*Ginsberg:* 'GUATEMALA... HONDURAS... POLAND... 100 YEARS WAR... TV RE-RUN INVASION... DEATHSQUAD SALVADOR/'

And here Ginsberg's voice splits off from itself; as the map of military-media invasion continues, a replicant Ginsberg begins to chant, so nearly inaudibly that his words seem never to have been picked up in any of the reproductions of the song's lyrics:

'AAHM.../ AFGHANISTAN MEDITATION.../ OM.../ OLD.../ AAH/ CHINESE FLU.../ OM... / KICK JUNK, WHAT ELSE.../ GATE.../ CAN A POOR/ GATE.../ WORKER DO? / PARAGATE.../ OM... OM/ GHETTO DEFENDANT.../ BODHI SVAHA...'

And here the remainder of Ginsberg's chanting and his recitation interrupt each other to such an extent that they become indistinguishable; Sanskrit's sacred syllables and The Clash's spiralling refrain becoming inextricable:

'IN HEROIN PITYSVAHA...NOT TEAR GASGATE GATENOR BATON CHARGEPARAGATE PARASAMGATEHAS STOPPED YOU TAKINGSVAHA BODHI SVAHATHE CITYGATE GATEGHETTO DEFENDANTPARAGATEIT IS HEROIN PITYPARASAMGATESVAHANOT TEAR GAS NOR BATON CHARGE GATE SVAHA...'

The sound swims off into the silence separating it from *Combat Rock*'s eleventh track. In one of post-punk's most celebrated albums, Ginsberg was reciting the last line from what is doubtless the most widely-known Buddhist sutra in the West. Interestingly, although the lyrics for the rest of his spoken word performance are recorded in *Combat Rock*'s album jacket, as are all of the lyrics for all of the other songs on the album, Ginsberg's recitation of the Heart Sutra is not included. Neither is there a single Sanskrit word in the list of the lyrics for *Ghetto Defendant* on the website that provides the lyrics for every song on every Clash album. The most likely explanation would be that Ginsberg's meditation would have been an improvisation in the recording studio on his part, perhaps with the prior consultation of the band, perhaps not, but one that clearly made their final cut, even though it was either accidentally or intentionally left out of the script of the lyrics that they sent to print for the album jacket. It is nevertheless somewhat surprising that the online archivists would not, all these years later, have picked up on the Heart Sutra's absence. ("Clash Lyrics", 2001)

The *Bhagavatiprajñāparamitahrdayasutra*, translated as The Bhagavati Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, and most commonly known as the Heart Sutra, contains what are probably the two most well-known fragments of Indian Buddhist wisdom. The first is the mantra chanted by Ginsberg: '[Om] gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha'. Buddhist scholar Donald S. Lopez provides – along with the cautionary note that Sanskrit mantras are usually not translated<sup>161</sup> – a loose English translation: 'The mantra seems to mean "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, enlightenment, svaha."' (Lopez, 1996: 15) Even more famous in the 'West' is the Heart Sutra's much-contested phrase 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form.' The controversy lies between two different Sanskrit phrases: *rupam sunyata sunyataiva rupam* and *rupam sunyam sunyataiva rupam*, which can be translated: 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form' and 'form is empty, emptiness is form' respectively. While the version 'form is emptiness' has 'wide currency and fame in English', most Indian and Tibetan texts favor 'form is empty'. Lopez says that '[t]here would seem to be a difference philosophically between'

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<sup>161</sup>For an explanation, see Lopez, 1996: 15.

the two; the 'form is empty' alternative could perhaps, as Lopez notes, be intended to avoid the seeming circularity of 'form is emptiness/emptiness is form'. But, in keeping with the sutra's teaching, the 'form' does not have an essential or constant form: in an audience in 1984, the Dalai Lama told Lopez 'that [between the two alternatives] there is no significant difference in meaning.' (Lopez, 1996: 5; 5 n.2)

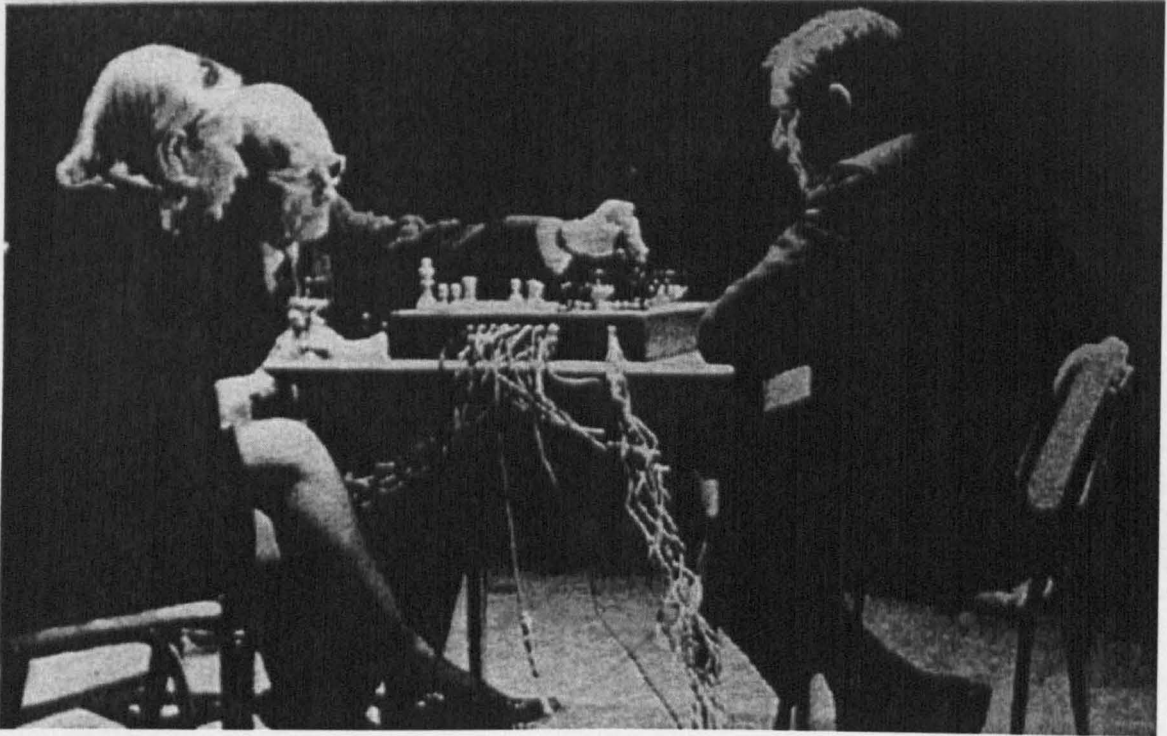
### *Contingently configured*

'He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put.' (Caillois, in Taussig, 1993: 34)

Is there a similar emptiness behind, between, beneath the 'Zen-punk' that Ginsberg and The Clash collaborated to help it to arise, Debord's *Hurlements* and Cage's *4'33''*? In 1958, six years after the one was screened and the other performed, both of these manifestations of *nothing happening*, Yves Klein famously exhibited nothingness in a Paris gallery. Might there be a vocabulary in which to describe what happens when nothing happens?

In her history of post-war performance, historian and former director of The Kitchen RoseLee Goldberg suggests that Klein's exhibition of nothingness ought to be read in terms of 'the angst of post-war Existentialism in the 1950s' one that manifested itself in 'public gestures that were poetic and harsh at the same time.' Goldberg considers that such 'work often contained traces of Sartrian Existentialism. A sense of "nothingness," or absence, pervaded Yves Klein's famous exhibition in 1958 in Paris entitled "The Void." It consisted of nothing but the whitewashed rooms of an empty gallery to which a select audience was invited. Those who entered had nothing to confront but themselves, making self-definition the metaphor embedded in the experience of being in a setting marked by the very absence of anything at all.' (Goldberg, 1998: 15-16)

But Sartrian nausea, the chainsmoking lament that man is condemned to be free, seems not quite adequate to Klein's *nothing*. As part of his attempt to manifest an art that should itself be broken through, he suggested that each ought 'to work for himself in order to return to real life, a life in which thinking man is no longer the centre of the universe, but the universe the centre of the man.' (Klein, in van Tuyl, 1979: 5)

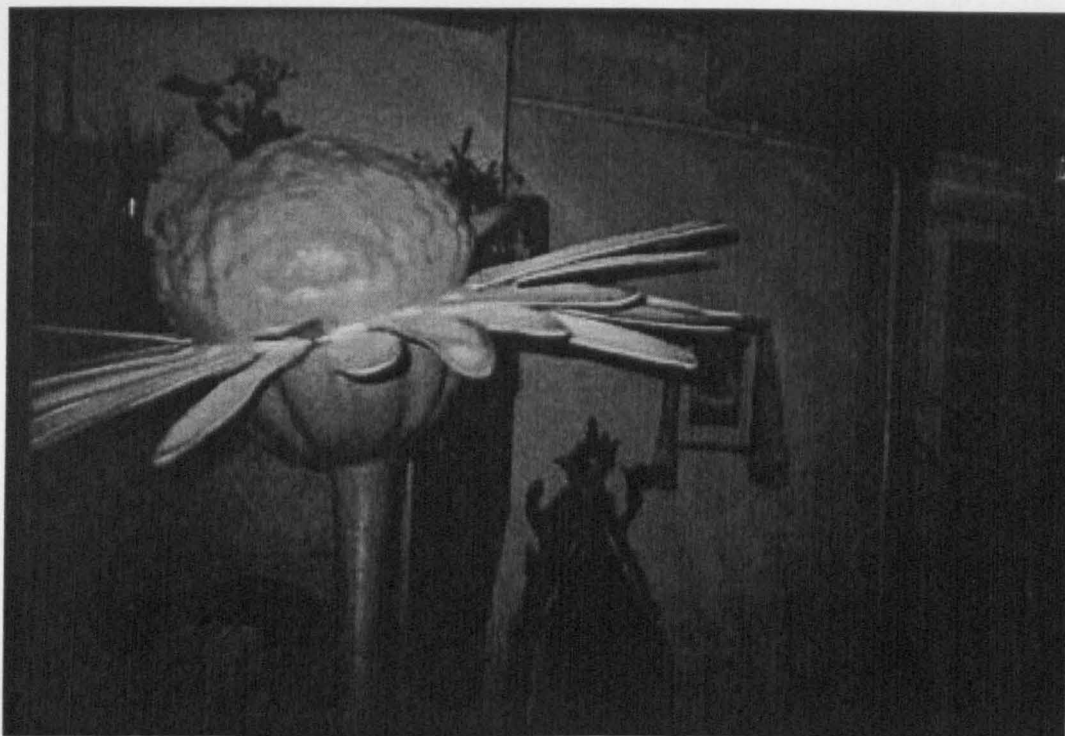


John Cage, Marcel and Teeny Duchamp playing electronic music chess (Cross, 1999: 40)

### *Zen Jurisprudence*

The 'koan' is frequently wheeled out as that popularly 'unsolvable' Zen riddle that is offered to make instant nonsensical sense of work like Yoko Ono's. 'The Zen koan', writes Munroe, 'offer another correspondence to Ono's event scores. These brief phrases — some a single character long and others such cryptic statements as "To turn a somersault on a needle's point" — are used as contemplative tools between master and disciple whose meaning, once grasped, leads to an experience of *satori* (enlightenment).' (Munroe, 2000: 18) In fact 'koan' is the Japanese pronunciation of *kung an*, which means 'public case'. The term comes from Chinese legal discourse, and was used to describe the awakenings of Zen masters: 'Just as a judge studies a previous legal case to get his bearings on the complexities of a present case, so can the Zen student study the public case to get his bearings on the complexities of the present "case" of his or her own existential dilemma.' (Batchelor, 1990: 51)

Even more than Cage, Ono's work is often reduced to a surface comparison to *haiku* or the *Zen koan*, when in fact she was raised on a complex and equally



Louwrien Wijers, prototype for *17 Madelieven*, in Wijers' living room, Amsterdam, 1999  
(photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

Despite her faith in her own hunch that the radically different kinds of experimentalism taking place in the works of artists on either side of the Atlantic could somehow be bridged, it was only years later that Wijers would articulate this in terms of a notion of 'nonduality'. In 1969, she felt unable to shape this intuition into a practice of everyday life. Some years before, shortly after coming to Amsterdam, she befriended the young artist Bernard ('Ben') d'Armagnac. He persuaded her to stop writing about work, and to return to making it. She describes this as the most 'difficult task' of her life. He invited her to come to Zeeland, south of Amsterdam, where he was living and working with his friend, another young artist named Gerrit Dekker. They would live together; if she had no money, it was no problem, he had enough for them to live on. '[H]e put me in a little house, and I'd been sitting in that house in the stone floor, wood stove...cemented wall with cracks falling off... I was just sitting in a wooden chair looking at the wall for *one year*, and I'm just thinking about what I had seen in New York, and what my original idea

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later, but I'm not sure.' (Mac Low, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 91-2)

‘cosmopolitan’ cultural diet of post-war Tokyo. She was the first female student to have been admitted to the philosophy course at Gakushuin University. In a time in which Marxism and Existentialism were popularized by ‘Japan’s postwar intelligentsia’, and liberal democratic values and pacifism hyped in place of nationalism, ‘Ono was reading prerevolutionary Russian authors like Tolstoy, Gorky, Chekhov, and Dostoyevsky, and such modern philosophers as Gide, Malraux, Hegel, and Marx.’ (Munroe, 2000: 15) This climate provoked her to ‘articulate her own form of spiritual philosophy and creative activity.’ Ono told Munroe that she sought also “‘to separate myself from the Japanese pseudo-bourgeoisie. I didn’t want to be one of them. I was fiercely independent from an early age and created myself into an intellectual that gave me a separate position.”” (Ono, in *ibid*: 16)

It is therefore no less accurate to connect her concern with ‘the nature of reality, existence, and mind’ to Japanese and European Existentialism and phenomenology than to Zen Buddhism or even to an unnamed sensitivity to the actualities of daily life. In a 1992 interview Fluxus artist Ben Patterson said: ‘Perhaps the one thing that everyone forgets or represses is that I, and my generation of Fluxus artists, were all more or less twelve to fourteen years old when the first atomic bomb exploded and left its mark on civilization. Perhaps only Zen or existentialism could begin to deal with such finality’. (Patterson, in Doris, 1998: 114)

Similarly, while Cage did indeed feel the tremendous influence of Zen Buddhism — as taught by D.T. Suzuki<sup>162</sup>, a fact that must not be missed — his journey into the world of Zen was not his first nor arguably his most important Oriental ‘pilgrimage’. ‘Aspects of Indian philosophy had already begun to exert an influence in the percussion and prepared piano pieces of the 1940s, signalling his intention to proceed musically

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<sup>162</sup> Cage attended Suzuki’s classes at Columbia University in the late 1940s when Suzuki was near the height of his fame. In addition to this, and to reading Suzuki’s books, Cage also visited Suzuki twice in Japan. (Richards, 1996: 92) It was also at one of Suzuki’s classes, ‘in the mid-1950s’, that Cage and Ono met one another. Accounts of Suzuki’s classes are numerous; see Munroe, 2000: 17-18. Discussions of Ono’s music tend to focus solely upon her post-Lennon work, which is itself often presented rather one-sidedly as Lennon’s creative enterprise. In fact, ‘as a child [Ono] was trained in classical piano and German lieder singing, began her career as a musician and composer. It was in music more than in any other media that Ono’s unique integration of avant-garde and Pop, mainstream and fringe sensibilities came to the fore. Almost single-handedly, she created a special genre that is inflected with rock n’roll and free-jazz. Her music has now been recognized as a seminal sound that helped give rise to punk rock and its derivatives.’ (placard from YES YOKO ONO, 2000, as above)

without reference to Europe.’ (Richards, 1996: 93) And his musical pieces between 1948 and 1951 were, in addition to his studies with Suzuki, influenced by his readings in the Christian mysticism of Meister Eckhart, as well as by various ‘Asian’ philosophical conceptions of ‘nature’ that Cage had digested in his encounter with the writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy, for whom ‘[t]he function of art was to “imitate Nature in her manner of operation” [...] Her manner of operation, as Cage interpreted it, was non-intention, uncluttered by humanly made notions of aesthetics and value.’ (ibid: 96)

Cage was not himself a ‘Buddhist’. Nor should his experiments with chance be conflated with Zen; as Sam Richards notes, ‘There is nothing in Zen Buddhism about art created by chance. Chance procedures in composition remove the unique gesture. Zen art, calligraphy being the most obvious, is the art of the unique gesture *par excellence*.’ (Richards, 1996: 95) In an interview with *Vrij Nederland* from October 17, 1964, twelve years after he performed *Silent Piece, 4 minutes 33 seconds (4’33’)*<sup>163</sup>, John Cage took pains to articulate this non-expressive non-uniqueness, resulting from his excision of ‘deliberate attempts at the expression of anything unique to himself’ (ibid: 101).

[Cage:] In the first place it will be necessary for students [of music]... what? Interviewer: ‘...to express themselves?’ John Cage (scornfully): ‘No. To open their ears. To learn to enjoy it. We don’t have anything to express, but we must notice a lot of things.’ Interviewer: ‘And what if you belong to the kind who have to express themselves?’ John Cage (opens mouth and laughs for a few seconds without any sound or movement)<sup>164</sup>: ‘When you catch a cold you have to sneeze, but it’s much better not to catch a cold. It is better to get rid of the non-art of expression.’ (Cage and interviewer quoted in van Daalen; in van Tuyl, 1979: 7)

Cage’s renunciation of expression need not necessarily be seen as the successful waging of a straight-forward *revolt* against European harmony<sup>165</sup>, but as the development of a ‘non-

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<sup>163</sup> Richards notes that, after Zen, his encounter with the *I Ching* was the ‘decisive catalyst’ for Cage’s work. ‘This ancient Chinese oracle of divination operated by what Cage usually referred to as chance, though synchronicity would be a better term.’ Cage appropriated the *I Ching*’s navigation ‘by apparently random means’ of ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ time (i.e. the sequential experience of linear time as well as the simultaneity of the synchronistic alignment of events) and used it as ‘a system for determining the sounds in a musical composition’ (Richards, 1996: 92). His infamous 1952 piece with the title *4’33’*, wherein no sounds are made intentionally, is ‘a reference to the time length determined by the *I Ching*. (ibid: 97)

<sup>164</sup> In her conversation with Munroe, Ono explained: “‘The essence of Zen that connected with Cage and all of us was a sense of laughter [...] Laughter is God’s language.” (Ono, in Munroe, 2000: 17)

<sup>165</sup> According to Richards, Cage found harmony and power to be intimately linked. ‘He felt that it was easier to impose sound, and a manipulative meaning for sound, on a listener when it was reinforced with harmony’ (Richards, 1996: 21).

co-operation' with it and its cultural baggage<sup>166</sup>. Cage's turning to Suzuki, Eckhart, Coomaraswamy, or Thoreau thus become explicable insofar as these writers offered Cage tools to effectuate for himself a mode of (non)creation whereby he 'allow[ed] sounds to be.' (Richards, op.cit: 101) Said Cage: 'The prepared piano, impressions I had from the work of artist friends, studies of Zen Buddhism, ramblings in the fields and forests looking for mushrooms, all led me to the enjoyment of things as they come, as they happen, rather than as they are forced to be [...] Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look.' (Cage, quoted in Wijers, 1993: n.p.)

### *Proposal peace*

In an interview given shortly before his death, Maciunas credited John Cage with coining the practice of concretism that enabled what Maciunas referred to as Fluxus' 'monomorphism'. 'Monomorphism, that means one form. Now, the reason for that is that, you see, lot of Fluxus is gag-like. That's part of the humor, it's like a gag. In fact, I wouldn't put it in any higher class than a gag, maybe a good gag.' (Miller, 1978: n.p)

He referred to Fluxus event-scores as 'neo-Haiku theatre' (ibid: iii); Frank poses 'proposal piece' as an alternative to neo-Haiku theatre's connotations of stagecraft. He explains that all of these pieces 'delineated their proposals with words, which Henry Flynt suggested as the necessary vehicle of transmission for concept art', even though many also operate in or around musical and/or poetic formats (ibid). He suggests that the women who have used the proposal piece have tended to achieve 'the least formal designation' and that they 'have approached them with less concern for traditional formats than have men'; he names Yoko Ono as the most important example, who he argues 'was probably the formulator of the proposal piece as a notational mode' (ibid). The simplicity of the proposal piece has permitted it to develop modes of the ordinary into, to borrow a phrase from choreographer William Forsythe, 'environments for extraordinary social interaction' (Forsythe, in Bruce, 1997).

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<sup>166</sup> Jonathan Katz has argued for a political reading of Cage's silences — 'in the sense of an individual ideology played out in social life' — with respect to his efforts to deal with his homosexuality and his love for Merce Cunningham; see Katz, 1997.



In a text entitled "To the Wesleyan People"<sup>167</sup> that she wrote following a visit and performance at Davison Art Center Gallery at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, on January 13, 1966, Ono explained that she thinks of her 'music more as a practice (gyo) than a music... The only sound that exists to me is the sound of the mind. My works are only to induce music of the mind in people.' In this remarkably obliquely explanatory text, Ono gives her reasons for her use of this form. Though Frank prefers 'proposal piece', *gyo* seems a more accurate term.

'There is no visual object that does not exist in comparison to or simultaneously with other objects, but these characteristics can be eliminated if you wish. A sunset can go on for days. You can eat up all the clouds in the sky. You can assemble a painting with a person in the North Pole over the phone, like playing chess. This painting method derives from as far back as the time of the Second World War when we had no food to eat, and my brother and I exchanged menus in the air.

There may be a dream that two dream together, but there is no chair that two see together.'

She explained to the people of Wesleyan why she chose not to refer to work as 'Happenings', and why, though she did on occasion use the word 'Event', she did not do so regularly.

'Event, to me, is not an assimilation of all the other arts as Happening seems to be, but an extrication from the various sensory perceptions. It is not "a get togetherness" as most happenings are, but a dealing with oneself. Also, it has no script as happenings do, though it has something that starts it moving – the closest word for it may be a "wish" or "hope".'

Ono closes her address with the famous tale of the debate between Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng. Their dharma duel is expressed in two short passages:

'The body is the Bodhi Tree  
The mind is like a bright mirror standing  
Take care to wipe it all the time  
And allow no dust to cling. — Shen-hsiu

There never was a Bodhi Tree  
Nor bright mirror standing  
Fundamentally, not one thing exists  
So where is the dust to cling? — Hui-neng'<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> This information comes from a placard to the "YES YOKO ONO" exhibition, as above. The letter is dated January 23, 1966.

<sup>168</sup> Hui-neng is an important and colorful character in the history and legends of Ch'an Buddhism; see Hui-Neng, 1998; Batchelor, 1990: 77; Rothfuss, in Monroe, 2000: 93.

Doris invokes this legend as well in reference to Ono and her address to the people of Wesleyan, suggesting that 'It is with Hui-neng that Ono has the greatest affinity.' (Doris, 1998: 115) He fleshes out Ono's choice of 'gyo' to describe her work, explaining that the term originates from Zen practice: 'expressed more fully, the term is *Gyo-ju-za-ga*. Translated literally, this means 'practice-walking-sitting-lying': one's daily life should not be other than one's practice.

Doris explores this 'bare, undivided attention' further in his discussions with Takehisa Kosugi, who refers to such practice as 'opening the eyes to chaos'. 'The sound object is not always music,' Kosugi says, 'but action, action. Sometimes no sound, just action. Opening a window is a beautiful action, even if there's no sound. It's part of the performance. For me that was very important, opening my eyes and ears to combining the non-musical part and the musical part of action. In my concerts, music became this totality, so even if there was no sound I said it was music. Confusing. This is how I opened my eyes to chaos.' (Kosugi, in Doris, 1998: 110) He elaborates this to explain that what is at stake here, as in the notion of 'direct perception', is 'self-revolution': 'Before opening eyes, there's a stage of consciousness of normal eyes. Beyond that, we have another consciousness. My idea was to open consciousness.' (ibid: 111) This opening was constitutive of what Maciunas called the 'art attitude'<sup>169</sup>. This held

'that there was no need for art. We had merely to learn to take an "art attitude" toward any phenomenon we encountered. Making artworks, he believed then, was essentially a useless occupation. If people could learn to take an "art attitude" toward all everyday phenomena, artists could stop making artworks and become economically "productive" workers.' (Williams, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 91)<sup>170</sup>

In 1971, Robert Filliou spent a month at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam engaging with the gateless gate of the art attitude and its expansion. In a short text he wrote by way of a provisional conclusion, entitled "Research on Research", he began by explaining the

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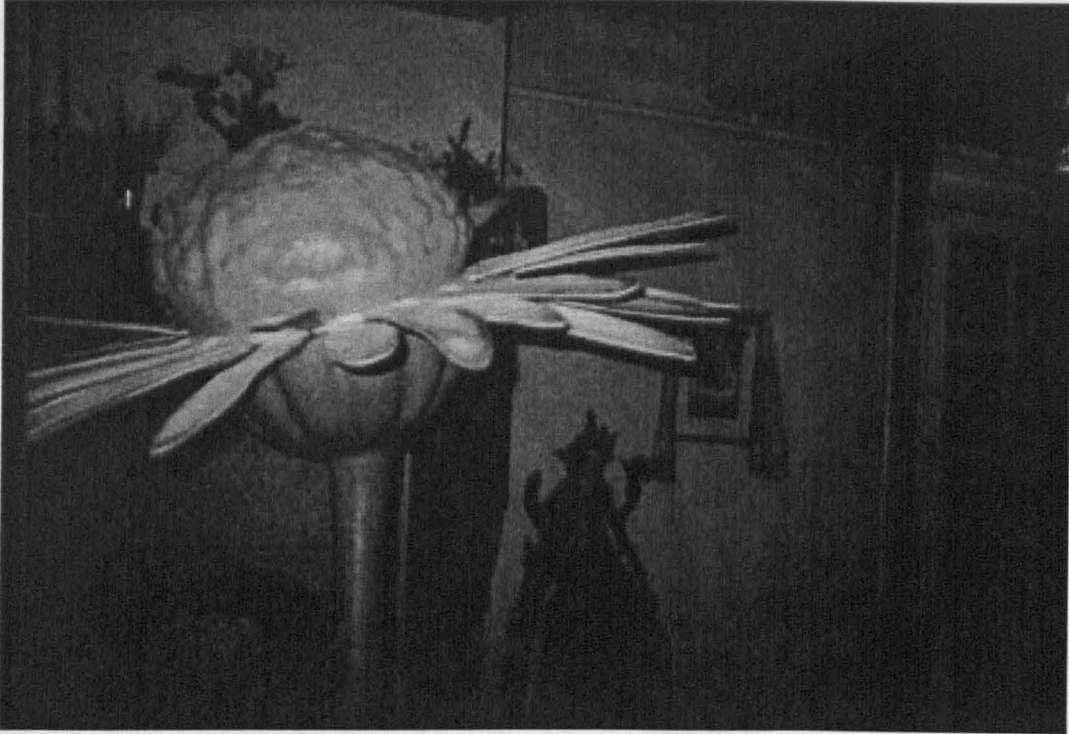
<sup>169</sup> Emmett Williams suggests that Maciunas' idea was 'derived mainly from his interpretation of the works made by George Brecht in the early 1960's, La Monte Young's 1960 compositions, and to some extent [Emmett Williams'] own verbal and performance works and those of Dick Higgins'. (Williams, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 91)

<sup>170</sup> Maciunas' political leanings are important to bear in mind, but with grain of salt ready to hand. Jackson Mac Low says that in the early 1960s, Maciunas 'was a peculiar kind of Marxist-Leninist – even, in his own way, a "Russianist"', and remembers Maciunas once showing him a letter he'd just mailed to Khrushchev 'in which he urged the Soviet ruler to encourage "realistic art" (such as G. Brecht's, La Monte's, and to some extent [Williams']) as being more consonant with a "realistic economic system" such as that of

difficulties of managing what he referred to as the horizontal and the vertical elements of this attempt to articulate what he called the 'Territory' of his project itself. 'Getting a territory inside the Territory was in itself research — At times I felt I knew what I was doing, at times I felt I didn't. I worked on a hunch, an intuition, or rather several of them'. He sought to explore ways in which a genuinely interdisciplinary inquiry might be mapped out. One of the intuitions that guided him in this was that 'There is an Artistic Proposition to the myriad occurrences in the world. I suggested several fields in which scientists and other specialists could work with ± for artists'. This fed directly into a second, expressed as a kind of axiom: 'The most interesting artistic research going on now is research into ways of living. However, this most important art form is now outside the field of regular art information. I think museums should subsidize it, make it known. They could do it by getting + showing information on experiments — private and public — that go on everywhere — the art circuit will follow. Art that makes only references to art is in trouble...'. This multifaceted hunch took the form of a logically inclusive methodology: 'My proposition was also horizontal. I invited everybody to join in the research... "You're your own territory", that's what I tried to say, "you don't have to appeal to high authority."' He closed his research summary with an affirmation of the intuition without which, though one may research *something*, one cannot research research: 'If my hunch is right... BUT OF COURSE MY HUNCH IS RIGHT... ... it's got to be.' (Filliou, 1971: n.p.)

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the Soviet Union than the old-fashioned "socialist-realist" art then in favor. I think his politics changed



Louwrien Wijers, prototype for *17 Madelieven*, in Wijers' living room, Amsterdam, 1999  
(photo Chris Thompson, 1999)

Despite her faith in her own hunch that the radically different kinds of experimentalism taking place in the works of artists on either side of the Atlantic could somehow be bridged, it was only years later that Wijers would articulate this in terms of a notion of 'nonduality'. In 1969, she felt unable to shape this intuition into a practice of everyday life. Some years before, shortly after coming to Amsterdam, she befriended the young artist Bernard ('Ben') d'Armagnac. He persuaded her to stop writing about work, and to return to making it. She describes this as the most 'difficult task' of her life. He invited her to come to Zeeland, south of Amsterdam, where he was living and working with his friend, another young artist named Gerrit Dekker. They would live together; if she had no money, it was no problem, he had enough for them to live on. '[H]e put me in a little house, and I'd been sitting in that house in the stone floor, wood stove...cemented wall with cracks falling off... I was just sitting in a wooden chair looking at the wall for *one year*, and I'm just thinking about what I had seen in New York, and what my original idea

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later, but I'm not sure.' (Mac Low, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 91-2)

of art [had been]. I couldn't bring it into one being [...] I had to think about it *so* long, it was a real inner crisis for me. [...] There was something happening that I couldn't follow'. (Wijers, 2/2000: 24) According to Wijers, Beuys had been happy to see that d'Armagnac had helped her to get herself out of what she describes as the cynicism of Amsterdam's art scene. (ibid)

Despite de Decker's similar dissatisfaction with the late-70s European conceptual scene's trend towards staleness, these years did produce a number of fascinating artistic experiments. Apart from the fame of figures like Ger Van Elk, Jan Dibbets and Marinus Boezem<sup>171</sup>, and despite major exhibits outside Holland,<sup>172</sup> most of these have largely been either ignored or unnoticed by English-speaking scholars.

Works by many of them were brought together in a 1978 exhibition called *mit Natur zu tun (To Do With Nature)*. Co-organizer Gijs van Tuyl wrote that the *To Do With Nature* exhibition grew out of artist Gerhard von Graevenitz' having been struck by the pervasive engagement on the part of Dutch artists from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s with 'nature', and his suggestion that a show be created specifically to address this. It is not unlikely that Filliou's attention to this trend in his 1971 *Research at the Stedelijk* was at least a partial impetus behind the project. Along with Piet van Daalen, Jan van Munster and Gijs van Tuyl, von Graevenitz gathered together a range of artists according to three criteria. There were those who worked directly with 'nature' (for instance, artist Sjoerd Buisman experimented with the growth processes of plants and the effects on them of environmental factors like changes in light and gravity, and recorded various data related to them).

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<sup>171</sup> In 1969, Van Elk exhibited a shaved cactus, a year after Boezem had exhibited a weather report, and began to conceive of 'air as a plastic material'. In 1967, Dibbets had abandoned his method of painting and stacking his square canvases, and turned to instead to creating piles out of squares of sod grass (Van Tuyl, 1978: 1)

<sup>172</sup> In addition to various appearances by a number of Dutch artists (and artists living in Holland, like Marina Abramovic and Ulay) at major international events like Documenta 6, the Cologne Art Fair and the Performance Week in Bologna in 1977 – there was one major exhibition in the United Kingdom. This was the show "Eleven Dutch Artists", "11Da", organized by Herman Swart and Caroline Tisdall at the Fruit Market Gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland, from August to September 1974. On June 2, 1977, d'Armagnac also performed in the International Performance Week in Bologna, 1977. Other participants in this event included: Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Gilbert & George, Dan Graham, Geoff Hendricks and Brian Buczak, Allan Kaprow, George Maciunas, Hermann Nitsch, Nam June Paik, Katharina Sieverding, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell. (see Daolio, in Wijers, 1995: 159, and *La Performance*, 1977; thanks to Geoff Hendricks for providing this)

There were artists who ‘make incidental use of nature, usually indirectly, by means of photography’ (artist Nikolaus Urban did an eight-day performance in which he attempted — unsuccessfully, which is a wonderful irony — to teach a parrot to say the last line of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Mathematicus*: ‘What we cannot speak of, we must be silent about’ (ibid: 28); or whose ‘starting point is nature or a natural way of life’ (ibid: 1).

Finally there were artists who committed themselves to living and working in nature, like Ben d’Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker, who following their mentor Anton Heyboer began their ‘post-studentship’ careers by dressing in traditional Dutch farmer- and fisherman-wear, living off the land, and working strictly with found objects from the Dutch landscape. Though d’Armagnac’s work made in the late 60s, on the heels of his time spent with Heyboer, consisted largely of etchings, he and Dekker soon after began primarily work with found pieces of wood. In this they followed, probably not unknowingly, Dutch artist Axel van der Kraan, who in 1969 ‘regarded the beach as his studio, where he built tables of driftwood which were washed away by the rising tide’ (in Van Tuyl; 1).

