Collected Short Texts

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Publications and Other Details
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This collection assembles my short texts.

Stephen Barber
THE RAW GESTURE OF EUROPE
(1990/1999)

The human body in Europe exists between the visual and the visceral. Images created by that body project and intensify its desires, eruptions, depressions, activations, impulsions. The body is sustained through images that incise, and by experiences in dark places (nightclubs, cinemas, city streets at night), by self-immersions and self-glorifications, killings of the self and resuscitations. The body is in a state of catastrophe. It must be courageous to survive, refusing the suffocating precariousness of its existence while embracing the unknown upheavals and bliss of its obliteration. What it can leave, of its presence in the world, is a barrier of scars against that world, against envelopment and obliteration: its own scars of images. Scars are the traces of life on the body: they are the mark of self-directed, wild gesture: the body’s images project them out. They last only for a short moment, and have to be gripped, grasped, kissed-at, sucked-at. The scar is also infinite, created to be deepened indefinitely by pain or joy or despair, saturated with sensation to bursting point, and kept in against the world of Europe and its invasive media screen, as a carapace. This carapace is developed by layers and sweeps, collisions and ricochets of corporeal fragments. The strength of the body’s own scars of images emerges from the body’s refusal to be engulfed into the media screen of Europe. This refusal is a work of gesture.

Nothing is more abstract than the body. The body in Europe needs its bones back: its shoulderblades and vertebrae, ribcage and elbows, heels, kneecaps. The work of rhythmic reconstruction, to pound together the body’s own scars of images, from exposed components and skeletal fragments, is a ferocious process of gesture. The gesture is the directed trajectory of the body, that gives the body back to the body. Gesture is in constant danger of being lost, and the body separated from the body. Gesture must be immediate, to adhere self to body, the body to its own image, with intentional immediacy. Gesture seizes the face, arranges its components by violence, refuses the collapse of the body into the homogenizing, overwhelming media screen of Europe. It is gesture that refuses representation and propels the body as a mass of movements, corporeal architectures, all compacted into one another. Gesture is the slightest thing. It has no substance in itself: it is in flight through fluid
space, open to incidents, interruptions and accidents, until it can aggressively hit the media screen of Europe and burn the image of the body in, ripping and decimating that screen.

The person who is creating their own action of Europe becomes exhausted by the exertion involved in the work, starts to hallucinate. The hallucinations are provoked to grind their way into images of the body, transforming instantly, formation to formation, obsession to obsession. The work of transformation itself is a grand hallucination that transports the body into a torrent of identity. The sensation of identity is hallucinated into a thousand metamorphoses, from the sexual angel to the murderous monster. The body is itself a hallucination: the head is the site of gross transmutation: magnified, obscured, revealed, sensationalised, obsessed, ignited. The body believes it must compulsively project its own voids and scars, and hallucination makes images spill and swarm over the body, abundantly. The body hallucinating must give the hallucination life and breath, but has to control its hyperventilation, so that the image of the body gesturing out its wild hallucinations is experienced as lucid. The vital hallucination is so lucid that it exhausts its own maker, generating and proliferating new hallucinations - a strange and multiple world of the hallucinating body in tension with the abject media screen of Europe. The body is impelled by a voracious visual transmission, carried and discharged by the hallucination. The hallucination lives in and as the body.

The border between image and body is the ultimate infuriation, the site of an intimate abrasion, ecstasy, extremity. The human body’s substance hits and grates against itself when it creates an image of the body. The repercussions of this process are explosive, in, on, and from the body. The body has a hidden face, stubborn and magisterial, which struggles against all appropriation. Only the rawest gesture will dispel the media screen of Europe, and that is the gesture which the body must use to assault that homogenizing screen. The body is slippery, elusive material - an illusion which can kick and punch back at the presence of the invasive and appropriating media screen that surrounds it. That screen is something immediately denied and refused by the corporeal, to the most extreme point, in Europe, to start with. The refusal of the media is the first word of the body, in Europe.
The body in Europe is an arrangement in movement. The movements are infinite in dimension, intention and duration. Even the body’s static position in the city is the constellation of a thousand movements, some harsh, some tender. The body’s own image is a gestural face-to-face with the corporeal: an amalgam of gesture, body against body and bone against bone. The eye suffers a painful transformation, born of the necessity to give life to vision, while gripping the physical material itself through vision: through the eye’s retina, the eyelid, the eyelash: closing, averting, confronting. The gesture sweeps the eye, grinding out accidents and intentions in an ocular lash: creating the final ocular crash. One eye is blinded, the other eye is exploded. One eye digs into itself, to provoke incursive visions into the very matter of the image, the other eye bursts out upon the city, forcibly dragging the body in which it is embedded along with it. The body’s images are created at the axis of a dangerous collision of corporeal elements. The body moves to make immediate actions and connections, moves to create.

The body is in a state of isolation, to be broken only by an effusive sexuality - a lust which overturns, interrogates, a yearning which dissolves corporeal borders with abrupt force. The body must shatter everything in its way to proceed to a sexuality which burns from visceral gestures. Any hesitation, and it will be submerged into the pacifying media screen of Europe. The body acts alone, in solitude, unless it is a torrent of sex: it is the instrument of its own isolation. At first, it refuses desire, and concentrates on a silent, visual projection of its own presence. The body is exposed to the extremes of Europe, to the most exhaustive degree, irresistibly becoming part of a sequence of violent corporeal amalgams. The transformation of the body from isolation to amalgamation is a process of upheaval, to be executed by the most dense and demanding gestures, in Europe. The body’s image transmits this process: the image is a raw instrument of welding, soldering, synthesising body to body: so the mouth must scream, the limbs must ache in ecstasy, the lips must swell, the spine must tense, everything must work to make the body’s image show surface enter, and become, ignited interior.

Gesture conspires in the body to refuse assimilation to the media screen of Europe. When the body is captured by that screen, it must ferociously refuse and repel its nullifying incorporation with an equivalent effort to that involved in the desire to be and present visual
attitude. The body in stasis is glacial in its resistance to the screen which surrounds it and tries to fix it. The body is in ecstasy at and as itself: it holds a designed, determined craving for inertia. At every void moment, the body is satisfied to be in stasis. The body is nothing, and magisterially aware of that nothing. Gesture is the tangible violence articulating the body, bringing together the driving currents and pulses of movement which project the body as a silence, as a terminal incoherence, as a total inertia. Gesture demonstrates visibility: the body creates for itself a void presence. Its attitude must be unbroken, for the sake of a void survival, in Europe.

The body has a city to live in. It draws the city around itself and animates it. It is in the arena of the city that the body breaks its stasis and moves. The city lives only from the body's tension and friction. Otherwise, it is a raw envelopment. In Europe, all media elements corrode the body, holding it fixed - while the body must move, between overflowing tenements, clattering underground trains, psychotic pavements. The body is enervated by the city, and images of the body proliferate around its brutal exhilaration. The night sky over the city breathes. The body's city is dense, concentrated down to an axis of nightclubs, cinemas, peripheral streets. Noise accumulates around the body, made only for the body, and the body gestures to ingurgitate or expel noise that it wants or rejects. The body walks the streets, generating obsession, enchanted by terror. The city holds the most intense, deep blackness: its buildings have the darkest dirt as their essential substance - they have been attacked, destroyed, pulverized, but they still stand together wounded, as a city. The wounds of the city hurt the body too. The blackness intensifies the light that spills from the heart of the city's hell: one million illuminated signs, and the sudden emanation from the skin of dancing bodies, saddened eyes. The city is a war of bodies.

At one moment, the body will be dancing, expansive and fluid. The next moment, the body is in despair, curtailed, in a crippled zigzag with its hands over its face. The city precipitates this sudden shift of sensation. The city has a disequilibrium which is brought to bear when the body is in such joy that it exposes its nerves, its capacity to survive, to the crushing power of the city. The body is disturbed: as it breaks a border and is lost, the sky collapses, the ground gives way, the tenements fall in on themselves. Without a city, the body cannot
construct a survival: but with a city, survival is immediately cut through. The sky flashes virulent red and gold. And the body’s raw gesture against and of Europe does not comfort the despairing body: it sets it into acute upheaval, so that the body is in maximum confrontation with itself, splintering bone to bone. This is the vital moment of the body: it may then obliterate all of its own sources and borders, and create a new body, and a new image of the body. The interstices between the body’s sensational extremes are marked by the tracks of the strongest, wildest gestures.

At the moment before gesture, the body is in a state of dangerous anticipation and turbulence. The transformation is imminent: as in death, the body will undergo a cataclysm beyond its imagining. It will be astonished by its act. The moment before death or gesture is a terminal extremity. The gesture is ready to strike: immediately, the image of this gesture will be spat out, and compulsively nailed into - and against - the media screen of Europe. But the body’s gesture will then burn out. The most creative moment is suddenly the most void moment, for gesture. The image is created, the body is exhausted, the gesture is lost. Gesture becomes dispersed forever in the endless night sky of Europe. Gesture cannot be interrogated, but its impacts can be excavated and given new flesh. Gesture is the volatile interzone between the body and the image in Europe. Gesture is a strange, frantic, physical, visual wilderness, overloaded with borders and extremes, collapses and desires: it seizes the body and the image, powered by obsession.

And obsession: does obsession have a matter, an intention, does obsession always seal itself to the city? In the city of obsession, the most vital work that can be done is to collect obsessions around the body. And concurrently, bodies must be collected around a creative work of obsession.

The greatest obsession is the body. This raw obsession collides with an obsessive sophistication, in the work of generating images of the body. Obsession itself is raw - an obsession with the raw and incomplete, which is rendered rawly. In the obsession of Europe, obsession is a matter of proliferation, density and emanation. The obsession is what emanates from the body, what spurts out. A surrounding obsession explores the enclosure of the night around bodies, and the vivid bursting
of the night by the body. Obsessionality is all-consuming, all-inclusive, all-embracing.

The substance of obsession, in Europe, is the fragmentation of obsession, so that new obsessions pour forth. It is a breaking which creates obsession, resuscitates obsession.

Obsession, in Europe, is the desire to complete what is irreparably cut: and then to cut again.
Peter Chevalier’s images are instruments of astonishment: they are fields in which astonishment grows and develops. The magnificence and undeniable life of Chevalier’s work emerge from an interrogation into the very matter and substance of mystery. Mystery is given a figure, an existence which is in a constant state of imaginative transformation. The images explore and restore a substance which is within, which has been hidden.

The transmutation of matter by imagination and its multiple gestures has gathered an acutely emotional force, in Chevalier’s work. From the virtuality of imagination, volatile and unfixed forms surface, to become excoriated and exposed: they are made to glow.

It is a precision in Chevalier’s figures which generates sensorial intensity. This precision is compounded by a great rawness, a kind of controlled looseness, in the execution. It seems that in the great upheavals of making and re-making, layering and re-layering, we can watch the ricochets between intention and intuition. They are condensed into the final state, the last moment of the image. In these constellations of marks and energies, there comes an exhalation which a more sealed figure could not capture and spill out. At the extremities of Chevalier’s forms, an effusive erosion of material combats the enclosure which would bring a deadly, swallowing stasis with it. The rearground of his images serves as a prepared, pool-like surface for the entry of his figures, and the meeting of those figures. The world of the image can both accommodate and divest itself of the figure. In that intricate and accumulating work of movement, the crucial question is that of curtailment, how to stop the work of image-making. It is at that moment that intuition must dominate intention.

In Peter Chevalier’s images, we see the multiple at work. Aside from the rapport between figures, there emerge the mouths within the mouth, the eyes within the eye. Similarly, his images undergo transformations according to the varying proportions of electrical and natural light in the studio: interior, electrical light has a force of illumination that invests the figures with their own, natural light, which
is not the light of nature. And in Chevalier’s images, the trajectories of figure against figure produce a multiplicity of marks that disrupts and intensifies those figures: a pivotal turning to and from between figures. A fundamental interstice appears in those relationships under exploration, figure to figure and figure to object, and runs as a countercurrent to the disjunction between facial features. The figure is in a process - of movement, of elongation, of contraction. The slippages make the figures more tenuous, more deeply unresolved. In Chevalier’s drawings, with their acute delineation, this sense of precipitation carries a moment before transformation or calamity: the tension of figures and objects charged with longing entails the visual impact of a mystery about the anatomical arrangement. In the painted surface, the constant accumulation of objects, memories and feelings is brought to a momentary and spare stability. That poise holds within itself the resonances and obsessions connected with the experience of the image, which intimate the raw confrontation of a relationship between two living beings: the image-maker and the image.

Peter Chevalier’s figures carry a great sense of majesty. They are the kings and queens of a void, both monumental and dispossessed. Their appearance conveys a force which has been stolen, but is still magisterial in its obscure persistence. We see that those figures are often segmented and disunified, and this accentuates the impression of unreachability, and so of majesty. Chevalier has created deeply wry images - the aura of distress and upheaval suffered by imperious pride gives the impression that what once stood stoically, has now been overturned and usurped. But it continues to stand, upset, alarmed. Chevalier’s rearrangement of the figure is a dismemberment which brings forth fruit. The resulting figure holds a regal petrifaction which still disgorges magnificence. Renewed life, however heterogeneous or monstrous, is given to a banished existence which must persist. In Chevalier’s work, that existence becomes free and miraculous, an extravagant coagulation of states of being. Always, in his work, we sense the tenacious oscillation between luck-less figures which have been overpowered, and the re-vivification of those figures, as fiercely independent monarchs of the self.

The life of Chevalier’s images has an impact of density. The mirror of the image stares back and challenges. Chevalier has studied the figure at very close range, at an extreme proximity. He has approached sensitive
matters, in mental and image-making terms. This proximity generates the sense of a concurrent repulsion and contraction.

Chevalier’s figures may provoke a distress in the act of seeing: they are un-screened. They are open to expansive transmutation as a result. The sensation they carry entails a visual tearing. It may be re-bound only after deep, prolonged reflection.

A constant questioning is present in Chevalier’s work and attitude. The questioning is as demanding as it is irresolvable.
A CHOREOGRAPHY OF SURVIVAL: SALOMÉ
(1991)

Salomé is an artist who manifests courage in his images: he has willed himself to produce and create joy, insistently and relentlessly. He has instigated an extraordinary body of work, and possesses the aura of a precocious veteran, physically emanating his struggles and accomplishments as though they were the most natural and necessary acts that he could have performed.

Aged twenty-two, and a student at the Berlin Hochschule der Künste in the class of Karl Horst Hödicke, Salomé initiated the Galerie am Moritzplatz with his fellow students Rainer Fetting and Helmut Middendorf, among others. The gallery was on the first floor of a tenement in a semi-derelict area of Kreuzberg, alongside the Berlin Wall, where Salomé still maintains a studio. Salomé himself opened the gallery with a performance on 13 May 1977. The direct impact of Salomé’s work on the subject of homosexual identity compacted deep commitment and provocation into a stark, visceral imagery. The Galerie am Moritzplatz generated a legendary status for itself, spearheading the resurgence of the figurative image in European painting at the beginning of the 1980s. In a concentrated burst of activity, Salomé also experimented with the collaborative image, executing a series of paintings and performances with the Swiss artist Luciano Castelli, who had moved to Berlin in 1978 and had met Salomé at the opening of the exhibition Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter at the Galerie am Moritzplatz. The raw and interrogative sexuality of this work was extended in the punk band, The Horny Animals, which Salomé led with Castelli, and in the Opera by Chance performances staged in Bordeaux and Paris in 1983 with Fetting and Castelli. The exhibition Ten Young Painters from Berlin, held at the Goethe Institute in London in 1981, conveyed some of the ecstatic upheaval of this time to a British audience.

In 1982, after the Galerie am Moritzplatz had closed down, Salomé painted his images of swimmers and water-lilies for the first time, as his contribution to the seminal Zeitgeist exhibition at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. Variants of the paintings were shown at the Raab Galerie in the same year. Salomé’s sensational, large-scale swimmers were
inspired by a visit to the Prinzenbad swimming pool in Kreuzberg, close to his studio.

The intervening years have seen great transformations. Salomé has mostly divided his time between Berlin and the United States, making a base for himself in another collaborative community of artists, in Idaho. He has painted images which celebrate demanding physical activity and strong self-assertion: the figures of wrestlers and surfers. In Salomé’s work, the self is the body. One of his exhibitions, in 1986, collected an independent and determined community of Women in Germany, such as the Berlin painter Elvira Bach and the singer Ingrid Caven (a collaborator of Rainer Werner Fassbinder) - women whose sensitive self-projection Salomé valued. Salomé is an involved watcher of events, externalizing the most internal and intimate acts. His Black Painting series of 1990 juxtaposed images of the most extreme suffering and joy. AIDS has fixed a lacerated and overturned collective memory of the 1970s; Salomé’s AIDS paintings refocus a unique emotional immediacy which compounds, and draws out, the demands for liberation in his works of the late 1970s.

Salomé always returns to his swimmers and water-lilies as a dominant part of his imagery for reinvention and reactivation. The swimmers explore an interaction between discipline and spontaneity. Salomé uses a constant visual vocabulary of around fifteen positions for his swimmers, around which the strokes of multiple colour work as a gestural improvisation. The swimming figures are held and highlighted in a blaze of colour. Salomé’s original swimmers, from 1982, were involved in a ‘Wettkampf’, a contest; his subsequent swimmers project more of a sense of self-mastery. Their struggle has been drawn into a corporeal radiance. The body’s projection in its unhindered activity is the essential element of its existence. An integral tumultuousness is concentrated and transferred into the need for an absolute lucidity and vivacity. The swimmers are absorbed in the act of demonstrating the strength of their own visibility.

Salomé’s gestures accumulate into an infinite unleashing of colour and sensation. The subjects are captured by the flexibility and compulsive expansiveness of this gestural work, around the gravitation exerted by human and floral flesh and substance. Salomé’s paintings may themselves be placed into free combinations - of figures and gestures -
so that they can multiply and escalate in scale. In Salomé’s work, the self must always take ever more daring directions, and propels itself forward in probing, expanding movements. The self swims out a choreography of survival - the breathing beauty of survival.
THE BODY AND THE CITY: RAINER FETTING
(1991)

Rainer Fetting’s images of the city and its figures go straight to the heart. They reach the vital matter of figures who appear alarmed, pulverized by the city which envelops them: an experience of the city that sets those figures into a constant state of anticipation and upheaval. Fetting’s images hold the life blood of the city. They are the immediate projection of its exhilarations, joys and threats. The city and the figure make up a strange arrangement in Fetting’s images. The city lives within the figure and the figure lives within the city. The city is vivified by the body’s glory and tension: it receives a powerful influx of sensation from the reinforced corporeal material. Simultaneously, the body is fuelled and terrorised by the city’s clamorous life. Fetting is an expert in the ricochets between the figure and the city. He probes and anatomises the interaction between these two elements, which seem at once mutually exclusive and interdependent. His images escalate the emotional charge of that interaction. Fetting has a presence in the city: his images take us deeply into the city.

In Fetting’s *Glamorous Night* sequence of paintings, the combustion of desire surmounts the city. Up on a New York building’s roof, the colours of flesh burn out against the city’s own blaze of light. In the first image of the sequence, the city is compacted, so that the figure of the Statue of Liberty is placed alongside a male figure in blue, who confronts us headlong with his sexual gaze. The figure of Liberty parallels and strengthens another, mirrored male body with its back towards us. In a further painting from the sequence, its emotional arrangement is developed to the point of enigma. The hand of the figure in blue disappears behind the naked body, presumably to take hold of its penis. But by moving across the night’s gorgeous panorama, we see the mirrored figure’s face in disembodied suspension - as though under acute sensorial scrutiny - then the reflection of the body, the lost and dislocated hand held upon its chest rather than its penis. The image is resolved in openness, in the beauty of exposure. Its intricacy catches the sense of the night.

Fetting’s images also form a plunge into the city, from the rarefaction of the spaces above the city, into the compulsive movement and
battering of the streets below. There, what counts is the adrenalin of passing through, of defying the signals and shouts which bar the will to pass. Fetting’s *Limousine* paintings show the armoured fortresses which majestically block the streets, with their combatively raised antennae and their hostile black-suited guardians. But through the buildings’ crisscrossed blue mass, a streaming column of bright yellow continues to incite movement. Fetting’s images of taxis propel the act of seeing through the streets. The taxi has the green light to view, explore and transform the city; it possesses and incorporates the city’s relentless motion, projecting it with its radiation of yellow colour.

Fetting also has the capacity to pull back from the city, to propel us towards it. His *CNN* sequence of paintings shows fugitive warplanes tearing into the city’s skyline. Their abrupt transplantation from their warzone into New York generates a profound disquiet in the city’s substance. They are an alien, exiled element which disrupts and challenges, which falls from the sky. The white flame of their propulsion gives the entire city an appearance of vertigo, and intensifies its attraction. The assault on the city is a combustion of great speed, just as the gaze of its inhabitants may rapidly inflame it. Fetting’s experience of the city involves the seizing and transmission of actual events and actions. The intervention of nightmare or hallucination, however, may give the city another appearance. In his painting *Psychedelic Architecture and Blue Buildings*, the city irrepressibly extends itself. It gains an extraordinary and independent compulsion, infused with both gravity and caprice. Fetting’s psychedelic city possesses an imaginative profusion of outrageous dimension.

Landscape is a further site of expansive life, from which Fetting’s work takes a deep respiration and a sustained rhythm. Moving outside the city, the magnetic but fixedly mirrored rapport of figure to figure, and figure to city, is overwhelmed by the sense of liberation which emerges from a direct, raw contact. This feeling is present in all of Fetting’s northern European and American landscapes, from those around Wilhelmshaven and Sylt and the Berlin Grunewald to the Hudson Valley (Fetting divides his time between Berlin and New York). In the *Rapeseed Field* sequence of paintings, Fetting extracts all the visual force of landscape as a grand, flooding emanation. The rapeseed fields are constructed with such a fierce sensitivity, with a complex work of gesture over gesture, that they appear saturated with the projection of
their sensation. They exist to exude themselves. But this sensation is not of one consistency. Fetting’s rapeseed fields are a riot of internal marks and abrasions, with deluges of colour in collision with precise strokes. The sky over the fields is suffused by this effusive combat. It extends also to the frames of certain paintings, so that they are included in the arena of colour. In the painting Rapeseed Field Facing Berlin, the city and the landscape are jarringly brought together. The appearance of Berlin at the edge of the rapeseed fields is that of a hybrid growth. The city emerges as a mass of austere blocks (cut in the east by the Television Tower and the Dom cathedral), forming a dislocated amalgam with the glowing expanse of the fields. Despite its evident solidity, the city seems in danger of eclipse from the tumultuous light which Fetting creates for his landscapes. In the work of attachment - from the figure to the city, from the city to the landscape, and from figure to figure - Fetting’s use of colour serves to propel together and cement. The sensation of the present moment is compounded by the building and working of gesture. And to get a close sense of the way of things, hallucination and nightmare can break into those attachments and let the act of vision run more disruptively and testingly.

Fetting is a spontaneous painter, whose work has the capacity to permanently illuminate the present moment. Fetting has presented the turmoil of human life, matter and history in Berlin; he has undertaken an excoriating of the city’s life. All the stories of the city and its figures are caught in an instantaneous process in Fetting’s work, and are shown with a concurrent sense of committed transmission. The experience of existence is allied to the necessity of seizing its substance in the image, with the maximum presence and physicality.
THE DEVILISHNESS OF THE HUMAN BODY: AUGUST WALLA
(1992)

For any artist who now makes images of the human figure in Europe, a crucial question must be how much of the visual sensation and the multiple layers of Europe’s recent history will be compulsively inserted - by accident or design - within all imageries of the body. As Europe enters a phase of escalating disintegration, its artists are increasingly confronted by the power of the body as a channel into the intricate situation of an endangered and uncertain existence. At other moments of profound creative obsession with the body, such as Paris at the end of the 1940s, the preoccupation with physical material was based around the desire to penetrate into its structures, to discover new corporeal dimensions, to reveal the astonishment of a new image of the body. Such a world bound into the projection of the physical might be irreparably fractured, like that of Antonin Artaud, or swarming with the mass of faces which transfixed Henri Michaux, but it remained an authentic world of the reinvented body. By contrast, the events of 1989 and the subsequent years of acute upheaval in central and eastern Europe have created a new preoccupation with the body as the subject of a sudden historical blackout; an imagery of the body is emerging in which existence is sutured together out of the accumulating collection of anxieties which make up the artist’s perceptual resources. Over those years, the scars of the Second World War have been unscreened and set into violent collision with the present moment; the images emerging catch the panoramic trajectories of this collision, and concentrate them into the presentation of the assailed human body.

As a child in eastern Austria during the Second World War, the artist August Walla lived in isolation with his mother. Since his father was permanently absent and he had no contact with men, when Walla heard Hitler speaking on the radio, he assumed that this was the voice of his father. At school, he liked to declare that ‘Everything red is devilish’, and he narrowly avoided being sent to a concentration camp. As a young man, he began to paint on every surface he encountered - television sets, furniture, roads, trees - revealing a joint preoccupation with the body and with history. The body was always Walla’s, but transformed from identity to identity, multiplied and multi-sexualised, under the pressure of the history which terrorised him. Walla’s inhabitation by the
turmoil of European war and its dominant role in the creation of his identity led to the use of symbols surrounding his imagery of the body and determining its nature and sexuality - swastikas and hammer-and-sickles proliferated and extended out to mythical and religious signs; the bodies he painted were split between possessing these symbols - as physical attributes emanating from the creative act in order to fill and secure the world - and being catastrophically robbed of identity by them. When Walla’s mother became too ill to care for him, he arrived as a voluntary patient at the renowned Artists’ House, a centre of creative experimentation established in the grounds of the Lower Austria mental hospital near Vienna, where he works incessantly, his preoccupations fuelled by magazine and televisual imagery.

It is largely through this isolation and retirement from life in society that Walla’s paintings work as a sensitive seismography for the upheaval of the body in Europe. His paintings demonstrate a compulsion to produce an open, unending narrative about the dangers to the body which he vividly perceives: conflagration, mass murder, dismemberment of populations. For Walla, the world is menaced by an imminent and total fragmentation, and it is the work of the body to collect and show these fears. Walla’s prolific output has an interchangeable feel to it, each painting presenting a set of the irresoluble and aggravated elements of a tenuous human existence. The space of the painting is a saturated arena of combat between the figure and whatever forces come to obliterate it; the dynamics of the image are governed by impulsion and expulsion - Walla’s body is a meticulously designed set of expressive orifices, which expel fluids and substances as a way of combating physical extinguishment. The death of the body is the thing to be feared most, just as the death of history may result from an excess of atrocity. In distancing himself from the banal detail of life, Walla has been able to remove the mediation between the vulnerable human body and the integrally oppressive, engulfing world of Europe - thus investing his work with a poignant directness and an aura of extremity.