Ben d’Armagnac was born in France in 1942, the son of a nobleman from whom he inherited the title of count. His mother was Dutch, and when the war broke out his parents moved to Amsterdam with their two children. When he was in his twenties, she committed suicide in their home. His sister persuaded the owner of the house to divide it into two parts and to permit d’Armagnac to live in the upstairs section and to rent out just the downstairs section (Wijers, 2/2000: 59). d’Armagnac went to art school in Amsterdam, and in 1966 he and his girlfriend Lotti, along with his close friend Gerrit Dekker, left the city to move to an old farmhouse in the hamlet of Lewedorp in South Beveland (Zeeland) (Zutter, in van Tuyl, 1979: 21) where d’Armagnac and Dekker worked on their sculpture. It was here that they met the artist Anton Heyboer, with whom d’Armagnac himself lived for several months and with whom both studied for a time. In a letter written in 1967 to friend Piet van Daalen, Dekker unleashed the following mini-manifesto which goes some way towards a rationale for wanting to live and work in more rural environs: ‘I must preserve all my intensity for myself, cherishing and

cultivating it; only then can I offer myself to society, not in the accepted guise of an artist fitting into society, but as a man who tries as an individual to adopt an attitude towards "life" in as objective a fashion as possible, and to hope that this intensity, which I must keep perfectly pure, will pass on a spark to our hunted, murderous, child-shunning society'. (ibid)

In this he continues Heyboer's brand of existentialism. 'Concentration camp was no worse than my parents' home,' Heyboer once remarked to an interviewer, 'and society is no worse than both for me, too uncreative.' (Locher, quoted in Zutter, 1979: 21) He told one writer: 'I can only exist as an artist. It would be impossible as a man. Normally there is no sense for me in things, I don't have enough feelings. I can live abnormally. Creation is the only eternal life. It is the resurrection.' (ibid)



Anton Heyboer, ca. 1965 (Wijers, 1995)



**Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker in their fisherfolks' attire, with an untitled sculpture in the garden of the Zeeuws Museum, Zeeland, 1968 (Wijers, 1995)**

After leaving Heyboer, d'Armagnac and Dekker continued to live and work together. At first they produced 'etchings in the form of letters, resembling those of Heyboer,' (Zutter, in van Tuyl, 21) but soon began to create concept art that engaged with their lived experience of their local environment. 'They used discarded planks and odds and ends to build wooden huts which were meant to be a kind of meditation space.' (ibid: 3) They said that the construction of 'these huts had nothing to do with art in our opinion, which is why we built them. We had a lot of fun doing it, and we lived in them as well.' (d'Armagnac and Dekker, in van Tuyl, 1979: 21, 23)





huisjes gemaakt  
in de Weddorp  
Zeeland

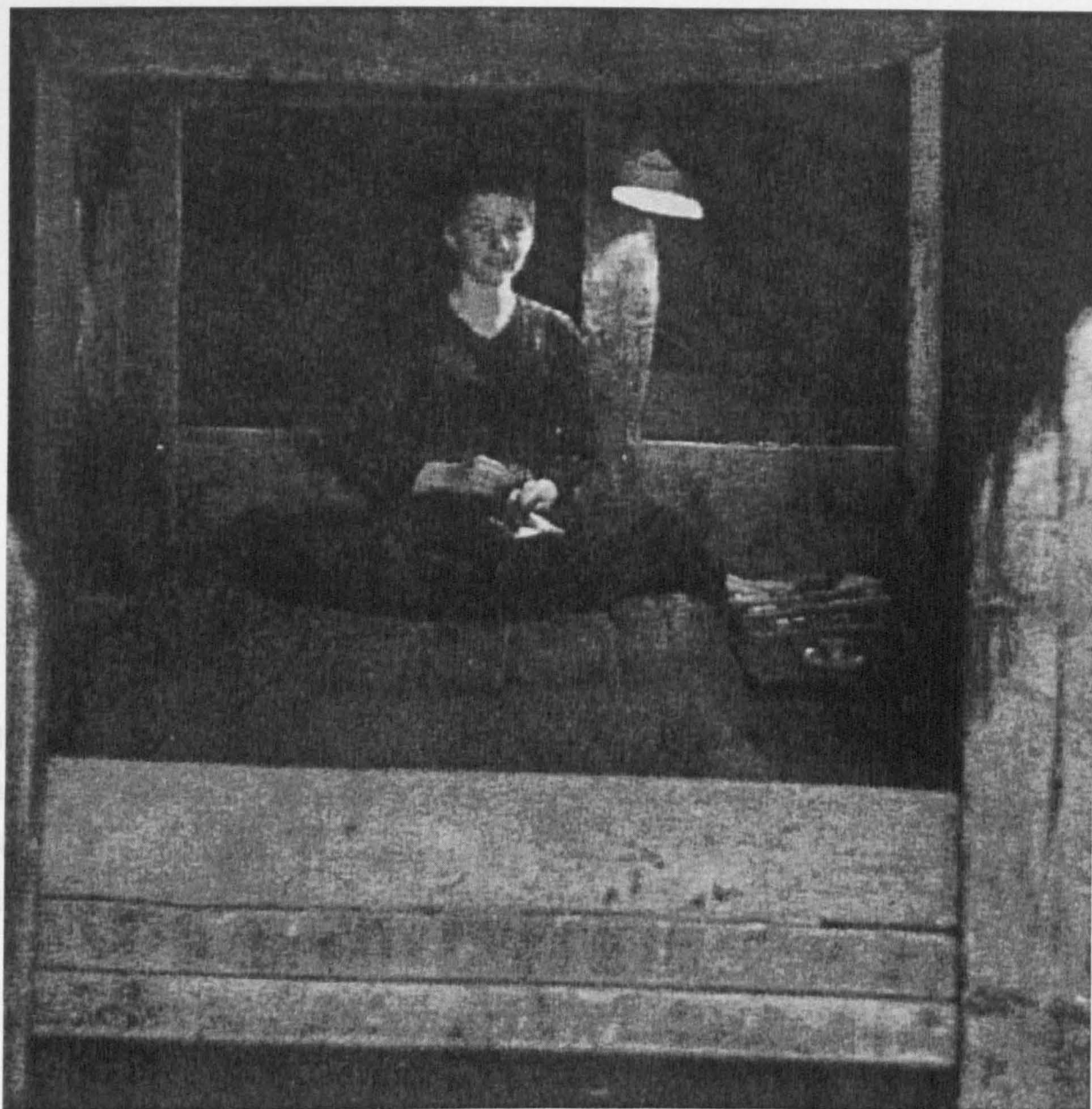
Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker, image of *Huisje*, Zeeland, 1968 (Wijers, 1995)

Wijers lived in one of these huts too, in 1970, following her first year with d'Armagnac and Dekker, the one in which she sat looking at the wall and thinking; this had been 'the year that I was starting to think *how* to work, you know.'

Loewrien Wijers, *Frislandse stalle*, 1971 (Wijers, 1995)

Then the work began.

I was very influenced by the concept, so the first things I made were just words. I don't know if I've ever told you but... for, oh, I think two years, I just found one word. I never knew [the system], what word it was, but as soon as [the word came to me] I would write it down on a piece of paper, with the date... and then just go on living. Because the idea was life and art are one, but how to get to the essence of it... I had no idea. So I made the series '40 Words', and they came out on big... hands of just... one word, and it was the first thing that I sold to the system that we had at that time, 'the system' system, you had to bring in the work, and then you got money for a period of time at that time. If you had to bring in new work, and you got money again, you know. That was the system. So from 1970 I was in the system of work. And the working of water was



Louwrien Wijers, Prinseneiland studio, 1971 (Wijers, 1995)

Then the work began.

'I was very influenced by the conceptual, so the first things I made were just words. I don't know if I've ever told you but... for, oh, I think two years, I just *lived one word*. I never knew [in advance] what word it *was*, but as soon as [the word came to me] I would write it down on a piece of paper, with the date... and then just go on living. Because the idea was life and art are one, but how to get to the *essence* of it... I had no idea. So I made the series '40 Words', and they came out on big... cards of just... one word, and it was the first thing that I sold to the system that we had at that time, the artists' system; you had to bring in the work, and then you got money for a period of time to live, then you had to bring a new work and you got money again, you know. That was the system. So from 1970 I was in the system of artists. And the working of words was

1970, 1971... and '72, but in '72 I had... an installation, you could say, with [this work]. But [it could] *almost* [be called] 'performance'. I've never realized that I thought of these things... rather early, even compared to Ben... my performance, I didn't *know* it was a performance, but I did it earlier than he did! [Laughs]... I was working on these sheets, then I had a period that I was working on sentences — sentences that you could use anytime, you know. Like I had one sentence, something like: 'the bay, that is the water here, the ships are passing', you know, things like that, very much like Lawrence Wiener, although I didn't know that he was doing these things. [...] But I had done that in '71 I think, I did the sentences, sentences that can *always* be said, you know. They're always *good*. [Laughs] I never work with those anymore. And then I started to do pictures of things, photographs of things that are always good... like the flowers that come out of the snow, you know, a picture of a crocus... many things like that, and... every year again you see [the flowers come back] and you think 'Wow', you know. In '72 I started as I said to do the installations so I made this piece [...at] the Goethe Institut, I had a room there and I just... made it in a way that I could *live* in the room, so everything that I would need for my living was in that room. That means the food was there, the... table, and papers and pencils, and... you know, it was just as if I could step in, and *be there*. You know, lamps and... some kind of crochet work that I was... working on. So I just made a room, and... it looked quite nice, you'll see it some day on a... photograph. And then I went to the United States...'

In 1972 Wijers returned to New York. A 'friend of a friend' whom she had met while staying in the Chelsea Hotel those years ago 'had a gallery [on Fifth Avenue, near Washington Square Park] and asked me to do a piece there'. The piece involved Wijers sitting in the window in traditional Dutch women's' folkwear.

'The influence of Ben d'Armagnac and Heyboer comes in here, eh? Heyboer lived in the folkwear of Holland, so therefore we started living in the folkwear, and actually in New York I was wearing Dutch folkwear, when I was there in '72. I was wearing wooden shoes and... the clothes and... incredible! [laughs] There must be a few people who can tell you about that, [me] actually walking up and down Fifth Avenue... [and] sitting in that installation, and it was about women, because I felt that women were not seen as they were. I was actually very much against Women's Lib, but I was very much *for* looking at women, as ... they should be looked at, you know. I didn't like them to be more... *male*, like in Women's Lib, I was a little bit against that.' (ibid: 36)

She had also begun to be interested in metal sculpture; within a few years what she calls 'mental sculpture' would come to take precedence, and would unfold almost directly out of her attempt to use metal to sculpt concepts.

'I was very intrigued how you could work with metal, because the metal did make me think of the *marzipan* that my... father was working in... because you could bend it in all ways, and I thought, Aha! Nice! You know. And my idea was, again, like in the 70s, I wanted to *solidify* things. *Time*, actually, I wanted to solidify... and I think I'm still doing that. [...] The first thing I made there was not of metal, it was wood [...] a wooden thing and a person lying on it and out of

the person flowers are growing. So that was the piece. And the person was me, full length, made in compost kind of material. I don't know whether that thing still exists, but it was a nice thing that we brought to Arnhem. And the next thing was the metal. So, the first thing I made of metal was a table and chair. And the idea of the table and the chair came because you were sitting, and there was some stillness, and then in the table I made a text. Because I was always working with text. And so the idea of being at *rest* is what I wanted to show. But... wrapping the table in aluminium, and screwing that together, is something I've done more, like with the copper bed, [to] take it out of its normal presence. Just the *shape* of the table, and the *idea* of table and chair, because the table and the chair are of something that one day will not exist anymore, but now to... *wrap* it, like Christo. Christo was of course very important in my time, in my influence [...] So I started wrapping up things to show their... existence in a different way... and used the shape of the thing in a *meditative* way, so the table and the chair, if you look in here [looks down at the kitchen table at which she and Thompson sat], and you're... reading a text... I called it, 'Going Inside'. And that... stairway, of lead, [and] the bed of red copper was the same idea... I called the bed 'Prayer'. So the bed... is a place, I find, where you can really have your prayers... it's a very nice place where nobody can disturb you, you know... you can have your *real* prayer, so that's why I called the bed 'Prayer', and I put the prayer on the cushion of the bed, with words. And... [the] stairway of lead is a thing that Beuys also... how did I call the stairway? Stairway must have a title...but... [she said the word 'overgave' in Dutch, inaudibly] *now* I remember! Ah... ah, what would the word be in English, *Overgave*? it would be like you give yourself to something, without holding back, that is the idea, so, the staircase would be... you have to step one, two, three steps *ahead of yourself*, from the ground, and then you can read the text, which says, if I'm... what's the word, *Overgave*, what does it mean, in English?

Thompson: 'I don't know if there is just a... one word for that.'

Wijers:

'Gave up, gave up yourself...is what it means. So that was written on the... highest... step of the stairway you could say, on the top part... If I live in... *Overgave* then... I am much more *real*. It is actually the same thing as Beuys said, 'If you create space around yourself, and you live in that space'... it's that kind of thing. Don't stay within your own, your confined... feelings and thoughts. *Trust whatever is there*... and live, live your trust. So actually all the things that I've done in the '70s have come through these phases of... making known to yourself what you actually want to, how you actually want to live, or... *be*. But it became very religious, almost. It became... the struggle came when I saw that, ahhh! the real things that you want to... *show*, or *make*... are much nearer to... *reality* if they... could be religious, you know, if they could have a religious *context*. And... but, we don't have that [context]. I mean, when I saw the first... sculpture in Dharamsala of Padmasambhava, made in metal, ah! I felt that for a culture like that to make a Padmasambhava... can be very helpful, whereas in the West, we don't have such icons, and it's very hard to make a sculpture that could be an icon... for many people. So... I thought, it is actually better to leave that kind of sculpture that I'm doing, I was doing at the time, to leave that to cultures that still have an icon *tradition*, and I shouldn't force my time to go on in icon-

thinking. And... I actually thought that, apart from using the material, which [...] I became more and more against, because how did I know whether the copper sheets, or the lead, were coming from safe places, you know, maybe there was lots of blood hanging on all this materials, because mostly they came from places where people didn't get much pay... and where there was slavery and terrible situations... so also that aspect I really disliked about working with metal. The creating of icons — that could maybe never be carried through in our society — I felt was not a right thing to do [...] So that, I got fed up with the whole idea, also I wanted to work not with *material* but with *mental*... Now we are talking late '70s. So I thought I must do a completely different thing. And I must go into the mental instead of the material. And that is the start of mental sculpture. And... I stopped doing these strange [sculptures] because I had done so many... by that time, maybe twenty-five pieces, and I was really coming to the *end* of the *visual* part of it. I didn't think that [it] was the visuals, that you had to show people, today. And then... as you know I started to talk to people, about art, so that is where the Beuys interview, '78, starts.' (ibid: 38-9)

It was d'Armagnac who helped her to return to her writing, not as a writer, but as a mental sculptor.

'Yeah, it was Ben who told me in 1977... 'Why don't you pick up your typewriter again. And... see whether you can make something with that now, after nine years of not looking at it.' 'Hm!', I thought... 'good idea!', you know. So I must say he actually... pulled me out of this game, before he died, a year before he died, he wanted me to... change, I don't *know* why, but... he just came in and said 'Stop', more or less, you know? And it's not easy to work as a sculptor with a typewriter [laughs]. But I found I had to do that. So I came to the interviews first, and then from there to Art Meets Science... and... I think I can say that it was just keeping on with the work, you know. It looked like I was working as a journalist again, but... I don't think I ever did. I think I found the way to go beyond normal writing and normal... media work. And I think that... what came out of it, Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy, I couldn't have taken that further I think, that idea of mental sculpture. I think it was... my utmost, you know... [...] I really felt like a Rembrandt when I was doing Art Meets Science. I felt that, you know... only later people would see that this was a *Nightwatch*, you know... something like that... There is not much material of Art Meets Science, really, visual material. But if we had more, it would have spread much more easily around the world. But it still can, you know... and I don't mind that the work is not famous. It has always been a little bit outside the art world, but then of course in 1973... I have to mention that, I had an exhibition again at the Goethe Institut ... here in Amsterdam, and one way or the other, it was a wonderful exhibition, it was all about writing, it was three rooms. The day before it opened I made a carpet... like paper, almost as big as this floor [about the size of her kitchen, 15" x 20"] and I wrote on it with very big letters, that I never wanted to enter the gallery circuit in... the art world, and that this was my last show, because I felt that if I wanted to enter the gallery world, I would have to... be dishonest to myself, and I said... I had a few shows, and I was grateful to the people who gave me the shows, but this was the last show that I did. Because I didn't feel that this could help me, in doing my work, so I've

always worked very concealed, you could say [...] And *that also* was the beginning of the mental sculpture, there was a whole.. game, so... what I just wanted to say, that I never... went in... Lawrence Wiener always says that, 'You know Louwrien, I went into the art circuit, and... that was easy. But what you do, without going into the art world' he says, 'that is much more difficult.'" (ibid: 39-40)

### *Play it by faith*

On the kitchen table in front of she and Thompson, Wijers' catalogue raisonné of d'Armagnac's life's work is open to an image of his *Buiten de perken*, shown at Sonsbeek, 1971.

The image shows two mannequins seated at a table. Each of their heads is crushed into the chessboard that sits between them, each smashed in by a pile of books. Thompson read the photograph's explanatory text:

'At a table, two big dolls, a man and a woman, are facing each other. Between them on the table is a chess set with some of the pieces turned over. The heads of the dolls are [he stumbles over the words:] bloody, battered... bloody battered? It's nice, its not... English, but its [Wijers, laughing, asks 'Oh, no?' as he continues:] its even more... poetic. '*Bloody battered*'... that part of it sounds like Shakespeare. I'd leave that. [He continues to read:] 'At the entrance a text explains that people talking to each other are often competing about knowledge without trying to understand each other.'

Wijers smiled and said:

'It is me... in the time that I was living with Ben... here in Amsterdam. And... I had friends from before who wanted to see me, you know, and then I would come back home... and I would be completely changed, because I was *so* tortured, that... and then he made this piece... And it's my books, too! [she laughs] I guess Ben thought 'Okay', you know... 'it's your head so it's your books.' (ibid: 72)

Thompson: 'It's a nice piece to go along with that Yoko Ono piece. You know, the white chess set...

Wijers: 'Yeah!'

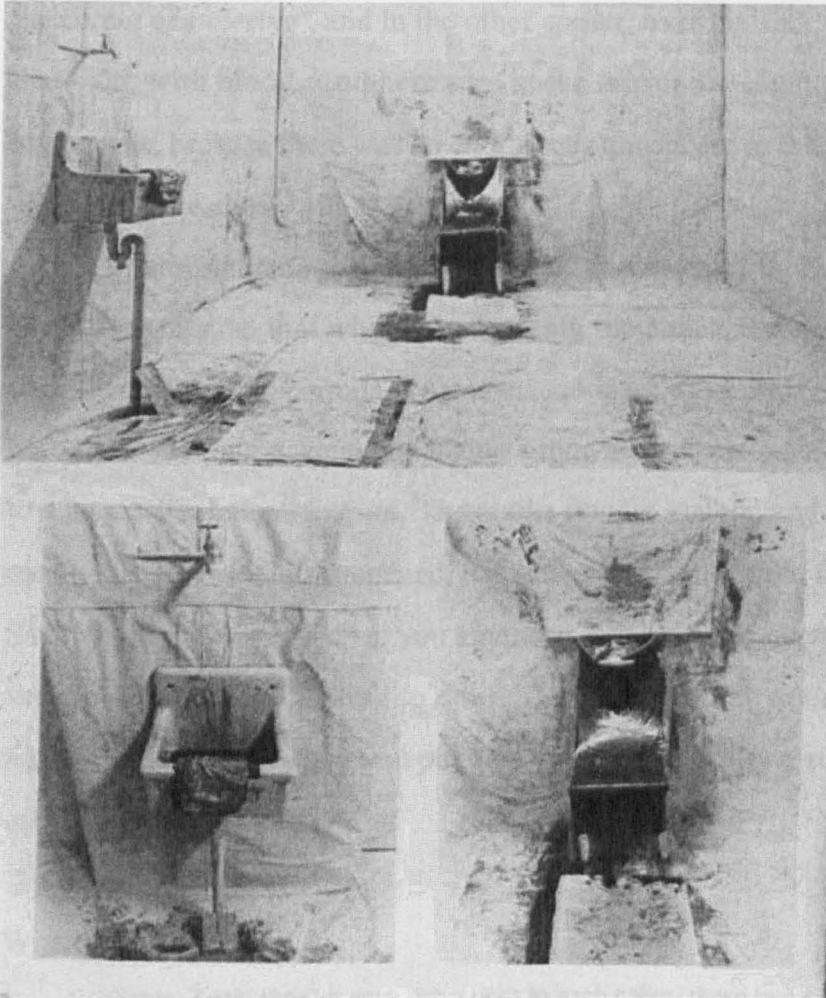
Thompson: 'You know this one?'

Wijers: 'Yes'.

Thompson: 'Where all the pieces are the same color... all white.'

Wijers: 'Maybe its around the same time almost.' (ibid)

Five years before, in 1966<sup>174</sup>, Ono had made *Play It By Trust*; for her 2000 retrospective 'YES YOKO ONO' at the Japan Society in New York, two sets of this piece were shown in the lobby, and members of the public were invited to sit and play. Each set includes two white chairs, white tables with inbuilt chessboards. All of the squares and all of the pieces, both sides, are white. A placard on the wall read: 'How to proceed when the opponent is indistinguishable from oneself?'



Ben d'Armagnac, *Witte Ruimte*, Goethe Institut, Amsterdam, 1972  
(Wijers, 1995)

While Wijers had been in New York, in 1972, a year before the Dalai Lama's first visit to the West, d'Armagnac had performed *Witte ruimte* at the Goethe Institut in Amsterdam.

<sup>174</sup> The date for the piece is given as 1966/97, presumably when it was released from Ono's personal collection for her retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, November 23, 1997 - March 15, 1998; see *Yoko Ono: Have You Seen the Horizon Lately?*, 1997: 144.

Wijers returned from New York in order to see it. It was one of his earliest performances, although it was only the traces of the action that were put on view; d'Armagnac performed it in isolation. The entire room had been covered with white canvas. Wijers explains that he had enacted the process of suffering with 'some difficult subject within himself'. The walls are covered with bloody handprints, most of which are covered over with white cloths that d'Armagnac has affixed as a kind of covering.

He had walked back and forth between two parts of the room; one 'seems to be the corner of *suffering*', and in the other corner, over the sink, 'he seems to be *cleaning*... that cloth with blood. And here sees in the mirror a...clean face [...] it was very, very impressive, because there was an enormous atmosphere in that... square, especially when you were there alone.' (ibid: 74-5)

Thompson remarked to Wijers that he was struck by the technique of laying cloth over the marks, so that what is underneath the attached sheets does not erase them, or wipe them away, but permits d'Armagnac to mark them, deal with them as if in a calming gesture — soothing a wound by laying a thin, clean sheet on top. Not eliminating, moving to a pure state, but *moving on*. The marks remain visible, and while they can perhaps be reactivated, the wounds reopened, d'Armagnac has made the first move towards healing. Says Wijers: 'It doesn't *harm* you anymore, heh? You've *dealt* with it. [...] It is also [a] very *loving-kindness*<sup>175</sup> thing to do. [...] Beuys has that *same* soft touch...to... *wound-healing*, almost, heh? How you put on a wound very softly a *gaze*, heh? Oh, how do you call it, *gaze* or *gauze* or...'

Thompson: 'Gauze.'

Wijers:

'*Gauze*. Yeah, they're very, very near to each other, these two guys. That is what makes Beuys much younger than for instance Heyboer. Heyboer didn't get rid of his *painting*, he just kept *painting*... but *Beuys* went into all these other things... and that is where Beuys and Ben are much nearer to each other in a way. Although when you look at the *drawings* of Beuys and the *drawings* of Heyboer they're very near to each other... I told you, when I brought Heyboer the Beuys book? Do you remember? And he slept on it, and... next day he called me and he said 'Come and pick up your Beuys book. I can't live with it. Its just like me...it's ruined my life, because [it's] so similar... the only similar thing to what I'm doing...and... its too near.' [she



laughs] *There* they are very similar, Beuys and Heyboer, but here, its almost like Beuys lived another generation, too, you know, the German younger generation.' (ibid: 75-6)

D'Armagnac took this concern with the enactment of healing further in a second work, in his untitled performance with Gerrit Dekker at the Neue Galerie in Aachen in 1975. The two of them lay face down on a hospital table, blindfolded and bandaged, arms outstretched, holding a bloody cow's heart. Where the focus of the previous work is upon healing work that must be done to himself, here the aim is focus upon the negotiation of a shared condition. Wijers' description of the piece picks up on this dialogical rhythm:

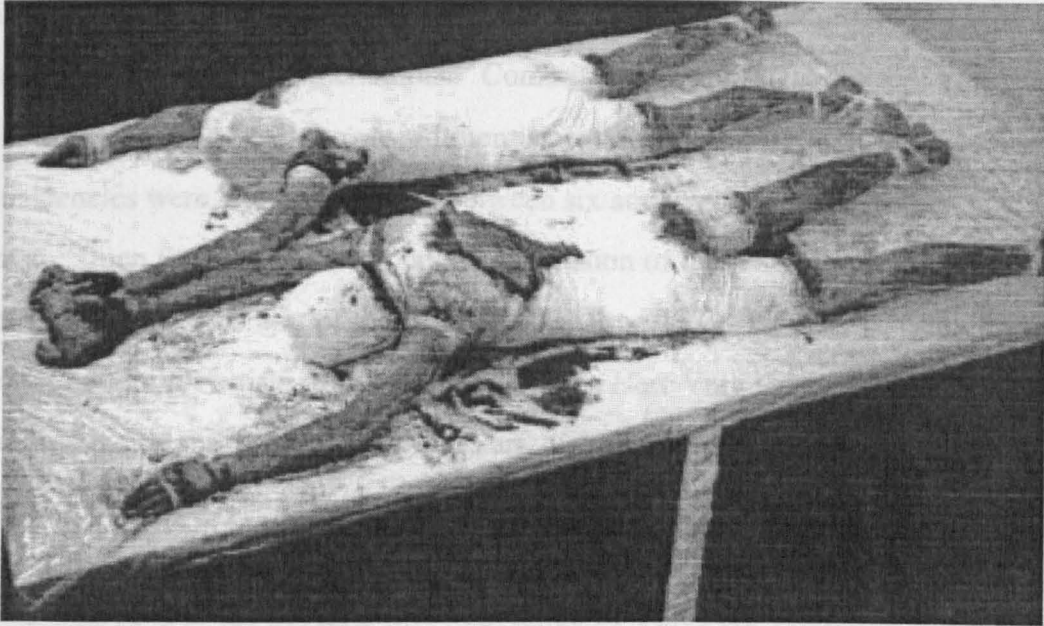
'Yeah he's almost like putting your hands inside the body of someone else and holding his heart, you know, to... caress the heart, that is what Ben is doing. He is going inside, you know... to help you... soothing the pain... And with Ben... the *blood*, you know, when he found out that Nitsch was using blood... I may not have told you this before... He stopped using blood. Because he saw that Nitsch was using the blood in a *completely* different way and *all* the Wiener Aktionisten... they said 'Oh! Ben d'Armagnac is like the Wiener Aktionisten!', and... then he met... Nitsch... in his castle, together with Wies Smals who went there [and her voice trails into a whisper] and was so amazed that he stopped working *immediately* like that... you know. Its, he never [again] used the same materials, not even the organs...' (ibid: 57)

While he excommunicated the organs themselves from his work in order to perish the connection with Nitsch's work,<sup>176</sup> Thompson told Wijers that the responsibility that Ben had used them to perform seemed to remain present.

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<sup>175</sup> It is in this specific sense of the practice of compassion, *metta* (Keown, 1995: 96), that Wijers uses the term to describe d'Armagnac's work.

<sup>176</sup> Nitsch had been performing his *Orgien Mysterien, Theatre* in Vienna since the early 1960s. For a thorough discussion of Nitsch's and the Viennese Actionists' work, see Ursprung, 1999; McEvelley, 1983: 65; see also the extensive writings of Nitsch, Brus, Muehl and Schwarzkogler, many of which are collected along with a range of documentation of their performances in Green, ed., 1999.



Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker, untitled performance, 1975

She replied:

'Yeah! That is what it is. It's *responsibility*, it is... if I take care of *you*, others will take care of *me*. It doesn't matter how it comes but... its: the first thing is you, the *other*, you know? Yeah, this is very bloody, heh? This is... of course two people holding... taking care of the... heart, yes. Yeah they are holding that heart together. Looks great, heh? It was done in Aachen, Germany, and... they could hardly get out of the museum, people were so angry at them. They almost jumped on them. Yes, people reacted *very* violently.'

Thompson asked whether the reaction was merely to the spectacle of the blood. 'I think so,' she said, 'because whatever, what they are doing is nothing more than this,' pointing to the photograph, an image of the most remarkable silence and stillness (ibid: 58).<sup>177</sup>

### ***The year the Sex Pistols broke up***

In 1978, d'Armagnac went to New York as part of a studio art and exhibition program for 'invited artists from other countries' sponsored and subsidized by the International Committee of an organization known as the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc.<sup>178</sup>

Under the auspices of the International Program at P.S.1, a sub-committee made up of

<sup>177</sup> In November 1979, Marina Abramovic said: 'The first time I saw Ben was in his performance in Paris, 1975. I looked and I said: it is not possible, it is just too open. That was an incredible reaction to me. It was like you show completely your inside to the outside. Later I met him and all his work was just too open. He had not any defence and that hurts. He was so vulnerable.' (Abramovic, in Wijers, 1995: 14)

individuals from a sponsoring city or country was to propose one or more artists for consideration by the International Committee, comprised of New York critics, art historians and artists, who would then issue a formal invitation to selected artists. The residencies were granted for visits between six and twelve months, and were to culminate in an 'Open Studio Exhibition' at the conclusion of the working period. Said the official press release: 'The aim of the International Program at P.S.1 is to provide a working environment for artists from other countries in New York City, in a community of artists and art-world professionals (critics, art historians, museum directors, etc.)'. Whereas today, years on from P.S.1's grand 1997 re-opening, the P.S.1 studio residency program makes a point of hosting artists from every corner of the earth, when d'Armagnac participated in it, the program was very much an American-European exchange program. As of 1978, the only international sponsors had been the Netherlands and the two German cities of Berlin and Düsseldorf. That year, in addition to d'Armagnac, there were three other participants, all of them from Düsseldorf: Monika Baumgartl, Volker Anding and Thomas Struth<sup>179</sup>. But d'Armagnac was the only artist of the four billed by P.S.1 as a 'performance artist'. All of the Düsseldorfers had open studio exhibitions. Baumgartl had hers on April 16, and Anding and Struth held theirs on the same days: May 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27, and 28. D'Armagnac was scheduled to perform in P.S.1's auditorium on May 14; he was the first person that Holland sent abroad as part of this program.

'So he was *so* excited. [...] Ben... told me how enormously he wanted... to go to New York... I had never thought of him that way, I always thought that that he was more of a recluse, you know. But... by that time he was... he really wanted to see the *real art world!* and see what was happening in New York. And then he *did* get that [chance]'.

This chance came to d'Armagnac largely through the support of de Appel proprietor Wies Smals (*ibid*). But, says Wijers laughingly, 'he was so disappointed about P.S.1, how it looked, and *where*... it was so far away from Manhattan [that] he never went there. He *hated* the place.<sup>180</sup> [...] He said he couldn't go there. It was terrible, he didn't know what

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<sup>178</sup> From a spring, 1978 Press release from P.S.1 Education Department. Subsequent references to the P.S.1 International Program come from this lone press release, which comes from somewhere in the yet-unorganized P.S.1 archive. Thanks to Natsuyo Fujiu for locating this information.

<sup>179</sup> At the time of their residency both of them were students at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, where Joseph Beuys was in 1978 its most distinguished and still controversial professor.

<sup>180</sup> According to Wijers, d'Armagnac had also had differences with certain of P.S.1's staff that added to his reluctance to spend his time on-site.

to say to the Dutch people, he said [C: Yeah]... he said, he got choked immediately as soon as he saw [the staff member in question], or entered his space, he found it, a *disgust*, you know, to offer such terrible spaces to artists.’ (ibid) So d’Armagnac wrote a letter to P.S.1 telling them that he could not do a performance there. He wrote another letter here to the funding body, in which he pleaded: ‘could he please make a performance, please make a performance any-, somewhere *else* in the city, because this was a place that he couldn’t *stand*.’ Wijers laughed and explained that ‘everyone was *very* upset, of course, you know, that this *Dutch... guy...* finally they had given him lots of money to live in New York, and then he said it was awful, where they had sent him to... and he was *so* disappointed about the galleries in New York [...] he was completely disappointed. Because it *looked* like everything there was *better*, but in fact it was better here, especially de Appel was the best place in the world [for performance] at that time<sup>181</sup>. But nobody... *understood* until they had *seen* the difference, of course. So Ben did make a performance of which we don’t have any photographs, a first performance, and... I *had* a photograph [of it] but people I think threw it out, because they thought [...] it had no value... But...it was the most valuable thing we *had*’ (ibid)

P.S.1 does not have records of this performance. Grounds for speculation about it, however, are provided by the text of Wijers’ interview with d’Armagnac on May 2, 1978, when d’Armagnac told her what he intended to do at P.S.1. How closely what transpired resembled his own verbal preview is uncertain. So too is whether it transpired on the date that the press release had specified, which was also issued in advance of May 14, and even perhaps in advance of d’Armagnac’s decision not to spend his time at P.S.1.

In their interview, d’Armagnac had explained a kind of ‘divinity’ that he had in mind as he worked. To elucidate this, he asked Wijers whether she would

‘mind if I explained to you what kind of a video-tape I am going to make for P.S.1. If you see it then you know what I have been doing, don’t you. Well, I can easily talk about that video-tape. The Brooklyn Museum [see below] that is really something... that is more complicated, bigger, for me. Also because I do not yet know exactly what I think in that tape I am really..... And I only realized that much later, because that video-tape I had written down quite quickly... and then I thought: *hay* [sic], that has indeed to do with where I want to go to. I’ll say more about it later,

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<sup>181</sup> For an intriguingly inverted version of this itinerary, one in which he left New York for Amsterdam to meet Wies Smals and had a similarly disconcerting experience, see Hansen, 2001.

about that divinity..... But when I am thinking about that video-tape I am thinking it will be a tape on which I am very much involved with my body. I am going to show parts of my body on that video-tape. But first I am going to sit somewhere on a very beautiful spot. And that spot I still have to find of course here in New York. I take then a tape-recorder with me and I am going to look very well at all the different parts of my body, which I will show later on that video. And then I name them all. After that I'll go to PS 1 and there you will hear that tape where I name the parts of my body.... So you hear that from a very different space then [sic] the PS 1, you hear those words coming from the very beautiful spot, and in the PS 1 I will answer. So you hear for instance 'feet', that is 'voeten' (Dutch) isn't [sic] it. And then I answer 'feet' there and I show part of my foot. And in such a way I will go around my whole body. And perhaps I will of my foot or my hand only show one nail... I probably do not even want you to see my whole hand. I have a feeling that I will keep the camera very close to my body? Showing small parts. But it strikes me that I do have the urge to go to that other spot first, because there I will answer the divine. I am then somewhere in a kind of divine atmosphere; something very beautiful and I will be answering the divinity in myself in fact later in PS 1, in that studio. So it strikes me that I am occupied by such things. I thought myself that this must be the beginning of something. You know, that I may want to work on this in the future.' (Wijers, 1978: 2-3)

The first performance he did in New York was at the 112 Greene Street gallery in SoHo. There is no available documentation of this performance, which Wijers remembers having happened sometime in April, 1978 (Wijers, 2000: 99). She does not know the title, but says it was 'a beautiful performance... it was *very* simple, but... with *sound* and *light*.' (Wijers, 2000: 99) In their interview, d'Armagnac, he spoke of it, if only obliquely, as 'a performance on my own with water, in my room [...] with nobody there [...] a very private performance [that is] in fact between a performance and an installation' (Wijers, 1978: 1).