Walla is a compiler and creator of textual as well as physical languages; his paintings are streaked with exclamatory texts which enumerate the splinters of identity that are generated by the volatile image of his body. Besides Walla’s own name, those of Hitler, Stalin and German or Austrian political leaders are frequently cited, together with those of archaic historical figures, and of religious figures (angels, Satan:
Walla views himself as living in a half-hell, an interstice of limbo between self and history, between language and raw image, between death and resuscitation). Others of his texts are taken from a reading from dictionaries and media sources, words selected for their sonorous and rhythmic power; the texts are multilingually compounded - mashed and intermingled to form bizarre ejaculatory units of language. Walla’s painting is gestural - each gesture generated from a desire to retaliate violently against the precariousness of existence, as well as from the exhilaration which such a situation necessarily engenders. Walla’s gesture cements text and image around an individual obsessional content of corporeality and self-focused sexuality; gesture becomes the manual projectile which amalgamates the visual and the textual, into an image possessing resistance against the effusive dangers to the corporeal identity of the artist.

As with all artists whose worlds are in perpetual upheaval, Walla is a great fabricator of identity. From the debris of his self, he has constructed a carapace of myth and omniscience around his capacity to multiply and metamorphose his physical identity. His painting depicts a set of instruments and defensive totems which have been extracted from the body, to guard against the catastrophic intrusion of external forces which may bring to the body its loss, chaos and death, in the form of a mortal invasion of the deified and unique space of the body. For these threats to be subjugated, Walla's obsession with survival must manifestly be made real, through the insistence and the repetition of the image. Walla's self becomes imprinted everywhere around the site of his body (through, for example, painting on roadways) as the means of securing the self’s existence; the body makes its incursion from private obsessionality, back out into the exterior space of the world. In this work of surviving in the world through an imagery of the body, Walla has created an immediate and unique corporeal language.

The ongoing upheaval of central and eastern Europe has made all artists and writers there doubt their father’s voice as void and illusory, and has compelled them to interrogate their identities and creative sources with urgency. The rise of neofascism in countries such as Austria, compounded by resurgent racist violence, necessitates a refusal to submit to calamity. Walla’s individual strategies of refusal, with their axis in the endangered human body, are vital signs of life.
A VIRULENT SIGN OF LIFE
(1993)

The *X-Position* project is an exploratory incision into what is most vital and sensational in the contemporary art of Berlin. The experience of the exhibition is a delicate juxtaposition with a raw taste - the monumental interspersed with the vivid detail; the blaze of colour compacted against the intensely monochromatic; the immediacy of the physical in contact with configurations of memory, through the force of gesture.

*X-Position* is a project of expansion, a virulent sign of life which is crucial for Berlin at this time when the city has become overexposed to a banal artistic internationalism that has failed to catch the seminal authenticity of Berlin’s own artists, who together project a seismography of what is most compelling in European art at the close of this century. As such, the identity which this project gathers together is sharply multiple, stubbornly revelatory. It is fierce work in the sense of its irreducibility, in its probing of the density and depth of the image, and in its interrogation of the tension between repetition and uniqueness, between spontaneity and intention. For the first time, in *X-Position*, it is possible to sense the eruptive intricacy of young contemporary Berlin art, as work in progress, in a process of diffusion into bizarre and extraordinary territories.

It would be wrong to say that the exhibition is a reflection or an abstraction of Berlin as a city. More exactly, this work is an amalgam that transmits the transformation of Berlin as its axis of creation. If Berlin is a city which saturates and compels its inhabitant, then the power of the work in this project is in its ability to signal the simultaneous absorption and reworking of that saturation, in a trajectory which moves directly from influx into reinvention and realization. This project seizes with sensitivity the complex visual arena between the city and its receptive inhabitant; the inhabitation of Berlin necessarily involves a recasting of its imagery, and *X-Position* is an assembling of that active transformation. Berlin is no longer the city of arbitrarily exiled artists in the way that it has been viewed in recent years; now, Berlin-born artists of the calibre of Anton Henning and Romen Banerjee, among others, are investing the city’s life with a brilliant and explosive charge of desires, contradictions, obsessions,
exhilarations - explorations which naturally spill beyond expectations and limitations, making incursions especially into performance and music as elements which reinforce the driving, innovatory trajectories of these artists’ work.

This is a project which will haunt its spectators, since it embodies Berlin as a locus of unease and disaffection, of disequilibrium and aggravated identity; the young art of Berlin carries a reaction of metamorphosis that sweeps between the delicate and the exclamatory with magisterial precision, as an indicator of the confinements and contaminations that pressurise and surround the process of creation in Berlin. The result is an art which coalesces friction and vision in a way that unleashes hidden strata of sensation and memory, of resistance and irony: the spectator of the project is involved in witnessing and experiencing an index of sensorial puncture points which ensure that the spectator will inhabit the space of the project as intently as the space of the city or the space of the body.

The haunting strength of this project is that it is an inhabitation which cannot be duplicated, but which, in its abrasive multiplicity, initiates the spectator to material which is already intuitively known and now becomes visually extended and substantiated: its impact of exhilaration will be laced narcotically, provocatively.

*X-Position* evidently negates the curatorial colonisation which has narrowed and impaired the focus of Berlin art in recent years. But more essentially, it pulses tenaciously with an adept exploration into the process by which the contemporary image is created, formulated, fragmented, projected and experienced; how it is welded to the presence of the city, and how it is welded to the upheaval of human sensation. The amassing of material in *X-Position* is an adrenalised origin for a riotous and captivating discovery of art in Berlin.
PAULE THÉVENIN’S GUERRILLA WARFARE
(1993)

Paule Thévenin, who died on 27 September 1993, was the close friend and editor of the two most extreme figures of twentieth-century French writing, Antonin Artaud and Jean Genet. She spent more than forty years editing Artaud’s *Collected Works* and fighting a running battle with his family over the rights to his work.

The daughter of an Algerian mother and a French father, Paule Thévenin grew up in the Dordogne, where her childhood friend was Roland Dumas, later President Mitterrand’s foreign minister. She moved to Paris and began to train as a doctor and actress, but her encounter at the age of twenty-four with Artaud changed her life.

His work with the Surrealists and the Theatre of Cruelty long over, Artaud was living at a suburban clinic, newly released from nine years in mental institutions. Thévenin collaborated closely with him for the last two years of his life, notably taking part in his incendiary final work, the banned radio broadcast *To have done with the judgement of god*.

Artaud was in a state of fury throughout the last part of his life, declaring that ‘to make all these people understand something, I would have to kill them’. But he trusted Paule Thévenin absolutely, and made her his literary executor on the day before his death in 1948.

The immense project of editing his *Collected Works* consumed the rest of her life. She devoted herself to it obsessionally. Artaud’s family detested her (claiming she had supplied him with drugs and hastened his death) and began court actions against her. The case continued for decades - Thévenin published twenty-five volumes, but finally Artaud’s family stopped her edition in 1992, when it was close to completion.

Her work with Jean Genet began in 1965, when the theatre director Roger Blin was preparing his production of Genet’s play *The Screens* at the Odéon theatre in Paris, and asked Thévenin to collaborate with Genet on a book of his writings about the production. The result was *Reflections on the Theatre*, Genet’s only sustained statement on the aims and sources of his theatre.
It was Paule Thévenin who moved Genet towards the Black Panthers, the Red Army Faction and the Palestinians at the end of the 1960s and 1970s. He was always jealous of the time she spent working on Artaud’s writings, and ultimately their friendship ended bitterly.

Paule Thévenin was a ferocious woman who suffered fools badly. Her quarrels in the Parisian literary world were conducted as a kind of guerrilla warfare, and she was unforgiving. Gaston Ferdière, the doctor who gave Artaud electric shock treatment, told me: ‘I fear that woman more than anything in the world.’

But she was witness to some of the most intense creative work of the century, and her sense of duty demanded that she make no compromise in her commitment to it.
The force that connects Jean Genet and Antonin Artaud most tangibly is the extraordinary figure of Paule Thévenin, and the role she played as a friend, editor and dominant negotiator in the lives and work of those two writers. When Paule Thévenin died in September 1993, I wrote in an obituary of how she had been involved in the work of the two most 'extreme' figures of twentieth-century French writing, Artaud and Genet. But in dealing simultaneously with the works of Artaud and Genet, it is vital to emphasise that they are extremes at a tangent: extremities in two parallel creative worlds. The form of those extremes lies in initiating and sustaining an exploration into the raw matter of human existence and sexuality, into the active disintegration of the links between identity and society. They are also extremes of language, carried by work which integrally examines how language may be transformed or fragmented into new configurations that project with intensity the sensations of the physical, the compulsion for reinvention, and the duty to renounce and execrate national identity and its imageries. The tangents at which the lives and work of Genet and Artaud mesh possess as great a degree of tension and resistance as of coincidence.

The period of time in which the work of Artaud and Genet intersected in Paris was in the immediate postwar years. After Artaud had undertaken his legendary project, the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’, in the mid 1930s, he left Paris and embarked on journeys to Mexico and Ireland, from where he was deported in September 1937, and he spent the next nine years in a number of French lunatic asylums. He emerged from the last asylum, Rodez, in May 1946 and returned to Paris, where he had been notorious as a leading member of the Surrealist movement in the mid 1920s. Jean Genet's penal incarceration had ended much earlier, on 15 March 1944, several months before the Liberation of Paris from the German occupying forces. Within days of his return to Paris, Artaud came into contact with Paule Thévenin, who at that time was twenty-four years old. She first visited Artaud to ask him to record his new work for a radio programme that she was involved with, and Artaud consented. In his solitude at the asylum of Rodez, Artaud had elaborated an imaginary family of erotic warrior-children that he named his 'daughters of the heart to be born' - daughters who would fight battles
to liberate him from the asylums, and would also bring him the large quantities of heroin which he asserted were being denied to him there. Artaud immediately incorporated Paule Thévenin into this transformational family of daughters, the first living woman to receive such a distinction.

Artaud's first radio recording was not a success, but in the following year, 1947, he was invited to record a long broadcast by the head of literary programmes at the French national radio station, Fernand Pouey. Artaud made his recording, which he titled *To have done with the judgement of god*, with three collaborators: Paule Thévenin, the theatre director Roger Blin, and the actress Maria Casarès. All three of those collaborators would also be crucial in Genet's theatrical work. *To have done with the judgement of god* formed the first stage in Artaud's project to resuscitate the Theatre of Cruelty, but this time with the determination that it would not be assimilated into the Parisian literary milieu in the way that his performances of the 1930s had been. His texts written for the recording delineate a ferociously surreal postwar world of autopsied bodies, schoolboys' semen and deliriously dancing figures engaged in a terminal battle against the reviled figure of 'god'. Artaud interposed his spoken texts with passages of screaming and with improvised glossolalic duets which he recorded with Blin. Artaud's recording was banned by the head of the radio station on the day before it was due to be transmitted in February 1948. The grounds given were that it was inflammatory, obscene and blasphemous. Fernand Pouey then threatened to resign, as a matter of principle. Although it is usually claimed that Pouey lost his job, this was apparently not the case - his widow told me in 1987 that the scandal eventually blew over, and in the same year, 1948, Pouey also commissioned a broadcast from Jean Genet.

This project was *The Criminal Child*, in which Genet wrote of the necessary cruelty of the Mettray reformatory for boys, where he had spent the years from 1926 to 1929. Genet wrote: 'These cruelties had to be born and to develop necessarily out of the desire of these children for evil.'(1) As with Artaud's conception of cruelty, Genet depicts a force of cruelty which is integral and self-willed: intentional rather than imposed by exterior forces. With an irrational and discursive precision which approaches that of Artaud's own broadcast, Genet writes of the bogus society that comprises his intended audience of radio listeners. And
where Artaud had depicted a calamitous postwar world in which visions of genocide and suppression had sustained themselves and remained dominant, Genet also emphasises the survival of those imageries into the present world, while also paralleling them with his world of Mettray. He wrote: 'The newspapers still show these photographs of corpses caught on the barbed wire fencing, in the crematorium ovens; they show nails torn off, tattooed skin... A rose is growing to become a plant of incredible beauty, whose twisted and tortured petals show up red - a rose under the sun of hell, naming terrible names: Majdanek, Belsen, Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Dora... But nobody knows that for as long as the children's prisons have existed in France, the children and men there have also been tortured.'(2) For Genet, the immediate imageries transmitted by the international media connected intimately with the world of his own identity and existence, in which the reformatory of Mettray had been a source of torture, but also, overwhelmingly, an enduring origin of elation, desire and joy. Similarly, for Artaud, the first intimations of the Cold War nuclear confrontations between Stalinist Russia and the corrupt Western world were channelled insistently into his own exhilarated creative imageries, in which an apocalyptic nuclear attack would pale into insignificance when balanced against Artaud's own project for a reconstituted human body of delirious gestural violence.

Genet's planned broadcast, The Criminal Child, met with the same fate as Artaud's To have done with the judgement of god: it was censored by the radio station, and was not recorded or transmitted; Genet published it as a text in the following year, 1949, while To have done with the judgement of god also appeared only in the form of an inadequate textual version. Artaud died from an overdose of chloral hydrate in March 1948, at the age of fifty-one, shortly after the banning of this recorded work. Throughout the last two years of his life, Paule Thévenin had worked with him, preparing his manuscripts and supporting him through his many quarrels with old, ambivalent enemies such as the Surrealist leader André Breton. Her husband, Yves Thévenin, regularly supplied Artaud with morphine - just as he was to provide Genet with nembutal in future years - and so incurred the wrath of Artaud's family, who claimed that Artaud's young friends such as the Thévenins had hastened his death. This led to over four decades of court cases and harassment since, soon after Artaud's death, Paule Thévenin took on the massive task of editing his Collected Works for publication, an almost
life-long project which remained unfinished at the time of her death in 1993. Artaud had entrusted her with this work on the day before his own death, by making her his literary executor. Jean Genet, too, was at one time to appoint Paule Thévenin as his literary executor, but Genet's demands on their relationship ensured that such an arrangement could not be sustained. While, for Artaud, Paule Thévenin formed the faithful and silently protective daughter, for Genet she had to play two roles of greater intricacy - that of the solicitous collaborator, and also that of the tenaciously vocal mother.

The imagery of the crematorium oven which Genet developed in *The Criminal Child* was also present in Artaud's recasting of the Theatre of Cruelty in the months after his release from the asylum of Rodez. In a text written in August 1946 and intended to serve as the Introduction to his *Collected Works*, Artaud wrote: 'The theatre is the scaffold, the gallows, the corpses cut into pieces, the crematorium oven or the lunatic asylum./Cruelty is the massacre of human bodies.'(3) He was preoccupied at this point by memories of two of his closest friends from the 1930s who had died in the wartime concentration camps: the former Surrealist poet Robert Desnos and the painter Sonia Mossé. And in Artaud's writings on theatre from the 1930s, he had initiated ideas of a theatrical event that would act with a unique impact of conflagration upon its spectators, making them participants in a feral experience whose imagery was also one of consuming fire and of gesture. Most notoriously, Artaud wrote of the participants of his desired theatre being 'like torture victims who are being burned and who are making signs from the stake'.(4)

But, despite these related obsessions and imageries in the work of Artaud and Genet, it seems certain that they never met in those postwar years, despite the fact that they both inhabited the Saint Germain-des-Prés cafés, such as the Café Flore, and had mutual friends. This may have been because Genet was associated in Artaud's mind with literary figures such as Jean Cocteau or Jean-Paul Sartre, a figure whom Artaud would claim to 'abominate', as his friend Jacques Prevel recalled.(5) It should be noted in this context that Sartre had willingly donated a manuscript to an auction designed to raise funds to guarantee Artaud's release from the asylum of Rodez. It may also have been that Artaud, who was notably unreceptive to the literary milieu that surrounded him, would have viewed Genet with hostility as just another young writer. As
Artaud remarked to Prevel in 1946: ‘When I hear people talking about a new poet, I want to shoot him at point-blank range.’(6) This fury was reserved especially for upstarts such as the young poets of the Lettrist art movement, Isidore Isou and François Dufrêne, but Genet's own status in those years may have evoked for Artaud the sudden and shameless notoriety which he associated with the Lettrists. Both Artaud and Genet had a considerable number of publishers at that time, notably Marc Barbezat, director of the publishing house L'Arbalète, who was engaged in publishing work by both writers; they had also shared a publisher in Robert Denoël, who had been murdered in a Paris street in December 1945, shortly before Artaud's release from Rodez. Denoël had also published the books by Louis-Ferdinand Céline which had been denounced as anti-Semitic, and though he appeared to have been shot at random while changing a wheel on his car, in retrospect it seems likely that he was assassinated because of his alleged former role as a collaborator with the German occupying forces.

Inversely, it may well have been the case that Genet himself would have been reluctant to meet Artaud, rather than the other way round. Artaud was a forbidding presence in Paris, but also an unrecognisable one, since the nine years of his asylum internment and his fifty-one electric shock treatments there had transformed him from the handsome Surrealist poet and film actor of the 1920s and early 1930s, into a toothless, invective old man who expectorated insults and poems simultaneously.

Genet and Artaud possessed several elements of a common personal history, both having spent time at the Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital in Paris; Genet was there under psychiatric observation as a fourteen-year-old youth in 1925, while Artaud underwent a number of drug disintoxication treatments there in the mid-1930s, before being interned compulsorily under Jacques Lacan from 1938 to 1939, as a prelude to being transferred to the asylum of Ville-Évrard and then on to Rodez. Genet and Artaud had a common preoccupation in the figure of the Roman Emperor Heliogabalus, whose four-year reign in the third century had been characterized by murder, incest, debauchery, and a nihilistic disdain for the powers of government, before he was murdered by his own bodyguards and thrown into a sewer. Artaud had written a biography of Heliogabalus for Robert Denoël in 1933, and Genet himself
wrote a play (subsequently lost or destroyed) around Heliogabalus's life in the early 1940s for the young actor Jean Marais.

Another, less coincidental, bond between Genet and Artaud was their explicitly positive view of the Fall of France to the invading German army in 1940. From his asylum, Artaud had regarded the events of the Second World War as being vaguely apocalyptic. His view of the corruption of France flexibly encompassed its sexual, criminal and linguistic aspects. For Artaud, the humiliation of France presented the opportunity for a curative searing of its infected and exhausted language, together with its complicit and passive inhabitants. Artaud, along with Genet, desired a France so perverted, execrated and debased that it would end up possessing a maximal, extraordinary purity that would saturate every level of human existence. And for both Artaud and Genet, the ultimate desire was that France would be terminated as the malicious entity which had incarcerated and refused them both.

The meeting between Paule Thévenin and Jean Genet came in 1965, nearly twenty years after Artaud's death. In the intervening years, Paule Thévenin had worked incessantly on editing Artaud's *Collected Works*, although due to the opposition of Artaud's family, only two volumes had so far appeared and she was compelled to undertake her work anonymously. Certainly, by the 1960s, her attitude and thinking had become saturated in Artaud's writings, which demanded an absolute rigour and lack of compromise; however, she was also preoccupied with left-wing politics, having from childhood been a close friend and supporter of Roland Dumas, who would become President Mitterrand's foreign minister in the 1980s. Politics of any kind had always been anathema to Artaud, especially since the Surrealist movement's affiliation with the French Communist Party in 1926 had proved to be one of the many reasons for his expulsion from the movement in that year. According to different accounts, Paule Thévenin was introduced to Genet either by the publisher Marc Barbezat or, more probably, as she herself remembered, by Roger Blin. In the time since his collaboration with Artaud, Blin had become one of the most innovative and provocative theatre directors in Paris, celebrated most notably for his 1953 production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. At this time, Genet was working on his final and most ambitious play, *The Screens*, and he needed someone who could help him prepare the vast and intricate manuscript of the play, which Blin was to direct at the Odéon.
theatre in Paris in the Spring of 1966, with a cast that included Artaud's former collaborators Maria Casarès and Jean-Louis Barrault. Blin had previously directed the first production of Genet's play *The Blacks* in 1959. Genet had been working on *The Screens* since 1956, and its evolution was marked by the depth of his formulations about the dynamics of his theatre, which became articulated in the numerous notes and letters that he wrote to Blin during the preparations for the production. Paule Thévenin collected and edited these notes for publication in collaboration with Genet, and also edited a text which Genet wrote at the same time, entitled *The Strange Word*.... It was in this work, through the intermediation of Paule Thévenin, that the intersection of Artaud’s and Genet's ideas on the necessities and nature of performance became visible.

In his notes from the period of *The Screens*, Genet writes again of the crematorium, this time as the authentic site of the theatrical act, which he believes should take place in extreme proximity both to fire and to death, and also to the heart of the city. In Genet's conception of performance, the theatrical act takes precedence over the demands both of death and of life. Genet’s ideal performance takes place in a cemetery, from which all but a few fragments of tombs have been cleared, so that the intimation, dignity and gravity of death are transmitted to the performance. Similarly, in Artaud's theatre, life itself is subordinated to the vital gravity of the event, which imprints the very existence of its spectators with the death-inked gestures of performance. For Genet, however, the vision of revolution is paramount, and he argues that theatre becomes dispensable in the face of an act of revolution; no matter how crucial the experience of theatre may be, it is instantly superseded by the force of revolution. He writes: 'If, one day, human actions were to become more and more revolutionary, the theatre would no longer have any place in life.'(7) But for Artaud, revolution and theatre are so seamlessly and violently welded together, in an imagery of the insurgent human body and its recreated languages, that such a detachment between theatre and revolution as Genet envisaged is inconceivable. And what attracts Genet to the crematorium is the stiff phallus of the chimney, spurting out smoke and ashes, while for Artaud, the essential element of the performance space is its capacity to roar cacophonically with human and mechanical noise, so that his idealised space is that of the factory.
Crucially, both Artaud and Genet envisaged that their desired performance must be unique, disintegrating the nature of representation and of repetition itself. At the time when he was preparing his recording *To have done with the judgement of god*, Artaud wrote: 'I abject all signs./I create only machines of instant utility.' (8) His projected unique event of gestural cruelty would fracture the constraints placed on human consciousness and would resuscitate existence, which, for Artaud, had become incapacitated and duplicated. In his writings from the time of *The Screens*, Genet too projected an incendiary event that would be unrepeatably urgent and immediate, and would, he wrote, 'illuminate the world of the dead'. (9) He aimed for what he called 'a unique performance, possessing such an immense and radiating intensity that it will act to inflame its spectators, thereby also illuminating and disturbing all those who were not present'. (10) The extravagant conception and sheer length of *The Screens* ensured that, although it was staged for a number of performances, it retained something of this sense of a distinctive and powerful unrepeatability. Genet was also concerned to isolate his own theatre from the theatre in general, in order to create a barrier between his own work and theatre as an inauthentic, literary or social product. He placed his self-valorisation on the essential dirt, outrage and invective of his theatre, which, he wrote, would leave his spectators with the taste of ashes and corruption in their mouths. Just as Artaud always demanded that the pre-existing, moribund theatre should be totally destroyed, in order for his own theatre of plague and cruelty to be brought into existence, so Genet conceived of an origin for his own theatre in its separation from the reprehensible cleanliness of the existing theatre. He wrote: 'If my theatre stinks, it's because the other smells good.' (11) In Artaud's work of the mid-1940s, he would assert that all crucial creative work was undertaken by exploring deep into the dirt of existence; writing in 1946 of his journey to Mexico, undertaken ten years earlier, he declared: 'I have come to Mexico to make contact with the Red Earth/and it stinks in its fragrance;/and it smells fine in its stink.' (12) Artaud also reversed what he viewed as the social definitions of health and illness, declaring that his own state of lifelong sickness was more authentic and urgently vital than that of health, which he viewed as an abject, complacent human surrender to society.

The role of the performer in Genet's theatre is formulated with a rigour that parallels Artaud's own view of the absolute subjugation of
the Theatre of Cruelty's actor to the power of the director. But Artaud and Genet both allowed for a resurgence of the will of the performer in exceptional conditions. Genet wrote to Roger Blin: 'Never allow the actor to forget himself, unless this self-forgetfulness were to be pushed to the point where he would piss in front of the audience.' (13) For Artaud, the action of an unleashed oblivion in his performer would potentially be more dangerous - at the time of the Theatre of Cruelty in the 1930s, he wrote that the fury generated in the actor could lead to unstoppable acts of justifiable criminality, such as murder. And in a letter to André Breton about his own performance of furious screams and denunciations, at the Vieux-Colombier theatre in Paris in 1947, Artaud concluded that his ideal performer would now be one who, as he wrote, 'would bring bombs out of his pockets and throw them in the audience's face with a blatant gesture of aggression'. (14) Certainly, Artaud's ideal and, ultimately, his only performer was himself, furiously exposed on the stage of the Vieux-Colombier, whereas Genet himself remained exterior to the volatile arena of the performer subject to chance, oblivion and violence.

Genet wrote to Roger Blin: 'The theatre is a place close to death, where all liberties are possible.' (15) When Genet travelled to Japan in the second half of the 1960s, he would have witnessed something of the huge impact which Artaud's work was exerting in all areas of performance and art there, most notably in the dance performance style 'Ankoku Butoh', which had been initiated in 1959 by the choreographer Tatsumi Hijikata, a friend and collaborator of the novelist Yukio Mishima. If, in the entire international field of performance, Artaud's theories have ever inspired one experiment of substance, that experiment would be Ankoku Butoh. Hijikata developed performances of contorted gesture and insurgent sexuality for which a primary inspiration, in their imageries of death and resuscitation, was Artaud's work, and ultimately his recorded scream; Hijikata would assert at the end of his life (he died in the same year as Genet, in 1986) that the only one of his possessions to which he accorded any value whatsoever was his recording of Artaud’s *To have done with the judgement of god*. Hijikata’s work and preoccupations were also deeply inspired by Genet’s novels, especially *Our Lady of the Flowers*, written during his penal incarceration. Like the work of Genet and of Artaud, the performances of Hijikata formed unique sensory projections of voids and absences, of violences and exclamations.
On his return from Japan, Genet undertook no further theatrical projects. Instead, during the principal years of his friendship with Paule Thévenin, from the end of the 1960s to the early 1980s, he allied himself with the Black Panthers in the United States, with the Red Army Faction in West Germany, and with the Palestinians in their exile. In these always ambiguous involvements, Genet certainly diverged away from most of Artaud's concerns, but it was in the context of his engagement with the Black Panthers that Genet made his only explicit written reference to Artaud. In his Introduction to the prison letters of George Jackson, written in July 1970 in Brazil, Genet notes that 'a certain complicity links the works written in prisons or asylums (Sade and Artaud share the same necessity of finding in themselves what must lead them to glory, that is, despite the walls, the moats, the jailers and the magistrates, into the light, into minds not enslaved)'.(16) The implication is that we can position the imprisoned Genet himself into the place of the Marquis de Sade here, with Genet's authority, and be able to distinguish the alliance of a determinedly self-willed exploration into liberation, between Genet and Artaud.