However subtle it would appear to his spectators, the privacy of his experience in the 112 Greene Street gallery provided him with a connective tissue with his early 'between performance and installation' works, like *Witte Ruimte*, performed at the Stedelijk Museum in 1972. The 112 Greene Street piece also reconnected him with the use of water, which would re-emerge in his Brooklyn Museum performance, which was to be his last. Wijers listened as Thompson read the catalogue description of the piece aloud: 'On a pavement in a garden of the museum lies a plateau of white tiles. Ben d'Armagnac is lying on it while wearing a black costume. A jet of water is pointed at his heart. Out of the loudspeaker comes the sound of someone breathing. Ben d'Armagnac moves slowly his

arms and legs. His chest heaves rapidly. After about an hour he lies there motionless for a moment then he gets up and walks off.’

‘Yeah,’ she said, after a pause. ‘Of course it was much more dramatic than [...] you will find in this... thing [referring to the catalogue].’ (Wijers, 2000: 99)

### *Full draft*

Between May 10 and 14, 1978, The Brooklyn Museum held a week-long event entitled “European Performance Series” (“EPS”). An initiative conceived by Sharon Avery of the Sharon Avery/Redbird Gallery in Brooklyn, by The Brooklyn Museum, and by Jan Brand of the Netherlands, the series invited nine ‘performance artists’ from Europe, most of them from the Netherlands, to stage their works for the American public. In addition to and in conjunction with the program at the Brooklyn Museum, the Sharon Avery/Redbird Gallery held what Avery dubbed a “Performance Retrospective”. This opened on the evening of April 29th and ran until May 26th, and consisted of “photography, video/sound tapes, objects, books and editions” from the prior performances of the artists participating in the “EPS”.<sup>182</sup> All of them — Ben d’Armagnac, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, Gerrit Dekker, Hans Eykelboom, Barbara Heinisch, Marten Hendriks, and Reindeer Werk (Thom Puckey and Dirk Larsen) — had also performed in the previous year’s Documenta 6 in Kassel, Germany. In a press release for the Brooklyn Museum, dated April 28, 1978, David Katzive, Assistant Director for Education and Program Development, explained that just as ‘Museum visitors come across sculpture, paintings, and period rooms, this week they will encounter artists as well’. He expressed his pleasure ‘to be able to provide a platform for these artists’ performances’ and believed ‘that they represent provocative points of view rarely encountered in this city. The direct and indirect presence of artists in a gallery compels [sic] a response from the spectator that adds another level of perception to ‘the experience of art’.’<sup>183</sup> A prior draft of this document explained that ‘Each artist has been asked to examine the interior space of the

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<sup>182</sup> Promotional material from Sharon Avery/Redbird Gallery, Brooklyn Museum of Art Archives, Records of the Education Department, European Performance Series (unprocessed records, box 18, programs); all subsequent references to material from the “EPS” series at the Brooklyn Museum come from the Records of the Education Department and are listed ‘as above’.

<sup>183</sup> Press Release, Brooklyn Museum, April 28, 1978; Brooklyn Museum of Art, as above.

Museum and to respond with a work appropriate to their own personal aesthetic and to the environments or objects which they have discovered in the building. The physical presence of each artist is a key aspect to the work which they create'. This procedural description was not included in the final press release. Nor was the entirety of Katzive's original statement, which was revised in order to appear in the official Museum press release (as above). The full draft had said: '[...] The direct and indirect presence of artists in the gallery compels [sic] a personal response from the spectator which is difficult to avoid, and while I'd like to think all of the works on display in the Museum are equally compelling, there is no doubt in my mind that these artists will be adding another level of perception to the 'experience of art'.'<sup>184</sup>

The temporary inclusion of European performance artists among the Brooklyn Museum's public displays was expected to shake things a bit. Given the lack of documented evidence it is difficult to know where on the spectrum between provocateurs and saboteurs these incoming aliens registered in the imaginations of the organizers and their institutions. One writer for a New York daily newspaper, in a short piece entitled "EXTREMIST ART", seductively warned that 'Six volatile groups of European artists are right now plotting a bizarre series of performances that are making the Brooklyn Museum extremely uptight. The avant-gardists, due here in a few days, are out to push audiences to the limits. [...] They mean to disturb.'<sup>185</sup>

A thorough discussion of the complex of events and agendas that came together under the auspices of the Brooklyn Museum's programming would be outside the scope of this thesis. The "EPS" was part of a more or less comprehensive strategy that aimed to undertake the vast task of addressing 'the contemporary artist in America'. The "EPS", despite the diverse expectations and experiences of its participants — and the likelihood of their objections to the political and ethical, not to say the aesthetic implications of such a strategy, has to be seen as an institutional attempt to invite a slice of the "European avant-garde" to cross the Atlantic for a taste-test that would set the Americanness of American (read New York) art into sharper relief.

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<sup>184</sup> Draft version of press release, Brooklyn Museum of Art, as above.

<sup>185</sup> From an undated review from an unspecified New York daily newspaper, Brooklyn Museum of Art, as above.

Ben d'Armagnac was the first of the "EPS"'s performers. Seventy-five people, by the official count, gathered in the Brooklyn Museum's outdoor Sculpture Garden at three o'clock on the afternoon of May 10 to watch and wait. This performance, untitled, was to be his last<sup>186</sup>.

In addition to writing Ben d'Armagnac's catalogue raisonné in 1995 (see Wijers: 1995), Wijers also contributed to a catalogue published to coincide with a 1981 exhibition of his work at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, a little less than three years after his death on September 28, 1978. For each of d'Armagnac's numerous performances throughout his life, the catalogue provides photographs and a short descriptive summary. The text provided for his performance at the Brooklyn Museum reads: 'On a pavement in a garden of the museum lies a plateau of white tiles. Ben d'Armagnac is lying on it while wearing a black costume. A jet of water is pointed at his heart. Out of the loudspeaker comes the sound of someone breathing. Ben d'Armagnac moves slowly his arms and legs. His chest heaves rapidly. After about an hour he lies there motionless for a moment then he gets up and walks off.' Wijers could not accept this lean prose. She elaborated:

'Of course it was much more dramatic than that... that you will find in this, eh.. thing. I said [to Ben] 'What are you going to do?'... I helped him to get, you know, different things ...the sand that... is here around this [surrounding the tiles he lay upon for the performance] and... and I helped him to find a place where he could buy this suit, and... this thing... because all these... suits and things he was al-, of course buying second hand, in second hand shops, and... he said, 'Louwrien, I'm going to do something that the doctor is very,' ...ah, 'doesn't agree with. But I'm going to do it anyway. Because I may end up dead,' he said. 'Its a very'... what do you call it?'

Thompson filled in the gap for her: 'Dangerous'.

She continued: '[still in Ben's words:] 'dangerous to do.' And he said, 'You'll see it.' But,' and here she began to whisper, 'in a certain way he, he didn't move anymore. The *whole* audience became *so* upset. Because the heart gets *so cold*... from the cold water that... first he was shivering... and then,' she sighed, 'nothing happened. Nothing happened. He was completely dead. And people were *really* worried. But then he realized that...' (2/2000)

Here Wijers' and Thompson's conversation gave way to a heavy silence as the tape ran for over a full minute.

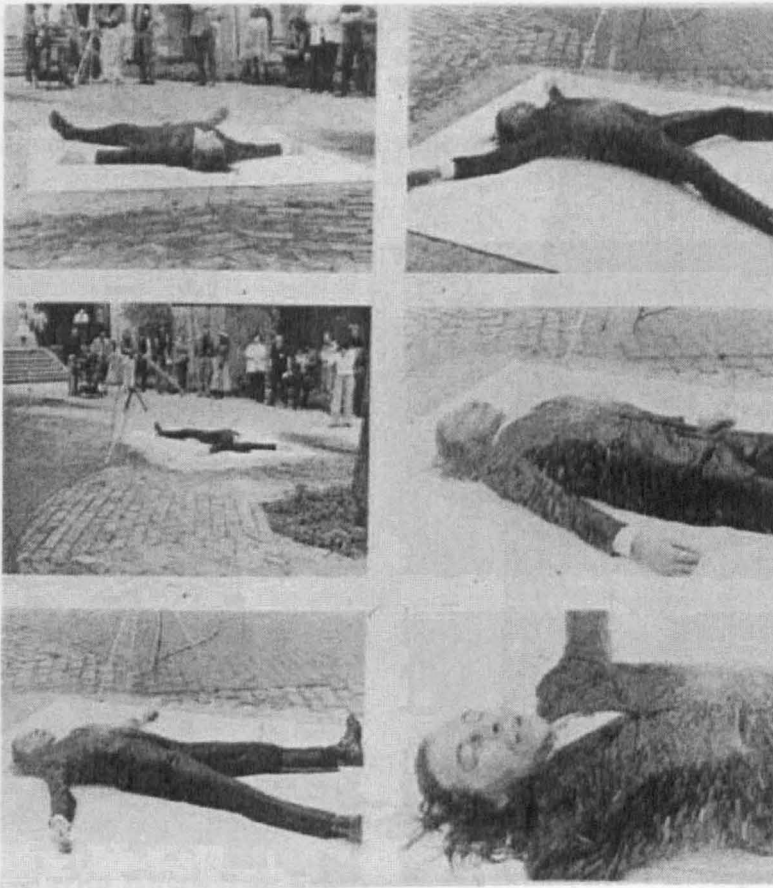
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<sup>186</sup> His May 14 piece for P.S.1 was not a performance but a film of a performance.



In a letter to co-organizer and liaison Jan Brand written a few days after the conclusion of the “EPS”, Katzive said: ‘Although I will try and contact each of the artists individually, I would be grateful if you would share with them the museum’s sense of overall satisfaction and excitement for what they were able to accomplish and perform during this past week.’<sup>187</sup> Each artist was paid \$150.00 for his or her participation.<sup>188</sup>

Wijers continued: ‘You know he... people were getting upset, so he... *jumped up*... and walked away. And people were throwing clothes on him, you know, they take off their own coat, and... to make him warm, and then... it was a very nice...thing, really...’ (Wijers, 2/2000: 100)<sup>189</sup>



**Ben d'Armagnac, untitled performance, Brooklyn Museum, 1978**  
(Wijers, 1995)

<sup>187</sup> Letter from David Katzive to Jan Brand, May 17, 1978; Brooklyn Museum, as above.

<sup>188</sup> Brooklyn Museum memorandum, Brooklyn Museum, as above.

<sup>189</sup> Discussing this performance, Antje von Graevenitz notes that, while theories of spectatorship abound, there are few that mention ‘the involvement of the viewer when the artist really dies within the rules of his work.’ Von Graevenitz, 1997: not paginated

Eight days before his performance at the Brooklyn Museum, he and Louwrien had discussed his plans for it over dinner at Magoo's restaurant in Manhattan. She gave the transcript of this talk the title "Ben d'Armagnac Talks to Louwrien Wijers"; in fact she refers to all of the interviews she has conducted – with Beuys, with the Dalai Lama, with Andy Warhol, and others – not as interviews but as 'talks', perhaps to emphasize that, while they may appear in print, they are nevertheless events. The two of them talked about the relationship between his experience of living for several months in New York and his understanding of the dynamics of his performances. Wijers posed the possibility that his performances embody his feeling of responsibility for his audience. He replies: 'That could be. With me those people are very near. And I do find that I am very responsible for that, for the fact that there are people. I even find I have to reckon with how the people are entering; where they can enter. In the first instance I go from myself of course, but then immediately the others are there.' (Wijers, 1978: 2)



**Louwrien Wijers, Hans Eykelboom, Jan Brand, Ben d'Armagnac in the Chelsea Hotel, 1978 (Wijers, 1995)**

In these days before his final performance he began to feel he was onto something new, which he would only begin to explore. Discussing the performance they had seen a few days earlier of the Dutch collective 'Reindeer Werk', who like himself had been invited to

participate in the “EPS,” Ben commented on his problem with the ‘emotionality’ of their work.

In their discussions with Wijers at the Chelsea Hotel on April 29, 1978, Reindeer Werk’s Thom Puckey and Dirk Larssen explained their current preoccupations with the exploration of emotional and psychological contradictions in anticipation of their May 13 performance at the Brooklyn Museum<sup>190</sup>. Thom told her:

‘I think that we are getting deeper and deeper into contradictions. I think now, that it is good for us to work within the context of art still, but in terms of being not art. And even though that might seem a sort of impossible thing to do. I think we find that we can in actual fact get things done, you know, through that. This as against saying okay, because we can’t now see our work as being art, than we should now cut ourselves out from the whole situation that the work has come up in.’

Dirk added: ‘That would be rejecting it, and it is not anti-art.’ Thom continued: ‘It is not anti-art, it is just work which has come up within the context of art, but now it feels as though it can’t be art, at the same time it is still within that context somehow, it might as well come out of that context through its own terms, you see.’ Wijers responded by highlighting the way that such an approach can permit a ‘break through into an open area.’

Thom responded:

‘Yes, I think that is so, but then you catch the shit, off all the orthodox art-world people. I am saying that we, I feel, are now catching that in the same way that people who come to what they come to through working in the field of psychology and who now come to the same standpoint as us, but that they say that their work now can’t be termed as psychology, in the same way as we say that our work can’t be termed art. Now you see [they] are cut off from the world of paid psychology.’

And Dirk added: ‘Which in a way is more strict than the world of paid art.’ Wijers here took an intriguing detour: ‘I do not know if I go too far, but can you place punk in the same situation?’

Dirk:

‘Well, you can see how, I think a lot of the bands were very good performers and the whole thing of the culture of people being there all at the same time was very good, but then a lot of them seem to have completely given up, in terms of developing that culture; they have become music,

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<sup>190</sup> No written description of this performance exists. Less than a year earlier, on June 6, 1977, Reindeer Werk had performed, along with d’Armagnac and Dekker, at the Cornexchange in Arnhem. Wijers was present and wrote a thorough description of the piece, in which she describes a frenetic series of improvised gestures intended to play upon the audiences’ emotional and psychological identification with and empathy for the performers. See Wijers, 1977: not paginated; Brooklyn Museum, as above.

whereas performing, I did not see as music. But a lot of them have become music. With some of them it is very good music. But that is not the same medium. It is like a reflection of it.'

Thom:

'I think it is not so good to compare art to music, as it is to compare art to psychology. I think that art has much more in common with psychology. I don't think that people can ever get past the fact that they have a heartbeat, and that they pick up on things which bounce back their heartbeats to them. But I think that the ties between art and that very deep aspect of a person is not so strong and therefore I wil[l] go so far as to say that I feel that people can now push art out and still be people, without having to concern themselves with art. Well I don't see how they can ever push out music. I must say that what punk rock has done is, that it has brought people back to their heartbeat.' (Wijers, 1978b: 2-3)<sup>191</sup>

Although he did not yet know the form it would take when he spoke to Wijers, this was precisely what, by stopping his own heartbeat, d'Armagnac had attempted to do in his final performance. In this same discussion with Wijers, he continued to describe his difficulties with Reindeer Werk: 'In fact I find it okay what those guys are doing. But perhaps I revolt for a moment against it because part of it, the emotionality [sic] I know very well, but I find one has to go past that. Then you arrive somewhere, where indeed for me things are much more pure... Where perhaps that emotion is used every now and then [but that] as soon as that emotion comes in one should already [sic] be at work on banishing it.' (ibid: 3) Wijers then asked: 'To keep the people clean?', to which d'Armagnac replied: 'Yes, yes. Exactly. Yes and I think that that is a very difficult path to take. I also think that this is for me perhaps going to be the essence for a new series of performances and that I will probably be working on that again for two years or maybe longer!'

The Brooklyn piece was to be the beginning and the end of this attempt not so much to resist the emotive, but to allow it to arise without clinging to it, and to move past it to something else. Wijers asked him about the extent to which this 'transition in style'

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<sup>191</sup> When at Jan Brand's request Wijers sent Katzive copies of her 1977 interviews with d'Armagnac, Dekker, and Reindeer Werk, she sent him a letter — written from the Hotel Chelsea on May 5, five days before d'Armagnac's performance — with a P.S. that hinted at the new direction she had taken in her mental sculpture, a kind of early example of experimental writing-with-art: 'You may be astonished by the way I do interviews and how I write about performances, because it does not have the normal style of someone writing about art. That is because I consider these writings literature at the same time. L.W.' Letter from Wijers to Katzive, May 4, 1978, courtesy of the Records of the Education Department, Brooklyn Museum of Art Archives (unprocessed records, box 18, programs)

had to do with his experience of living in New York (ibid). He explained to her that in fact he

'felt that already in my last five performances; that there was something somehow twisted, you know what I mean. As a matter of fact it is very dangerous, tricky, because you can at a certain point handle very well. Emotion you can, if you know the way it works within yourself, and you know the tracks within yourself that lead to emotions... then you can from one minute to the other switch the points and emotions just pour... I believe emotions are such a strong source, that you really never have to be afraid that they won't come. [...] And if you have a sort of training to keep that path towards your mind clear and you know how to utter it, than [sic] I feel, at a certain point it is too easy a way. I think I was myself confronted with that in my last four or five performances. I did find myself thinking: well, Bernard you are doing that very easily, perhaps a little too easily.' (ibid: 2-3)

As Wijers and Thompson flipped ahead in the catalogue a few pages, they came to a reproduction of a hand-written letter d'Armagnac sent to Wies Smals, who was then the director of De Appel, the small but vastly important Amsterdam project-space where performance took place before anyone thought to call it performance. She had been instrumental in arranging for d'Armagnac to go to New York. Wijers read the letter, which is in Dutch, and then explained the gist of it to Thompson. 'Its very simple letter, it just says that he... he couldn't write to her because he was too busy... fitting into the New York situation, and he felt that he had to change his work completely, and... that's why he was quiet for a few months... but now that he's done the Brooklyn performance, he could tell Wies that, really he started a new phase in his work, and New York has been very essential for him, for his...development, and... that as soon as he comes home he will tell her all about it.' (2/2000)

In a way his decision to go to New York was a deliberate attempt to push himself into something of a raw state, whereby he might provide himself with the means to work through the tendency to seek the condition of existential security. '...I knew that beforehand in Holland, that I would in New York be able to create a situation in which I would be putting myself absolutely threadbare; I would absolutely arrive at the impossible, concerning the work. And in fact I like that.' (Wijers, 1978: 3) In his essay "Mediators," Gilles Deleuze spoke about creation 'as the tracing of a path between impossibilities [...] A creator who isn't seized at the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator is someone who creates his own impossibilities, and thereby creates

possibilities.’ Without having a ‘set of impossibilities, you won’t have the line of flight, the exit that is creation, the power of falsity that is truth.’ (Deleuze, 1992: 292)

d’Armagnac’s work can be imagined as the push toward a state where he finds himself at the end of his tether, where familiar emotional, physical and intellectual tools would only pull him spiralling back into the ease to which he refers above. At this point where it is not just apparently but actually impossible to move further, he becomes able to engage in a committed and intuitive way with others; for him these are presences real and imagined who collaborate in the invention of a therapeutics beyond empathy, in which his ‘doing for himself’ is inseparable from his ‘doing for others’ and their ‘doing for him’. He said: ‘I hope I can be a stronger counterbalance for what I feel around me. And at that point I mean to say: I don’t think we can still save it with emotion. We are past saving it with that. Then I do hope that my ripening goes on so smoothly and so strongly that I indeed arrive at that point where I am myself but at the same time the exact counterbalance for what is happening around me.’ (Wijers, 1978: 6)

### *All fell dead*

Thompson asked Wijers if d’Armagnac’s Brooklyn performance had been his last. ‘It was the last performance, yes. It’s a pity that we didn’t take photographs of him here, in the... that corner there...’ She pointed towards the kitchen window of her home in Amsterdam. Outside, where two canals meet just opposite her front door, is hung a convex mirror. It was there that Ben had died. He had been living on a boat that was moored there, parked perfectly in between Wijers’ house on one side of the canal and the house of his wife Joanna and their two children on the other. On the night of September 28, 1978 he slipped on the sideboard, hit his head, fell unconscious into the water and drowned.



**Gerrit Dekker, *Untitled*, 1988 (Brand and Dekker, 1988)**

This image which Gerrit Dekker made for his 1988 “Gerrit Dekker / Sheets” exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Chandigarh, India consists of a loosely framed photograph of Dekker’s 1978 EPS performance, in which d’Armagnac led him by the hand, silent and blindfolded, ‘through the empty corridors of the Brooklyn Museum in New-York’ (de Vries, in Brand and Dekker, 1988: n.p.).

In her interview with Dekker on May 7, 1978, two days after d’Armagnac’s own EPS performance, Dekker told Wijers: ‘I would not dream of bringing about something in people.’

On September 1 and 2, 1978, almost four months after his Brooklyn performance and nearly four weeks before the death of his closest friend, Dekker did a forty-five minute sound performance at De Appel in Amsterdam. The flyer offers a fittingly bare description:

‘In a dark space the audience heard the pre-recorded sound of a fluorescent lamp.

Starting from silence, Dekker increased very gradually the volume to a maximum, after which he reversed the process to complete silence again. As the volume got stronger, all other sounds in and outside the space fell dead.’

In the dark, the sound of light, recorded from another time and place, is brought, at a creeping pace, from an unnoticed silence to an almost unbearable volume and back to a

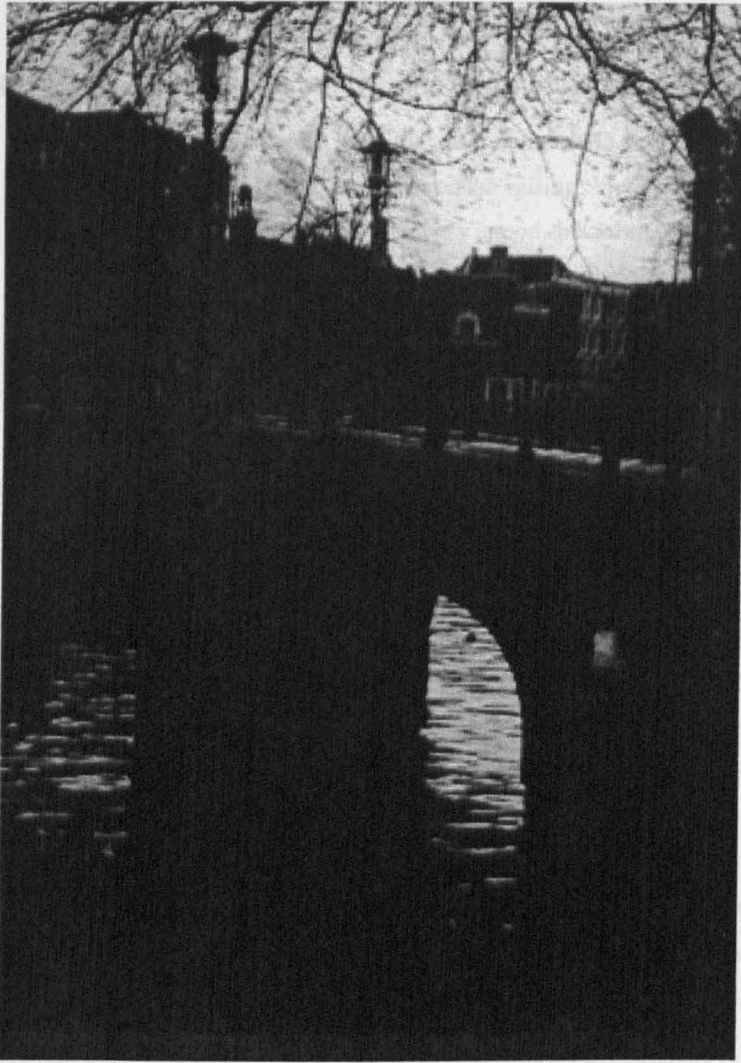
silence that is now entirely different than it had been at the outset; 'all other sounds in and outside the space fell dead.' ("Gerrit Dekker", 1978)<sup>192</sup> Though for forty-five minutes he stood in the same spot in the same room, Dekker did not bring the sound of this absent light full circle, but rather full spiral: even though he never left, he did not return to the point of departure, did not close the loop, but underlined the fact that such closure is impossible because 'each moment has to be lived again and again.' (Maharaj, 1995: 23)

The last time that Dekker performed in public was in the Gemeentemuseum in Arnhem, shortly after d'Armagnac's death. 'For an hour he stood still, facing the wall.' (Brand and Dekker, 1988: n.p. )

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<sup>192</sup> It is interesting to note the closeness of this piece with d'Armagnac's Bologna performance, part of which involved him regulating the level of light in the rim with a dimmer switch, slowly and gradually increasing it and thereby the clarity with which his performance could be seen by the audience; for a description, see Daolio, in *La Performance*, 1977, n.p.





Corner of Brouwersgracht and Herengracht, site of d'Armagnac's death (photo Chris Thompson, 2000)

Wijers had not been in Amsterdam when d'Armagnac died.

'But it, actually [it should have been photographed...] Oh, we should have done that, you know, he looked fantastic... I didn't see because I was in Arnhem talking to Beuys, you remember? [she laughs] I, its impossible, heh? So that, immediately I left... which meant... I also missed a little... part of Beuys... and I went to Amsterdam, and... by the time I came here it was afternoon, Thursday, and Ben was already in the hospital. In a fantastic room, it was all... tiles, he was so fond of tiles, you know... All around it was tiles, even the thing that he was lying on, the table kind of thing, was *tiles*. And he was there, on the tiles, and... his head was smashed... it was blue, because you could see that his head had fallen on the... boat, you know, it was completely blue... so, that was... the *beauty* of it... that this *face*... that he had worked with so often, you know... [she points to one of a series of blue pigmented prints he had made before he had died] Over *here*, I mean, was now... almost like... *giving the picture*, you know... it was blue and yellow, it had all colors, it was bruised all over.'

Here was another long but not uncomfortable pause, after which she continued:

'Also the fact that he was, that so many people saw it, you know, that when... [his wife] Johanna came they were all hanging over the railing, looking at this... figure in the water... going up and down...on the... waves... A very good performance... I think. And he wanted to, this one [pointing to the photograph of the Brooklyn performance] was already... *death* was his subject... It became his subject, because... what happened in New York, I told you maybe that... he was living in New York, I was living in the Chelsea [Hotel], he was living in the Chelsea, one day he comes out, one person has just jumped from... a thing that happened quite often, had... jumped from the... tenth floor, on the pavement, and fell in front of Ben. Ben was coming *out*, and the person *fell*. And... the... head was completely... smashed [...] on the... pavement... and it... was.. in front of Ben. So that is why I think death became something for him... to... work with. I think it made... such a big impression on him. And... to *me* it was the... same as happened during the war, during the war [Ben's family] had nothing to eat, and they were with the French Alliance, Alliance Française... Amongst themselves, they... spread all the children... they could go to the different families... so every evening they went to another family to *eat*, while the mother was taking care of her sick husband, and had nothing to eat for him. [After dinner, Ben and his older sister] went *out*, into the street, and... there was a curfew, you had to be home in time, and... so it was always a very hectic thing, how could his elder sister get the young boy home before eight o'clock after food, because sometimes they had to walk, you know...*long*... stretches, there was no tram, of course, there was no rail, it's 1944. On the way home one night, they find the Germans, and they're just playing games with their... what is it called... pistols...or... *rifles*. And they were shooting... doves. Pigeons. And one pigeon fell in front of... Ben, *dead*. And actually this happened again then in... New York... but in a... different way. So that I think was why he was so obsessed with death. But maybe he was already dead himself, I mean... preparing for his own death. So, all of these things came together... so his... life story is just... magnificent in every aspect. It *fits*, you know.' (ibid: 101-2)

Chapter Four

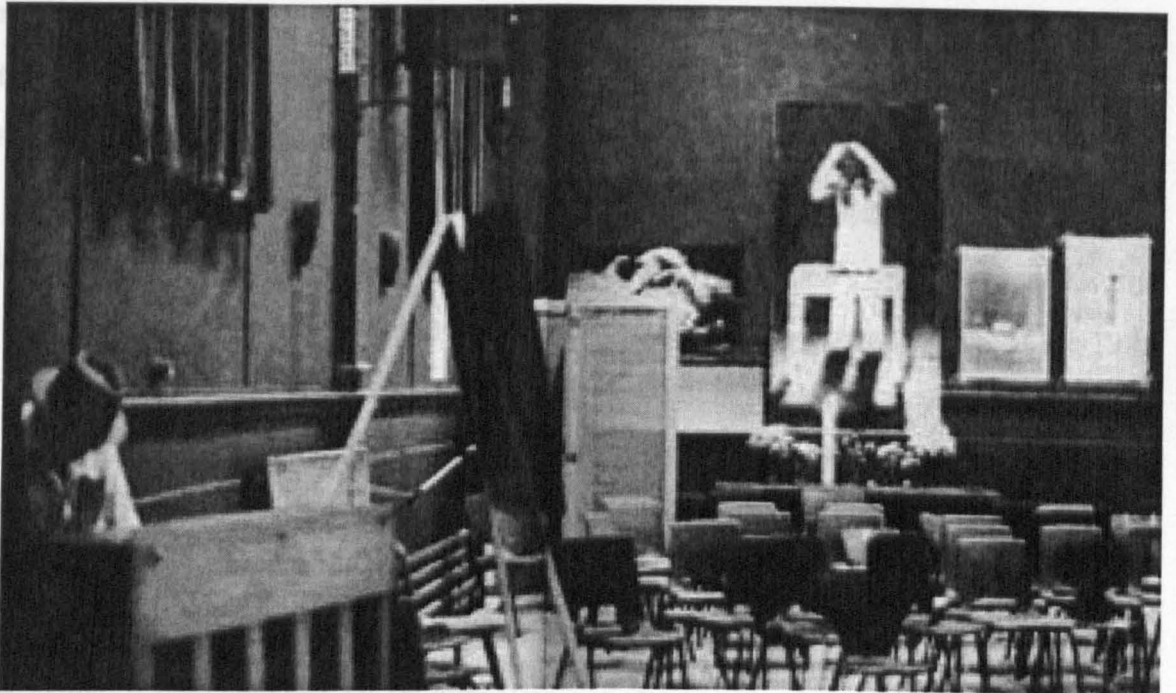
## Daisy Chain

‘...a lamp burning with the oil of an olive tree which is *neither of the East nor of the West*, bursting into flame even though fire touch it not... And it is light upon light..’

(Qoran 24:35, in Corbin, 1994: 1)

‘What is really at stake is one’s image of oneself.’

— Jean-Luc Godard, in Abish’s *How German is it?* (Abish, 1980)



Joseph Beuys playing ‘In memoriam Ben d’Armagnac’, Theater aan de Rijn, Arnhem, September 30, 1978 (Wijers, 1996: 18)

Soon the Theater aan de Rijn in Amsterdam would be full of people who had come to attend the upcoming session of the ‘Behavior Workshop’, which had begun on Wednesday, September 28 and would run through October 3, 1978<sup>193</sup>.

<sup>193</sup> This had included performances by Beuys, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, and a series of workshops and discussions.

Now, it was just before noon on Friday, September 30, and the room was empty except for Beuys, Wijers, and the ghost of Ben d'Armagnac who had died not two days before. Wijers had left the workshop on Thursday, to see his body a final time. She returned to Arnhem that Friday morning with images from Ben's performances. On a table beneath the large poster of his 1976 performance at the Stedelijk Museum, she and Beuys lit a tall candle and surrounded it with daisies; rows of empty seats sat anticipating the arrival of the workshop's participants.

Taking advantage of the few moments of silence, Beuys played a memorial piano piece for Ben d'Armagnac.<sup>194</sup>

Soon after, people began to rearrange the chairs into a circle and set up microphones for the group discussion. Wijers suggested to Beuys that they take a moment and record a short interview. He accepted, and they relocated to 'a quiet corner at the back of the hall.' Once she had her tape recorder ready, he began: 'Perhaps the best thing is that you put some questions.' (Wijers, 1996: 13)

Though not the first instance of her practice of mental sculpture, this is the first interview included in Wijers' *Writing as Sculpture, 1978-1987*, which chronicles the interviews and encounters that led to the conception and the actualization of the 1982 Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting in Bonn, Germany on October 27, 1982.

Because of the comprehensiveness with Wijers' book presents this genealogy, this chapter will not delve into the details about the sequence and content of all of these meetings and encounters. However, a brief overview of the path from its inception to its actual occurrence (with which this chapter will deal specifically) is useful here. After this interview, Wijers held two others with Beuys in close succession, both in Düsseldorf, on November 22, 1979 (Wijers, 1996: 28-59) and June 3, 1980 (ibid: 60-75). At this second interview, she and Beuys spoke at length about his notion of 'Social Sculpture', and Beuys 'suggested that his investigations should be presented to his friend Andy Warhol too, who in his famous studio The Factory in New York was with his many co-workers realizing the enlarged concept of art in a different way, but with the same motivation.'

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<sup>194</sup> It is tempting to guess that that he played Satie, who was one of his favorite composers. (Stachelhaus, 1991: 16; Paik, 1993: 64; in his 1976 review for *Studio International*, Hein Reedijk compared d'Armagnac's Stedelijk performance to Satie's *Vexations* (Reedijk, in Wijers, 1995: 144).

(Wijers, 1990: 16) Though the popular perception of Warhol is as an uncritical, however playful, capitalist, both Wijers and Beuys thought of him as a deeply committed humanist. This debate is beyond the scope of this project; here it is sufficient to note that both Wijers and Beuys considered Warhol and his work to be of a piece with their own<sup>195</sup>.

Following this, Wijers met with Warhol in Geneva five days later, on June 8, 1980 (Wijers, 1996: 76-91); as he could not go to meet Warhol as he had hoped, Beuys sent Wijers in his stead. Warhol — whose *Interview Magazine* had recently published the first interview with the Dalai Lama in September 1978, which effectively marks the beginning of the Dalai Lama's presence as a figure in Western popular culture — suggested to Wijers that she put the same questions to the Dalai Lama as she had put both to himself and to Beuys. She returned to speak again with Beuys in Düsseldorf on June 24, 1980, when she asked him the same questions she had asked Warhol. These are not enumerated; there seem to have been the following: 'Do you think that there is a possibility for a one-world government in the near future, or in the future?'; another that asked about the possibility of a unified Europe; and what Wijers says is 'the last question I asked Andy Warhol, because he is working with people so much: 'Who are the most important people in the world right now?'' (ibid: 92-95).

Wijers then went to Dharamsala, India, for an audience with the Dalai Lama, on April 15 and 18, 1981 (ibid: 96-117). A little over two months later, the Dalai Lama made his second visit to London, where he gave his 'Good Heart' talk referred to in Chapter One above (ibid: 118-125).

'Directly after the interviews His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet had given me in Dharamsala, I enthusiastically informed Joseph Beuys how struck I was by the similarity in the viewpoint of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the ideas that he himself had been working towards in his 'Social Sculpture' for the last fifteen years. I was able to come to this conclusion because my questions in the first interview with His Holiness had for a large part been inspired by the subjects Joseph Beuys had put to discussion first through his 'Organisation for a Direct Democracy', and then through his 'Free International University', the ecological 'Green Movement' and the political party 'The Greens'. The immediate reply from Joseph Beuys to my remark was that 'he would very much want to set up a permanent co-operation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.'" (ibid: 135)

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<sup>195</sup> For a useful discussion of the relationship between Warhol and Beuys as read through Warhol's diamond dust portraits of Beuys, see Atkinson, 1994.