Paule Thévenin closely advised Genet on his course of action during their friendship, notably in the matter of Genet's only film, *Un Chant d'amour*. In 1975, the producer of *Un Chant d'amour*, Nico Papatakis, arranged for the film to be submitted for a censorship visa, in order for it to be released commercially for the first time. The film, which had been shot in 1950, was presented as having been recently made, and won an official prize which Genet angrily rejected in a text written for the newspaper *L'Humanité*. In his interview with Jane Giles for her book on *Un Chant d'amour*, Papatakis commented on Genet: 'Maybe I was the closest friend he had outside of his boyfriends, but Paule Thévenin took him. He put himself into the political things. He went close to the Communists and the whole thing was - God! - a mess.'(17) Paule Thévenin incited fear and awe in equal measures. She reassured both Artaud and Genet of their status as poets, and her respect and commitment to the two writers was absolute. But while Artaud and Paule Thévenin remained strongly allied at the time of Artaud's death in 1948, Genet deserted her as a friend three years before his death in April 1986. Genet, who was suffering from throat cancer, was disturbed by the death of Paule Thévenin’s husband from the same disease, and consequently shunned Paule Thévenin because she constantly reminded
him of his own mortality. But it may well have also been that her intense and extensive literary contacts and entanglements - and her preoccupation with finally completing her edition of Artaud's *Collected Works* - ultimately proved alienating to Genet.

Since the AIDS-related death of Hervé Guibert in 1991, the only living French writer with the stature to be juxtaposed alongside Artaud and Genet is Pierre Guyotat. Guyotat has acknowledged the role of Artaud and Genet in the development of his work by performing what he has called 'active homages', in the form of readings at conferences or festivals around Artaud’s work, in France in 1972 and in London in 1996, and at the event organized at the Odéon theatre in Paris to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the production of Genet's *The Screens* in 1991. Guyotat became the subject of great controversy in France in 1970, when *Eden, Eden, Eden*, his third novel, was subjected to censorship restrictions by the French Ministry of the Interior; those restrictions remained in force until the election of Mitterrand’s government in 1981. A number of French writers, including Jean Genet and Roland Barthes, supported Guyotat in his battle against the censorship imposed on his work, which he documented in his book *Forbidden Literature*. Paule Thévenin also took Guyotat's side with tenacity, and her friend Roland Dumas became his lawyer. Guyotat’s work concerns acts of prostitutional sexuality which constantly expand in scale, intensity and number. As with that of Genet, Guyotat's world is inhabited by beautiful boy prostitutes, and by the odour of sperm and death. The language at work in his writing is welded into a headlong, exclamatory rush towards an extreme, absolute, pure obscenity. And like Artaud, Guyotat views the act of writing as a raw exudation of physical matter, creatively expectorating substances which are savage and interrogative in their impact upon the reader or spectator. All of those three utterly independent writers - Genet, Artaud and Guyotat - speak with sensational desire and veracity, against the apparitions of society: their act of writing cracks censorship wide open in all its horror.

Notes
2. ibid, page 389.
6. ibid, page 56.
11. ibid, page 13.

The translations in this essay are my own.
CRUEL JOURNEY: THE DRAWINGS OF ANTONIN ARTAUD
(1994)

Few explorations of an imagery of the human figure have been as obsession and extraordinary as that undertaken by Antonin Artaud at the end of his tumultuous life. The exposure of Artaud's drawings, paintings and manuscripts, after decades in which they were almost invisible, has given the chance for this imagery to acquire the raw eminence it deserves alongside the other elements of his work. Artaud's status as one of the great inspirational icons of twentieth-century dissident culture was established in the mid-1960s with the engagement of innumerable theatre companies, worldwide, with his ideas for a unique style of performance based around violent gestures, cacophony and a visceral impact upon the spectator. Similarly, his Surrealist writings of the late 1920s - concerned with a disciplined 'revolution of the body' which set him at odds with André Breton's political preoccupations and idealisation of the role of chance in art and writing - proved to be fertile ground for a host of writers, film-makers and artists attracted by Artaud's intentional journeys into psychosis and addiction, and the extreme imageries he brought back with him.

It was only in the last few years of Artaud's life that his preoccupation with physical transformation led him to what is undoubtedly the most powerfully enduring manifestation of his work: his drawings and paintings. He had been expelled from the Surrealist movement in 1926 after producing several books of poetic fragments and a number of film scenarios, and his subsequent attempts to incorporate his theories of performance within a series of spectacles in the Parisian theatre of the 1930s - the project which he called the 'Theatre of Cruelty' - had left few material traces. The Theatre of Cruelty was based around ideas of an unrepeateable, ferociously gestural event, which would combust itself in its act of realization. But, in fact, the ephemerality of Artaud's performances was due more to the ridicule and neglect they met in the Parisian theatrical milieu than to their intention to survive only in the lacerated consciousness of their spectators.

Artaud left Paris abruptly in January 1936 after the collapse of his final Theatre of Cruelty spectacle, The Cenci. He travelled first to the mountains of northern Mexico, where he participated in the peyote
rituals of the Tarahumara people, hoping to find a revolutionary culture of fire and dance which would supplant his terminally jaded experience of European culture. After a brief period back in France, during which he became enthralled by apocalyptic ideas of an imminent global catastrophe, Artaud set out again, travelling to the remote Aran Islands, off the western coast of Ireland, from where he intended to watch the end of what he saw as a corrupt and compromised world. He spent weeks in a state of destitution, and wrote innumerable letters to friends in Paris, covering the paper in vividly coloured signs and fetish symbols, burning the surface with cigarette ends. These 'spells', as Artaud called them, were designed literally to embody his sense of fury and isolation, and to exact retribution on their recipients whom he felt had abandoned him.

Artaud was arrested for 'vagabondage' in a public park in Dublin on 23 September 1937, imprisoned for several days in Mountjoy Prison, and was then deported to France. On the boat - in a deeply paranoid and delirious state - he attacked two stewards and was placed in a straitjacket, then institutionalised in an asylum in the outskirts of Rouen on arrival in France. Certainly, Artaud's behaviour in the preceding two months had been exceptionally bizarre and violent, but many of his friends in Paris saw his internment as pure misfortune, since his habitual eccentricities had been eminently permissible in the Parisian milieu he had inhabited before his journeys. What Artaud experienced in the next nine years would be agonizing. He had been one of the most elegant and dandified of the Surrealists, his intensely handsome features hauntingly captured in the films in which he had worked as an actor in the 1920s. Now he was starved and beaten in communal wards, transferred from asylum to asylum across France, under threat of deportation to the concentration camps after the German invasion of 1940. Impossible to diagnose, even by Jacques Lacan whose asylum - Sainte-Anne - he had passed through in 1938-39, Artaud was in a state of institutional limbo: in one asylum, he spent time successively in wards intended for 'maniacs', 'cripples', 'epileptics', and 'undesirables'.

In 1943, Artaud was transferred to the asylum of Rodez in rural southwestern France, and it was there that he began the series of drawings which would continue until his death five years later. The young director of the asylum, Gaston Ferdière, had been approached by the former Surrealist poet, Robert Desnos, who, like Artaud, had been expelled
from the movement. Desnos knew that Artaud would at least be able to eat at Rodez and would be in less imminent danger of extermination (Desnos himself would be deported to a concentration camp the following year for his Resistance activities in Paris, and would die of typhoid at the Theresienstadt camp). Ferdière had been a Surrealist poet, writing obscene, largely unpublished poetry, before his change of career. His preoccupations were anarchism, drugs and pornography, and his role of authority in a social institution created a tortuous dilemma for him. The resolution Ferdière found, as he told me in our meetings before his death in December 1990, was always to explore the use of what he considered to be the most innovative and radical treatments upon his patients. Artaud became the trial subject of two of these treatments: art psycho-therapy and electric shock therapy.

Ferdière applied fifty-one sessions of electric shock therapy to Artaud between June 1943 and December 1944. The treatment had been invented only five years earlier, by the Italian doctor Ugo Cerletti, who had observed the pacifying effect of electric shocks applied to the skulls of pigs in a Rome slaughterhouse, and adapted the strategy for human application. The treatment was surrounded by an aura of discovery and excitement at the time Ferdière began to use it, and he embraced it completely. Ferdière's assistant, Jacques Latrémolière, included an account of the treatment Artaud underwent in his doctoral thesis, *Incidents and Accidents observed in the course of 1,200 Electric Shocks*. He writes of the 'theatrical reactions of the subject in the face of his hallucinations', and notes that one of Artaud's vertebrae was shattered by the third of the unanaesthetised sessions. Artaud himself would write of having been killed by this same session, and of watching the orderlies prepare to take his own corpse to the mortuary before he suddenly awakened after a coma of ninety minutes. Ferdière, while not denying that such an incident took place, told me that, with such a volume of electric shocks being applied, it was difficult to remember this particular event.

Artaud's response to the treatments fluctuated between abject pleading for their cessation and threats of violence against Ferdière. He complained of acute memory loss, and of the unbearable intrusion of the electric current into his living consciousness. He told an interviewer in 1948: 'I plunged into death. I know what death is.'(1) Ferdière was to defend - and to continue to apply - electric shock treatments until the
end of his life. He believed that Artaud had been withdrawn and unable to write before the treatments, although the volume of Artaud's letters at the time contradicts this. Ferdière claimed the glory for all of Artaud's future work. Artaud's own public denunciations of Ferdière after his eventual release from the asylum would be so virulent and livid that the mention of them alone could reduce the psychiatrist to tears. Ferdière, building on his reputation as the 'rehabilitator' of Artaud, would subsequently become the psychiatrist of the Surrealist photographer Hans Bellmer and his companion, the poet Unica Zürn (who committed suicide in 1970 while under his care). He also treated the leader of the Lettrist art movement, Isidore Isou, during the events of May 1968 in Paris. Isou and his fellow Lettrist Maurice Lemaître subsequently wrote an entire book of outrageous insults against Ferdière, entitled *Antonin Artaud Tortured by the Psychiatrists*. They asserted: 'Dr Gaston Ferdière is one of the greatest criminals in the entire history of humanity: a new Eichmann', and demanded his immediate arrest, claiming he was responsible 'for all of the social and individual disasters which have taken place in France since May 1968'.(2)

Artaud had intermittently drawn since his childhood years. His working journal for the Theatre of Cruelty production of *The Cenci* is constellated by gestural tracks of colour as he plotted the movements of his actors. The 'spells' which Artaud sent in the form of letters from his journey to Ireland, and again from one of his asylums, Ville-Évrard, are a further stage in his compulsion to introduce an image when his written language proved inadequate to the demands he was placing upon it. In Artaud's drawings, images and texts are meshed together with the same tense intimacy that his life and his work are inextricably entangled. The first three of Artaud's drawings at Rodez, undertaken directly at Ferdière's request, were spare charcoal depictions of weapons: machine-guns and swords (Artaud had attached great importance to a sword he was given in Cuba en route to Mexico, and which had been lost or confiscated on his journey to Rodez). Those first drawings were a direct manifestation of Artaud's primary preoccupation: instruments with which he could violently liberate himself.

In later years, Ferdière would claim to have been one of the great pioneering figures of art psycho-therapy, and of the 'Art Brut' movement of works by culturally indifferent or marginalised artists; he was involved in organizing one of the first exhibitions of art by asylum patients in
February 1946, at the Sainte-Anne hospital, through which Artaud had passed on his long trajectory through the asylums. In opposition to Jean Dubuffet and more contemporary proponents of Art Brut such as Leo Navratil, Ferdière's position was that the art work of the asylum patient should function primarily as diagnostic material, rather than as an authentic image in its own right. However, Ferdière never attempted to integrate Artaud into the Art Brut movement - Artaud, for one thing, was an enormously sophisticated refuser of culture. But Artaud's visual work was also intensely resistant and irreducible to a movement such as Art Brut, just as his written work had been indigestible to Breton's Surrealism. It was work in an incessant state of exploratory transformation and upheaval, mixing media with furious alacrity, and strewn with a merciless invective against social institutions. Ferdière abandoned the idea of instructing Artaud to draw long before he gave up on the electric shocks. His personal inclination was towards the more decorative and benign elements of Art Brut, and he told me that Artaud's drawings were 'of no interest whatsoever' to him. He confiscated many of the drawings Artaud undertook at Rodez, and sold them in 1950, shortly after Artaud's death.

Artaud began drawing on his own initiative in the month after his electric shock treatments had ended, January 1945. The following month, he began writing again on a sustained, indeed incessant, basis. It was as though he had obstinately wanted to defy Ferdière and his treatments until the psychiatrist had despaired of 'curing' him, before bringing the new phase of his work eruptively into action. Artaud created his Rodez drawings in the open ward he inhabited in the asylum, in conditions of constant noise and interruption from the other inmates. Ferdière had offered Artaud the option of a room off the main ward, but Artaud refused, believing himself to be a more vulnerable target for further electric shocks if placed in isolation. He drew, always standing up, on large pieces of paper, using coloured crayons and pencils left behind at the asylum by a Surrealist painter whom Ferdière had temporarily been hiding from the Germans, Frédéric Delanglade.

At first, Artaud's drawings projected the utter fragmentation of identity which he had endured through his incarceration and the electric shocks. The surface of the drawings became an arena in which Artaud dispersed an imagery of decapitated body parts and organs, screaming mouths and jagged scars. These elements of a physical detritus were set
against a threatening proliferation of metal instruments and machine parts, nails and spikes. The presence of the body in the drawings was in intimate proximity with what had already wounded and disassembled it. Artaud inscribed texts around the borders of his drawings, clearly attempting to suture the gaping expanse of his imagery with a carapace of language. The written language was one of furious invocation and resistance, partly made up by a vocabulary of invented syllables. As an imagery of protest against torture, Artaud's Rodez drawings form an exclamation of unparalleled intensity. The drawings are all the more powerful for their sensational incoherence and openness. They are the work of a man intent on reassembling his identity, but only just beginning to grate together the materials needed for what would be a long and unfinishable process. They are an imagery of the irreparable.

With the end of the Second World War in 1945, Artaud's friends from Paris were able to travel to Rodez to visit him and discuss with Ferdière the possibility of Artaud's release and return to Paris. The psychiatrist believed that he had done all he could, and that although Artaud was still to some degree a danger to society, he could now be released. Allowing Artaud to be visible in Paris would generate prestige for Ferdière, and for what he believed to have been the innovativeness of his treatments. The painter and Art Brut theorist Jean Dubuffet visited Artaud in September 1945, and the writer Arthur Adamov followed in February 1946. Adamov, in particular, was determined that Artaud should be liberated, and organized an auction of works donated by such figures as Picasso, Braque and Giacometti to provide Artaud with the sum of money which the Rodez asylum authorities stipulated as a condition for his return to Paris; additionally, it was required that Artaud should be lodged in a rest home, and Adamov asked a young doctor's wife named Paule Thévenin to locate the most suitable establishment.

Artaud's drawings were transformed during his last months at Rodez, when he became aware that his incarceration was close to its end. His shattered fragments of human figures coalesced and became more substantial, powerful presences. The drawings were still constellated with exposed bodies and weapons, but those weapons - bullets, drills, screws - were now executed with a gestural assurance and fluidity that suggested they were being used rather than suffered. The sense of dislocation which had haunted Artaud's early Rodez drawings was overturned by an impassioned force of resuscitation. This was nowhere
more evident than in a drawing of March 1946 which took its title from Artaud's theatrical project of ten years earlier, *The Theatre of Cruelty*. The drawing depicted a group of warrior girls whom Artaud, in the isolation and sterility of his internment, had elaborated as the embodiment of his desired liberation. He named them his 'daughters of the heart to be born', but his rapport with them was intensely sexual as well as familial. In his writings of the period, Artaud amalgamated the identities of women he had actually known in his life with entirely invented characters - his two grandmothers, for example, were genealogically inverted, to become feral, erotic children ready to battle for Artaud's release. In the drawing, the daughters are simultaneously dead and alive; they are confined within coffins, their bodies mummified and injured, but have their eyes vigilantly open and attentive.

The last drawing Artaud made at Rodez before his release in May 1946 was ostensibly a self-portrait, but it's evident from photographs of the same month taken of Artaud and Ferdière together in the asylum grounds that the drawing is a vehement struggle of the identities of Artaud and Ferdière within the image. The face in the drawing distinctly resembles both Artaud and his psychiatrist. One of Ferdière's assistants at the asylum, Jean Dequeker, with whom Artaud was on good terms, watched Artaud in the process of making the drawing, and in his account underlined the sense of a battle which the act of drawing entailed: 'On a large sheet of white paper, he had drawn the abstract contours of a face, and within this barely sketched material - where he had planted the black marks of future apparitions - and without a reflecting mirror, I saw him create his double, as though in a crucible, at the cost of an unspeakable torture and cruelty. He worked with fury, shattering pencil after pencil, suffering the internal throes of his own exorcism...Through the creative rage with which he exploded the bolts of reality and all the latches of the surreal, I saw him blindly dig out the eyes of his image.'(3) For Artaud, the idea of the 'double' was always that of a force which both threatened to supplant and destroy his identity, and with which he could also reassert and transform his identity. In his final image from Rodez, Artaud compacts his identity and that of Ferdière together, in order to dissolve and finally negate the presence of Ferdière over his life. The drawing is a portrait of the self in the most authentic sense.
Back in Paris, where Artaud inhabited a large, derelict pavilion in the grounds of a suburban convalescence clinic, he undertook a series of portraits of his friends and associates which, like the final Rodez drawing, appear to be dual, even multiple portraits. The contours of Artaud's own face, bone structure and eyes are incessantly present in his portraits of other people, as though impelled to break through another identity and to achieve the visibility which had been denied to Artaud in his years of internment. Viewing a series of Artaud portraits together is like watching the irrepressible transmutation of the same head, accelerating into furrowed old age at one moment, suddenly becoming rejuvenated and lucid with the next drawing. Other, smaller heads appear around the edges of the drawing's surface, but it is always Artaud who stares at the spectator in a face-to-face confrontation.

Artaud was also involved in a constant confrontation with the sitters for his Paris portraits. Paule Thévenin, the woman charged by Adamov with locating a suitable place of convalescence for Artaud, became the subject of three portraits, as well as being incorporated into numerous other drawings of multiple figures and heads. Paule Thévenin described to me the process of being drawn by Artaud as that of being 'skinned alive'. As at Rodez, Artaud would execute his portraits standing up before a table on which the sheet of paper was placed; he would scream, hum and invent new vocabularies at the same moments that he incised his pencils and crayons into the paper. The sitter was forbidden to move, but was permitted to talk as much as he or she wished - Artaud drew the face disintegrating and cohering as it formed and expressed words. The process of drawing, for Artaud, was that of a revelatory excavation into the lost material of the human anatomy. Paule Thévenin was in her mid-twenties at the time, and she would remember the experience of witnessing Artaud create his portraits of her as being literally terrifying: Artaud incessantly ground marks and lines into his image of her face, until, in a work such as Portrait of Paule Thévenin (or Paule with Blocks of Metal), she would suddenly encounter exactly the face she would have as an old woman, almost fifty years later. Simultaneously, she felt that her face in the portrait had been imbued with an existence in another arena of space and time - it was a face of liberation that threw out all the anger, determination and ecstasy she could ever feel, through its eyes and mouth. Artaud said to her: 'I have given you the face of an old empress from a barbaric era.' Presenting a
portrait to another of his sitters, Jany de Ruy, Artaud told her: 'It's a head of weapons.' 

After working on his drawings for several hours in the presence of his sitters, Artaud would then undertake the final element of his drawing process alone in his pavilion. This came in the form of a wounding of the image of such ferocity that he did not wish his sitters to witness it. With the portrait of Paule Thévenin, the image of the face became surrounded by blocks of metal, the face exuding blasts of nails and metallic shards. The facial skin was used as a surface space for the imprintation of an obsessional graffiti of objects and signs. The area around the edge of the drawing became used for the addition of a text, which evoked Paule Thévenin's integration into Artaud's group of 'daughters of the heart to be born'. The images were a creation of gesture so intense that they unerringly evoke Artaud's ideas for his ideal performance of the Theatre of Cruelty. In effect, these drawings are the stagings of an overwhelming interrogation and damaging of identity, on the scale which Artaud had dreamed of at the time of his failed projects for theatre, ten years earlier.

Artaud's portraits of his friends accumulated in the months after his return to Paris. He viewed this population of aggrieved and astonished heads as having the power of an army, able to protect him from arrest or a new asylum incarceration. He decided to exhibit the drawings, and accepted an invitation from the celebrated collector of Surrealist art, Pierre Loeb, to show them in his gallery, the Galerie Pierre in Saint Germain-des-Prés. In part, Artaud conceived of his own exhibition as a repudiation and negation of the International Exhibition of Surrealism, curated by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton, which took place at the Galerie Maeght in Paris at the same time, the summer of 1947. Artaud wrote to Breton denouncing what he argued would be the Surrealist exhibition's 'stylized, limited, closed, fixed character as an attempt at art'(4), when set against the sensation of explosivity which he wanted to impart to his own exhibition.

In order to realize this ambition, Artaud decided to undertake two performances in the Galerie Pierre during the run of the exhibition. Apart from one, partly-improvised performance of screams and denunciations, against psychiatry and society, which he had staged earlier that year, at the Vieux-Colombier theatre in Paris, these events
were to be Artaud's only public performances between his release from Rodez and his death. He collaborated with the theatre director Roger Blin on events which involved the reading of specially written texts, the beating of percussion instruments with pokers, and, most essentially, the performance of Artaud's own scream (a scream which remains searing to those who heard it, either at those performances or within Artaud's final work, the banned recording for radio entitled *To have done with the judgement of god*). Artaud's Galerie Pierre events took place within an intricately determined and intentional space: they were staged in front of a specially chosen audience, and were surrounded by what Artaud considered to be the massed army of his portrait drawings.

For the catalogue of his exhibition, Artaud wrote a text entitled *The Human Face*, which articulates the set of intentions he worked with in executing such an extraordinary body of work. He wrote: 'The human face carries, in effect, a kind of perpetual death on its face/from which it's for the painter alone to save it/by giving back to it its authentic features.' Describing his own works, Artaud noted: 'All of them are attempts: that is to say, blows or thrusts, in all the directions of hazard, of possibility, of chance, or of destiny... That is why a number of the drawings are amalgams of poems and portraits, of written interjections... So, you will have to accept these drawings in the barbarity and disorder of their technique, "which is never preoccupied with art", but with the sincerity and the spontaneity of gesture.'(5) In a letter to his publisher Marc Barbezat, shortly after the exhibition had closed, Artaud revealed the panoramic scale of the project he was envisioning with his drawings: 'I have the idea of putting into operation a new gathering together of the activity of the human world: idea of a new anatomy./My drawings are anatomies in action.'(6)

However, Artaud's survival after his release from Rodez was precarious, and he would die less than two years after his return to Paris, on 4 March 1948, of an overdose of the drug chloral hydrate which he was taking to alleviate the pain of intestinal cancer. The drawings of his final months were formed of collections of human heads, amassed on top of each other, laced with filaments of text. Artaud drew figures from his past life in Paris, from as far back as the mid-1920s when he was still a member of the Surrealist group, and juxtaposed them with the heads of the people most important to him in his contemporary world, such as Paule Thévenin and her sister Minouche Pastier. Every
head that formed part of those populations shows evidence of being attacked and scarred: heads are impaled with huge nails, throats are gouged, mouths are distorted and wrenched. The area surrounding the figures is occupied by a scrawl of gestured strokes - like that with which Alberto Giacometti surrounded his painted figures - into which the lines of human heads ascend and descend, forming elongated totem poles of bodies and scars. Artaud believed that everyone who had ever befriended him in Paris had been covertly silenced or murdered, and these last drawings (like the 'daughters of the heart') form a great project of visual resuscitation, in which the faces of Artaud's obliterated friends reappear, infused with furious life.

The most exceptional of the last completed drawings is the one entitled *The Projection of the True Body*, which Artaud had begun at Rodez and brought back to Paris with him. He had worked on the drawing all through the period after his return to Paris, intermittently adding new figures and textual elements to it. By the time of its completion at the beginning of 1948, the surface of the drawing was dense with inscriptions over inscriptions, bodies over bodies, gestures over gestures. The drawing shows Artaud's own figure at one side of the image, and a skeletal figure of bone and fire at the other side. Artaud's own head and eyes, drawn in pencil, stare out of the image, while his body is being shot by a group of soldiers with rifles. His kneecaps are edged in flame and worn to the bone. The skeleton of fire is attached to Artaud's figure by a chain that ends in handcuffs restraining his wrists. The skeleton is a figure in a state of wild eruption, crayoned in great streaks of vivid colour from the black arrangement of bones, and projecting the violent physical transformation that was Artaud's pre-eminent obsession. Artaud predicted in one of his final texts that, at his death: 'you will see my present body/burst into fragments/and remake it under ten thousand notorious aspects/a new body/where you will/never forget me.'(7)

Artaud has been remembered, more intently and exactly now than ever before. That refusal of oblivion was in large part due to Paule Thévenin who, after Artaud's death, protected the vast majority of his drawings from dispersal (although this also entailed screening them away from public view for many years), while undertaking the immense project of editing Artaud's *Collected Works* - a project which she started as an assistant to Artaud in 1946 and left unfinished at her death in
September 1993. The knowledge of Artaud's drawings remained erratic and partial in the decades after his death, and they were unduly perceived as being secondary to his theatre projects. The exhibition of Artaud's drawings at the Centre Georges Pompidou, which in 1994 showed the entire collection of drawings bequeathed to the museum by Paule Thévenin, is evidence that the most vivid, immediate and vital aspect of Artaud's work - his drawings - is that which will certainly exert the greatest inspiration in the future.

Notes

The translations in this essay are my own.
PIERRE GUYOTAT: EDEN, EDEN, EDEN
(1994)

Pierre Guyotat's legendary novel of atrocity and extreme obscenity, *Eden, Eden, Eden*, finally appears in English. Set in the dirt of a tainted zone of the Algerian desert in a time of civil warfare, Guyotat's novel brings scenes of brutal violence into intimate collision with relentless acts of prostitutinal sex and degradation. *Eden, Eden, Eden* was banned as 'pornographic' by the French Ministry of the Interior on its publication and remained under governmental censorship for eleven years. The book is a courageous and unique exploration into the virulent matter of sex, language and the human body. It is lethal, and it has no precedent. Guyotat has declared: 'The very origin of the whole system of literature has to be attacked.'

Guyotat is a reviled and revered figure in France. His books have astonished and appalled their readership with their raw physical power. He has been acclaimed as the only writer alive who is creating a new language. He has said: 'There is something inside me that makes it necessary for me to go further, always further into aberration.' Guyotat was born in 1940 in a remote mountainous region of south-western France. He has written obsessively from his first years. As a child, he masturbated constantly while writing, and his first manuscripts (as he narrates in his 'seminal' text of the early 1970s, *The Language of the Body*) are extraordinary visual coagulations of semen, ink, dirt and blood. As a teenager, he became a soldier in the Algerian colonial war, and was arrested for inciting his fellow soldiers to desert and kept imprisoned for three months in a hole in the ground. His first celebrated book, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, is a hallucinatory account of the terror and ecstasy provoked by that war, the memory of which was long suppressed in France. *Eden, Eden, Eden* was written in an intense six month period in a concrete highrise in the desolate suburbs of southern Paris.