He charged Wijers with the task of making it happen. She arranged with the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for permission to hold the meeting. Then in order 'to prepare the ground thoroughly for a fruitful audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama' (ibid) she arranged for Beuys to meet Lama Sogyal Rinpoche in Paris on January 29, 1982 (ibid: 134-139). This had been suggested by Robert Filliou, with whom she had spoken at her home in Amsterdam on October 11, 1981 (ibid: 126-133). Thereafter, Wijers returned to Dharamsala on April 12, 1982 to speak with him about modern art and spirituality in general, and about Beuys' work in particular (ibid: 151-161). On April 28 of that year, Lama Sogyal Rinpoche visited Beuys' atelier at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie (ibid: 162-173).

*Writing as Sculpture* includes a report on the meeting between Beuys and the Dalai Lama, followed by a partial transcript of the discussions in the hotel café afterwards (ibid: 200-221). On November 15, 1982, Wijers interviewed Beuys again, and they deliberated the idea of whether and how Beuys and his energies could be of direct help to the Tibetans (ibid: 226-231). Following this, the book ceases to present a cohesive narrative; though it continues to proceed chronologically, it becomes a kind of collage of discussions and quotations that cohere around the still-developing possibilities of the Art-of-Peace-Biennale in 1985/6 and the Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy (AMSSE) conferences in 1990 and 1996. It should be noted that, though *Writing as Sculpture* was published in English in 1996, the original German edition had come out in 1987, close on the heels of the Biennale and before AMSSE had taken shape. These projects will be discussed in more detail below. To date, *Writing as Sculpture* is the only publication to discuss the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting or the events leading up to it in any detail<sup>196</sup>.

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<sup>196</sup> Interviews from *Writing as Sculpture* are reproduced in Karin Kuoni's edited collection of interviews and texts by Beuys entitled *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America*. The first, "Interview with Louwrien Wijers", is a reproduction of the Wijers-Beuys interview from November 22, 1979. The second, "Conversation Between Lama Sogyal Rinpoche and Joseph Beuys", is a reproduction of the January 29, 1982 (Kuoni, ed., 1990: 183-210; the book's index erroneously gives the page numbers as

### *Bonn Voyage*

It starts in a hotel room, although that is perhaps the *last* place it could be said to have begun. In Bonn, Germany, on October 27th, 1982, from nine until ten o'clock in the morning, in his suite at the Hotel Königshof, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet met with the German artist Joseph Beuys. Around nine o'clock, a large crowd of artists, activists, students, writers and other interested folks, some of them members of the European Buddhist community, some well-known and some not, had begun to gather in the hotel's waiting area in anticipation of the group meeting with the Dalai Lama that someone but no one knew who said was supposed to follow the meeting with Beuys.

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163-190). Though it does not mention the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting as such, Terry Atkinson's essay "Beuyspeak" does speak of the Beuys-Lama Sogyal-Wijers talks (Atkinson, 1995: 169).



Lobby, Hotel Königshof, Bonn, Germany, October 27, 1982 (Wijers, 1996:213)

Beuys had invited the Dalai Lama to attend that year's Documenta VII as his guest, but for a range of mundane reasons, despite his interest, the Dalai Lama had been unable to come to Germany until the autumn. But the prospect of the Dalai Lama's visit had sown the seeds of excitement, however uncertain, and possibility, however vague, in the minds of many people, Beuys included. He saw the meeting with the Dalai Lama as part of what



he called a 'spiritualized economy', something he had recently elaborated in his statement for Documenta VII, entitled "An Appeal for an Alternative":

'Let us examine our concepts according to which we have shaped the conditions in the East and West. Let us reflect whether these concepts have benefitted our social organism and its interactions with the natural order, whether they have led to the appearance of a healthy existence or whether they have made humanity sick, inflicted wounds on it, brought disaster over it, and are putting today its survival in jeopardy.' (Beuys, 1982: 370)

A few months earlier, during Documenta, in support of his *7000 Oaks* project to plant 7000 trees throughout Kassel, Beuys had held a kind of performance rally now known as *Tsarenkrown*, during which he melted down a replica of the crown of Tsar Nicholas and cast the molten gold in the shape of a hare and a sun.



Joseph Beuys with *Peace Hare* and *Sun Ball*, Documenta 7, Kassel, June 30, 1982 (Wijers, 1996: 8)

Wijers was in the audience that had gathered. With the golden peace hare in his hands and the sun globe in a pair goldsmiths' tongs held high, Beuys called out to her, over the

crowd: 'Now Louwrien, in co-operation with the Dalai Lama, we can realize Eurasia! My old concept Eurasia!' (Wijers, 1996: 202)

So, at nine o'clock, as people began to congregate in the lobby downstairs, Wijers and Beuys arrived at His Holiness' suite. They were greeted by the Dalai Lama's staff, guards and secretaries. For reasons that will perhaps forever remain shrouded in the vagaries of bureaucratic whim, she was denied entrance to the first half of this meeting which she had worked for almost two years to bring into being. Like any bureaucratic utterance it was at once arbitrary and irrefutable. Beuys shrugged, said 'Okay then, let's have it that way' and trotted into the suite without a protest and without Wijers, who stood for some time trying to talk the Dalai Lama's secretary into letting her in. Finally he agreed that she could come in, but only for the meeting's *second* half.

When she joined them, her entrance halfway through the talk enhanced what was already a slightly awkward, however amicable mood. She pulled out her tape recorder and prepared to set it on the table, but was told by His Holiness' deputy secretary Tempa Tsering that this would not be permitted.<sup>197</sup> She requested the permission to take photographs but again was told that the official photographs that had been taken would be made available at a later date (Wijers, 1/1998). Nineteen years later and after waves of inquiries by both Wijers and myself, neither photographs nor reliable information about who took them are anywhere to be found. Numerous requests for information or records kept by the Tibetan Government in Exile about this meeting have met with replies of varying verbosity that no such records exist. The response from Tsering Dorjee, His Holiness' secretary at the time of the Bonn meeting, was as follows: 'With regard to the *audience granted* to Joseph Beuys in Bonn on 27th October 1982, I do not recollect any particular subject discussed at length. Neither did we record any.'<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Again, these details come from interviews with Louwrien Wijers in Amsterdam, Holland in January, 1998, January, 1999 and February, 2000.

<sup>198</sup> From a letter sent to me from Tsering Dorjee, now an official at the Tibet Office in Switzerland, dated January 13, 1999; emphasis added. In response to my first inquiry, sent to the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in early October, 1997, Deputy Secretary Tenzin N. Takhla had replied: 'I am sorry to inform you that we do not have any information about this meeting or this person. You may want to try to contact our office in Geneva which would have been in charge of organizing His Holiness' visit to Bonn in 1982. They may have some information for you. Sorry for not being able to help.' (Letter from Tenzin N. Takhla, October 29, 1997). It was this that prompted me to write to Tsering Dorjee, who had himself been present at the 1982 meeting. I wrote a second letter to the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala nearly two years later, presenting all of the facts I had gathered regarding the dates,

In his *Awakening of the West*, Batchelor writes of the Dalai Lama's "unofficial" visit to East Germany on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall to meet with the new East German government; Batchelor's source, German Green party-co founder (as was Beuys) Petra Kelly, told him how

'the Dalai Lama and the aspiring government were deeply moved by the meeting. But she also remembers the nervousness of his staff, some of whom wanted to cut the meeting short and hasten back to the safety of the West. [...] Petra's respect for the Dalai Lama often clashes with her frustration with his political advisors, whom she considers reactionary and ill-informed. The [Dalai Lama's] autobiography's failure to mention the meeting with the Citizen's Action Movement might simply reflect a concern of the Dalai Lama's staff that His Holiness be associated with a failed political movement.' (Batchelor, 1994: 375-7)

Although it tells nothing of the content of their discussion, the fact that Dorjee's letter refers to the meeting not as a 'meeting' but as an 'audience' is worth noting. At the same time, however, it is misleading to suggest that his secretary's statement necessarily voices the Dalai Lama's own response to his encounter with Beuys. In fact, when on April 12, 1982 Wijers made her second visit to Dharamsala to meet with the Dalai Lama to discuss Beuys' work specifically in preparation for the meeting to come, His Holiness had enlisted the illustrious American professor of Indo-Tibetan studies Jeffrey Hopkins to help translate possibly obscure material. Near the end of the discussion, Wijers handed the Dalai Lama the catalogue of Beuys' major 1979 Guggenheim retrospective.

'There was nothing on the market at that time in English, except for the Caroline Tisdall book. That was lovely, that [this] existed. So this big, expensive book I thought I should bring for the Dalai Lama. And, so [laughs] after first having read *every* sentence, and word, memorized it more or less, the *whole* book... I thought whatever question he's going to ask me I *have* to be able to answer it. [laughs] Well, the Dalai Lama takes the big book on his... *lap*... looks at it... he doesn't go page by page, but he goes, you know, a few pages by a few pages and he says: 'Aha, this artist is working on the same thing as we are: *impermanence*.'" I was amazed, because I had never *thought* about his work, Beuys, as working on impermanence, *although* he had *so often* said the word, I had never thought to put it in that context, big context...' (Wijers, 2/2000: 1-2)

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those present, and so forth. The reply came again from Mr. Takhla: 'I am sorry to inform you that we do not have any information about the audience. Actually, His Holiness meets with literally hundreds of people during his visits and unfortunately, no records were kept of His meetings with people during any of the visits in the early '80s. We do hope you will understand our position.' (Letter from Tenzin N. Takhla, December 26, 2000) It is unlikely that, though all of my letters have been addressed to His Holiness himself, any of them will have actually made it into his hands. I remain hopeful that a most recent letter, sent in May 2001, in which I noted His Holiness' many discussions with Wijers, his participation in her AMSSE project, and other details, and made a request that my short letter be given to him for his own review, will receive an answer.

*Impermanence.* As a meeting between two such legendary figures, two famous men whose every word and gesture have been almost habitually recorded by their respective entourages; as what would seem to be yet another version of the proverbial meeting of 'East' and 'West' so longed for, for so long, by all kinds of Western cultural mythologies, the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting would seem to have offered great possibilities for intercultural understanding, collaboration, and social reform. One would expect that it would be the subject of numerous art historical articles, discussions and investigations. But in fact the meeting has gone largely unnoticed by academic as well as popular history; the only publication to cover it in any detail is Wijers' *Writing as Sculpture*.

In large part, these exclusions from the historical record stem from the same misconception, one that imagines history to be something made in meetings between famous men: they meet, talk, strategize... and lo and behold, history happens. But what happens when nothing happens? When what has been expected (the first steps towards the great mythical 'Eurasian' synthesis of the West's romantic imagination), what has been pushed into being through the force of dozens of heterogeneous agendas of various participants in an event, falls short of expectations and calls attention to the various microscopic obstacles to perfect intelligibility in encounters with cultural difference?

### *Eurasianausea*

Wijers can recall only bits and pieces of the second half of the meeting<sup>199</sup>. She recalls that they discussed two separate but interrelated topics. The first was the issue of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In the early 1980s the Tibetan Government in Exile, as well as the diasporic Tibetan community, was publicly committed to a fervent anti-Chinese position, and argued in no uncertain terms that the Chinese should be pressured to leave the country. Beuys told the Dalai Lama that he felt that this position was not a viable one; according to Wijers, he said 'the work of building a good society can be done equally well with the Chinese in Tibet.'

Secondly, Beuys suggested the possibility of staging a political *aktion* in Beijing; the Dalai Lama was in fact quite interested in the possibility, and asked whether Beuys

had any thoughts about how to go about it and, more pressingly, whether he had any friends in China. Beuys, by this time head over heels into the construction of his political persona, having staged the '100 Days for Democracy' at that summer's Documenta, got the '7000 Oaks' project (which the Dalai Lama was later to support publicly)<sup>200</sup> well underway, and made trips throughout Eastern and Western Europe in support of his Free International University for Interdisciplinary Research and for Direct Democracy, was undaunted by such geopolitical trifles. 'We will make friends in Beijing!' he said.

At this, says Wijers, the Dalai Lama's face sunk a bit. Shortly after, the meeting came to a pleasant and nebulous end. Beuys made a diplomatic faux pas when he tried to press a few thousand Deutschemarks into His Holiness' palm. It is customary to offer donations to Tibetan lamas to help further their dharma work, but these always go through subordinates. The Dalai Lama recoiled and exclaimed 'Please give it to them, I can't touch money! They will do something good with it!' Beuys, Wijers and His Holiness had a good laugh over it, but every Tibetan in the room was mortified, especially considering the first impression Beuys had made by failing to remove his trademark felt hat during the entire meeting.

Interestingly, though Beuys' Beijing *aktion* was doomed from the start, by 1987 the Tibetan Government in Exile officially altered its policy and its public rhetoric from its Tibet-for-Tibetans position to one that advocated a kind of Chinese protectorate and limited Tibetan autonomy<sup>201</sup>. Wijers says that she has always wondered whether Beuys had even a tiny influence upon this shift. As with all of the tangible results that were to be borne of that morning's meeting, this would come only well after the day had run its course. The hours that followed the conclusion of the meeting she describes as a cross between exhilarating and nauseating.

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<sup>199</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all details of this discussion and of the Bonn encounter come from Wijers, 1/1998: not paginated.

<sup>200</sup> The Tibetan Buddhist monastery Samye Ling in Scotland made an official purchase of seven oaks 'commemorating Joseph Beuys, his 7000 *Eichen* project, and his permanent cooperation with H.H. the Dalai Lama'; see Claus, 1998: 25-6.

<sup>201</sup> For a discussion of His Holiness' 'five-point plan' for a negotiated settlement with China, which was instrumental in his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, see Powers, 1995: 185; on China's colonial presence in Tibet, and the ongoing attempts to arrange a meeting between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, see "China's Tibet", 1998; on the changes in Tibetan cultural politics since the Chinese invasion of 1959, viewed with particular attention to the visual culture of the Tibetan community in exile, see Harris, 1999.

'It was the *worst* feeling that you could *ever have*, you know, it was terrible. It was like... it was...' (Wijers, 2/2000: 2) — but as Wijers recalled the reception of the evening of October 27, 1982, she found that it was not quite like anything. Perhaps, then as now, that might be all that could be said with certainty: that it *was*. It was like time's own backlog caught up with and overflowed itself. It was as if what had been fated to happen all along somehow lost track of itself... nothing happened, and kept happening, all throughout the day. It was as if the modernist "Eurasian" rhetoric was called up short by the actuality of the "Eurasian" encounter, an encounter that had to happen in real time, in the language and the temporality of the everyday, with real participants, in order to have a shot at yoking the *idea* of global human progress to "real" time and space, so that Eurasia as geography and Eurasia as epistemology could become seamless.

In one score entitled "Exercise", George Brecht directed potential participants to: 'Determine the centre of an object or event. Determine the centre more accurately. Repeat, until further inaccuracy is impossible.' (Brecht, in Doris, 1998: 124)

Amen or alas, further inaccuracy is always possible; the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting would be far more thinkable had it *not* happened.

Once the meeting was over, Wijers and Beuys left His Holiness' suite to find that the group in the lobby had grown to around sixty people<sup>202</sup>. A blend of excitement at the prospect of dialogue and exchange and uncertainty about how precisely it would take shape and proceed had drummed the crowd into a chaotic state. A tangle of agendas, aims and aspirations that under the circumstances could not be stitched together, the crowd was to find that the 'promised group-meeting [with the Dalai Lama that they had anticipated] was not organized' (Wijers, 1996: 204). After a few minutes the Dalai Lama descended from his suite, and as the gathering of artists and writers, activists and others watched, chatted and waited, he and his entourage left the hotel. Those assembled managed only to catch a glimpse of him as he made his way to his next engagement at the University of Bonn; if there might have been the chance of that 'group meeting' with His Holiness, it had just vanished into the Bonn sunshine. It would be eight years before the

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<sup>202</sup> For a partial list of those present, see Wijers, 1996: 204.

1990 AMSSE conference in Amsterdam would bring something similar, though on a much larger scale, into being.

It was Robert Filliou who, unknowingly, provided the impetus for AMSSE. He had been working on something he called 'Artists-in-Space/Art-of-Peace', a project aiming to create discursive/performative environments in which 'artists', always a loosely-defined title for Filliou, could explore the question of how to re-imagine peace as something dynamic and inventive, not simply the absence of or pause between wars. Interestingly this idea was a remarkably holistic one which included a dimension that, as suggested by his earlier 'Research at the Stedelijk' project, would be focused upon the role of food and nutrition in these considerations. That day, sitting around the café table, he proposed an idea to Beuys:

'On the same basis as Kassel, why couldn't there be a show, like a biennale or a triennale or a quartenale, of work by artists that deals with the specific problem of making the world a world with peace and harmony. Suppose there was such a thing, you see.. It might be very, very interesting as a kind of focus once in a while of plans and projects which are at times not known. Maybe we could give some thought to this and perhaps organize such a thing or propose the creation of it. And in my mind it could become almost the equivalent of the 'Peace Prize for Artists'. The artist who came up with the best readily realizable project might be honored.'

(Filliou, in Wijers, 1996: 205)

Beuys nodded in approval, and said 'Sure', but his mind had been evacuated by the formlessness of the meeting with the Dalai Lama that had just adjourned. Filliou continued: 'Perhaps little by little it could become like a meeting place, where every four years for instance people would meet. You can imagine what a different catalogue it would make than the one of a Kassel Documenta.' (ibid) This would be the idea, months later, that would enable this meeting to be something other than the mockingly spastic end of the romantic dream of Eurasian metasynthesis. Indeed the Art-of-Peace Biennale was, once it would be permitted to come to fruition in terms other than those upon which Beuys insisted, to be a successful and fertile project, one that paved the way for and articulated many of the themes with which the 1990 and 1996 AMSSE conferences would engage. But for the rest of that day in Bonn, attentions remained focused on Beuys and his attentions remained focused on what had been missed, but what he could perhaps still accomplish if he played his cards properly.

Wijers brought out the tape recorder that had been barred from the semi-hermetic meeting upstairs, and placed it on the corner of the table around which were sitting Beuys and Wijers, German artist Ute Klopheus, Filipino artist Jacinto Molina, Robert and Marianne Filliou, and others. Wijers described what followed as 'enthusiastic conversations' (Wijers, 1996: 204). After the talks in the hotel café, which went on for some time, the group moved to another space in the Hotel Königshof in order to meet Carolyn Tawangyowma, the oldest living Hopi Indian, and her associate Joan Price (ibid: 207). At Wijers' invitation, the two had come from the Bookfair in Frankfurt, Germany, where some days before Tawangyowma had met with the Dalai Lama, and were eager to meet with everyone there in Bonn (ibid). The second phase of discussions consists of the exchange between Tawangyowma, Price, Beuys and Robert Filliou.

Wijers had 'invited the oldest Hopi Indian lady, Carolyn Tawangyowma to refer to Coyote 1974 [Beuys' infamous action in the René Block Gallery in Manhattan, "I Like America and America Likes Me," during which he spent a week living in the gallery with a wild coyote] and the US'.<sup>203</sup> It is interesting to note that in their discussion, Beuys fired a question at Tawangyowma that both performed and demanded the concreteness that he had himself been unable to provide to His Holiness: 'As a practical question from me, how can we help? How can we support your aims?' (Wijers, 1996: 208)

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<sup>203</sup> From Wijers' unpublished lecture notes for her talk on April 7, 1995 at the "Considering Joseph Beuys" symposium at the New School for Social Research, New York.





**Tempa Tsering presenting Beuys with the Buddha statue, with Jacinto Molina looking on (Wijers, 1996: 214)**

Running parallel but largely unindexed in relation to the spoken words that lived to make it to transcription is a series of photographs taken by Cathrien van Ommen that document the events that took place following the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting. The first in the series shows old friends Beuys, Robert and Marianne Filliou talking together. Beuys can be seen holding the white silk scarf, or '*kata*', which would customarily be blessed by the Dalai Lama and put round the neck of those with whom he meets (see photograph, Wijers, 1996: 212). Oftentimes laypersons as well as *sangha* members will purchase their own *kata* in advance, and the blessing itself will be the gift they receive, and the *kata* will be hung or displayed somewhere in an office or semi-public domestic space. Whether or not Beuys paid for his *kata* as well as the sculpture he was to receive later that day is unknown; the Dalai Lama does on occasion give these as gifts.



Statue of the Buddha 'given' to Beuys (Wijers, 1996: 215)

### ***Back to the future: Bonn, 1982***

During the first part of the discussions following Beuys' meeting with the Dalai Lama, Jacinto Molina had asked Beuys specifically about his work on the notion of 'Eurasia': 'in your work, you have mentioned a lot about the Eurasian aspect, or concept; the unity of Eurasia. Do you have any programme, or plans, on how to unite these two areas, how to make the East and the West blend together? Which you said is the most important thing in your work.' (Wijers, 1996: 204) Beuys began by agreeing and rehearsing his thesis on the idea of the implementation of 'a spiritualized economy', which he had been discussing for some time in varying degrees of depth, and continued his reply:

'The Eastern world has to take the spiritual capacity of all the Eastern traditions, concentrate them and metamorphosize their ideas into the most practical and useful means to serve the people of the world, to solve problems. I think, only the integration of the idea of economy with the spiritual idea can solve problems. The economy is now highly developed in the West, the spiritual idea is highly developed in the East, now they have to integrate.' (Wijers, 1996: 204)

But here, perhaps keenly aware of the parallels between Beuys' catch-all Eurasia and earlier twentieth century Nazi dreams of a Eurasian synthesis<sup>204</sup>, Molina pushed him:

'In what way do we try to blend these two concepts or goals together? Do you have any models? Do we do it through economics, through mass-communication... in what manner are we going to escalate this Eastern philosophy, or spirituality, to blend it with the materialism and advanced technology of the West? Is there any structure you are proposing so that these two can come together and blend into a system?' (ibid)

This kind of pressure for specifics plans about how these grand ideas might be undertaken, which was of course, crucially, also the point put to him by the Dalai Lama, evoked a strange response from Beuys. This began with a tactful escape from the directness of Molina's examination, followed by a reconfiguration of the formula that had, up to today, rarely been called into such question. 'For that, we have a lot of proposals to make, we have to make proposals, we are not dictators — we have only to speak and report about our research and show the people what our proposal is — so, we are asking the people if our proposal might be a solution for the problem and whether it serves their means. So, we are not saying this is a solution. We are asking if our findings can serve the needs.' Filliou came to the rescue: 'I think, Joseph, what I find hopeful and optimistic is that no society until now has solved this problem.'

Beuys, relieved: 'No, that's right.'

Filliou continues excitedly:

'So it's a fantastic challenge. It's a fantastic opportunity. We are bound to succeed because we cannot fail, if you see what I mean. There's no room for failure. No society has ever made it and because of this — listening to Jacinto, at the same time — I think that the artistic model, which is a sort of way without imposing oneself, to go up even when you appear to go down. The artistic model is something that can give a solution.'

Of course: 'That's what I think and that is what I told His Holiness the Dalai Lama too this morning. That is the idea of the spirit. It cannot be dealt with by way of politics, it cannot be dealt with by way of religion, it can only be dealt with by art. Art is the solution of the problem. But then also the traditional art has to change radically.' Filliou laughs in agreement. They are old friends, and their intimacy allows Beuys to trade a

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<sup>204</sup> Thanks to Geoff Hendricks for pointing out the importance of this connection; for a short discussion of the Nazi infatuation with putative Aryan roots hidden and preserved in Tibet, see McKay, 2001.

stock reply: 'There is a traditional so-called modernism, but that cannot solve the problem. Modernism cannot solve the problem.'

These words "Modernism cannot solve the problem" might well have been printed on T-shirts worn by everyone present in the hotel café.

After the discussion mentioned above had gone on for some time, Tempa Tsering, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's deputy secretary, entered the room with two representatives of the Tibetan community in Germany, T.T. Thingo and N.G. Rongé. Tempa Tsering carried with him 'a statue of the Buddha almost completely covered in a white silk shawl', which had 'been especially blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama'. He presented this to Beuys and shook his hand 'warmly'. Beuys placed 'the heavy antique Tibetan sculpture in front of him on the table around which a large group of people [was] seated.' (Wijers, 1996: 210) Just after this consecration of their discussions, Wijers' cassette tape ground to its end, with the result that the third phase, the remainder of the afternoon, went unrecorded.

What is not explained in the book is that Beuys was in fact strongly advised by one of the Tibetan representatives of the Dalai Lama to purchase this expensive sculpture some time in advance of their meeting, something which was a bit of a disappointment to Beuys and which was done apparently without the knowledge of the Dalai Lama (1/1999; 2/2000: 2) Upon being presented the statue, Beuys was also invited to attend a reception for the Dalai Lama between five and six o'clock that evening.

In Sartre's *Nausea*, at three o'clock one afternoon on a bleak January day, the narrator Antoine Roquentin laments that 'Three o'clock is always too late or too early for anything you want to do. An odd moment in the afternoon. Today', he laments, 'it is intolerable.' (Sartre, 1964: 14)

It must have been nearly three o'clock when Beuys was given the statue. Someone, but not he, requested permission for the entire group of artists and friends that had gathered to come to the reception as well. So with the prospect of a collective meeting with the Dalai Lama still dangling, the afternoon continued on, and the oddness of the three o'clock moment became protracted as it crept up to four and then five o'clock. Even then it still seemed sufficiently early to salvage Eurasia.

The request for the whole group to come to the evening reception was at 'first gladly accepted, but later on almost all [were] denied entry' and went home (Wijers, 1996: 210). Even those who were permitted to enter, including of course Beuys and Wijers, were kept at some distance from the Dalai Lama by his attendants; according to Wijers, 'Beuys was not allowed to be in the neighborhood of the Dalai Lama'. (2/2000: 2) The photographs (Wijers, 1996: 218-21) give a sense of his and Wijers' life on the outskirts of the human barrier built shoulder-to-shoulder round the Dalai Lama. In one of these (ibid: 219), Beuys can be seen standing next to her, peering over Tibetan heads toward His Holiness.



**Joseph Beuys and Louwrien Wijers looking over the crowd towards the Dalai Lama, Hotel Königshof (Wijers, 1996:219)**

A striking two-page photograph (ibid: 220-21) — whose blurred focus, improvised composition, rough texture and heavily enigmatic atmosphere make it a good metonym for entire day — provides a virtual visual summary of the morning meeting. The absence of a 'Joseph Beuys' signature that would authorize this print as part of an authentic collectible edition is almost as surprising as the nearly seamless way in which the fullness of the event has been translated into two dimensions. His back to the viewer, Beuys' famous felt hat dominates half of the photograph. As a perfectly suited imagic response,

the Dalai Lama's beaming, smiling face, almost dissolving into the grain of the print, meets Beuys' own but at a critical distance.



Joseph Beuys and the Dalai Lama, Hotel Königshof (Wijers, 1996:220-221)

'[T]he actual day in Bonn, I was happy that I had put the tape on the table [in the cafe and later in the restaurant], because this way something of the day came out, but actually when the day was over we had nothing in our hands... *we just had a vague smile to Beuys at the end*'. (2/2000: 2)

Six o'clock — the reception was over, and it was now officially too late. Early in his diary, Sartre's protagonist writes: 'This is what I must avoid, I must not put in strangeness where there is none. I think that is the big danger in keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything. You continually force the truth because you're always looking for something.' (ibid, 1-2)

Beuys and Wijers met again, less than a month later, in Düsseldorf on November 15. She asked him what he had thought about the meeting. Beuys began:

'For me the meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama was very interesting, but I am not really clear what in reality could come out, you know — what real procedures there could be to solve firstly the existing spiritual problem, the embracing of the two worlds Asia and Europe, and how this spiritual programme then will become completely clear with His Holiness — since we are thinking from this point of view in almost the same manner, I am not really clear how this could lead to practical doings. There is from this point of view no difference, almost no difference. Then His Holiness was telling about his interest in solving the problem of his people in Tibet. Surely, he can try to do it alone, he does not need my help for instance, but I made the proposal to him that it would perhaps be a great interest for the Chinese to have his coming back integrated with an economical programme, with a new economical programme, which would also be interesting for the Chinese government. Because I know that the Chinese at the moment are very curious to make equations and different views of the future, and on the development of economical forms for organisations.' (Beuys, in Wijers, 1996: 227)

The two of them went on to speak about the possible points of contact between Beuys' notion of the expanded concept of art and the notion of global responsibility and co-operation. Wijers asked him: 'Did you exchange views on this point with His Holiness the Dalai Lama?' Beuys said:

'Yes, there was a kind of exchange, but I think in this meeting I was more active than the Dalai Lama. I made the proposal, and I described the proposal in similar terms like I do now. The Dalai Lama was always very thankful and accepting — accepting the direction of speech, and *I think I sensed that he felt* that there was a very important thing going on. But maybe I felt at the same time a kind of attitude that for him it was in a way a new methodology toward new things — so His Holiness was mostly listening. He was mostly observing and trying to understand this kind of methodology, maybe this was a very new thing for him. And also with the problem that the available time was relatively short, there could not develop an interchaining discussion on all the different points. I had enough work to bring a convincing shape of the complex problems to him and show him my readiness to help the Tibetan people, or help on this line. [¶] If His Holiness wants to help, then this was a proposal from my side. It was a proposal. Now we must see if they think in the same direction. It is not aloof from the reality to return to Tibet to serve all the people there and to develop an economical order, thereby caring for an autonomous entity under the roof of the Chinese system.' (ibid; emphasis added)

At this point Beuys begins to retreat into the complexity of this proposal that Molina was not able to draw out from him fully, and which indeed could be said to have looked a bit foggy to the Dalai Lama:

'It was a complex proposal, very complex. It was founded from the philosophical point of view and it was founded from a point of view of the necessities created by the present economical situations in our world in general, and also it was founded on the special need of the Tibetan people. So, I couldn't do more in this short, time. Anyway, one cannot do more than this. The

next step must be a real step. All other long and broad discussions on this philosophy will not lead to results. Now, I think, we have to do something. We must do real steps, otherwise it goes again back to those very old fashioned kinds of religious attitudes. With respect for Buddhist traditions, for the Tibetan traditions including all Tantric traditions<sup>205</sup>, for Zen Buddhism and for Hinduism and Christianity, and even for pre-Christian Druid philosophy, all these interests are spread out very intensively already over the world. Of this we have enough stock, but now we have to do something. We have to transform the systems, and we have to find real means for better production to regulate the structure.’ (ibid: 228)

Translation: his proposal was too complex for one hour; it was an intricate philosophical argument, with multiple economic variables and implications; it was laid out with the specific needs of the Tibetan people in mind; it was the best he could do; it’s up to the Dalai Lama now — the real step has yet to be taken; but it cannot be *too* philosophical — now is a time for action; but though we must move beyond the sectarian concerns of the various world faiths, it still cannot be too broad; it is a question of systems, transforming systems, of better production... *what were we producing again?*

Wijers asks a variant of this question: ‘What should the first action in respect of the Tibetan problem be?’ Beuys hedges:

‘I cannot say. I cannot say what they need and what they want.. at least, I think, there must be appearing a kind of will, there must appear a kind of signal to go on with this and the will of the Tibetan people and His Holiness to return to Tibet. And in case I might not get that signal I will stay completely modestly in the background. I will not press. I have as it is enough to do here in this direction. So, I can give my part of co-operation to this problem here and this will change the world, I am clearly convinced of it. If one tries to change the world every idea which works on

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<sup>205</sup> In his January 29, 1982 discussion with Lama Sogyal Rinpoche, Beuys made a case for the depth of his spiritual concern for Tibet, one that combined a desire to make a personal connection with this Tibetan lama, on what Beuys may have presumed to be the proper terms, with a strange mix of surface understanding of tantric practice (perhaps gleaned through discussions with Filliou or Wijers) and a deep but oddly misplaced understanding of Anthroposophy: ‘My personal relationship to these plans is an interest in the Buddhist philosophy as a special personal fate.. [¶] I could say that I am a friend of the tantric intention, and.. I could say that.. from the point of view of my astral body I was already in Tibet.. I won’t speak about incarnation and reincarnation, which is also a necessity to bring to the people, in order to come to another understanding of the values of life and death.. and death and life.. and again.. The Free International University is an organisation that has a lot of offices in Germany, in the Netherlands, in England, Scotland, South Africa, Scandinavia, and so on.. I think, what we should do.. is not to make a little thing.. It should be a big.. a great idea..’ Lama Sogyal: ‘I agree with you..’ Beuys continued: ‘.. that has the kind of will power that will bring about some new spiritual intention on this planet firstly.. not to speak about other planetarian states in the future.. other later states of the planetarian unit.. For that the necessity is, in my understanding, to prepare a kind of living body on this planet, which could transform towards future existences.. Maybe this is my first sentence..’ (Beuys and Lama Sogyal, in Wijers, 1996: 136) On Beuys’ discussion of his prior ‘visitations’ from the astral plane, see Beuys and Brügge, 1999: 37-8.



this line has to co-operate and has to be done on the spot in public. It cannot be a hidden thing. It has to be done in public actions.'

Translation: he will wait and see. The next step depends upon the will of the Tibetans. If they don't give him the signal that they really want to return to Tibet, then what can he do? He will remain a supporter, but without a clear indication that they are ready for his help, it makes more sense to focus upon his other, more immediate, clear, and local, projects. In any case what he is doing is to engage locally with global issues. And furthermore he is doing so actively, not working through secret meetings and backroom deals; he is working openly, in public. The discussion continues to explore similar themes. At the end of it, Wijers, who has been trying to get him to outline what specifically he would be willing to commit to doing to further what progress *had* been made there that day in Bonn, says: 'The moment is there — we should do this now.' Beuys, never one to back down from direct action, agrees. And the intensity of his agreement makes way for his withdrawal.

'Yes, sure.. In a way it is already done. Everything is already there. We have only to execute it. Therefore I insist in DOING it. I am not so much interested in making too many conferences with only speaking, speaking, speaking.. talking, talking, talking.. I am no longer interested to talk only.'

Wijers is in agreement: 'I know, so, what can I propose to the Tibetans?' Having insisted on doing more than speaking, what does he offer?

Speech.