Over the last twenty years, Guyotat has written incessantly but has published only one novel, *The Book*. This astonishing work compacts all the cruelty and exhilaration of Guyotat's early work into a monstrous abjection of language, stripped to the bone, viral and skeletal. The writing of *The Book* and his subsequent work, *Stories of Samora Machel*,
almost killed Guyotat. At the end of 1981, he was living the creation of his language with such obsessionality that he gave up eating, lost half his body weight and was rushed to hospital to be resuscitated from a coma that was almost fatal. Since then, Guyotat has worked on preparing the manuscript of *Stories of Samora Machel* for publication and begun an immense new work which is now slowly nearing completion, *Progenitures*. Every three or four years, Guyotat gives a series of readings in the basement of the Centre Pompidou in Paris - partly improvisations and partly a delivery of work in progress, these performances leave their audiences unforgettably scorched by Guyotat's language. He has also given readings at events around the work of the only two writers whose language in any way approaches the extremity and the dissidence of his own: Antonin Artaud and Jean Genet.

*Eden, Eden, Eden* is a delirious and exhausting book to experience: it propels its reader into itself with fury and adrenalised elation. The hero of the book is an Algerian prostitute boy, Wazzag, who participates in an infinite series of sex acts. The book stinks of sperm and killing: it is a malignant orgasm.

On the publication of *Eden, Eden, Eden*, Roland Barthes wrote that Guyotat's book literally constituted a historical shock. The writer Philippe Sollers said that nothing had been done that risked so much since the novels of the Marquis de Sade. Guyotat has relentlessly beaten the comatose, catatonic nature of language into an anatomical matter of writing. Guyotat is the most original writer alive, and *Eden, Eden, Eden* is his most livid, atrocious book. It will derange you and it will scar you.
In 1969, the French literary journal *Tel Quel* published an extract from Pierre Guyotat's work in progress, *Eden, Eden, Eden*, under the title *Bordels of Butchery*. After the book's publication in 1970, it was subjected to governmental censorship in France, was reviled by large sections of the Parisian literary establishment, and became one of the great divisive scandals of postwar French writing. The participants of *Tel Quel*, in collaboration with supporters and associates of Guyotat, mounted a defence of the book. Michel Foucault wrote: 'Guyotat has written a book in a language of startling innovation. I have never read anything like it in any stream of literature. No-one has ever spoken as he speaks here.' Documents and interviews relating to this protest against the censorship of Guyotat's work were published in a volume which he entitled *Forbidden Literature*. I aim here to explore how the language of *Eden, Eden, Eden* generated such institutional and individual vitriol; to stress the role of *Tel Quel* in making manifest the language of the novel; and to relate Guyotat's language to the configuration of contemporary Europe, and the pressures operating in any creative work brought into existence within the extreme conditions for which Guyotat's own work provides prescience and testimony.

Guyotat's 1988 text *Wanted Female* was conceived while he was jogging on a beach in Santa Monica, during a stay in California where he was engaged in a collaboration with the artist Sam Francis. Guyotat saw a junkie girl running down the beach to buy crack from her dealer, and the image for the text was sprung: a girl is caught inside the cheek of the bestial narrator of the text, along with six macerated sexes. The disciplined rhythm of *Wanted Female* is that of the process of running, its trajectory jump-cut by invasive imageries, until the running of the text is suspended and all that remains are the ashes of the narrator, grabbed and gathered by the junkie girl into a sack, open and noxious. By contrast, the speed of *Eden, Eden, Eden* is that of an atrocious headlong rush into obscenity, conducted at breakneck intensity, disciplined to the last syllable. The text is not left to breathe, and it constricts and exhausts the reader in an adrenalised pulse of text, whose final release and exhalation comes with the final spasm of the great malignant orgasm which the entire book constitutes. No space exists in
the text for readers to pacify themselves, to focus and thereby rest the eyes. The onrush of text is itself an ocular violation. *Eden, Eden, Eden* is a text that compels the eye, physically, into its implosive momentum, that accelerates incessantly at the reader. In an interview published in *Tel Quel*, Guyotat spoke of how the text of *Eden, Eden, Eden* terminates at the same site where his camper van had finally broken down, in the steppes around the border between Algeria and Niger, during his obsessional travels around the area. He comments: 'I write like I travel - I write like I drive, even.' The brutality of raw speed is the primary element in the transmission of the matter of writing.

Guyotat has written that his work of the early 1980s, as yet unpublished, *Stories of Samora Machel*, makes up what he calls 'the total prostitutorial experience'. *Eden, Eden, Eden* consists of the fragmentation of prostitution. The book forms the relentless enumeration of an innumerable series of sex acts performed between prostitute boys and manual salaried workers in a desert brothel in Algeria. The final section of the book, compacting the detail of fauna with the detail of sex acts between a group of nomadic human beings and animals, takes place on a steppe in northern Niger. The text is initiated in warfare, with multiple acts of violence, rape and massacre perpetrated by marauding French troops, in a colonial conflict for which the unspoken index is the Algerian war of liberation, previously incised by Guyotat in his first celebrated novel, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*. Each fragment of the sex acts performed by Guyotat's prostitute boys, Wazzag and Khamssieh, is saturated by the murderous opening of the text, which determines that every act of lust is read - indelibly, with vicious clarity - through the medium of a hanging pall of blood. The salaried sexual act doubles the salaried act of exploitation undergone by the drillers, workers and butchers who enter the arena of prostitution. And the regime of sex is doubled by the regime of killing.

At the time of the writing of *Eden, Eden, Eden* and the appearance of *Bordels of Butchery* in *Tel Quel*, Guyotat had not yet completely formulated his project of recreating what he calls 'the matter of writing', a project that consumes him to the present day. That project was most intensively developed in the aftermath of the scandal over *Eden, Eden, Eden*, in the years from 1971, when Guyotat was closely aligned with the French Communist Party, to 1975, when he began to inject heroin for the first time and published his most dense, syntactically damaged and
elided work: a novel entitled *Prostitution*. The writings which Guyotat worked on in those years are what he calls 'liberated texts'. The act of creation that produced *Eden, Eden, Eden* is the primary pivot upon which that work, done under the skin of the French language, intricately grates in all its originality. Since Guyotat has stated that the origin of the whole system of literature has to be attacked, the crucial question is to formulate another, oppositional origin: that of the matter of writing, at the site where it cuts away from a stultified system - and then to locate *Eden, Eden, Eden* within the process which that reinvented origin generates. As Guyotat states in a text of the early 1970s, *The Language of the Body*, delivered at a conference on the work of Artaud, his work began in secrecy as a child, with vital corporeal matters combined in language. He recalls how he wrote incessantly from an early age, masturbating constantly with one hand while he wrote with his other hand. The matter of language originates in obsession, in the intensity of fluidic trajectories and mixings, with only a jagged set of fragments from that work being openly presented to the reader’s eye - from the great mass of Guyotat’s writing, only a relatively small volume of his textual ‘ejaculation’ has ever been presented to the public eye, with the remainder either being lost in the jet of its trajectory, or retained in the body of work that he has determinedly kept for himself. (However, Guyotat’s latent work is accessible, stored at the IMEC literary research centre in Paris in its manuscript form, and can be sought out there.)

The matter of writing begins in expulsion and incorporation. In a sense, *Eden, Eden, Eden* is the perfect book for contemporary Europe, which is also, in its malignancy, dominated by those twin compulsions. The gestation of *Eden, Eden, Eden* involved a refusal of Europe and its eventual re-incorporation in a transformed state. In the period after the publication of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, Guyotat left Europe and returned to the now-liberated Algeria, and travelled back and forth through the desert and mountainous regions in the south of the country, meticulously photographing and filming the landscape and nomadic people, making notes towards the dispossession of language - the dispossession of the French language *from* itself - that his writing of *Eden, Eden, Eden* would project. The book was then written in a sudden burst of six months in a concrete highrise in the suburbs of southern Paris, in the winter following the May 1968 events in the city. The construction of the matter of writing subsumes the protracted process of gazing, travelling and noting, into the abrupt intensity of the executed
text. This process of oscillation, between contemplation and execution, at work in Guyotat’s writing, forms part of the greatest of all of the contradictions of representation: between repetition and a unique projection or demonstration. Roland Barthes wrote in his preface to *Eden, Eden, Eden* of how the ‘unit of the phrase’ in Guyotat's language is endlessly brought to bear, compulsively and relentlessly, against the preoccupations of the text. The substance of the subject matter is never attained, never fulfilled. The uniqueness of the language in *Eden, Eden, Eden*, which Michel Foucault emphasized, remains so only through its sustaining, its determined rhythm of repetition. Since the text visually enacts an ocular violation, the impact upon the reader of that intense repetition constitutes a concurrent mental violation of the most challenging kind: it aims at the barrier between language and the human body. In the last stages of the work of Artaud, this terminal contradiction, between repetition and uniqueness, is also vitally at stake. After giving what would be his final performance, at the Galerie Pierre in Paris on 18 July 1947, Artaud wrote about the language of gestures and blows which he had formulated and had attempted to demonstrate to his audience, but which had finally eluded him, in terms of the kind of immediacy of repetition that he wanted to project. Artaud commented: 'I would have had to shit blood through my navel to arrive at what I want./For example, three quarters of an hour's beating with a poker on the same spot.’ The diverse preoccupations of the notes which Artaud made for his final work, the banned recording for radio *To have done with the judgement of god*, also ultimately amass around this concern to insistently demonstrate the unique, while at the same time refusing the repetitive nature of representation as integrally and maliciously social. The intentional strategy of repetition in Guyotat's *Eden, Eden, Eden* is of a parallel order, in its exploration of the tension between the sustained and the immediate in language, working as a direct counterpart to the corporeal processes of resistance and creation.

The matter of writing is ultimately capable of bringing abstraction, and even the integral repetition of language itself, to its end, to its silencing. In retrospect, Guyotat views his alliance with *Tel Quel* as one which assisted in, and added to, the journal’s project of expelling abstraction from the contemporary world, and of focusing instead on the immediately gestural and physical. In the historical scope and resonance of Guyotat's work, the two overriding elements to be discerned are, firstly, what he calls 'the revolt against abstraction', and, secondly, the
permanent struggle with the power of repetition. Long before the rise of fundamentalism in Algeria in 1991, Guyotat had warned that the systematic abstraction of religion, into a movement of mass terror, on a sustained scale, was the greatest danger for the North African countries. It's certainly the case that one of the great fallacies about European history, in the second half of the twentieth century, was that the genocide enacted in the Nazi concentration camps of the Second World War would not be repeated. At least in Britain, the television imageries of Omarska in the summer of 1992 constituted a disabusal of that fallacy about the power of repetition. Similarly, the extermination of one hundred thousand Kurdish and Iraqi conscript soldiers, by European and North American weapons technology, in the deserts of southern Iraq in February 1991, resuscitated the atrocious dynamics of power that had animated the particular conflict - that of Algeria - which initiates the language of Guyotat's *Eden, Eden, Eden* and of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*. The latter book is explicitly dedicated by Guyotat to his uncle, Hubert, arrested for resistance activities and killed in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, at Oranienburg in northern Germany, in 1943. Guyotat has written: 'My whole imaginary system is an allusion to the concentrational system.' The twin forces of abstraction and repetition are eminently palatable and consumable in the contemporary media. And, decades on from *Eden, Eden, Eden*, Guyotat’s current work, *Progenitures*, still confronts and refuses abstraction, and is crucially impelled by an incessant, locked fury at repetition.

*Eden, Eden, Eden* is demonstrative and revelatory in its insights into the crucial and determining matters of sex, language and the human body, and the liberating pressure of the act of writing is maximal when placed intimately against the horror of the forbidden. The Tamacheck text which opens *Eden, Eden, Eden* reads: 'And now, we are no longer slaves.' The support which *Tel Quel* gave to Guyotat and his projects, at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, certainly formed a factor in the transformation of censorship, and the transformation of the forbidden itself, in contemporary France. The forbidden is an entirely different material now to what it was at the time of the censorship of Guyotat’s work in 1970, though in many ways its operation remains as virulent and immovable as ever. The focus of censorship has been recast in the intervening decades, and the strategies of censorship have evolved too, in terms both of their sophistication and their brutality. Guyotat writes: ‘Censorship is condemned to have much more work with
my new texts than with the first ones.' The fact of refusing censorship - refusing its central operation of suppressing an upheaval in re-imagining sex and the human body, in re-imagining language - is enduringly valuable. The traces of that process of resistance are marked in the survival of *Eden, Eden, Eden* and in the role of *Tel Quel* in that survival.