'The content of this speech. I can only help if they really want me to do something. If they<sup>206</sup> are just interested in making education centres in France, in Spain, in Italy, in the Netherlands, here in Germany, and everywhere, groups with venerable persons who are surely very important, then let them do that, but I am not interested in this. We also have our schools of education, and our schools of spiritual teachings and all that. We could do this also here, but it will not solve the problems existing so, I am in this way really in the field of economy. And I think, here again the Dalai Lama and I are thinking along the same lines. It is the statement of the Dalai Lama that he is not interested in speaking on religion [,] that he is not interested in the old-fashioned discussion on politics, but that he is interested in a recreation of the world, and in economical doings. So, from the side of verbalization the thing is clear. Now we will see if it can also become clear from

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<sup>206</sup> Who this 'they' is remains unclear, but it seems to refer those supporting the establishment of Tibetan Buddhist centers in the West. Given his commitment to education and dialogue, his lack of interest in supporting such initiatives is surprising. This comment is likely more of a frustrated blow not at the Dalai Lama himself, but at certain members of his entourage: 'venerable persons'.

the point of view of performing and executing these ideas into the physical life conditions. That's all. Every other statement would be a repetition.' (ibid: 231)

On January 29, 1983, Wijers added an appendix to the text of her discussion with Beuys. It explains that she had prepared a copy of the transcript of this discussion and sent it to the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. His Deputy Secretary had written back to tell them 'that the relevant content of the received writing had been brought to His Holiness' kind notice', and went on to say:

'We all greatly appreciate the concern of Professor Joseph Beuys towards the sad plight of the Tibetan people. Unfortunately, as you would have noticed, during the past few months China seems to have hardened their attitude towards the issue of Tibet. Therefore, in the near future, the suggestion of a meeting between the representatives of Tibetan people and Red China and Professor Beuys seems infeasible.' (ibid)

It would be months before Filliou's suggestion was to begin to bear the fruit whose seeds had been planted here in Eurasia's ruins, and it was neither Beuys nor Filliou but Wijers herself who would turn the ostensibly failed meeting inside out and transform it into the ground of later successes. Months after that October day, having gotten over her disappointments, Wijers was faced with the news of her mother's terminal illness, and had to give up her writing for a time to attend to her. She had brought her tape player and tapes from that day with her so that she could at least transcribe them while she nursed her mother. There is a Taoist saying: 'it loves to happen'. As she sat alone and listened to the tape recordings of the meandering discussions that took place over those hours at the cafe tables, she picked up on Filliou's comment, suddenly it hit her. She describes her epiphany: '[B]ecause we couldn't get this practical work with Tibet going, which Joseph Beuys had been thinking about, I thought, through *that way* [Filliou's 'Art-of-Peace Biennale'] maybe we could reach there *finally*. So I suggested to Beuys to use this idea of Filliou, and invite the Dalai Lama to meet artists, more artists, and get to *that*, to a working relationship. So... I *used* Beuys and Filliou, and suggested to do that. So *both* Beuys and Filliou thought this could be *done*. And that's how it started. It was actually because Filliou said that to Beuys during that meeting. It had very little to do with the actual meeting with the Dalai Lama, but he said it on that *day*, informed Beuys on what he would like to see *happen*, you know. So, and then I used that, I thought "Aha!..." (Wijers, 1998)

## *Responsible Idiocy*<sup>207</sup>

In the invitation he wrote for the Art-of-Peace Biennale, which was published both in German and in English, Filliou wrote:

'We're all against war. But what are we for? Peace, we say. What is peace? Nobody quite knows. It's an art, likely, not an abstraction.<sup>208</sup> An elusive art: "Peace is not of this world", we say. Not of this space either, by the way. Space is fast becoming militarized. As there is suddenly no alternative to peace, unless we change worlds suddenly we're doomed. Can we achieve peace before achieving peace?<sup>209</sup> Or is high-tech gloom our only prospect?<sup>210</sup>' (Filliou, in Block, ed., 1985: 6)

Sometime in the late 1960s, French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou was talking with his friend Billy Kluver, a research scientist at Bell Laboratories. The reason scientists make greater strides in their field than artists do in theirs, Kluver had told him, is that scientists 'don't know what science is.' (Filliou, 1970: 87) The quote comes from a book Filliou published in 1970, entitled *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*. It is unique among publications in welcoming its readers to consider themselves its co-authors – an invitation Filliou upholds as more than just an egalitarian intertextual gesture by leaving room throughout the entire book for the readers to write down their own thoughts, and inviting them to send these back to him in order to stimulate further, yet-unimagined collaborative projects. Apart from the sections containing Filliou's interviews with artist friends like John Cage, Diter Rot, Dorothy Iannone, Benjamin Patterson, Joseph Beuys and Allan Kaprow, the format of each of the book's pages is one-third Filliou's text in German, one-third in English, and one-third empty space reserved for the reader.

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<sup>207</sup> Some of the discussion that follows has been published, in an abbreviated form, in Thompson, 2001.

<sup>208</sup> Here Filliou has inserted the following footnote: "The War/Peace duality (peace being defined as the absence of war, and vice-versa) is the product of restless minds. Hovering above is peacefulness. "You cannot have a peaceful world without having a peaceful mind", the 14th Dalaï Lama reminds us. Intuition tells us he is right. How can we achieve peaceful minds? I believe in asking those who know, and live according to, the true nature of mind: living masters of perennial Wisdom like, in the Tibetan tradition for example, H.H. the Dalaï Lama himself, H.H. Dudjom Rinpoché, H.H. Khyentze Rinpoché, Kalu Rinpoché, and so on..." (Filliou, in Block, ed., 1985: 6, 7n3)

<sup>209</sup> Here Filliou has inserted the following footnote: "Yes, intuition tells us, provided the age-long fatalistic advice "if you want peace, prepare for war" is dropped in favor of the realistically authentic "if you want peace, prepare for peace".' (ibid: 6, 7n4)

<sup>210</sup> Here Filliou has inserted the following footnote: "Intuition tells us that science cannot provide answers to questions its very applications have raised, like the ones related to bio-engineering, artificial intelligence, "star wars", etc... without going back to its roots in intuitive wisdom. This probably applies as well to fundamental theoretical breakthroughs.' (ibid: 6, 7n5) For the full text of Filliou's proposal, see ibid: 6-7. The Art-of-Peace Biennale will be discussed in more detail below.

POETISCHE OEKONOMIE : In Richtung auf neue Wertmaßstäbe. Drei Vorschläge :

1. Rehabilitation der Kaffeehausgenies

Die Leute machten sich über wild und bunt aussehende, leidende Künstler lustig, die in Kneipen herumhingen und ihre Arbeit unbeachtet liessen. Manchmal ist es noch so. Sie wissen noch nicht, dass wir alle eine Art Kaffeehausgenie sind. Wir haben mehr Ideen als Möglichkeiten, diese Ideen zu verwirklichen. Sogar Künstler, die sich für Kunst und Technik interessieren, sind abhängig von der Begabung und dem allgemein guten Willen der Ingenieure. Viele von ihnen versuchen es erst gar nicht mehr. Sie denken: Lieber führe ich ein Leben, das mit meinen Idealen übereinstimmt, als dass ich meine Ideale für Geld oder vorgetäuschten Ruhm eintausche. Und wenn wir uns nicht so viel Glück erlauben, dann träumen wir davon. "Vielleicht gehe ich nach Westen und trage Blumen im Haar". ( Emmett Williams schrieb dies in einem Brief an mich. ) So ist es höchste Zeit, die Kaffeehausgenies zu rehabilitieren, die Vorgänger der Beats, der Hippies und anderer Bewegungen.



von l.n.r.: Marcel Broodthaers, Tomas Schmit, Addi Köpcke und der Autor

POETICAL ECONOMY : Towards a new Standard of Value. Three Propositions :

1. Réhabilitation des Génies de Café

People used to make fun of wild, picturesque, tortured artists sounding off in drinking places, and leaving their work unattended. Some still do. They don't know yet that all of us now are sorts of café-genius. Not only do we have more ideas than possibilities of realizing them ( even art and technology, for these artists interested in it, make them dependant upon the consent and general good-will of the engineers ). But many of us don't even try any more. Better, they think, to make my life consistant with my ideals, than to trade them up for some money and illusory fame. And when we don't allow ourselves this much happiness, we often dream of it. "Maybe I'll go west and wear flowers in my hair " ( Emmett Williams, in a letter to me ). So it is high time to rehabilitate the Génies de Café, precursors of the whole beat, hippy and other movements.

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Page 73 from Filliou's *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*

The book is in many ways Filliou's answer to Kluver's provocation. 'It is true', Filliou says, 'that artists spend a powerful lot of time and energy trying to convince each other about what is art and what is not. They do not know that they don't know.' (ibid) For Filliou this idea was more than something to muse about over drinks with his friends. Indeed for him there was something very serious at stake in his playful non-knowledge. 'Every generation of young people', he argued, 'has to fight fascism. For mine, it was the overt fascism of the Nazis and their allies. For theirs, in relative peace time, it is the covert fascism of the square world. Usually this fight is lost, because young people fail to root out the seeds of fascism within themselves.' (ibid) What he calls 'relative peace time' is peaceful only in that the covert fascism he describes now unfolds relatively discretely, and in a relatively bloodless manner.

Today many find the notion of a singular cause to rally behind not so much simplistic as fictive, even as the need for interconnected strategies of resistance become increasingly urgent. Accordingly many works from the 1960s and 1970s — like Filliou's book, like Yoko Ono and John Lennon's famous hotel room occupations enjoining the world to give peace a chance — and indeed even the utterance today of the word 'peace', tend to be met with responses ranging from condescending smile to clinical annoyance. But the question that many of the artists involved with Fluxus were and are trying not simply to pose but actively to perform, was and is how peace might be thought of not simply as the absence of war, nor a pause, even indefinitely protracted, between wars, but as something other than that, something dynamic that had necessarily to be continually re-imagined and re-translated.

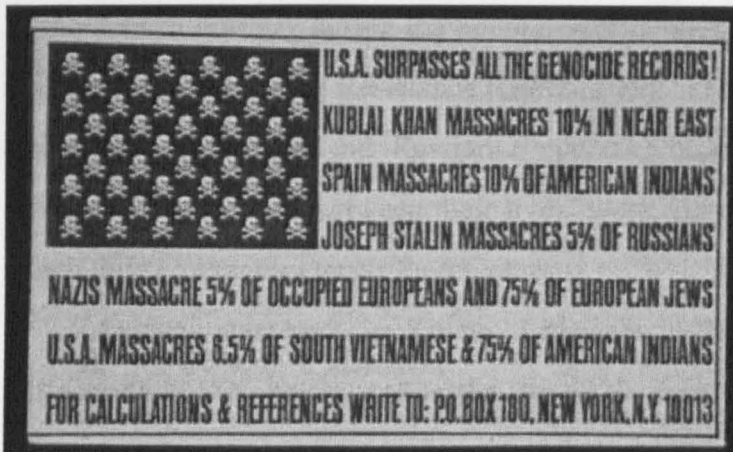
In 1968, for example, Yoko Ono released *Film No.5 (Smile)*. A year earlier she had spoken of her desire to make a film that could include 'a smiling face snap of every single human being in the world.'<sup>211</sup> Much of the recent interest in the work of artists involved with Fluxus, both as central and more orbital participants, is marked by a tendency to delight in these works' light-heartedness and playfulness. This is an important element of the Fluxus project, but it is not divorcible from the urgent and often biting politics that, despite differences between their agendas and ways of working, can be found at the heart of Fluxus<sup>212</sup>. Indeed as Ono's statement about *Film No.5* continued, it revealed a more caustic undercurrent. She said: 'We can arrange it with a television network so that whenever you want to see the faces of a particular location in the world, all you have to

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<sup>211</sup> Text from a placard accompanying the display of *Film No.5 (Smile)* at the YES YOKO ONO exhibition, Japan Society, New York, October 18, 2000 - January 14, 2001.

<sup>212</sup> In the context of a recent interview between Bracken and Geoffrey Hendricks, Hannah Higgins and Alison Knowles, moderated by Janet A. Kaplan, Knowles said of Fluxus that it 'is a very loosely associated group of friends without a political direction who are nonjudgmental of one another.' See Kaplan, 2000: 7-17. The refusal of most of Fluxus' participants to operate as a unified group with a cohesive politics indeed sets it apart from avant-garde projects, such as the Italian Futurists or the French Dadaists, whom Knowles names as connections to Fluxus performance that should nevertheless not be seen to be too closely linked. Part of Fluxus' politicality is its capacity to link individuals with differing notions of what counts as 'political direction', and differing views of whether or not Fluxus had one or many such political directions. In this same interview, Bracken Hendricks explained that within Fluxus, 'you will find that different people mean very different things by the word *politics*.' Hannah Higgins elaborated upon this: 'My mother [Knowles] may say that politics is not the point. I think for some [Fluxus] artists it is. Geoff [Hendricks] tends to function on a more political plane. Other's don't.' (ibid: 14). For a closer study of the tensions between George Maciunas' desires for an organized political agenda and structure for Fluxus, and the aversion to this felt by many of his friends, see Smith, 1998.

do is press a button and there it is. This way, if [Lyndon] Johnson wants to see what sort of people he killed in Vietnam that day, he only has to turn the channel.'



George Maciunas, *USA Surpasses All the Genocide Records!*, 1966

In the book *Totality and Infinity*, considered by many to be his magnum opus, Emmanuel Levinas began a lifelong project that sought to establish the primacy of ethics for philosophical thinking. It is critical in Levinas' thinking that for the 'I' the other is not knowable, and equally important that, despite the self's inability to *know* the other, the self can nevertheless *kill* the other (Levinas, 1998a). *Totality and Infinity* was first published in 1961 — incidentally the year that Fluxus was founded. From this book through to the end of his life, Levinas was consumed with the question of whether the 'egalitarian and just' ideal European state was to be produced through Hobbes' 'war of all against all' — or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for the other' (Levinas, 1996: 169). It is this question that is raised in Ono's work by the flashing shift from the world's billions of smiling faces to close-up views of their strategically indiscriminate murder, the balance in which peace, whatever that is, must always hang.

Both Filliou and Levinas were consumed with the question of peace. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that they both consumed this question, being nourished by it and by always asking it. We recall from Filliou's conversation with Kluver the importance Filliou placed upon non-knowledge in making the art of peace. In this as in so many other respects he virtually shares the same breath as Levinas, who wrote, years later, that 'it is in the knowledge of the other (*autrui*) as a simple individual — individual of a genus, a

class, or a race — that peace with the other (*autrui*) turns into hatred; it is the approach of the other as ‘such and such a type.’” (ibid: 166). Their mutual concern with peace owed not just to having lived through war, but to having actively participated in it. Both served in the French military during the Second World War, Filliou as a fighter in the French communist underground Resistance (Gintz, 1985: 132) and Levinas as an officer and interpreter of German and Russian (Peperzak, in Levinas, 1996: xiii). Despite the numerous connections between their lives’ work, the war seems to be the only point at which their biographies touched each other.

Levinas was born in Kovno, Lithuania in 1906. By 1923 he was studying philosophy in Strasbourg, and in the late 1920s went to Freiburg to work with Martin Heidegger. In 1930 he published his dissertation on Husserl,<sup>213</sup> became a French citizen, did his military service, was married, and got a teaching job at the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris.<sup>214</sup> He translated Husserl’s book *Cartesian Meditations* into French, and began a book on Heidegger which he later stopped working on when he became aware of Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazi party. In 1939 he was drafted into the French army, and was taken as a prisoner of war in 1940. Though he was a Jew, his status as a French officer saw him interned in a military prison camp rather than a concentration camp – though he lost nearly all of his family in Lithuania to this fate (Peperzak, in Levinas, 1996: xii), except his wife and daughter, who survived the war in a Christian monastery (Levinas, in Rötzer, 1995: 63).

Filliou was born in La Sauve, in the south of France, in 1926. After the war he left for California to find the father he never knew, worked in a Coca-Cola plant for two years, and then, after studying economics at the University of California at Los Angeles, he was sent as part of a United Nations research mission to Korea and Japan. He spent years traveling thereafter, living in Egypt, Spain, and Denmark, and returned to France in 1959. In 1960 he met his lifelong friend Daniel Spoerri, through whom he came into contact with the artists with whom he was to concoct a range of Fluxus partnerships.

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<sup>213</sup> This was published under the title *Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930). The English translation was published four decades later: *Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. A. Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Fluxus' histories have become an increasingly hot topic.<sup>215</sup> Perhaps this owes in large part to Fluxus' transnational, or even non-national character; Geoff Hendricks has said that 'Fluxus is about internationalism, the idea that in a certain way we're nomads. We travel and we connect up with people of similar minds and then things grow out from there.' (G. Hendricks, in Kaplan et al, 2000: 12) Hannah Higgins has noted that what has enabled the success of this 'nomadism' has been Fluxus' inclusionary ethos, which she believes can teach us something 'about an expanded sense of humanism.' She speculates that 'Fluxus is the first or maybe even the only major movement to have members who are black, white, Asian, Hispanic, male gay and straight, female gay and straight. It was truly open in a time before identity politics would again make that impossible.' (Higgins, in *ibid*) This trans- or non-national humanism is inseparable from Fluxus' pragmatism, what Owen Smith has referred to the 'small-scale opportunism' (Smith, 1998: 6) that catalyzed Fluxus' avowedly interdisciplinary, or discipline-scrambling, activities.

When they did consent to categorization, Fluxus artists opted for neologisms like 'intermedia', a word coined by Dick Higgins in 1966 to refer to precisely this interdisciplinary experimentalism.<sup>216</sup> But more often, they wished their activities to speak for them, as in Filliou's 1960s attempt at a project to persuade the cities of Liège,

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<sup>214</sup> The Alliance was, in Peperzak's words, 'an important philanthropic and educational institution whose mission was to promote the 'emancipation' of Jews living in Mediterranean lands such as Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Turkey, and Syria.' Peperzak, in Levinas, 1996: viii.

<sup>215</sup> This history is far too complex and colorful to handle here in a way that could do it justice, and there are as many stories about how Fluxus got its name as there are Fluxus artists. For more about this period, including Fluxus' 'beginning' as a Lithuanian cultural club, see the chapter entitled 'An Immigrant Invents Fluxus', in Williams and Noël, 1997: 29-48. For a rich and often productively contradictory collection of accounts of and accountings for Fluxus, see Friedman, 1998. George Brecht wrote: 'Fluxus is a Latin word *Maciunas* dug up. I never studied Latin. If it hadn't been for *Maciunas* nobody might ever have called it anything. We would all have gone our separate ways, like the man crossing the street with his umbrella, and a woman walking a dog in another direction. We would have gone our own ways and done our own things: the only reference point for this bunch of people who liked each other's works, and each other, more or less, was *Maciunas*. So Fluxus, as far as I'm concerned, is *Maciunas*.' (Brecht, in Williams and Noël, 1997: 41) Many have argued against the tendency to equate Fluxus and *Maciunas*. 'As long as the nature and history of Fluxus remain debatable, contested and unstable, the spirit of flux in Fluxus remains alive', writes Hannah Higgins, 'even when the debate takes place in academic venues'. She anticipates 'a time when some well-meaning, academic type will come along and can Fluxus. In being canned, it will be preserved for all time but will lose much of its flavour. It may be that this process is inevitable if anything of Fluxus is to survive the life of the artists. The canning process is, however, unnecessary as long as the artists and those who know and love them are alive. This does not mean that rigorous histories of this or that Fluxus cannot be written. It merely means the history of all Fluxus cannot be.' (Higgins, 1998: 57)

<sup>216</sup> See Higgins' essay 'Intermedia' (Higgins, 1966); for thorough discussions of the genealogy and implications of the concept of intermedia, see Friedman, 1999; and Blom, 1998: 63-90, especially pp. 65-66.



Maastricht, and Aachen to exchange their war memorials, and to encourage all countries who were considering war to exchange war memorials first — and hopefully instead.

Entitled 'COMMEMOR', the project proposed creating 'a mixed 'committee for the exchange of war memorials'... the work of which will be accompanied without any doubt by rational consciousness and high pleasure.' The committee would attempt 'to achieve the reconciliation of the nations by one effective action only', 'to give an example which other continents might follow one day', 'to honor the victims of twentieth century's worldwars [sic] in a truthfull [sic] way', 'to make the future generations aware of the absurd and murderous obscenity of all nationalisms', 'to carry out the final fraternization of the towns and villages of Europe', and 'to change the pompous and revengeful style of history-writing into a new, generous expression of our destiny'. The project issued the following request: 'COUNTRIES WHICH NOWADAYS THINK OF WAR ARE SUMMONED TO EXCHANGE THEIR WAR MEMORIALS BEFORE AND INSTEAD OF MAKING A WAR'. Filliou hoped by the end of year to exhibit 'the total of the activities of COMMEMOR and all of the works sent to us as a 'CONTRIBUTION FOR AN ART OF PEACE'. (Filliou, 1984: 50)

However it is only with caution that we should read words like 'transnational' and 'interdisciplinary' back onto the Fluxus experiments of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>217</sup> The notions of fluidity and flow that are part of the aura of the contemporary applications and rhetorics of the 'transnational' and the 'interdisciplinary', notions which are of course conjured by the name and the word 'Fluxus', feed in some senses into the current fashion for speaking of oneself and one's work in the language of a kind of 'nomadism' that tends to have more in common with the caprices of seasonal fashion than with the kinds of uncertainties that might be seen to be part of a shared existential, ethical or

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<sup>217</sup> There is in this country a tendency to forget that Fluxus still exists. 'Collections make the mistake of terminating their collecting policy with the year Maciunas dies, which is absurd, because these people [involved with Fluxus] are still active. It's been twenty-five years since Maciunas died, and they still collaborate. It's not like they just get together for museum shows.' (Higgins, Kaplan et al, 2000: 9) Indeed, the Fluxus network is still growing and doing Fluxus in increasingly innovative forms, taking advantage of the possibilities afforded by the internet, a medium which seems almost to have been invented for Fluxus. See, for example: [www.fluxus.org](http://www.fluxus.org).; see also Saper, 2001 for a thorough discussion of Fluxus and other post-war forms of cultural practice that make use of and engage with the network and its possibilities for communication and collaboration. For a discussion of contemporary Fluxus practices, see the catalogue published on the occasion of "The Fluxus Constellation" at the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Villa

epistemological condition as articulated by Geoff Hendricks' characterization of Fluxus' internationalism as nomadic. There is also today a fairly uncritical acceptance of the state of 'fluidity' — as though describing one's positionality as a 'fluid' one were unequivocally good, and pronouncing another's work 'not sufficiently fluid' were tantamount to condemnation. Higgins notes that despite the obvious 'fluid metaphors' called to mind by the name Fluxus, the complexity of this fluidity is 'lost on most writers who write about [Fluxus], who tend to want to understand fluidity only as against structure, and then the fluid form only exists as a kind of negation.' (Higgins, in Kaplan et al, 2000: 7) To the extent that the time that we live in demands the creation of situational compasses specific to each situation's conflicts and exigencies, both Fluxus and the notion of a 'fluidity' that is other than the negation of structure or form offer ways of exploring contemporary culture as a scene of perpetual translations, one that is not so much fluid as it is viscous — sticky and full of impurities, untranslatable things that trip us up, make us messily disoriented, and keep us lost in translation.

This condition with which the historian of the Fluxus constellation must grapple is readily comparable to the task facing the translator of Levinas. Throughout his writings, he uses four separate forms for what in English is rendered by the word 'other' — *autre*, *Autre*, *autrui*, *Autrui* — but he does so inconsistently. It is consequently impossible at times to distinguish whether his use of the word *Autre*, for example, refers to God or whether it refers to a human 'other'. (Peperzak, in Levinas, 1996: xiv) The 'other' him/her/itself always remains impossible to articulate, foiling our habitual attempts to make this other(s) translate seamlessly into the terms of my own knowledge of him/her/it. For Levinas such reduction of the other to the terms of the 'same', of the infinity of the other to the totality of the I's horizon of intelligibility, is an act of violence. Consequently his way of refusing the translatability of alterity is part of the essential *unarchy* of Levinas' thinking. Filliou lovingly referred to life in this *unarchic* state as 'the art of losing oneself without getting lost' (Filliou, 1970: 24). This was his 'art of peace', the peace that Levinas described 'as awakesness to the precariousness of the other.' (Levinas, 1996: 167)

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Croce — Genoa, Italy, February 15 - June 16, 2002, which coincides with the 40th anniversary of the 1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus festival (Solimano, ed., 2002).

Awakeness is the condition articulated by the Sanskrit term *buddha*. The man formerly known as Prince Siddhartha Gautama became called *buddha*, the one who is awakened. It was this state of being awake to the precariousness of the other, each and every sentient being, that convinced the Buddha, after much deliberation, to set forth and share his realization with others; thus Buddhist ethics was born. Interestingly, Levinas always maintained his non-interest in Buddhism. According to Stephen Batchelor, Levinas 'certainly had no interest in Buddhism and seemed slightly disdainful' of it.<sup>218</sup> In one interview, Levinas declared that his interests were purely in Western philosophy and in the Bible, saying flatly: 'I don't have any nostalgia for the exotic. For me Europe is central.' (Levinas, in Rötzer, 1995: 63) His interviewer asked him whether by this he meant to say that 'we, too, should remain in this tradition... of thought?' He replied: 'Yes, that's what I mean. You can express everything in Greek. For example, you can say Buddhism in Greek. Europe will always remain a speaking-Greek – that's our language of the university. In saying this I'm thinking neither about the Greek roots of words nor about Greek grammar. The way of speaking in the university is Greek and global. In this sense, Greek is certainly spoken at the University of Tokyo. That's central, for not every language is Greek.' (ibid)

It is difficult to be sure about how to approach the encounter with this passage. Firstly, the word 'Buddhism' is itself a Western invention, one that appeared in European academic discourse in the first half of the 19th-century<sup>219</sup>. In none of the Asian countries to which this thing called Buddhism has been indigenous has it been able to be reduced to a single categorical term, least of all one that would translate seamlessly into English. So in this sense Levinas is right to argue that 'Buddhism' can be said in Greek, if Greek operates for him as the meta-grammar of Western scholarship, since Buddhism-the-category is a product of Western academic knowledge and its ties to discourses of colonialism. But the notion that it is possible to reduce this plurality of philosophical, religious, psychological, meditative, artistic, and literary traditions and cultural histories,

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<sup>218</sup> The details of this conversation between Levinas and Batchelor were relayed to me by Batchelor in a telephone conversation in May, 1999, and reconfirmed in an email dated July 7, 2001.

<sup>219</sup> For a short critical history of the birth of Buddhism as academic object of knowledge, see Lopez, 1995: 1-29. See also the chapter entitled 'Eugène Bernouff: The Construction of Buddhism', in Batchelor, 1994: 227-249.

and their complexities and contradictions, to a single term, is a difficult one to swallow<sup>220</sup>. Levinas' relationship with 'Buddhism' becomes a bit more curious when we take into account Gillian Rose's critique of his ethics.

In her book *Mourning Becomes the Law*, Rose takes issue with what she perceives to be a disavowal of politics in Levinas' work, taking his concern for the primacy of the ethical to imply a kind of detachment. She associates this, as have many others, with Buddhism, referring to his work as 'Buddhist Judaism'. The notion that Buddhism is entirely unconcerned with things political depends for its truth, like most things to do with Buddhism, upon which specific Buddhism we are talking about, where, and when. Surely it would be impossible to consider the Vietnamese Buddhist monks who were part of the resistance to the Vietnam War to be apolitical.<sup>221</sup> Rose's notion of Levinas' Buddhist Judaism overlooks the fact that his ethics is inherently political, but that, as in the case of Fluxus, its politics take the form of anarchy, an anarchy that is inseparable from radical and absolute responsibility. For Levinas any politics 'must be able in fact always to be checked and criticized starting from the ethical.' (Levinas, 1998b: 80) This is the undercurrent of his notion of peace 'as awakens to the precariousness of the other.'

This is also the peace with which, according to Ken Friedman, Fluxus was concerned. He writes that 'Fluxus... proposes a world in which it is possible to create the greatest value for the greatest number of people', and notes that this notion 'finds its parallel in many of the central tenets of Buddhism.'<sup>222</sup> Filliou, like many of his Fluxus friends, sampled and appropriated Buddhist ideas and practices in his work to varying degrees and purposes. But unlike most of them, at least most of the artists who grew up in European and American cultures, both Filliou and his wife Marianne actually took the vows that make one officially 'Buddhist'<sup>223</sup>. He studied with Tibetan Nyingma master His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche, and with others as well, such as Lama Sogyal Rinpoche

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<sup>220</sup> This becomes even more difficult when we consider that, while we feel quite confident that something called 'Tibetan Buddhism' is a religion, there is no word for 'religion' in the Tibetan language. The sense of propriety and intercultural protocol becomes scrambled yet again when we note that, for all this, the Dalai Lama regularly uses the English words 'the Buddhist religion' in his discussions and his writings.

<sup>221</sup> On the Vietnamese Buddhist resistance to the war, see Fitzgerald, 1972.

<sup>222</sup> Among these is the tenet, common to the various forms of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, of the vow of the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva is a being that, having attained awakening, vows to forego final enlightenment in order to work for the enlightenment of all other beings. See Santideva, 1979a, 1979b.

and Gendun Rinpoche. When Filliou died, in 1987, it was in the midst of a three-year meditation retreat.

In the first of his appendices to *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, Filliou shared the secret of what he called 'Relative Permanent Creation'. This was a variation of what he had elsewhere called 'La Fête Permanente' – the permanent party, a continuously playful anarchy in response to the 'fascism of the square world'. It was also a partner to an action poem Filliou presented in 1965 called "Le Filliou Ideal", which in his book he describes as the 'secret of Absolute Permanent Creation'. The score of the poem reads:

'not deciding  
not choosing  
not wanting  
not owning  
aware of self  
wide awake  
SITTING QUIETLY  
DOING NOTHING'

After speaking these words to the audience, Filliou sat for a while in meditation, 'motionless and silent' (Filliou, 1970: 95). "Le Filliou Ideal" was in fact part two of a larger action poem published in 1967. Entitled 'Yes — an action poem', it was a fairly pure affirmation of difference that, where it ended with Filliou in seated meditation, began with a more lyrical meditation, also of his own body. The poet, Filliou, sits on a chair, and a 'lecturer introduces him soberly to the audience, and reads as follows':

Part One – The Adult Male Poet

The Legs: 'All poets present the characteristics which we have just described [the limbs, etc.], but the diverse agglomeration of poets show, among themselves, some differences that suggest distinguishing among them.

— thus the yellow poet has yellowish skin, prominent cheekbones, thick hair, slanted eyes, a large nose and thick lips.

— the black poet has a colored skin, varying from golden brown to deep black, kinky hair, a flat nose, thick lips, and very strong, powerful jaws.

— the white poet has pinkish skin, an oval-shaped face, straight hair, eyes slit horizontally, a straight nose and thin lips.

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<sup>223</sup> These are the vows of Refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teaching and the path), and the Sangha (the dharma community).

— the red poet has a copper skin, unruly hair, prominent cheekbones, a hooked nose, and thin lips.’ (Filliou, 1967: 5-6)

While the poem begins by exploring the phenotypic exterior differences between a range of various possible poets, in the next section, entitled “of the Necessity of Alimentation”, the pinkish male poet takes the reader on the tour of their innards. While Filliou finds pronounced differences when looking at the poets from the outside, their interiors are virtually identical: all seem to have the same cycles of consumption, digestion, and excretion, which he details. His careful noting of the excretory faculties of poets prompts him to consider the differences between the male and the female poet, again from the point of view of the pinkish male.

‘In the case of the female poet, the urethra opens to the outside of her body, between her legs. Just behind her urine-opening is the vagina of the female poet, which, in the case of the adult virgin female poet is closed by a thin membrane known as the “hymen.” Around these two openings are folds or lips of flesh, which form what is called the “vulva” of the female poet. But of course she is praised also for her poems, which are just as beautiful.

In the case of the male poet, the urethra passes through a fleshy tube called the penis of the poet, which hangs between his legs.

Excretion is of such vital importance to the good functioning of the poet that the departed savant, Leonardo da Vinci, insisted that “the poet is a wonderful mechanism transforming good wine into urine.” (ibid: 8)

In the sixth subsection of the fifth section, “Brain of the Poet”, Filliou goes on to consider the “Reproduction and Senses of the Adult Male Poet”, which predictably are tied quite closely with one another; in section seven, “Conclusions”, he considers the process by which the poet notices a woman passing by him, and the range of factors that arise for him to sort through as he wonders what he should do about it.

‘And even before deciding, perhaps it is boring to decide. Better, he thinks, to accept all possibilities in advance. Better to accept all the possibilities in advance, and accepting them always, to remain beyond that region where everything is parcelled out, and everybody is owned by what he owns.

This at least is his ideal. And he expresses this ideal in a poem, because he is a poet.’ (ibid: 9)

This is followed by “Part Two — His Poem”, “Le Filliou Ideal”, ‘the secret of Absolute Permanent Creation.’

In *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, Filliou mentions two discussions on the subject of Permanent Creation, one with mathematician Warren Hirsh, and the other with John Cage in the car ride to Hirsh’s home.

'Permanent creation is a collective achievement. It cannot be perfect in any one of its components, but only as a whole, as more and more persons come to practise it. In February 1967, I went to dinner at [the home of] my friend the mathematician Warren Hirsh, who teaches and does research at New York University. John Cage drove Marianne and me to his place. It is during this ride that John told me we should, in social matters, achieve the equivalent of getting rid of harmony and counterpoint in music. It is by this, you remember, that I began my taped conversation with him. That evening I asked Warren what he was presently working on. He answered that it had to do with some complex mathematical problems exploring the possibility "of building perfect wholes out of imperfect parts." It concerned circuits, of course. As I understood what he said, if a [in a] circuit composed of many components, one of them breaks down, the whole circuit stops. But if each component itself reproduces the whole circuit, with all its components, and each of these in turn reproduce the whole circuit, and so on and so on, we may arrive at a total circuit that will never break down, no matter if any or some of its components do. It made me think of the human brain, of memory, for instance. You may try to remember somebody's name by calling to mind his face. If it does not work, recall of making his acquaintance may bring up his name. Or odd association of ideas, having to do with sounds, smells, objects, etc.... In most cases, some components of the brain fail, and yet the answer will come out: the brain does his work. It also made me think of this study. I told Warren: "That's exactly what I try to discover in the fields of art, education and social matters." Yes it is.' (Filliou, 1970: 177)

Permanent Creation emerged again in different but related form later in 1967 in a series of discussions between Filliou and Allan Kaprow. The State University of New York had been considering opening an experimental university. Their then-president began to confer with a range of teachers, students, and interested non-academics about what the program might entail. One of these collaborators was Kaprow, who invited his friend Filliou to sit in on two of the meetings. Filliou proposed establishing an Institute of Permanent Creation. We can only speculate about how this might have shaped American higher education; unfortunately the Institute never made it past brainstorming stage (ibid: 41-43). But Permanent Creation remained central to Filliou's vision of peace. If the finding of inner peace characterized Absolute Permanent Creation, Filliou explained that the secret of Relative Permanent Creation was something he called 'autrisme'<sup>224</sup>. He wrote:

"Autre' means 'other' or 'else'. I suppose that 'autrisme' could be translated by 'otherism' or 'elsism' - such horrible words. I prefer to leave it in French. I wrote l'autrisme in 1962. Both the title and subtitle were chosen tongue-in-cheek. I hate -isms. I hate manifestoes. L'autrisme is an action-poem. It illustrates the possibility of making a performance out of one's ideas, instead of

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<sup>224</sup> This root 'autre' has been used most recently by Sarat Maharaj in his introduction to the writings of Eddie Chambers. He describes Chambers' 'autrebiography' as 'an overflow of sources and origins, a

turning them, through the writing of manifestoes, into theories. Thus, as in any performance, possibilities of spontaneous improvisations, even contradictions, remain. Clearly it is TEACHING AND LEARNING AS PERFORMING ARTS.' (Filliou, 1970: 90)

The score for 'l'autrisme' consists of conversations between four characters, named 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', and 'E', that revolve around their either deciding for themselves, or being requested by another, to do something other than what they are doing, or to be other than what they are. The action-poem nears its end with A, B, and C moving out into the audience. En route to the exit they question members of the audience at random: 'what are you thinking about?', 'what are you doing?', 'who are you?', 'what are you?'. No matter what answer they are given, A, B, and C give such responses as: 'think of something else', 'do something else', 'be somebody else', 'be something else'. Filliou's stage direction reads: 'and in the midst of the general confusion thus created - spectators coming and going, shouting, fighting, kissing, rising, laughing, protesting, etc.... A, B, and C leave the room.' (ibid: 91-92) Filliou ends the poem, not because some resulting dramatic action seems to demand it, but only in order that he as the author may himself be permitted to go forth and think, do, or be something else, to be other.

It is difficult to imagine a more faithful performative unfolding into 'real time' of Levinas' philosophy. Adriaan Peperzak characterized Levinas' work as 'proposing an alternative phenomenology faithful to what [Levinas] calls the 'unthought' of the philosophical tradition, namely, 'the search for the human or interhuman intrigue as the fabric of ultimate intelligibility.'" (Peperzak and Levinas, in Levinas, 1996: 150)

Interestingly Levinas' 'search for the interhuman intrigue' is almost exactly the way Gillian Rose, despite her critique of Levinas' apoliticality, was to describe her own politics in bringing her philosophical memoir *Love's Work* to a close. Its last sentences are: 'I will stay in the fray, in the revel of ideas and risk; learning, failing, wooing, grieving, trusting, working, reposing – in this sin of language and lips.' (Rose, 1997: 134-135)

That he 'stay in the fray' was precisely the advice given to Robert and Marianne Filliou in a discussion that they were to have, years after writing *Teaching and Learning*

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network of neural nodes and criss-crossing pathways [...] a volatile performative process, a spasmodic mesh of self-building, self-demolishing connections' (Maharaj, 1999: 8, 4)



*as Performing Arts*, with His Holiness Lama Dudjom Rinpoche. Robert Filliou had told their teacher:

‘I am fifty-four years old.. I am an artist.. I have written a few books.. I have worked for quite a while now in this field.. and I am invited at times to speak to people.. to work with them.. and artists of a younger generation have at times a way of looking upon me as some sort of teacher.. while I myself, I know that I have much to learn..! So, what do you think I should do..? Do you think I should stop for a while.. and really learn what I have to learn, before I speak to these young people and fulfil [sic] what they expect from me..? Or should I go on..?’ Their teacher immediately answered: ‘As long as we haven’t reached illumination.. we are all students.. [...] Meanwhile, [...] what we know we teach, and what we don’t know we learn’. Dudjom Rinpoche told him and Marianne: ‘Just go on with your work’<sup>225</sup>.

In an interview given near the end of his life, Levinas borrowed Dostoyevsky’s line from *The Brothers Karamazov* to outline his vision of responsibility, saying: ‘We’re all guilty of everything in relation to the other, and I more than all others. This ending, ‘more than all others,’ is what is most important here, although in a certain sense it means to be an idiot.’ (Levinas, in Rötzer, 1995: 59) He was ever insistent that his ethical philosophy was not a practical prescription for the everyday. Though he maintained in an earlier interview that ‘I am responsible even for the Other’s responsibility’, he followed with a caution that his were ‘extreme formulations which must not be detached from their context’, explaining that ‘[i]n the concrete, many other considerations intervene.’ (Levinas, 1998b: 99)

The absolute character of Levinas’ ethics makes it difficult to grapple with the unfolding of the practice of that ethics into, and as, the phenomenal world. The question of what precisely it would entail to act as ‘responsible idiot’, of how to undertake the translation from the notion of universal to highly particularized responsibility, was an existential inquisition that Levinas was not unhappy to leave to his others. It is here that Filliou’s practice of everyday life, an everyday practice that was decidedly non-everyday, provides some cues for performing an ethics of responsible idiocy.

Page 73 of *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts* (see image above) begins Filliou’s list of three principles he came up with — no doubt thanks to years of conferring

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<sup>225</sup> Robert Filliou had been sharing this story with Wijers. He explained to her: ‘The more Marianne and I go into the Vajrayana, the more we cannot help wondering at times, whether our actions are the right ones, or not.. The big problem for an artist in particular is this: Should I go on with my work.. or should I stop

over jokes, drinks and smokes with the friends pictured — which were meant to bring the world, or maybe even just the world inhabited by him and his friends, towards an entirely new way of conceiving value. The ever-neologizing Filliou called this the ‘Poetical Economy’. The first of its principles entails ‘rehabilitating’ what he calls the ‘café-genius’. All of us who have spent time as teachers and learners will readily agree that our most important lessons have come not from being on the giving or receiving end of formal instruction, but from the hours sitting around and discussing ideas informally, moments far away from the one-way-street that leads from informer to informed. The curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, having learned from every conference he had ever attended that all of the most interesting discussion invariably took place not in panel sessions but in the coffee breaks between them, recently organized an entire conference as one long continuous coffee-break<sup>226</sup>. Filliou’s café-genius was an attempt to encourage just this kind of laughter- and caffeine-enhanced brainstorming, alone or with friends, the *unarchic* autrisme of ‘losing oneself without getting lost’.

The second principle of Poetical Economy is the ‘Homage to Failures’. The failure is Filliou’s non-hero, the person who influences no one and thereby achieves the greatest success: helping to dismantle ‘the idea of admiration’ and ‘the deadweight of leadership’ (Filliou, 1970: 74). This idea was central to what could be called Filliou’s Fluxus-pedagogy, which did in fact seek to treat teaching and learning as performing arts. It is worth noting that for Levinas, too, the relationship between teaching and learning constituted one of the most poignant modes of the ethical relationship (Levinas, 1998a: 98-101, 180). Filliou stressed the interdependent, nourishing relation between teaching and learning, one in which failure would be celebrated in advance for the fruit it could not help but bear one day<sup>227</sup>.

Filliou’s third and final point, which is in many ways the linchpin of the Poetical Economy and the key to Permanent Creation, is what he calls the ‘Celebration of the

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for a while, and go as deep as I can into the doctrine.. and only after that eventually start again?’ Both quotes are from Wijers, 1996: 129.

<sup>226</sup> This was the ‘Art & Brain’ conference in Jülich, November, 1994.

<sup>227</sup> It is difficult to imagine a concept that would be more of an anathema to the course that education is set to take under America’s new President than Filliou’s homage to failure. Where the poetical economy’s experimentalism depends upon the valor of failure, the imminent Pure War economy depends upon excommunicating it.

Spirit of the Staircase'. We have all had the experience of leaving a party and finding ourselves halfway down the staircase when we are struck full force by what we should have said but did not. This is the Spirit of the Staircase. Filliou wrote that he was sure that once *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts* was published, what he had 'left unsaid, or said but could have expressed better', would be all too apparent to him. But rather than kick himself for not exploring all avenues, resolving all contradictions, bringing things to closure and his peers to their knees with his acumen, Filliou believed we should enjoy the anticipation of the revelation of the Spirit of the Staircase, and celebrate the phenomenon the experience of which shapes all of our lives to varying degrees. In fact, he proposed updating it by calling it the 'Spirit of the Elevator'. This special kind of late-blooming 'wit should make us smile, or laugh. Feeling too strongly that what we should have said is more important than what we actually did say, can only lead to guilt, or impotence, or both.' (Filliou, 1970: 74)

On one level, these points constitute an amusing art historical footnote from an artist who, like many central and peripheral participants in Fluxus, can always be counted on to provide us with a laugh. But on another level, Filliou's work helps focus the pointedly ethical nature of the serious *unarchic* play that has long been at work in the divergent projects of so many of the artists working, talking, drinking and laughing together in and under the Fluxus constellation. The focus that Filliou's Fluxus-pedagogy provides is one that does not close down the differences between these individuals and their creative and critical practices. His approach to the performance of teaching and learning provides a useful orientation toward the current flood of reappraisals of Fluxus, in that it provokes us to think not only about the place of the rise of interest in Fluxus in the current production of new forms of cultural knowledge, but to ask once again about the ethics of such knowledge, and whether the practice of peace might require the production of something like Filliou's non-knowledge. It is tempting to wonder, for instance, what kind of critical theory might emerge if we were to fully open ourselves to the nondual thinking expressed in the provocation Filliou issued to all ethnographers in general when he asked: 'Hey, instead of studying us, why not come over here and have a drink with us?' (ibid)

## *The Fruits of Failure*

Within a few years, in Hamburg from December 1, 1985 to January 12, 1986, Filliou's dream for the Art-of-Peace Biennale had become a reality, one that had come to involve hundreds of collaborators. The idea had emerged through his own work with the students at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, in his "Artists-in-Space/Art-of-Peace Biennale Study Group"; Filliou had been artist-in-residence there from 1982 to 1984. For Filliou Art-of-Peace and Artists in Space were inextricably linked. At the same time, this initiative was sufficiently broad, flexible and playful that Wijers' AMSSE conference in 1990 — even though neither Artists-in-Space nor Art-of-Peace as such would be part of its scope — could nevertheless consider the Art-of-Peace project to be its direct influence. And Filliou could consider both projects, Artists-in-Space and Art-of-Peace, to be part of the same larger aim. In a 1987 invitation for AMSSE<sup>228</sup> that he composed at Wijers' request, Filliou wrote:

'We are all against war and yearn for peace. But mere absence of war, however much we welcome it, is not truly peace. Peace is presence. It is not an abstraction, but an art. (Here, art = artists are. Peace = the peaceful are — it could mean all people on earth, if we but dared.) Peace is an art and, like all arts, an adventure, possibly the last one left to us, and certainly the greatest. In Amsterdam, Art meets Science and Spirituality precisely to probe what forms this art of peace may take and what new vistas its adventure may unfold.

This much we know: if we want peace, we must prepare for peace — and not 'for war', as the unrealistic saying goes. Then one day for sure, the radiance of peaceful minds — yours, theirs, ours — will set off the gentle chain reaction Bernard Benson calls "the peace bomb"<sup>229</sup>, and all will be well. The source of Art, Science and Spirituality is Intuitive Wisdom, akin to space, ever new. Masters of Wisdom are masters of peace, and catalysts. In Amsterdam, they may well infuse

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<sup>228</sup> AMSSE did not happen as such until 1990; a preliminary version of it had been planned for December 1987, as a continuation of the 1985/1986 Art-of-Peace-Biennale in Hamburg, of which more below, with 'Art meets Science and Spirituality' as a kind of subtitle. A third Art-of-Peace had tentatively been planned for 1989, in 'Oslo (or London or wherever)'. It seems that this took the form of the 1990 AMSSE. These details are mentioned in the last letter, which is not dated, that Filliou sent to Wijers before he and Marianne began their retreat.

<sup>229</sup> Filliou's reference is to Benson's *The Peace Book*, first published in 1980, an illustrated tale of a young boy whose refusal to understand why the leaders of the world persist in preparing for and thereby ensuring war ultimately leads the leaders and their people to understand the collective lunacy with which we allow ourselves to go on living. The boy succeeds in his quest for peace, as we are told in the introduction, where a group of children asks a storyteller what 'Peace Day' is and how the world came to celebrate it. 'Sit quietly and I'll tell you, 'cause without it... or what lies behind it, you wouldn't be here, nor would I!' (Benson, 1982: 8-9) It is interesting to note the closeness between the style of Benson's writing and Filliou's writing style in his letters to his fellow artists. Towards the end of *The Peace Book*, the little boy produces a handwritten letter whose words could equally have come from one of Filliou's Art-of-Peace invitations: 'Protecting ourselves from our neighbours is the path of Arms and leads to WAR! Protecting our neighbours from ourselves is the path of disarmament, and leads to PEACE.' (ibid: 179)

our open minds with the energy to walk the sky of Intuitive Wisdom together — all the way to just here, where peace is already, just now, we're told.

ALL ARTISTS ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE ADVENTURE

Thank you, and good wishes.<sup>230</sup>

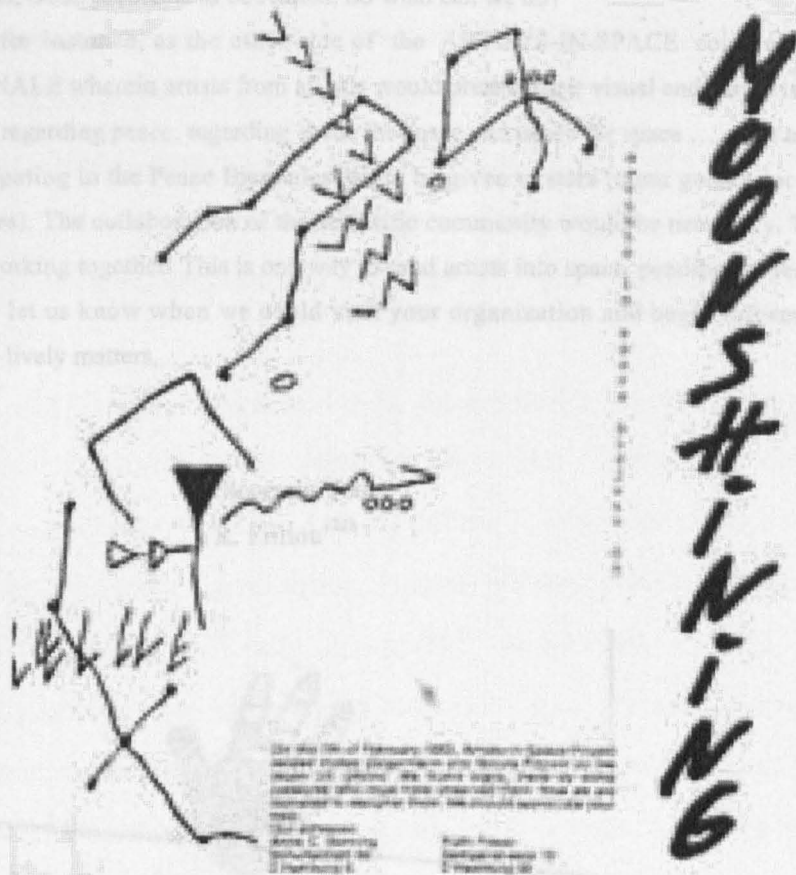
In preparation for preparing for peace, as part of the Artists-in-Space and Art-of-Peace-Biennale projects, in November 1983 Filliou wrote a poem entitled 'FROM LASCAUX INTO SPACE: an instant trip'.

- '1) being in a cave  
being like being in a cave  
being in the Lascaux cave  
being like being in the Lascaux cave  
when hungry for food  
recording the magic in our cave  
the miracle of feeding/being fed  
recording in our cave  
when hungry for food  
creating Lascaux in our cave.
- 2) when hungry for light in our cave  
when hungry for light in the  
darkness of our cave  
our minds being split  
by our own arrows our minds being  
split  
wanting to heal the mind  
being hungry for light  
making stars to go to
- 3) seeing stars on all sides  
being sky to go to
- 4) coming back to this place now  
coming back to this town  
coming back to this school  
coming back to this room  
  
smiling the peace smile<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Robert Filliou, unpublished invitation to AMSSE, May 1987. Filliou sent Wijers the text from his retreat, along with a letter to her dated May 13, 1987. In it, he told her that she should decide whether 'the invitation should be signed by name, or merely from "a fellow artist" — from here, it's difficult to realize whether there is a need of personalization or not.' All of Filliou's unpublished materials and correspondence to which this chapter refers were made available by Louwrien Wijers in January, 1998. The text referred to in Chapter Two above — Filliou's reflections which at Wijers' suggestion were made available to the meeting of the Art Meets Science planning meeting (the organizing group went by the names 'Kuratorium' and also 'Study Group') — was first written, also from retreat, on April 25, 1987. This is published in Wijers, 1996: 274-275.

<sup>231</sup> Filliou, unpublished draft of 'FROM LASCAUX INTO SPACE: an instant trip', November 1983. It is referred to on its title page as 'an instant recognition tape', suggesting that it was recorded.



Robert Filliou, Image from the Artists-in-Space project, not dated

On February 15, 1983, Filliou wrote a letter to the European Space Administration, telling them of his work with the eleven students in the Artists-in-Space project, which he had ‘initiated a while ago for the urgent fun of it.’<sup>232</sup> He told them:

‘We do not feel that artists should be expected to remain mere spectators of humanity’s investigation of space. As we know from past human performance, such as the conquest of the New World, this venture carries with it staggeringly negative as well as positive potential.

I am suggesting that artists participate in the space program of their various countries if the conquest of space is to be tolerably light and graceful. Of course, only genuine spiritual masters know by what precise alchemy homo sapiens might grow wings. Meanwhile, you know, we are

<sup>232</sup> At the end of this sentence, Filliou inserted the following, and only, footnote: ‘see PILOT PROPOSALS, Assembling Press, New York, 1982. A similar proposal is made in the same book by Roger Erikson, who suggests “a collaboration with NASA: orbit a team of artists as a study in effect of what to do during leisure time on long space trips” as “if anyone knows how to make the most of [a] bad situation artists do.” Roger and I, unawares, are each seconding [sic] the other’s motion, as it were.’

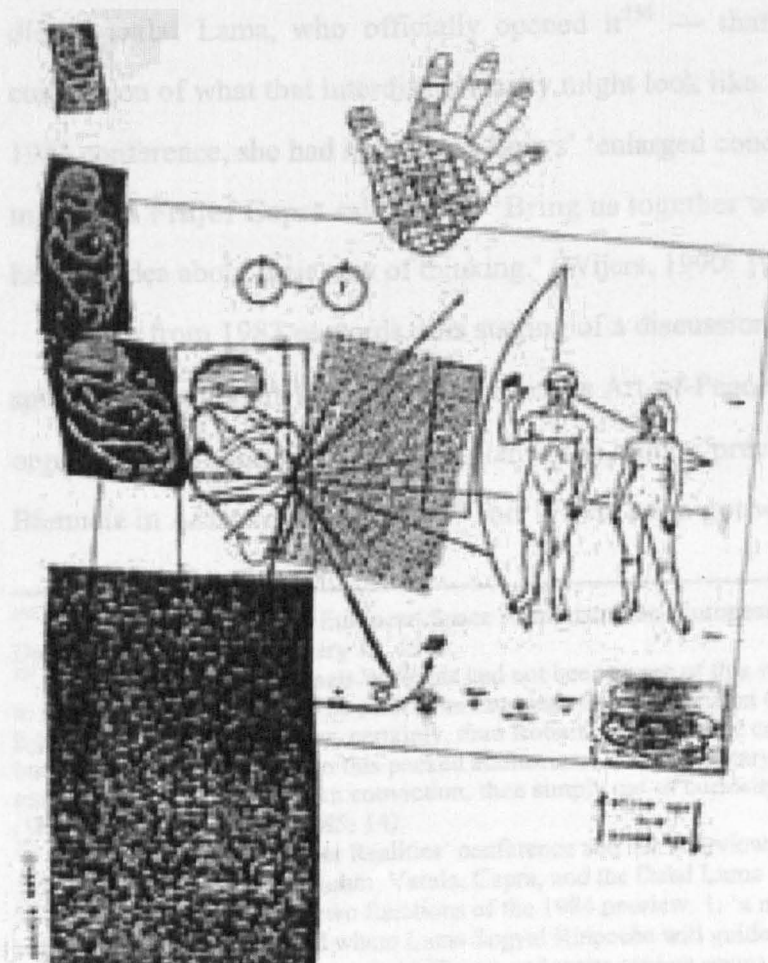
threatened with all-out atomic war, and yearly millions of people are dying of hunger, and we know all these problems to be related. So what can we do?

Well, for instance, as the other side of the ARTISTS-IN-SPACE coin, an ART-OF-PEACE BIENNALE wherein artists from all arts would present their visual and verbal intuitions regarding space, regarding peace, regarding space for peace and peace for space ..... The names of the artists participating in the Peace Biennales might be given to stars in our galaxy (or even to nameless galaxies). The collaboration of the scientific community would be necessary. This is one way to start working together. This is one way to send artists into space, pending the real thing.

Please let us know when we could visit your organization and begin informal talks touching th[e]se lively matters,

Sincerely Yours,

R. Filliou<sup>233</sup>



**Robert Filliou, Image from the Artists-in-Space project, not dated**

It is perhaps not surprising that Filliou had not yet been able, in his 'COMMEMOR' war-monument swap, to convince the governments of Europe to consider alternatives to war. What is surprising is the success he had in having them take the Artists-in-Space project at least somewhat seriously. Six months before he wrote 'FROM LASCAUX INTO SPACE', Filliou and some of his students at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste had actually visited the European Space Operation Center in Darmstadt at the invitation of its director<sup>234</sup>.

Much as Filliou's engagement with the possibility of sending artists into space had shaped his approach to an interdisciplinary Art-of-Peace, it was Wijers' own attendance of the September, 1983 'Other Realities' conference in Alpbach — in which scientists Rupert Sheldrake, David Bohm, Francisco Varela and Fritjof Capra took part, as did the Dalai Lama, who officially opened it<sup>235</sup> — that led her to a complementary conception of what that interdisciplinarity might look like. At one of the meals during the 1983 conference, she had mentioned Beuys' 'enlarged concepts of art and science', and an interested Fritjof Capra said to her: 'Bring us together with the artists of our time. We have no idea about their way of thinking.' (Wijers, 1990: 19-20)

So from 1983 onwards, this staging of a discussion between artists, scientists, and spiritual practitioners became her aim for the Art-of-Peace Biennale. She, Filliou, and the organizational committee had first planned to hold a 'preview' of the 1985 Art-of-Peace-Biennale in Amsterdam in 1984.<sup>236</sup> But Wijers soon got word that, because funding had

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<sup>233</sup> Letter from Filliou to the European Space Administration, European Space Operation Center, Darmstadt, Germany, February 15, 1983.

<sup>234</sup> It would appear that Emmett Williams had not been aware of this visit when in his introductory lecture to the Art-of-Peace Biennale he said: 'The European Space Operation Center in Darmstadt took the matter lightly, one supposes. Lighter, certainly, than Robert took it. In any case, there was no reply. Yet I cannot but wonder, as I look out into this packed auditorium, if some solitary somebody from the Space Center is out there listening, if not from conviction, then simply out of curiosity. Yes, welcome to the Fly-in!' (Williams, in Block, ed., 1985: 14)

<sup>235</sup> For her record of the 'Other Realities' conference and her interviews with its participants, see Wijers, 1996: 233-255. Sheldrake, Bohm, Varela, Capra, and the Dalai Lama were all participants in AMSSE.

<sup>236</sup> In her notes, Wijers lists two functions of the 1984 preview. 1: 'a meeting where artists will be regarding peace', and 2: 'and where Lama Sogyal Rinpoche will guide the art and tantra project for which a museum space and funds are needed.' The art and tantra project seems not to have emerged as a reality before the 1990 AMSSE project, in which Lama Sogyal participated. In her notes, she lists George Brecht, 'American artist, scientist, lives in Köln, former student of John Cage' as a key figure in the genealogy of the project. She mentions specifically his 1982 'Freedom in Art' project: 'How about drawing common law prisoners into the mail art/telefax network, making it available to them. Simply from now on include in your mailing lists your fellow women and men prisoners, publish their contributions alongside others'. In her collection of notes is the following early fragment of a draft, which appears to have been co-written by the committee: 'The Art-of-Peace Biennale proposes international gatherings where artists from all countries



become available to hold the project in Hamburg, the Amsterdam preview would have to be postponed. This meant that the 'Art meets Science and Spirituality' component — the notion of a dialogue with economists had not yet entered into the project — would have to wait until AMSSE in 1990. She recalled that in 1984, in an attempt to secure the funding for the Amsterdam preview, she had

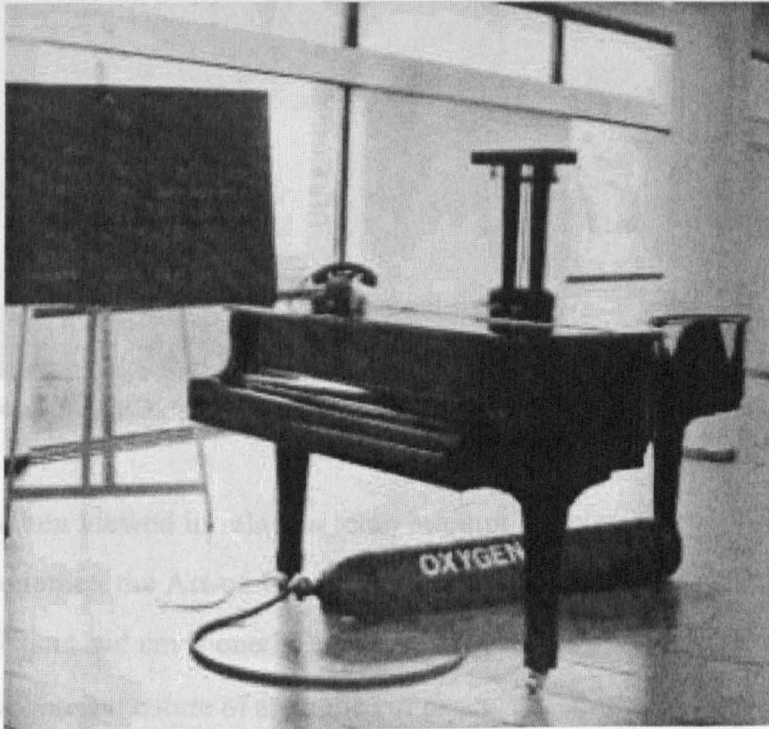
'put out the first application for money. Here, in Amsterdam. And I think I would have gotten it, [if I hadn't had] the message from Robert, that... the *first* Art-of-Peace-Biennale would be organized by René Block, and René Block already had money in Hamburg [from DAAD] and... we couldn't do a Biennale in Amsterdam and Hamburg at the same *time*, so Amsterdam was going to be postponed, first Hamburg was going to happen. And that was December '85, and my part, Art meets Science and Spirituality, would just be in the catalogue. I felt, 'This can't be', I felt so bad. Even the *writers* for the catalogue I wasn't allowed to choose. So *they* were choosing one person for *Art*, one person for *Science*, one person for *Spirituality*... in this catalogue. So I really dismissed the whole thing. And, I came for the opening, but it was as if I *couldn't* be there, you know. I left early, and I felt bad, because it was *another* exhibition, *four hundred* participants<sup>237</sup>, and everyone there, hanging up... a little thing [on the walls], I couldn't believe it. I mean, I didn't want to be *negative*, because it was a *good* thing, all together, and... I didn't want to disappoint Robert, because Robert had thought of it differently *too*, and Robert was already in *retreat*, by that time. I just wanted to keep... anyway, René Block said, "You'll do the thing in the right way in Amsterdam." That was his... washing off of it... So... that was the real false start. I was very disappointed. And it meant that I was waiting for two years to realize the first meeting... and, so in '86 after Beuys died I started again... The year before, '85, Beuys was very sick. Johannes Stüttgen whenever you called he said [voice raised, scoldingly]: "*Don't* go and see Beuys, he's *too tired!*" [laughs] So I kept quiet, you know... I felt I couldn't go. I, I think the year '85 I had seen him... hardly, maybe once. So therefore also I was a little bit off. I couldn't

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and all arts are meeting with scientists (Rupert Sheldrake, David Bohm, Francisco Varela and Fritjof Capra) and with accomplished spiritual masters (the Dalai Lama, Lama Sogyal, Raimon Panikkar) contributing to the weaving back together of the three threads of art, science and wisdom into a new tradition, a 'nouvel art authentique' let's say. Kunstverein Hamburg, the Biennale de Paris delegation and the Stedelijk/Fodor Museum have offered Art-of-Peace Biennales. A full fledged biennale with many artists invited, thousands of proposals explored cannot be organized without trials.' From Wijers' unpublished notes for AMSSE. Wijers kept these notes together with her extensive annotations to Filliou's *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, which she referred to frequently.

<sup>237</sup> In her introduction to the catalogue for the 1990 AMSSE conference, Wijers notes that there were 'no fewer than 391 artists from thirty-three countries' (Wijers, in *Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy*, 1990: 20) In this introductory essay, she notes that it was Dr. J.R.M. van den Brink, the former Minister of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands, and subsequently director of AMRO Bank, who added 'the element of current economics' to the discussions of art, science and spirituality. Van den Brink had told her: 'The dialogue will open people's eyes to the necessity of a broader framework. Currently, the biggest problem is that the globalization of the economy is considerably ahead of the globalization of policy frameworks, which should be based on world-wide cultural awareness. In that case an unbridled competitiveness is going to reign, which is what is happening right now. I fully agree with Joseph Beuys that the true capital is human creativity. This applies to art, science, spirituality, but also to economy. For the businessman, market signals are the dabs of paint on his palette. [sic]'' (van den Brink, in *ibid*: 22)

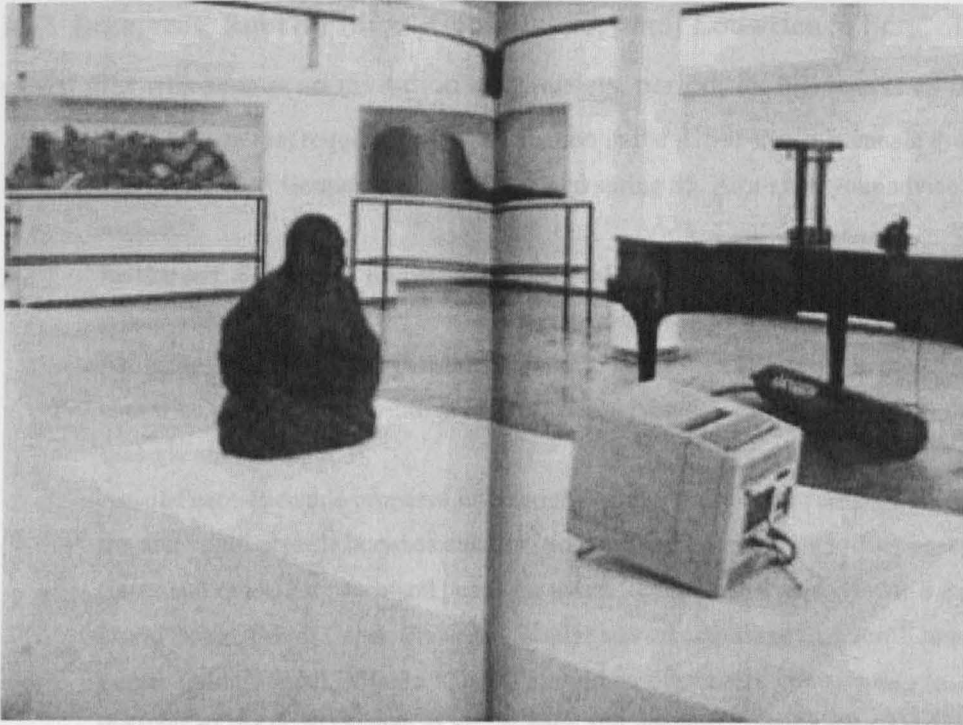
do much in the year '85. And '85 was the opening of the Biennale in Hamburg, and *indeed* Beuys sounded on the *phone*, because he couldn't come, he was too sick to come, he made his beautiful oxygen piece... it was quite clear that indeed Beuys was ill and... still it was very sudden that he died, you know, in January '86... it was very sudden... I had *felt* it, but I didn't want to *think it*, you know.' (Wijers, 2/2000: 4-5)



**Joseph Beuys, *Klavier, Telefon, Sauerstoff-Flasche*, Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985**

both to AMSSE as an actual event and to the ethos of continued, collective, interdisciplinary dialogue that both events shared. In this respect, each could be said to have found successes in the failures of the 1983 Bonn-Düsseldorf-Lüneburg meeting.

The Art-of-Peace committee's first newsletter, entitled "towards an ART OF PEACE Biennale", presumably written in early 1984 or even before, mentions that the biennale is 'to be held in Hamburg, West Germany, in summer 84 and spring 85. On the copy of this newsletter, which combines both Filliou's and Auer suggestions, and which had initially mistakenly been attributed to 'The Artists-in-Space/Art-of-Peace-Biennale coordinating committee', the words 'The Artists-in-Space' have been crossed out. There is also a footnote explaining that the committee members were, 'to date, Ann Berning,



**Nam June Paik's *TV Buddha* next to Beuys' installation, Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985**

When viewed in relation to an attempt to bring artists, scientists, and spiritual leaders together, the Art-of-Peace Biennale could fairly be said to have fallen far short of what Wijers had envisioned. But when it is seen as a collaborative artistic engagement with the notion and nature of a practice of peace, the Biennale emerges as a forum for experimental inquiry that can and should be seen as an important and eloquent contributing partner both to AMSSE as an actual event and to the ethos of committed, collective, interdisciplinary dialogue that both events shared. In this respect, each could be said to have found successes in the failures of the 1982 Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting.

The Art-of-Peace committee's first newsletter, entitled "towards an ART-OF-PEACE biennale", presumably written in early 1984 or even before, mentions that the biennale is 'to be held in Hamburg, West Germany, in autumn 84 and spring 85. On her copy of this newsletter, which contains both Filliou's and her annotations, and which had initially mistakenly been attributed to 'The Artists-in-Space/Art-of-Peace-Biennale coordinating committee', the words 'The Artists-in-Space' have been crossed out. There is also a footnote explaining that the committee members were, 'to date, Ann Berning,

K.P. Brehmaer, Robert Filliou, Georg Jappe, [and] Louwrien Wijers'. This draft of the newsletter was sent as an invitation to all artists, period; its full text is as follows:

'[The committee] requests your participation in the Art-of-Peace Biennale Preview to be held in Hamburg, West Germany, in autumn 84 and spring 85. As a start, your advice and comments are welcome.

At the Art School in Hamburg we initiated the Artists-in-Space/Art-of-Peace-Biennale study group. These projects are the two sides of the same creative coin:

Artists-in-Space suggests that artists participate as such in the space programs of their various countries, so that the non-utilitarian, playfully creative, PEACEFUL aspect of the conquest of space is not lost sight of.

Art-of-Peace-Biennale proposes international gatherings wherein artists from all countries and all the arts could present hunches and intuitions regarding space, regarding peace, regarding space (inner and outer) for peace and peace for space.... Meeting with scientists (i.e. Rupert Sheldrake, David Bohm, Fritjof Capra, Francisco Varela) and accomplished tradition<sup>238</sup> masters (i.e. the Dalai Lama, Lama Sogyal, Michio Kushi<sup>239</sup>) could be organized, contributing to the weaving back together of the three threads of art, science and wisdom<sup>240</sup> into a new Tradition, a "nouvel art authentique", let's say.

So!

Over the past two years, at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg, down-to-earth contributions to the art of peace have been experimented (i.e. the PEACE SMILE), and promising contacts established with the staff of the Dalai Lama and the scientific community (the European Space Administration, the Danish Space Research Center), the Kunstverein in Hamburg, the Biennale de Paris delegation, and the Fodor Museum, Amsterdam, have offered to host Art-of-Peace Biennale previews<sup>241</sup> in 1985 and 1986 respectively.

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<sup>238</sup> The word 'spiritual' is here crossed out with 'tradition' in its place, in Filliou's handwriting.

<sup>239</sup> Michio Kushi is referred to in Filliou's final 1987 Art-of-Peace-Biennale invitation as a 'Ying Yang philosopher/therapist/food expert'; Wijers had hoped to invite him to the 1990 AMSSE conference but was discouraged from doing so by John Cage, who told her that Kushi was so devoted to the Kushi Institute that he would leave the proceedings at the drop of a hat to return to the Berkshires if anything were to go even slightly wrong there while he was participating in the conference. (Wijers, 1/1998) The Kushi Institute is the world's foremost macrobiotic educational center, founded in Becket, Massachusetts in 1978 by Michio and Aveline Kushi (for more information, see the website of the "Kushi Institute", 2001: n.p.). It seems that Kushi had been a choice for the Biennale but because of budget restrictions could not be invited; nor could 'such precursoring scientists as Bernard Benson, Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, philosopher of science Raymond Ruyer, Francisco Varela, Hubert Reeves, David Bohm, René Thom... together with master of meditation Sogyal Rinpoche' (Wijers, 1996: 273) Sheldrake, Capra, Bohm, Varela, and Lama Sogyal Rinpoche all took part in the 1990 AMSSE conference. The details of the 1990 conference are too complicated to discuss here; for transcripts of these dialogues, see Wijers [ed], 1996; for transcripts of interviews with all of the participants, as well as others who, like Cage, took part in the project but did not attend the conference itself, see *Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy*, 1990. The tapes from the 1996 AMSSE conference in Copenhagen have yet to be transcribed.

<sup>240</sup> The word 'religion' is here crossed out with 'wisdom' in its place, again in Filliou's handwriting.

<sup>241</sup> Here the following footnote is inserted: 'previews only, for a full-fledged Biennale, with many artists invited, thousands of proposals explored, realized or sampled, cannot be organized without trials (and errors). Hence our request for advice and comments.'

At this point, DAAD Berlin lended its logistical support, and delegated René Block to organize the first manifestations on our calendar: a symposium between artists, scientists and tradition masters and an exhibition in May/June 85, at the Hamburg Kunstverein.

As we see it now, the symposium week-end will include:

— an international discussion between some ten (in all) invited artists, scientists and tradition masters (names and dates will be announced in due time by René Block)<sup>242</sup>.

— a public debate during which all the proposals made by artists (yours) will be aired. By the way we intend to publish a catalogue. It will list all your proposals. Depending on our budget, the coordinator will have recourse to summaries or groupings when and if the weight and length of the responses make it necessary.

— actions by artists. For instance the HFBK (Hamburg Art School) Study Group plans to enlist the support of scientists working at the Planetarium and for one night at least give the name of each participating artist (yours, unless you choose otherwise) to a star in our galaxy.<sup>243</sup>

In May/June 1985, there will be an exhibition at the Kunstverein under the provisional title of WHAT SHAPES PEACE? It should include samples of contributions to the art of peace made in the recent past by contemporary artists, and some new contributions drawn from your proposals.

During the 1985 Paris Biennale, plans at this time are to carry out some actions from an information booth manned by members of the HFBK and Danish Study Groups and French overseas guests, where films and books will be shown and information on the Art-of-Peace will be given. The 1986 Fodor Museum Amsterdam Preview<sup>244</sup> will take into account and build upon the results obtained in Hamburg and Paris.

That's all for today, except for 3 questions:

— do you think it advisable to set-up an Art-of-Peace Biennale?

— if you don't, would you care to say why?

— if you do, how should we go about organizing it? will you participate in the Hamburg Preview?

— if you will, what's your proposal?

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<sup>242</sup> Here the following footnote is inserted: 'Tradition masters might be asked what is peace? What is the relationship between inner and outer peace? Is peace something to attain or a state (of mind?) to go back to? In other words, is the irresistible [sic] movement towards unity forward or backward? passive — a prayer — or active — a tangible goal —?..... Scientists might be asked if peace is a meaningful concept in a world of strife where aggressivity seems to be at the root of the gratification of the twin hungers (for food and sex), and where the growth of science itself (and of technology and material "progress") is based upon competition and conflict. Is the age-long state of neither-total-peace neither-total-war we live in the only middle way opened to humanity, between mass suicide and utopic dream? ..... Artists might be asked what peace is for. What would a peaceful world (galaxy) look like? What is the architecture of peace? The Music? etc... War, as Jean Renoir saw it, is "la grande illusion". Isn't peace "the great abstraction"? WHAT SHAPES PEACE? What are we for is the question, not what we are against. We know everybody is against war. But what are we for? Peace? What form would you give to peace? ..... And so on. Let's hope some sort of synthesis will arise. It might, or it might not. We'll see. It's worth trying, we think. Do you?'

<sup>243</sup> Here the following footnote is inserted: 'this is 1 way to start working together. This is 1 way to send artists into space, pending the real thing.'

<sup>244</sup> This appears to be the actual date and location for what Wijers referred to above as the 1984 Amsterdam preview.

Please send all answers<sup>245</sup> to”

René Block/ART-OF-PEACE-BIENNALE PREVIEW

DAAD

Steinplatz 2, 1 Berlin, West Germany<sup>246</sup>

Filliou’s final appearance in public was on September 28, 1984 (six years to the day after d’Armagnac’s death) in Düsseldorf, at the opening of the ‘von hier aus’ exhibition. Here, Filliou had staged his project *Eins. Un. One*. Wijers described this as a ‘mandala, nine meters across, in which over 5,000 different coloured dice [on which only the number one appeared] were thrown.’ In addition to operating collectively as a chance-arranged mandala, the dies also served as multiples. As Filliou suggested, ‘You hand out the 5,000 dice to people who then carry together the exhibition ‘Oneness’ around in their pockets.’ (Wijers, in Wijers, ed., 1996: 12) ‘After the exhibition with this last statement’, Wijers wrote, ‘Robert Filliou entered a three year retreat, together with his Danish wife Marianne, and died towards the end, in 1987.’ (ibid)

In Filliou’s absence, his friend Emmett Williams delivered the inaugural address for the Art-of-Peace Biennale, aptly entitled ‘Welcome, in the name of.....’. Mentioning Robert and Marianne Filliou’s retreat, he touched upon their hope that the encounter with Tibetan Buddhism might serve as the catalyst for the reimagining, and reimaging, of peace.

‘As many of you know, Robert and his wife Marianne have withdrawn to a center of meditation in the Dordogne for three years and three months and three days, to a monastery close to the caves of Lascaux, near the spot where the remains of Cro-Magnon man were found. They are both joyfully confident that the coming of Tibetan Buddhism to the West will help shape the future of humanity in the direction of peace.’ (Williams, in Block, ed., 1985: 12)

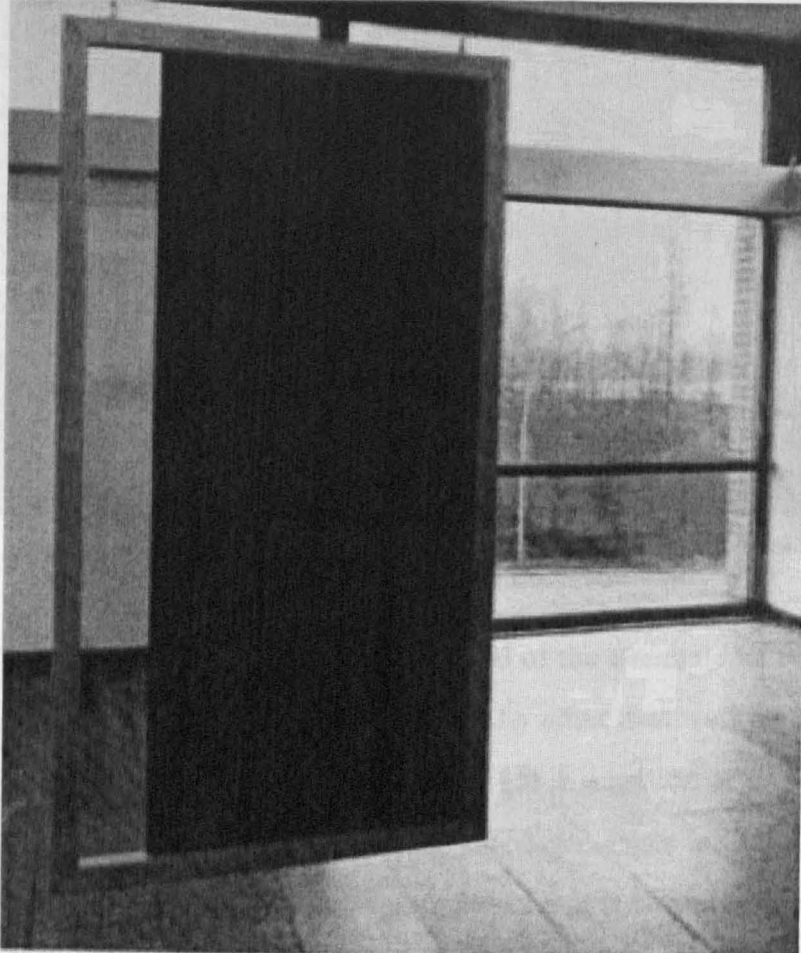
Williams underscored the experimental nature of this collective inquiry, returning to Filliou’s insistence that working for peace would entail something radically different than fighting against war:

‘There are Peace marches East, Peace marches West. And Peace protests and sit-ins and strikes. Some pray for it, some fast for it, some sing and dance for it, some fight for it. And some even kill for it. [¶] Is being against war the same thing as being for Peace? Filliou reminds us that,

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<sup>245</sup> Here the following footnote is inserted: ‘For our guidance — and bibliography — do you know of some contemporary contributions to an art of peace we should know about (for inst., Terry Riley’s A Rainbow in Curved Air, the 1980 Art and Survival Berlin meeting, Lili Fischer’s Peace Trees, Clemente Padin’s Pan/Paz, Emmett Williams’ white for governor wallace, Keinholz’s Idaho Peace Sculpture, etc..., etc...).’

sure, we don't want war and injustice, but to fight war and injustice does not automatically create Peace and justice.' (ibid)



John Cage, *Where is the war?*, Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985

I am... trying to say that for James truly enjoys the sounds of his music machines, and that learning to enjoy these sounds -- as well as the questions that enjoying them raises -- is what his work is all about. Or that Alison Knowles has discovered the best way to offer a first-class spiritual experience that takes her into terrain that she couldn't explore in any other way. Or that Robert Rauschenberg's "Miami Republic" was a piece that he truly tried to inhabit, and that his "principles of equivalence" -- the equivalence of well made, badly made, and not made -- was a plot of a music of thought that he actually attempted to practice.' (Martin, 2002: 73)

<sup>246</sup> *Excerpted instructions read: "Please step inside the circle of objects and sit down in the seat that has a*

<sup>246</sup> Final annotated draft of the first "towards an ART-OF-PEACE biennale" newsletter, not dated, courtesy of Louwrien Wijers.



Alison Knowles, *The Give and Take Chair*, (1984), Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985<sup>247</sup>

The legacy both of Filliou's work and of the Biennale he conceived is this notion that working for peace is something radically other than working against war, and that such a positively-defined practice, working not in negation of or in opposition to war but *for* peace, is characterized by a unique set of challenges as well as pleasures. Speaking about these in relation to Fluxus, and in a way that is entirely consistent with an art of peace, Henry Martin writes of what he calls 'the principle of libidinal research':

'I am... trying to say that Joe Jones truly enjoys the sounds of his music machines, and that learning to enjoy these sounds — as well as the questions that enjoying them raises — is what his work is all about. Or that Alison Knowles has discovered the bean to offer a first-class spiritual adventure that takes her into terrain that she couldn't explore in any other way. Or that Robert Filliou's "Genial Republic" was a place that he truly tried to inhabit, and that his "principle of equivalence" — the equivalence of well made, badly made, and not made — was a part of a mode of thought that he actually attempted to practice.' (Martin, 2002: 75)

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<sup>247</sup> Knowles' instructions read: 'Please step inside the circle of objects and sit down in the chair that has a seat. Study the objects for a while. Pick up an object of your choice and replace it with something of your own, in the same spot. Look around at what else there is to see. Step outside the circle when you are ready.' (Knowles, in Block, ed. 1985: 165)

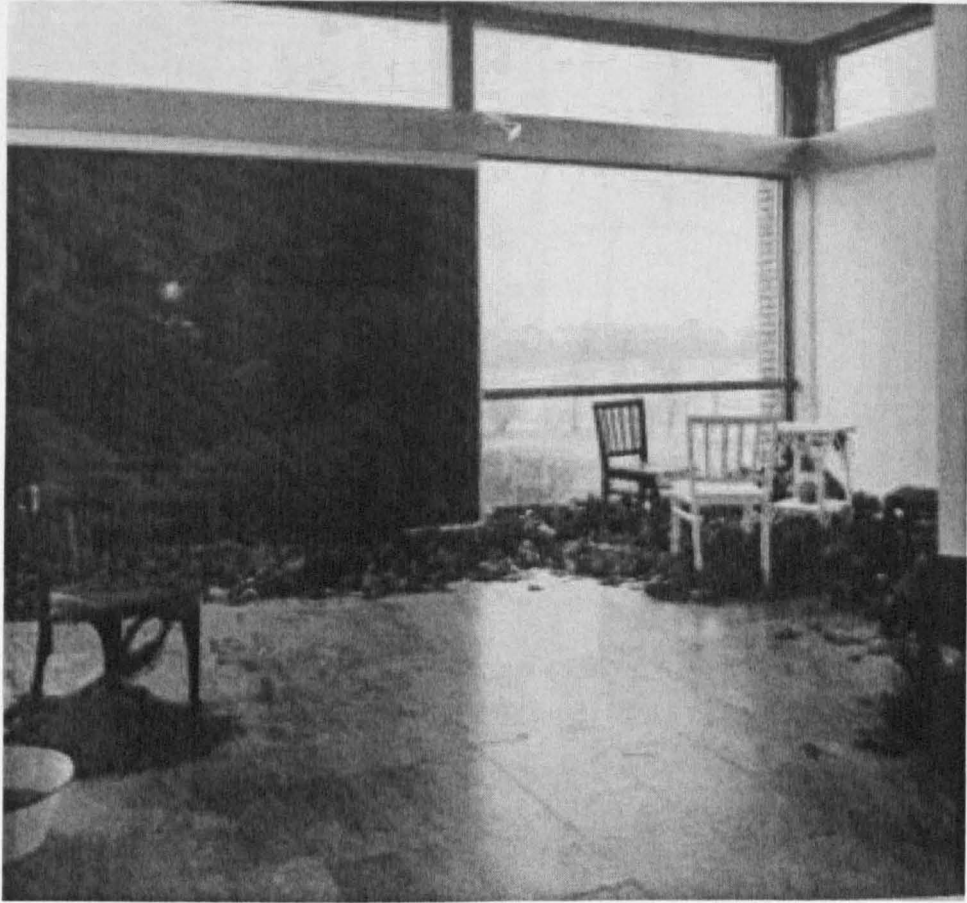


Art as libidinal research, like Filliou's research on research conducted at the Stedelijk,

'sometimes shares its problems with other fields of inquiry — as Surrealism, for example, shared the problems of depth psychology — but it seems to achieve its status as art by accepting no obligation to share the solutions that other such fields of enquiry espouse. [...] To look to any particular discipline for a key to any art is to court a kind of blindness. Art is a way of creating and testing experience, a way of following intuitions for only as far as in fact they will take us, whereas codified systems of thought are the things to which we turn when we feel the need to fill up the gaps in the body of intuitions that we can say we have culled on our own. And precisely where our do-it-yourself investigations will finally lead us is something of course that we cannot know. I remember an interview in which Louwrien Wijers questioned Robert Filliou about his involvement with Tibetan Buddhism. She asked him if he felt that he had been able to incorporate the Dharma into his work as an artist, and he replied, "I would feel incredibly lucky, as an individual, if I were able to combine the Dharma and my art". I think that "lucky" is the word that most needs to be stressed. Filliou had earlier remarked that art is not worth doing if the artist isn't totally committed to art, and he recognized that any such commitment is also a danger. He described it as the danger of becoming a "Master of Crazy Wisdom", and thus of creating one's own particular hell. That's the risk one has to take.' (Martin, 2002: 75)

It is worth noting the closeness between the notion of an experimental practice of 'creating and testing experience' and Emmett Williams' own assessment of the Art-of-Peace Biennale as a similarly, and necessarily, open-ended project.

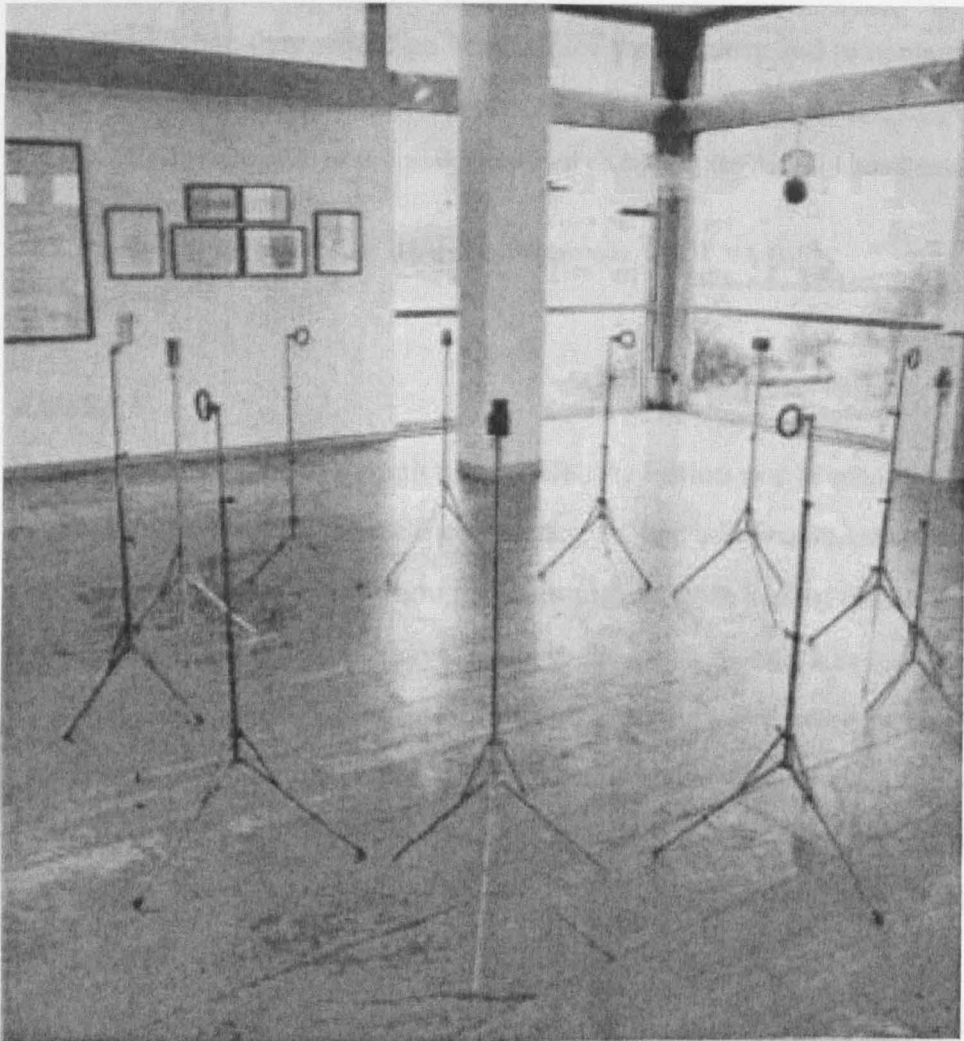
'By and large, the exhibition does not look or feel like a demonstration. It is positive, exploratory, and forward-looking, with only a few attempts to recount the horrors of war past and present. [...] As René Block, the organizer of the exhibition, predicted, contributors concerned themselves with peacefulness, beauty and the future; happiness, laughter and sadness; music, art and faith; about justice, wisdom, time, tradition and space; your problems, my problems and theirs, and an as yet undefinable something spelled p-e-a-c-e.' (ibid: 13)



**Geoffrey Hendricks, *New Moon. Full Moon. Seed Bed. Root Chair. Gandhi. Thoreau. George Fox.*, Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985**

In his own words, Filion described a work in the Biennale called *Telepathic Message No. 27*. It is as though it were the manifestation of the silence of mind he was seeking to cultivate in retreat, and his simultaneous wish to be present there at the Biennale to see so many others had worked to bring into being, making the silent music of the spirit with them even despite the absence of his body; as one among many participants in the formulation of this peace that is other than the absence of war.

Still in the midst of his retreat, Filion's health was ailing. On November 3, 1969, he wrote what was to be his last letter to Wijens. He told her that as a result of an earlier operation he had undergone to remove his cancer, he had developed a secondary cancer of the liver. "Western medicine", he wrote, "gives me a few months to live. Subodhya, Marianne and I are very well." He told her of his plans to remain on retreat until



**Robert Filliou, *Télépatique Musique No. 21*, Art-of-Peace Biennale, 1985**

In his own absence, Filliou contributed a work to the Biennale called *Télépatique Musique No. 21*. It is as though it were the manifestation of the silence of mind he was working to cultivate in retreat, and his simultaneous wish to be present there at the Biennale he and so many others had worked to bring into being, making the silent music of the mind with them even despite the absence of his body, as one among many participants in the formulation of this peace that is other than the absence of war.

Still in the midst of his retreat, Filliou's health was ailing. On November 5, 1986, he wrote what was to be his last letter to Wijers. He told her that as a result of an earlier operation he had undergone to remove his cancer, he had developed a secondary cancer, of the liver. 'Western medicine', he wrote, 'gives me a few months to live. Spiritually, Marianne and I are very well.' He told her of his plans to remain on retreat until

Christmas, when they would go home to see their family and to contact close friends by phone. Until that time, he said, she was welcome to write him. He ended his letter:

‘The thought of all of you working so hard on making the Art-of-Peace-Biennial no. II a reality is always present with me.

Don’t let the news of my illness discourage you. TOUT VA BIEN,

really —’

### *AMSSE*

In Amsterdam in 1990, though neither Beuys, Filliou nor Warhol would live to see it, Wijers brought the first AMSSE conference — one that was indeed, in spirit, the Art-of-Peace Biennial no. II that Filliou had kept present with him in his retreat — into being. Robert Rauschenberg took Beuys’ place in the meeting, and was on the same panel with the Dalai Lama, physicist David Bohm, and economist Stanislav Menshikov. Wijers had conceived a full-scale happening that included everything from macrobiotic cuisine for the participants to a custom-built structure to house it that had been based upon Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Chocolate Grinder’ from his *Large Glass*. It would be called the “Adobe Pavilion” and be constructed out of traditional adobe materials.

Amen or alas, the version of AMSSE that actually took place had to be scaled down significantly to meet with the available funding: ham and cheese sandwiches in the Stedelijk Museum. But by all accounts the project was a great success, both inside the conferences and in Amsterdam generally. The Canadian artist collective General Idea contributed a project in which they had several bright yellow Amsterdam trams painted with AIDS awareness posters, which after much protest the operators agreed to drive throughout the city. René Block suggested one of the other elements of the art initiatives that accompanied the dialogues themselves, a fax project by means of which artists from around the world could contribute to AMSSE. These were hung like posters at the tramstops throughout Amsterdam for two weeks coinciding with the conference (Wijers, 2/2000: 8).<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> It is possible that Block’s idea for the fax project came from George Brecht’s 1982 ‘Freedom in Art’ project. At the end of the 1990 AMSSE catalogue, the names are listed of all of the artists who participated in the art initiatives; the fax project is not mentioned specifically. For the full listing of participants in the Fodor Museum show (including General Idea, Tim Rollins and K.O.S., and Thom Puckey, who as half of

It is interesting to consider that for Wijers, the unfolding of this project was in every sense a continuation of what *she* saw to be the spirit of the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting<sup>249</sup>, and even more interesting to consider that it took eight years for these initiatives to begin to catch up with all of the conflicts as well as the possibilities that had been part of the ‘everyday’ fabric out of which that meeting of famous men had been constructed. It seems a suggestive challenge to think that it is precisely in these moments — in the strangely unsettled ‘everydayness’ of hotel lobbies, waiting areas, and cafes, this ‘everydayness’ whose unfolding each participant was in his or her own way partially responsible for — that ‘history’ happens.

About two years ago, I wrote to Marianne Filliou to ask her a few questions about her husband’s and her work. One day some months later, I received a postcard from her by way of reply. On the front of it was a reproduction of one of Filliou’s drawings, a circle of figures drawn in blue ink holding hands and dancing as if straight out of a Matisse painting. Above their heads he had written a string of words that come as close as anything could to articulating that magical and elusive thing called the everyday: ‘ART IS WHAT MAKES LIFE MORE INTERESTING THAN ART’. On the back, she wrote that she was very busy but that if I wanted to speak with her I was welcome to call her at home in France. When we spoke, I asked her about how being practicing Buddhists had impacted upon their work. She gave a warm chuckle and said: ‘Buddhist... yes... but of course you know that the Buddha himself was not a Buddhist.’ Indeed. Similarly, whenever we try to speak about it, we inevitably find that the ‘everyday’ — the site of epiphany, the source of irony, the home of experience, whatever that may be — is decidedly singular, complex, everything but everyday.

And indeed, it requires intense libidinal research to sort through the fog of what happened there, that day, in Bonn in 1982. We could begin with ‘what happened’: all of the path-crossings, encounters, and so forth (what de Certeau et al call the ‘neighborhood’); then there was the *milieu* that was used to make sense of the primary

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Reindeer Werk had participated in the 1978 “European Performance Series”) see *Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy*, 1990: 416-421.

<sup>249</sup> In all of her writings on the AMSSE conferences, she speaks of the import of this meeting. See Wijers, ed., 1996: 11-12 (this publication also contains a poem John Cage wrote specifically for AMSSE, entitled

encounter, and which had the effect of subordinating all these seemingly secondary path-crossings and comminglings to it; this milieu ensured that, within the space of that day, in order for an event to ‘happen’ it had to participate as a resident in that Eurasian ‘neighborhood’. This was a milieu which, seemingly ‘horizonless’, nevertheless had its contours, and they were provided by Beuys and by the investment of his ego in the role of facilitator of the Eurasian encounter.

When the day ended, that is, when the specific attachments that had made this milieu exist had been dissolved by the ostensible ‘nothing happening’ of the meeting, the milieu itself ceased to be. It stopped being that which organized the unfolding of the events, aspirations, and agendas that constituted it. These events themselves became historical.

The milieu, undone by the actuality of the encounter, slipped back from the ‘Eurasia’ of Beuysian-Buddhist Celtic-Orientalism. But the encounter itself had produced an entirely different set of relationships. From the quasi-tectonic meeting of these great plateaus — scapes that blossomed around each of these two respective figures, Beuys and the Dalai Lama, men with such charisma, presence, cultural and moral authority; scapes at once so apparently intelligible to one another, so seemingly compatible in so many ways, but yet in real time quite unavailable and unintelligible to one another, so much so that their encounter was almost bewilderingly uneventful — from the fissures and the epistemic and existential aftershocks that the meeting produced, an entirely different set of routes became apparent for effectuating what was in some ways what all of the participants in the meeting had hoped for in the first place, but which demanded the absence of the determining uncertainty of the Eurasian ‘horizonless milieu’ in order to begin to make itself happen. Nothing had to happen in order for what it had been hoped would happen to be given the chance to do so.

This meant, most practically, that the terms of this encounter — ‘Western’ with ‘Eastern’ culture, the ‘Eastern’ elements within ‘Western’ culture with the ‘Western’ elements within ‘Eastern’ culture’, all of these undecidable relationalities — had to eclipse the Beuysian refrain, and the Beuysian ego. Both, indeed, played a major role in

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“Overpopulation and Art”, *ibid*: 14-21); Wijers, 1996: 7-10 especially; and Wijers’ introduction to *Art*

effectuating this encounter. Though it would not be possible within the fraught space of a single day to do so, nor, it could be argued, was Beuys himself the person to do it, the refrain at least marshalled the individuals and events into position to produce something other than what it or Beuys could produce. As this day demonstrated, the refrain itself — as an extension of one man's conscious and unconscious intentions — was insufficient. It was insufficient in terms of its inadequacy with respect to the heterogeneous positions of the various Western and non-Western artists and others, those who helped directly and indirectly over the previous years to bring the encounter into being, and those who actually came to Bonn that day to show solidarity, support the aims which they believed that day to represent, and get involved in whatever developments might take shape.

More pointedly, it was inadequate with respect to the political realities of the Tibetan government in exile. Although the West knows him as a Nobel laureate, an eloquent writer, speaker, and activist on the subject of contemporary ethics — in short, as a multifaceted part of its own pop culture pantheon — the Dalai Lama is much more than this. He is the political leader of the government in exile of Tibet, which includes those Tibetans living in Chinese-occupied Tibet, as well as members of the Tibetan diasporic communities in India and worldwide. Although it is now in exile, the Tibetan Kashag represents one of the oldest governments on the planet, and he is its patriarch. He is also the head of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the largest and most powerful of its four major sects, and as Dalai Lama he is the senior leader of the adherents of all of them. Beyond that, although all of the various traditions of Buddhism do not have an official leader, he is arguably Buddhism's unofficial figurehead.

The Dalai Lama would surely be the first to consider his meeting with Beuys as a meeting with another human being, who like any sentient being is equally possessed of the Buddha-nature and hence ultimately on equal footing. He is quite genuine in his insistence that 'as a human being I have a much larger responsibility toward the whole human family—which indeed we all have' (Dalai Lama, 1999: 20), and would surely have thought of his meeting with Beuys as a part of the enactment of this equally-borne responsibility. But it would be misleading to think of the two of them as equivalent figures, one from the

West and one from the East, although many of Beuys' acolytes have argued for such parity, and although the Beuys cultural industry that has been built up around his by no means diminishing fame certainly benefits by his comparison to a figure of the Dalai Lama's stature.<sup>250</sup>

To return to the consideration of the day of their meeting, it could be argued that the 'failure' of this meeting is far from tragic, although it certainly seemed so initially to many of those friends and colleagues of Beuys who gathered that day, and who keyed into him as the day's barometer. Rather, as with any proper failure, it is only a disappointment to the extent that its productivity is overlooked. This productivity permits the meeting, and the din of the day's discussions and debates for which it served as a center of gravity, to be thought of as properly comic. The following words, which hung over Samuel Beckett's desk, are fitting here: 'Fail, fail again, fail better.' The Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting was an exemplary failure. In that it still offers possibilities for crafting the means to engage with the strands of the 21st century's increasingly complex ethical, existential fabric, its failure continues to exist in the present tense.

For Beuys, as for most all of those non-Tibetans who gathered that day, the Eurasia milieu was the *only* thing that could happen, the only way in which what happened could happen. It was at the same time 'horizonless', without certain parameters, and perfect in its limiting effect. It was only when the distressingly *unthinkable* happened, that is to say, when *nothing* happened<sup>251</sup>, that what Wijers had hoped might happen could begin, finally, to take shape.

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<sup>250</sup> Thanks to Ken Friedman for pointing out this important detail.

<sup>251</sup> It should be said here that, while the notion of 'nothing happening' is in this case defined in relation to the confounded expectations of the artists who gathered in the hotel in Bonn, and so is defined in relation to the way in which what happened was in fact the unfolding of nothing happening, there is perhaps a productive dialogue to be held between an unintentional or accidental 'nothing happening' and a non-intentional (in Cage's sense of the term) 'nothing happening'. As Henry Flynt has pointed out, the 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of a complex dialogue of practices, many of them informed by Cage, which in attempting to foreground the dissolution of art did in fact engage with the question of what would happen when nothing happened. Perhaps the extreme contribution to this set of practices was Ray Johnson's *Nothing* on July 30, 1961, the last event scheduled for the last evening of George Maciunas and Almus Salcius' A/G Gallery. 'Con Edison had cut off the electricity. Johnson had placed wooden dowels on the darkened stairs leading to the closed gallery. The audience was supposed to trip and break their necks on the way to a non-existent performance.' (Flynt, 1993: n.p.) In that the nothing happening that took place in Bonn was the unintentional and uneventful failure of what Beuys and his friends had hoped would happen — the synthesis under the rubric of Eurasia of Western materialism and Eastern spirituality — it is of a very different sort than the nothing happening that happened in Johnson's *Nothing*, in Cage's 4'33", or in Yves Klein's 1958 empty gallery or his patented "International Klein Nothingness", which he



### *Obliteration*

In his development of Levinas' notion of obliteration, Howard Caygill differentiates obliteration from annihilation by locating each in relation to its philosophical genealogy. Annihilation is the reverse of Platonic participation. Annihilation substitutes 'absence and nothingness' for 'presence and plenitude'; it is only the negative value of the notion of the direct and intelligibly traversable mimetic chain linking idea, thing, and representation of that thing.

The notion of mimesis used here must be contrasted with Taussig's 'mimetic excess'; whereas participation permits a reversibility, mimetic *excess* entails a fabric of incessantly doubling ethical relationships, permitting the 'power to both double yet double endlessly, to become any Other and engage the image with the reality thus imaged.' (Taussig, 1993: 255) Mimetic excess, in that it does not maintain the separation between self and Other, would appear to be at odds with Levinas' ethics. It is however possible to argue that, despite Levinas' maintenance of this separation, it is at the moment in the ethical encounter at which one feels oneself to be the other's other, the moment of responsibility, that Taussig and Levinas converge. Despite the difference of the language used to speak of the shaman's therapeutic practice, this practice is of necessity an enactment of responsibility for the other. So while it departs in overt theme and language from Levinas' writing, the moment of the encounter is the subject of both.

Taussig explains: 'The chanter chanting creates and occupies a strange position, inside and outside, part of, yet also observer of the scenes being sung into being.' He is not in between them, but is, literally in every sense, suffused with them. This is not an *occupation* of several positions, as if in a kind of tenancy, but an existence *as* part of the fabric of interhuman intrigue (indeed, in Taussig's case, not just human), a condition of exposure in which one is 'vulnerable — a sign of what it takes to enter the interzone of mimetic space.' (ibid: 111) Though he refers to it as an 'interzone', this space is entirely different from the in-between space of the liminal, which he specifically rejects, arguing instead for the necessity of being bound to 'both positions at the same time' (Taussig, 1993:111). What he thus describes as a 'capacity potentiated by post-coloniality... to

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added to his line of "International Klein Blue" (IKB) and "International Klein Immateriality" (IKI) (Flynt,

live subjunctively as neither subject nor object of history but as both, at one and the same time' (ibid: 255), can be seen as a condition congruent with Levinas' insistence that politics be able to be checked by the ethical (Levinas, 1998b: 80). While Levinas did not, in his philosophical writings, engage with the question of how the absolute nature of his ethics might actually translate into, or how morality would operate with respect to, the interpersonal politics of contemporary encounters with difference, the anarchy to which his work opened finds its answer in Taussig's notion of a present whose 'spinning is giddy', un-organizing

'the possibility of defining the border [between self and other] as anything more than a shadowy possibility of the once-was. The border has dissolved and expanded to cover the lands it once separated such that all the land is borderland, wherein the image-sphere of alterities, no less than the physiognomic aspects of visual worlds, disrupt the speaking body... into words hanging in grotesque automutilation over a postmodern landscape where Self and Other paw at the ghostly imaginings of each other's powers. It is here, where words fail and flux commands, that the power of mimetic excess resides as the decisive turning point in the colonial endowment of the mimetic faculty itself.' (ibid: 249)

Like mimetic excess, obliteration entails an economy entirely other than that of participation-annihilation. Like participation-annihilation, it also works 'with the collateral of eternity'. But while in the terms of participation, 'the eternal idea is the source of light... for obliteration it is the enduring light which is the source of eternity.' (Caygill, 1998: 137)

Caygill articulates this in terms of the process of photography: the light that permits the photograph 'has already passed, it is elsewhere; while the photograph endures in its wake, part of another pattern of light moving through and past us.' For Levinas, as read, indeed as *obliterated* by Caygill, the photograph presents a means of thinking the decidedly human movement of obliteration as an alternative to the 'philosophical syntax' of participation. The photograph, writes Caygill, paraphrasing an early Levinas essay from 1948 entitled "Reality and its Shadow", 'obliterates its object by marking its removal; it is as though the photographed object "died, were degraded, were disincarnated in its own reflection."' (Levinas, in ibid: 137) Photography therefore

does not represent its object at a third remove from the ideal; it permits its 'disincarnation', marking the movement of the light whose endurance produces eternity.

The processes of taking a photograph and forming a concept of something could thus both be thought as uses of technology (photographic, conceptual) in the intentional (following Husserl: an orientation that tends towards the rendering-intelligible of an object)<sup>252</sup> engagement with the phenomenal world. Both of them, to the extent that they think to fix the putative 'object', produce an adequation of which obliteration is the undoing.

In his critique of Levinas' desire to stage the face to face encounter, an oblitative encounter 'without intermediary and without communion', Jacques Derrida writes:

'This unthinkable truth of living experience, to which Levinas returns ceaselessly, cannot possibly be encompassed by philosophical speech without immediately revealing, by philosophy's own light, that philosophy's surface is severely cracked, and that what was taken for its solidity is its rigidity. It could doubtless be shown that it is in the nature of Levinas's writing, at its decisive moments, to move along these cracks, masterfully progressing by negations, and by negation against negation. [...] The poetic force of metaphor is often the trace of this rejected alternative, the wounding of language. Through it, in its opening, experience is silently revealed.' (Derrida, 1978: 90)

It is Derrida's wont to insist that Levinas turns to metaphor in the 'decisive moments' of his writing<sup>253</sup>. His critique depends upon this assertion. Which is to say it depends upon the demonstration that Levinas' writing does indeed employ metaphor and negation — the 'neither this... nor that' — in the way that Derrida implies. Early on in his essay, he makes an apparent 'detour' to consider the difficulties posed to the critic of Levinas by the inseparability of his style of writing from his intentions.

'...Levinas's writing, which would merit an entire separate study itself, and in which stylistic gestures (especially in *Totality and Infinity*) can less than ever be distinguished from intention, forbids the prosaic disembodiment into conceptual frameworks that is the first violence of all commentary. Certainly, Levinas recommends the good usage of prose which breaks Dionysiac charm or violence, and forbids poetic rapture, but to no avail: in *Totality and Infinity* the use of metaphor, remaining admirable and most often — if not always — beyond rhetorical abuse, shelters within its pathos the most decisive moments of the discourse.' (Derrida, 1978: 312n7)

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<sup>252</sup> 'Hence intentionality,' writes Levinas, 'where thought remains an *adequation* with the object, does not define consciousness at its fundamental level. All knowing qua intentionality already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently *non-adequation*.' (Levinas, 1998a: 27) For a nuanced reading of Levinas' work on Husserl, see Derrida, 1978.

<sup>253</sup> See Derrida, 1978: 312n7, where exactly the same wording — 'decisive moments' — is used.

It appears that Derrida will be vigilant against slipping into exegetical violence. This would have the effect of illuminating Levinas' own violence, carefully touched upon in the second step of Derrida's footnote. Levinas, he says, 'recommends the good usage of prose which breaks Dionysiac charm or violence, but to no avail'. Derrida presents himself as obliged by Levinas' own style to ensure his own good usage of prose. Not surprisingly, therefore, he does not disappoint; the very sensitivity which Levinas implicitly demands is at once caught by the barb of Levinas' own failure to avoid Dionysiac 'charm or violence'. To charm is to violate. In forbidding such rhetorical rapture, Derrida suggests, Levinas cannot but succumb to it. Here, where his putative will to renunciation quavers, cannot but quaver, his employment of metaphor turns, 'if not always', to 'abuse': here, at the instant of oppression, masked by the movement of negation, hidden by 'pathos', are housed the 'decisive moments' which are the crux of his ethics. Dutifully, on the grounds of Levinas' polished, only occasionally abusive rhetorical style, he offers a tactical worry:

'By too often omitting to reproduce these metaphors in our disenchanting prose, are we faithful or unfaithful? Further, in *Totality and Infinity* the thematic development is neither purely descriptive nor purely deductive. It proceeds with the infinite insistence of waves on a beach: return and repetition, always, of the same wave against the same shore, in which, however, as each return recapitulates itself, it also infinitely renews and enriches itself. Because of all these challenges to the commentator and the critic, *Totality and Infinity* is a work of art and not a treatise.' (Derrida, 1978: 312n7)

If *Totality and Infinity* is a work of art rather than a philosophical treatise, Derrida's subsequent barrage of philosophical erudition does seem to raise the question of why his own response nevertheless insists upon engaging with it as a treatise.

Describing his own prose as 'disenchanted' is a second tactical ruse, for nothing is more 'enchanted' than Derrida's prose. His oblique compliment stages a comparison by which Derrida casts his own work as the exposition, and the exposure, of metaphor, calling attention, as with his exegesis of Levinas' violent light, to Levinas' dependence upon this trope.

But as the above passage, nestled into the fold of a footnote, demonstrates, it is Derrida himself who develops and deploys the oceanic metaphor to describe Levinas' style. It is Derrida's own writing that evokes and utilizes elementality in an attempt at forensic exposure of the violence inherent in Levinas' metaphysics. For Derrida, Levinas

is unable, despite 'admirable' effort, to escape from that most fundamental metaphor: 'the nudity of the face of the other — this epiphany of a certain non-light before which all violence is to be quieted and disarmed — will still have to be exposed to a certain enlightenment.' (Derrida, 1978: 85)

Why can it not escape? Because of a problem inherent in Levinas' thinking, or because escape is not at all what that thinking is after? To imply that 'the metaphysics of the face as the *epiphany* of the other' cannot 'free itself of light' because it 'perhaps has no opposite' suggests that Levinas himself believes that his writing *can*, through its sly management of metaphor and negation, and *wishes* to, free itself from light. It suggests that it is accurate to read Levinas' use of 'light' in terms of metaphor, and that, somehow, it would be desirable to Levinas to be able to rely upon the opposition between light and its opposite, such that he could negate that light and the violence of intellegibility that Derrida insists it entails. 'Light perhaps has no opposite; if it does it is certainly not night.' (Derrida, 1978: 92): this suggests that 'light' can only be metaphor, and that light's obliteration must be, or must aspire and fail to be, negation. Derrida writes that 'all languages combat within' this light, that philosophy — and Levinas is no exception — is only ever '*modifying only* the same metaphor and choosing the *best* light'<sup>254</sup> in which to do so. (ibid: 92) The insistence that light has no opposite is a derailment; light has no opposite just as the ocean has no opposite, and Levinas' writing in no way depends upon such oppositions, either in style or intention.

Derrida's claim that Levinas' work 'proceeds with the infinite insistence of waves on a beach' is itself metaphorical. It is even unproblematically so within the space of his own text; in that it underwrites the use of the lesser violence of philosophical illumination to combat greater violences, Derrida's essay could not be taken to task for resorting to metaphor, despite its pretensions to the contrary ('By too often omitting to reproduce these metaphors in our disenchanted prose...'). But this avoids the fact that, literally, *makes* all the difference: Levinas' writing is not metaphorical at all. It does not write by metaphoric relationship to the elemental, the light, the ocean, but it *enacts* the elemental,

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<sup>254</sup> The full passage is socketed into Borges: 'Light perhaps has no opposite; if it does, it is certainly not night. If all languages combat within it, *modifying only* the same metaphor and choosing the *best* light,

the luminous, the oceanic. Though Derrida insists that Levinas' waves on the beach constitute 'return and repetition, always, of the same wave against the same shore', a passage in *Totality and Infinity* calls attention to the fact that neither wave nor shore is ever the *same*. Though speaking of fresh rather than salt water, the point would be the same:

'Man as the measure of all things, that is, measured by nothing, comparing all things but incomparable, is affirmed in the sensing of sensation. Sensation breaks up every system... Only in this way does becoming acquire the value of an idea radically opposed to the idea of being, does it designate the resistance to every integration expressed by the image of the river, in which, according to Heraclitus, one does not bathe twice, and according to Cratylus, not even once.'  
(Levinas, 1998a: 59-60)

Neither what Derrida calls metaphor (light) nor employs as metaphor ('same waves against the same shore') succeed in enveloping what takes place in Levinas' writing as the thought 'expressed by image', which is not equivalent with metaphoricality. That which is expressed is expressed not *as* the image, but in tandem *with* it; it is not a carriage *over* ('meta-phor' is a carrying-over as between registers or milieu), in which writing takes possession of the event (waves crashing, river running). Elemental enactment is undone by the event and thereby endures through it, 'beating its own record'<sup>255</sup>. Levinas writes: 'The depth of the element prolongs until it is lost in the earth and in the heavens. "Nothing ends, nothing begins."' (ibid: 131) This describes the relation of obliteration to the

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Borges... is correct again: "Perhaps universal history is but the history of the diverse *intonations* of several metaphors" (*La sphère de Pascal*; my italics).' (Derrida, 1978: 92)

<sup>255</sup> Luce Irigaray asked a series of questions of Levinas that poses what is perhaps the pivotal tension within his relationship to elementality through her focus upon Levinas' erotics: 'When it is not traditional metaphysics,' she writes, 'what governs the ethical order in Levinas is fundamentally a law deriving from God. [...] But how are God's commandments brought to bear in the relationship between lovers? If this relationship is not divinized, does that not pervert any divinity, any ethics, any society which does not recognize God in carnality? And who is the other if the divine is excluded from the carnal act? If these gestures of ultimate relations between living humans are not a privileged approach to God, who is he? Who are those who testify to such a God? Who are, where are the others? **And why, and how long ago did God withdraw from the act of carnal love?**' (Irigaray, 1991: 186, emphasis added) It is here, and not in the milieu marked out by Derrida's text, that we can locate Levinas' doubt, marked by his wariness of the elemental. In *Totality and Infinity*, he warns that 'the separated being must run the risk of the paganism which evinces its separation and in which this separation is accomplished, until the moment that the death of these gods will lead it back to atheism and to the true transcendence [...] The nocturnal prolongation of the element is the reign of mythical gods. Enjoyment is without security [...] Enjoyment, as interiorization, runs up against the very strangeness of the earth.' Levinas, 1998a: 142) In light of Irigaray's critique, the question that this passage poses for Levinas' ethics is: what is the use of the God to which atheism leads us, if the relation to the infinite transpires through the encounter with the other, which is to say, the concrete, existing other, 'in the street, along the road'? Put differently, who needs God if carnality can be seen to be divine?

enduring light: ‘... a scintillating light whose very flash consists in extinguishing itself, a light which at the same time is and is not.’ (Levinas, in Caygill, 1998: 137)

It is with this provisional clarification of obliteration, with its relationship to an endurance that is not about freedom but about responsibility, which is not at all the ‘opposite’ of freedom, that we might return to Derrida’s claim that Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity* is not a treatise but a work of art. What *difference* does this claim really *make*? ‘Finally,’ writes Levinas, ‘infinity, overflowing the idea of infinity, puts the spontaneous freedom within us into question. It commands and judges us and brings it to its truth.’ (Levinas, 1998a: 51) In freedom’s obliteration one will have felt oneself to be responsible for the other<sup>256</sup>.

This is explored by Adrienne Rich in her poem “Eastern Wartime”, which gives voice to the ‘enduring light’; it speaks through the figure of memory, which tells us of the eternal passing of that which is remembered, and its consequent iteration as the production of infinity:

‘Streets closed, emptied by force    Guns at corners  
with open mouths and eyes    Memory speaks:  
You cannot live on me alone  
you cannot live without me  
I’m nothing if I’m just a roll of film  
stills from a vanished world  
fixed lightstreaked mute  
left for another generation’s  
restoration and framing    I can’t be restored or framed  
I can’t be still I’m here  
in your mirror pressed leg to leg beside you  
intrusive inappropriate bitter flashing (Rich, in Bhabha, 1996: 202)

‘I can’t be still I’m here’: the iteration that speaks through memory extinguishes it, produces its dis-incarnation, for it is here that the now re-remembered, re-positioned

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<sup>256</sup> This distinction might provide an alternative way of engaging with Derrida’s critique of Levinas in his essay “At this very moment in this work here I am”, in which Derrida expands his critique of Levinas’ violence by seeking to meet him within the space of the ethical encounter itself, thus taking up where Levinas had left off — in his own essay “Wholly Otherwise” — with his expression of ‘the pleasure of a contact made [with Derrida] in the heart of a chiasmus.’ (Levinas, 1991: 8) In his reply, Derrida goes to nearly schizophrenic lengths and employs perfectly untranslatable prose in order to suggest that Levinas’ ethics depends upon a kind of violent proscription that takes the form of the futurity of the bond which Levinas ‘will have’ insisted upon, ‘will have obligated’ in advance. But the question that Derrida leaves unclear is whether it is accurate to say that Levinas ‘will have obligated’, or whether he, Derrida, as the other’s other, will have felt himself to be obligated (Derrida, 1991: 11).

‘subject speaks the present in the past’ (Bhabha, 1996: 201). Like the photographed object, it is as if the remembered subject ‘died, were degraded, were disincarnated in its own reflection.’ It is with respect to this dis-incarnation, and the eternity that it produces, that obliteration can be said to be ‘deferred destruction — an envelope of a future determined in advance’, but in another respect obliteration, like re-memory, ‘marks the possibility of a future’ (Caygill, 1998: 138). Again, unlike Platonic participation in which the lightsource is the eternal idea, this future is produced by the ‘light moving through and past us’, the light spoken through Rich’s ‘I’, ‘whose very flash consists in extinguishing itself, a light which at the same time is and is not’ (Levinas, in Caygill, 1998: 137).

To the extent that this ‘light which at the same time is and is not’ nevertheless endures and in doing so produces the eternity, could there be said to be a difference between disincarnation and reincarnation? Are both different ways of articulating the ‘interhuman intrigue as the fabric of ultimate intelligibility’, an intelligibility that is not one ‘where thought remains an *adequation* with the object’, but one that ‘already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently *non-adequation*’ (Levinas, 1998a: 27)? Could this non-adequation be thought of not as disincarnation, reincarnation, or incarnation, but as a prefixless and enduring *carnation* that is productive of an infinite interhuman *fabrica*, a making felt that is ‘insensible of mortality and desperately mortal... learning, failing, wooing, grieving, trusting, working, reposing – in this sin of language and lips’? (Rose, 1997: 135)

What then is *carnated*? In one of his dialogues with Nágasena, King Menander<sup>257</sup> asked the sage:

‘Reverend Nagasena [...] is it true that nothing transmigrates, and yet there is rebirth?’

‘Yes, your Majesty.’

‘How can this be?... Give me an illustration.’

‘Suppose, your Majesty, a man lights one lamp from another — does the one lamp transmigrate to the other?’

‘No, your Reverence.’

‘So there is rebirth without anything transmigrating!’ (from *Milindapañha*, in de Bary, 1972: 24-5)

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<sup>257</sup> Menander, or Milinda, was a Greek king in northwestern India in the second century BCE. The text *Questions of King Menander* tells of the dialogues between the king and the sage Nágasena, which are reputed to have persuaded the king to convert to Buddhism (de Bary, 1972: 21)



Earlier in their discussions, Nágasena had made an argument for continuity through rebirth which returns us to Levinas' 'light which at the same time is and is not':

'Suppose a man were to light a lamp, would it burn all through the night?'

'Yes, it might.'

'Now is the flame which burns in the middle watch the same as that which burns in the first?'

'No, your Reverence.'

'Or is that which burns in the last watch the same as that which burned in the middle?'

'No, your Reverence.'

'So is there one lamp in the first watch, another in the middle, and yet another in the last?'

'No. The same lamp gives light all through the night.'

'Similarly, your Majesty, the continuity of phenomena is kept up. One person comes into existence, another passes away, and the sequence runs continuously without self-conscious existence, neither the same nor yet another.' (ibid: 24)

What is important is not so much the valuation or the establishment of the veracity of reincarnation but the notion, one that is expressed in any form of *carnation*, of an ineluctibly irreversible continuity that is nevertheless not a totality.<sup>258</sup>

Like death, obliteration is irreversible because it is not to be thought in the terms of the interchangeable forward and backward flow of participation, 'from idea to appearance and back to idea'. It is other than annihilation, but to the extent that it could be seen to produce a nothingness, it would be a rich and pregnant one, a nothing-happening which would be the basis for the successes and failures of experiment. Caygill notes that while Levinas felt that this 'enduring interval [is] monstrous and inhuman... it can also mark risk. Obliteration does not guarantee arrival', at either end of the tramline between idea and appearance or any nicely demarcated stop in between, 'but only the possibility of the journey.' (Caygill, 1998: 137-8)

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<sup>258</sup> Levinas' own position with respect to reincarnation was clear. 'I recall from my meeting with him', says Stephen Batchelor, 'not so much an explicit aversion to Buddhism — though he certainly had no interest in it and seemed slightly disdainful — but a deep dislike of the notion of reincarnation'. But Levinas was at the same time equally unequivocal about the centrality of 'the notion of death in Western thought (by which I understood the finality of death as constitutive of human experience, following Heidegger).' Batchelor went on to note that the doctrine of reincarnation 'is as much Hindu as Buddhist and, from my own perspective, not essential to Buddhism anyway'. Email from Stephen Batchelor, July 7, 2001. On Heidegger's complex intellectual relationship with Eastern thought, see Batchelor, 1990: 121; see also Parkes, 1996: esp. 105-6. Interestingly, Heidegger, Levinas, Beuys, and the Dalai Lama have all insisted on the importance for Westerners of not being so eager to venture outside the 'Western' tradition. See

### *Obliterating Eurasia*

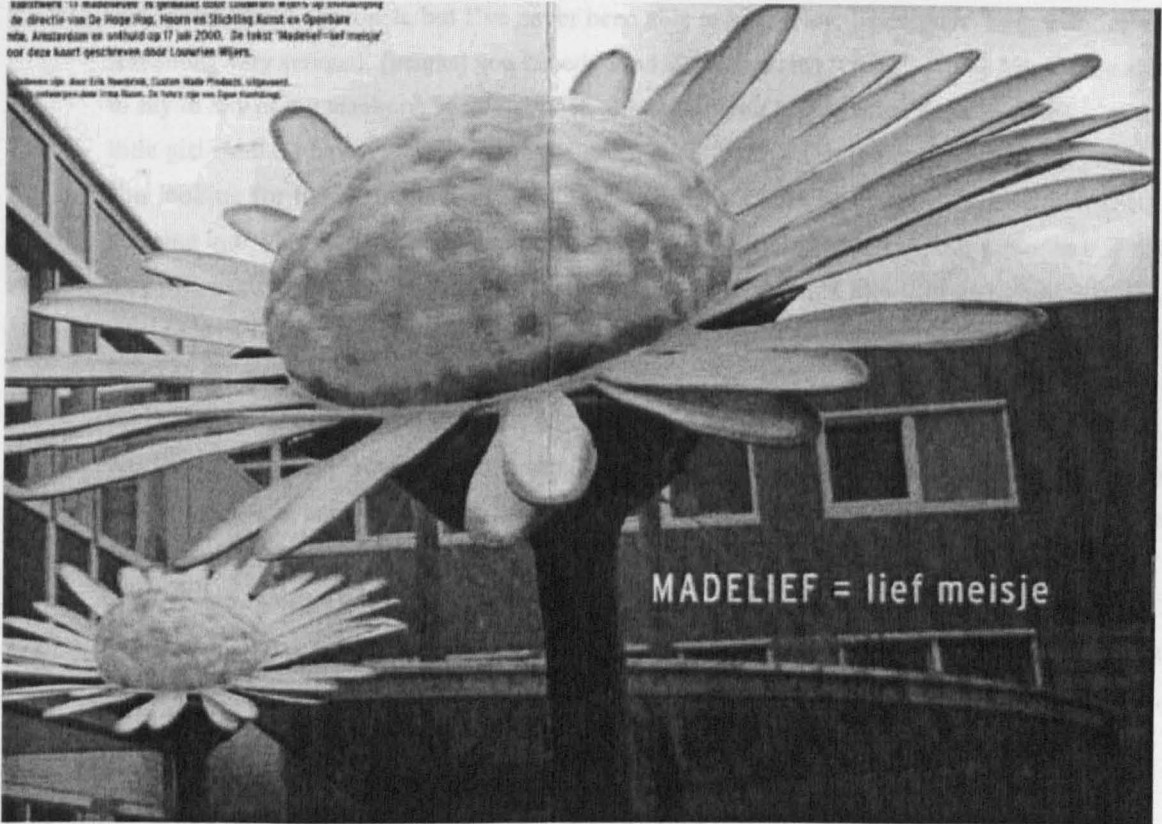
This possibility of the journey is what happens when nothing happens. The angst of many of the participants that day in Bonn owed to the failure of the events to unfold as they expected — which is to say the failure of the individuals involved to act in ways that conformed to the blank script that each participant carried with him or her — which itself owed to their investment in the *techné* of the Eurasian milieu. Its obliteration, overflowed by the confluence of chance and necessity, permitted the liquefaction, the un-organization, of that which had been yoked to the idea of Eurasia, to Beuys' stewardship. Even plans or hopes that had not yet even been brought into speech, ideas and proposals that had been generated even before the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting became articulated as a possibility, like Filliou's "Art of Peace Biennial", were that day penned up in the horizonless milieu. It would not be accurate to say that Eurasia's obliteration freed these ideas. Rather, it permitted a different consciousness of their interdependence. This opened into the realization of the "Art of Peace Biennale", her dissatisfaction with which led Wijers to embark upon the AMSSE conferences. This is not to say that Beuys and his Eurasia were moved past with any kind of finality. Wijers would be the last one to wish for the disappearance of his memory, since his work helped bring her to the construction of these conferences and the encounters they have produced.

Any encounter, especially an organized encounter like a conference, a meeting, a symposium, and so forth, always runs the risk of becoming a milieu. It is always threatened by the *thinkable*, by a conceptualization that does violence to the difference with which one comes into contact. Indeed, it is a risk that must be run in order to stage such events; in this way that concepts may be used as tools to effectuate increasingly rich, complex, provocative encounters.

In this respect, obliteration is the movement of the ethical encounter. As infinity it is a movement guaranteeing only 'the possibility of the journey'.

sculptuur: 17 madelieven is gemaakt door Louwrien Wijers op aanwijzing  
 de directie van De Hoge Hoop, Hoorn en Stichting Kunst en Openbare  
 ntu, Amsterdam en onthuld op 17 juli 2000. De tekst 'Madelief=lief meisje'  
 oor deze kaart geschreven door Louwrien Wijers.

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 de directie van De Hoge Hoop, Hoorn en Stichting Kunst en Openbare  
 ntu, Amsterdam en onthuld op 17 juli 2000. De tekst 'Madelief=lief meisje'  
 oor deze kaart geschreven door Louwrien Wijers.



Louwrien Wijers, *17 Madelieven*, 2000<sup>259</sup>

### Catalysis

‘I forgot to say, when we were talking about my work, that I have always positioned myself very much as a... *female*. [...] So, I just wanted to say that again that, in my relationship to *anyone* around me, if it's the Dalai Lama or even Heyboer, Beuys... I *always* have to take this place of a woman. It is something that culture... in the first place asks you to do, and in the second place, I wanted... it to *happen*. Because I felt that this would be *new* in art, you know... So that was my strongest point, I never wanted to act as a *male* in the art scene, because I thought that hadn't gone... the right way. [...] And I actually have pictures of myself in this studio, at work , and I

to the Dalai Lama”, 2001:123)

<sup>259</sup> On July 17, 2000 Wijers completed *17 Madelieven*, a sculpture for an Amsterdam home for mentally disabled people. It consists of a number of larger-than-life-sized daisies, large enough for people to walk under. She noted with unease the way that large abstract sculptures are frequently doled out to such institutions without consideration of the way they might impact their residents' perceptions of their daily environment. ‘I just didn't feel that was right,’ she said, ‘to give [such a] visual to people who already have a very... subtle... way of being. A visual that is incomprehensible, I've always disliked that.’ She chose the daisies in order to give momentary feelings of being small, childlike, providing a means whereby past sensations of serenity or wonderment can live again in the present. (Wijers, 2/2000: 41-44)

look male, you know. But, I never wanted... it is something that comes with doing art, that you get a male-ish... the difficulty in that whole *game* is, that I can never speak *up*. And not... with the Dalai Lama... also because he's the Dalai Lama, you know [laughs] but he is male, and thinks 'Aha, this is a girl', you know. Wow! You are sitting there... this is *good*, for the East this was very good, this... approach, but I've never been able to say: 'Hey, listen guys, I am working on something very serious!' [laughs] you know! 'And *don't*... get me wrong!' [I've] *Never* been able to say to *any* of my teachers, even Heyboer, yesterday, you know, when he talks to me, I'm the little girl. And... I have to stick with that. I don't *mind*, but I... I'm looking for that, you know... I'm looking for the *girl approach*, and how can I *work* with it. That... *femininity*... that... weaving into what is *there*, but *getting* out what I think is important, you know. So: that is my way of working. And... we didn't mention that last time, and... I like... to just... tell you, that until today I'm taking that position of a *woman*, you know, I'm coming into the *home* that I'm working for now, and that's why I *dress* like a woman, you know... I wear... when I walk in the street, the Moroccan and Turk people, because I wear this... *scarf* [on her head] they are happy, you know, they [say] 'Aaaah! What a nice lady, she must be... Islam, you know!' But then when we had Russians here, in the harbor, I'd... come around the corner and there are two or three Russians: 'AH! Babushka!' And they start speaking in Russian to me, you know... and they [say]: 'You're not... you're not Russian!?' and [I say] 'No, I'm not Russian, I'm from Holland, here!' 'But you look like a Russian lady, oh wow!' [laughs]... So... I'm trying to find a *way* that is a *shape* that everybody sees as a woman, you know... I'm giving a picture of... a *global* woman, you know! [laughs]' (Wijers, 2/2000: 54-55)

Speaking of a New Zealand conference she had hoped to organize for 2000 but which has yet to secure funding<sup>260</sup>, she says: 'I would so much enjoy if [Art Meets Science] can travel to all the places in the world, if it gets into a... way of being, of existing, where it can be *welcome* in *any* part of the world, and *still* has Western ideas and combines it with *other* ideas. So ... the format of the talks in New Zealand I am hoping to get from the Maoris. So maybe we will change the format completely, so that maybe it becomes a different format... And I think that is what Art Meets Science *needs* at the moment. It has worked, but it should *grow*, it should grow into something that can live in the twenty-first century almost by itself...' For her, if the project does not produce catalysis it is just another conference.

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<sup>260</sup> Of this next AMSSE, she says: 'I am hoping that the Dalai Lama will come. [...] What I don't like about Art Meets Science as it is working now is that it is too white and too Western. So for the first time I will have a chance to bring in the indigenous people. And bring in their... and they have been hoping to meet the Dalai Lama for a long, long time.' (Wijers, 1/1998)

After a pause, she reflects: 'It's easy to get empty things. You can buy them everywhere.'

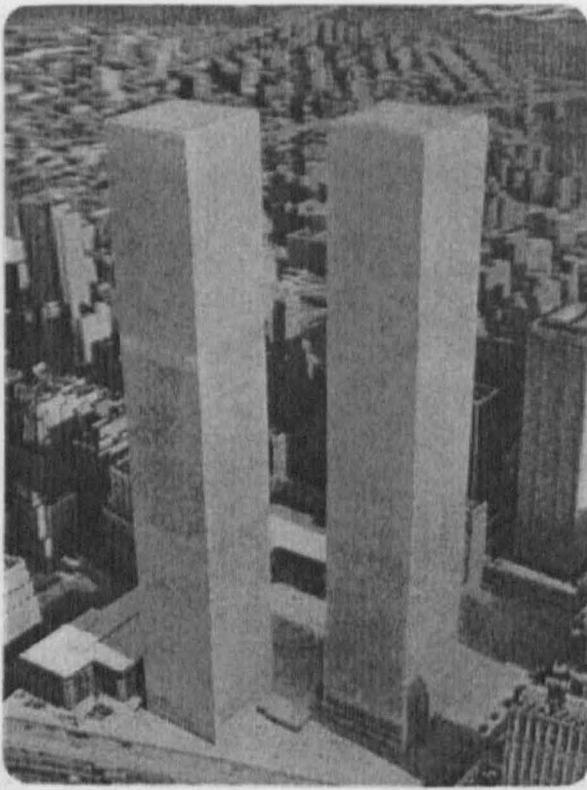
With these discussions of global culture, it was perhaps inevitable that the topic of freedom would come up. She saw freedom to be the subject of most of the works by the male artists she had known and loved. She had never known quite what to make of it.

'Its all about freedom, because that was the subject in ah... ahm... not only Beuys' work but... Heyboer too, you know, everything was about *freedom*. How to free yourself, your inner self. And, you know, Filliou, Heyboer, Beuys, its all about *freedom*. And then you come to the Dalai Lama and he says, 'Freedom? What do you mean? Nobody is free from money.'<sup>261</sup> [laughs] So you know... when I explained to the Dalai Lama the Free International University, he said 'Free, what do you mean? Nobody is free... for instance from money'. So you know, for me that was good, because I could never *catch* the image of *freedom*... in all... throughout *all* those years, even with... the existentialists, they were always talking about *freedom*. I could never understand what they were talking about. It was *so vague*.'

I replied that my sense was that with Universal Responsibility, one might be free to the extent that he or she is responsible for someone else's freedom. Wijers: 'That is much better, yes.' I continued: 'So you can't... just be free by yourself.' 'No.', she added, 'Your own freedom shouldn't count. It is the *other* one's freedom. [...]. It is all about: How can I protect you, so that you can be free from sorrow and... *blockages*, and... wounds that you have. So... we're always freeing each other.' (Wijers, 2/2000: 63)

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<sup>261</sup> Here she is paraphrasing her April 2, 1982 discussion with the Dalai Lama; see Wijers, 1996: 159.



Joseph Beuys, *Cosmos und Damien 3D*, 1974

Beuys' multiple *Cosmos and Damian 3D* is named after Cosmas and Damian, the early Christian martyrs and Arab physicians whose acts of healing, and their refusal to accept payment for them, became legendary. These legends have it that they performed the first limb transplant, known as "The Miracle of the Black Leg", by removing the diseased leg from a Roman and replacing it with the leg of a recently deceased North African. While it is generally agreed that this could not in fact have taken place, the story has lived on as the founding myth of organ transplantation, and Cosmas and Damian are today the patron saints of healers, druggists, physicians and surgeons (Thompson, 2002: 12) Here Beuys uses the Social Sculptural logic to transform the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center into two giant sculptural objects that can be read as either blocks of sulphur or butter, or both. Sulphur was, along with salt and mercury, considered by 15th-century healer and philosopher Paracelsus, one of Beuys' most important influences, to be one third of the material triad out of which the whole world was fashioned. Butter itself also appeared often in his works, serving much the same function as fat: an illustrator of the way love, compassion or warmth altered the physical form of things.



**Joseph Beuys, *24 Stunden*, 1965, Gallery Parnass, Wuppertal**

For Beuys, the continuum of temperature change, the change from cold to warm, implied a move from a highly-ordered state to a chaotic one; this chaos was not, as we might expect, a violent disorder. Here Beuys, through a relatively simplistic action — putting his cheek against a block of fat until the warmth of his flesh began to make it melt — demonstrated the capacity of creating a different kind of chaos, one brought about and sustained by human warmth or compassion, which for Beuys was not divorcible from Social Sculpture. Beuys once said:

‘Suffering and compassion should not arise in man because of biographical events, but every person should in himself be able to suffer and show compassion, that is, he should be so penetrable and open that he can. For example, when one speaks about the sociableness of man, one has to know that suffering and showing compassion are the actual prerequisites for becoming a social being.’ (Beuys, in Murken, 1979: 149)

Wijers has explained this Gallery Parnass action with the following anecdote. When she and Beuys visited Japan together in 1984, at the invitation of the Watari family and the

Seibu Museum in Tokyo<sup>262</sup>, Wijers was interviewed by a Japanese television crew who asked her to sum up Joseph Beuys' work in *one* word. 'One word?', she asked. She thought for a moment and gave it to them.

'Well, if you want only one word, I would say that word is *love*.' (Wijers, 2/1998)

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<sup>262</sup> No thorough or accurate record of this important visit exists in English. A series of writings dealing with Beuys' work, with texts in both Japanese and English, prompted by the 1984 visit, was published by Watari-um under the title *Joseph Beuys — Beyond the Border to Eurasia* in 1991. The tapes of Beuys' discussions, lectures, and so on have yet to be transcribed. Beuys made the trip in order to raise money to support his "7000 Oaks" project that was already underway, but which ultimately was not completed in his lifetime; the final oak was planted in 1987 by his son Wenzel Beuys. In his visit to Japan, Beuys gave a series of lectures, spoke extensively with students and with the Japanese public, and made an immobile multiple when he signed the sidewalk in front of the Tokyo airport. He also performed a duet with Nam June Paik. The Seibu Museum had invited Beuys to come in conjunction with a retrospective exhibition of his work, while at the same time, and independently, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, with the backing of Sony and the Japan Foundation, had planned a retrospective exhibition of Paik's work. For Paik's touching narration of their trip to Japan, which began when they accidentally found themselves on the same Lufthansa airlines flight, and their duet, see Paik, 1993: 66.



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Recorded interviews with Louwrien Wijers in January, 1998; January, 1999; and February, 2000 are the source of the information about Wijers’ organization of and involvement with the Beuys-Dalai Lama meeting in Bonn, Germany, 1982; her own life and work; and the life and work of Bernard d’Armagnac and her relationship with him. Records pertaining to Filliou’s ‘Artists in Space’ and ‘Art of Peace’ projects, Wijers’ involvement in the 1985 ‘Art of Peace Biennale’ in Hamburg, Germany in 1985, the organization of the 1990 and 1996 ‘Art Meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy’ conferences come from unpublished documents and notes provided by Wijers.

This thesis represents what is to my knowledge the first and only discussion of the majority of the above materials, and the first attempt to historicize and interpret them in relation to 20th century cultural history.

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