The question of censorship is one that Guyotat has continued to confront: in his defence, in the newspaper *Libération*, in 1994, of Jacques Henric’s novel *Unending Adorations*, and in his defence too of Salman Rushdie and his novel *The Satanic Verses*. From Guyotat's first words, the will to avoid the erotic, to embrace the pornographic, has been pronounced. The pornographic is placed clearly in Guyotat’s work in the direction of what disturbs, deranges and liberates the limits of the body, of what sensationally overturns and also transfixes the eye, of what falls irrevocably into the raw substance of the body, and of what castigates the superficial imageries of a bogus society. Guyotat has commented: 'Pornography is certainly more beautiful than eroticism. I say three cheers for pornography!'. The intervening ground between Guyotat's pornographic realignment of language in *Eden, Eden, Eden*, and the ‘pornography’ of censorship itself (in relation to a book accused by the French government of being pornographic, in the years between 1970 and 1981), is a terrain of silence: a terrain which Guyotat has explored to the point where his silence alone has proved atrociously articulate. If writers are only writers when they publish their work, then that presence of silence, together with his periods of retraction from society, have been determining in Guyotat’s work. He has interrogated the limitations and veracity of the writer’s identity with searching violence. Guyotat wrote about the origins of his novel *The Book*: 'At the same time that I decide never again to publish, reinforced by my refusal of the designation "writer", these voices [of mine] disappear into what I no longer call writings, but *matter*.’ Silence and obscenity are equally at the heart of Guyotat’s matter of writing. The oscillation between the forced silence of censorship, and the intentional silence of extreme creativity, is initiated from fury and from aberration. It is simultaneously the silence of humiliation and of reaction, the silence of degradation and of liberation. Together, those silences form the unique texture of Guyotat’s matter of writing.

The text of *Eden, Eden, Eden* is ferociously lit and coloured. It is a text that is concurrently an image in space, and an image in which no time is
ever lost: the movement between prostitututional act to act is instantaneous, utterly without temporal gaps. Guyotat has commented that he always possesses a pictorial and visual, rather than linguistic, sense of what he is doing. In the act of writing, it is the image which causes an initiatory detonation in the movement and the abrupt choreography of language. As in the manuscript notebooks of Artaud, the border between image and text in *Eden, Eden, Eden* is summarily negated by the creative act which incorporates the visual and the textual, transforming them into a corporeal and assaultive matter. And finally, the text of *Eden, Eden, Eden* is a language of the body. For Guyotat, the responsibility to write is paramount, as an act of resistance and even of revolution - a configuration of revolution which has its momentary, but momentous, intersection with the trajectory of *Tel Quel*. At the same time, the origin of that responsibility to write is exterior and autonomous to all of the forms which enclose it, including the collective identity of *Tel Quel*, and even the individual identity of Guyotat himself, who has commented: 'I have written these things, but it wasn't I who wrote them. I am the instrument of that writing. I am a body through whom the words pass.' The body, then, is the instrument which hammers into, or else lets slip, language. It is the body which can disobey or endure, rather than its words. And the body is all there is between language and the void of censorship or fundamentalism or massacre or repetition.

The origin of the matter of writing is in its revelation of the duplicity that exists between the body and language, and in the shattering act of collision which also welds them together.
BERLIN: SCREENING TRANSFORMATION
(1996)

The screen of Berlin is where its transformations are compulsively inscribed. The zone between the city's inhabitants and those spectacularly mutating screens forms the interstice where cinema collides with architecture.

Berlin becomes ever more possessed by the urgency of that ocular crash - between city and eye - as it approaches the end of the century in which it has incessantly devastated and enlivened Europe. With the vast rebuilding work evident everywhere in the east of the city, the work in progress towards Berlin's regaining of its status as Germany's capital city tangibly recreates history before its citizens' eyes. The contrast between the city's scars and its innovations is starker than ever. Destruction and creativity fit intimately together in Berlin. The city projects its own visual and temporally multiple presence, never more so than with Christo's wrapping of the Reichstag in July 1995. By day, the grey-wrapped building is void, cancelled. As Christo declared on Berlin television, the impact he wanted was that of seeing the building momentarily disappear, and nothing more. But by night, vast crowds gather in the heat of the Berlin night. They create their own cacophonic soundtrack as they sit on the fields of grass before the Reichstag and gaze in transfixed awe at the spectacle of nothing. Into that nothing, the imageries from the past, the present and the future of Berlin are incessantly generated, since Berlin is the sensorium of Europe. The darkness transforms hypnotic vision into intersecting trajectories of memory and imagery. And on such nights, the entirety of Berlin becomes one vast cinema: the projectionist is insane, the film reels are in reverse order, the seats are a bizarre mix of the broken and the new, and the audience is deliriously facing in every wrong direction. On the final nights of the wrapping, the grey sheets start to unravel from the Reichstag and cranes appear around the building. The screen of the city is dismantled before its participants' eyes, and the murderously banal spectacle of everyday life in the city slides back into place for another instant.

Simultaneously with the wrapping of the Reichstag, Berlin's annual Techno music carnival - the 'Love Parade' - snakes through the centre of the city in a vast and obliterating wall of noise. To some extent, young
Berliners see the Love Parade and its crazed participants as the aberrant extension of the punk movement. Where punk was a volatile concoction of political outcry and sheer malicious delight, the Love Parade too is a provocative but fundamentally pleasurable experience. It embodies both the distrust which Berliners manifest towards the immense corporate transformations which are elevating themselves in the city, and the exhilaration with which they display that resistance. The surfaces of Berlin are sonically charged with that resistance, as a counterpoint to the genealogies of graffiti which have now been layering their way into the eastern streets of the city for seven years. This isn't the first time that Berliners have poured through the city streets, and the Love Parade necessarily and contradictorily evokes both the Nazi parades of the 1930s and the mass demonstrations of Communist workers against Nazism. The Love Parade is the finale of Kathryn Bigelow's film *Strange Days* filmed by Leni Reifenstahl. With the scepticism that led many Berliners in 1933 to revile Hitler and oppose his election while much of the rest of Germany embraced Nazism, the city’s inhabitants continue to demonstrate their capacity to negate the best-made plans of the Berlin authorities. Berlin's contemporary artists - often Techno musicians and film-makers and architects as well as artists - are as far from the conceptual artists of the 1970s and the figurative painters of the 1980s as it's possible to go. An obsolete technology such as super-8 is the vital film medium for seizing the future of a city which is irrevocably exiled from the contemporary. And the new, exiled film-makers inhabiting Berlin - from Kurdistan and Armenia and Croatia - reveal the city as an arena where the obsession with exile has a pre-eminent site. It was only when the GDR's final dictator, Erich Honecker, went into exile and death in Chile that the city grew to love him as part of itself. The city assembles its new visual configurations - of buildings, of cinematic and digital imageries, of obsessions - in anticipation of the calamitous sensation of ecstasy which their oncoming cancellation will provoke, in the heart of Europe.
The Raab Galerie has proved uniquely sensitised to the transformations in Berlin and its culture over the last decade and a half, and to the context of Berlin in its rapport with international art, especially that of the USA and Britain. Essential images of a time of upheaval - for the human figure, for the city - have emerged from the Raab Galerie. Its position in the Potsdamerstrasse - close to the Neue Nationalgalerie and the Staatsbibliothek, and intimately near to the great site of precarious reconstruction in the Potsdamerplatz - has set it at the core of the intensely impacting imageries created in Berlin.

The Raab Galerie is an open, accessible space, with the presence of the work inside signalling its existence to passers-by and seeping out its life to the hectic city street. Opening nights at the gallery are often spectacular events, with the crowds spilling from the gallery onto the night pavement outside. Those openings are also the originating points for many collaborations and associations, since the gallery forms one of the crucial creative meeting points of Berlin.

The Raab Galerie exudes an aura of deviance along with its serious engagement. In many ways, it is the most idiosyncratic and illuminating of all Berlin galleries. It is a place where the most unexpected events take place naturally, and where the atmosphere creatively shifts from moment to moment, with extraordinary and humorous results. The artists exhibited by the gallery are a correspondingly idiosyncratic group with particular needs and demands. The gallery’s owner, Ingrid Raab, recounts how the artist Luciano Castelli once required a cow to pose with him for a magazine photograph. It was wintertime, and the Berlin Wall was still in place, so cows were not easy to come by in the far-from-agricultural confines of West Berlin. Finally, one rare cow was procured from one of the very few West Berlin farmers, but it first had to be insured for an enormous sum for its journey into the city. (Another artist, Rainer Fetting, also appreciated the corporeal solidity of the cow, and regularly travelled to the north German island of Sylt on cow-viewing expeditions.) Such bizarre events are part of life for a gallery with such a strong creative pedigree.
The Raab Galerie has a particular status for its sustained engagement - from the earliest moment - with the figurative artists who came to international prominence from Berlin at the start of the 1980s with their roaring, sexualised work: Rainer Fetting, Luciano Castelli, Elvira Bach, Salomé, among others. Those are artists whose work has been immersed in desire, obsession and lust - best exemplified by the collaborations between the artists (and by the punk band formed by Fetting, Castelli and Salomé in the early 1980s, The Horny Animals, which Salomé recalls played like teen idols to ecstatic, hysterical audiences). But the Raab Galerie has also consistently initiated new projects and helped to develop the work of younger artists, such as Romen Banerjee, throughout its existence. And the gallery's work with American, Russian, Japanese and British artists and photographers epitomises this stimulus. The work of the artists explores the nature of perception, the sensational power of the body, and the identity of the vastly transmuting metropolis.

Berlin art is expanding in diverse fields simultaneously, escalating in attraction and impact, in vivid and vital collaborative amalgams, and often now through the work of East Berlin-born artists rather than the 1980s community of exiles. The Raab Galerie is a seminal presence in those explorations and transformations.
BERLIN: THE OCULAR CRASH
(1996)

The Wahrnehmung project is the embodiment of the insistent processes of innovation and transformation which convulse gestures of perception, and make them compulsive sources of creative experimentation for the contemporary moment and its imageries.

The zone of perception is one which proliferates with possibilities, endlessly mutating from creative sphere to sphere: shattering and instigating new configurations. It rips through into a new terrain of the visual image and object. This project crucially explores the power of the interstice: the multiple openings of the zone around which all vital collaborations now hinge: between visual artists, musicians, writers and film-makers.

Moving from the very origin of the visual image in its multiple forms, to the ephemeral transmission of the image through new instantaneous technologies such as the internet, is a journey which collapses in on itself. The power of the origin of the image and the power of the immediate are simultaneously present: virtual space negates itself, the object survives.

The very origin of the visual image is becoming more and more brought into prominence and urgency through the mutations of visual perception which this project instigates. The essential journey made by the project is through the territory of the compacted zones of virtuality and reality: between the virtual object and the real object. The transformations induced by this journey are insistently inscribed in the perception of virtual space and real space, creating an urgent ocular crash.

The project also demonstrates that Berlin’s vital contemporary artists - often Techno musicians and film-makers as well as artists - are as far from the conceptual artists of the 1970s and the figurative painters of the 1980s as it’s possible to go. They reveal the city as a liberated zone in which the upheavals of the end of the 1980s have been succeeded by the determined collapsing of every bogus division and barrier to their freedom, and by the ability to use all media exhaustively for the raw
creative and social material they provide. That determination - that sense of perception - makes the art of the city ever more exhilarating as it moves into the last days of this calamitous century.
ZERO CATEGORY: DISPLACEMENTS AND EXTREMITIES
(1998)

*Zero Category* (a project undertaken by the Gekidan Kaitaisha performance art group in Tokyo in 1997) explored the vertigo of existing on the most precarious of borderlines - that border where the extremities of the human body encounter the extreme power of the media images which penetrate and impel the body. At this interstice where the media operate directly through the human, the human body develops its vital strategies of resistance.

I watched *Zero Category*, spellbound and displaced. Afterwards, it infused me with memories of travelling through eastern Europe in the years of transformation after 1989: the vast wrecked cities, the sudden apparition of consumer frenzy, the haunted faces of human figures - from Albania to East Germany - whose sky had fallen down.

*Zero Category* operated through a rigorous accumulation of gestures and silences. In this way, it gathered a condensed and charged corporeal tension which it then subjected to a vivid unleashing, in exhilaration. In their trajectories through space, memory and time, the human figures of *Zero Category* exacted a discipline that, from moment to moment, sensorially cracked open, into revealing outbursts of noise, or attack, or sex, or confrontation, or embrace, or silence.

In *Zero Category*, the immanent presence of the visual city imprinted itself onto every gesture of the human figures that tenuously inhabited it, creating a torn debris of upended, refugee bodies incorporated into the visual arena of media imageries. *Zero Category* demonstrated the existence of a city - Tokyo, or any other city of the world - layered both with its past devastations and with its virulent contemporary media transmissions. The material of the human body is the screen for the transmutations which the city emanates - a material to be shunned and marginalised if it cannot be swallowed alive. *Zero Category* interrogated that relationship of image and body - the most compelling and obliterating relationship for any human being in the contemporary world.
Zero Category operated in a zone of immediacy beyond representation and performance. Its own oppositional images were of a starkness and simplicity that collapsed down into intricacy and provocation, into the extremes of what can be done with the human body. Relentlessly, violently, it assembled and disassembled its fragments, its expectorations, its abjections.
EL TOPO: ON THE ROAD
(1999)

The film director Alejandro Jodorowsky’s life is the ultimate road movie narrative. Incessantly on the road or on the run between countries and continents, surrounded by a peripheral entourage of mentally damaged individuals, and moving with sudden transitions from obscurity to ephemeral celebrity and back again, Jodorowsky has been one of the great legendary, but subterranean, figures of experimental art and cinema from the 1960s to the present. His pre-eminent film, *El Topo*, released in 1971, charts the road to atrocity and revelation with lacerating force.

Jodorowsky was already forty-two years old when he made *El Topo*, and had a history of two decades of experimental theatre performance behind him, largely staged in Mexico: his principal inspiration in this performance work was Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, although Jodorowsky insists that, if asked to choose between Artaud’s work and his own obsessions as his main creative source, he prizes his own interior compulsions above all exterior sources or cultures. Jodorowsky has been associated for over thirty years with the Spanish theatre director and film-maker, Fernando Arrabal, although Jodorowsky’s South American origins enable him to wield a supremely raw power, of a kind barred to Europeans, in dissecting his preoccupations with human illusions and the worthlessness of existence.

*El Topo* was immediately revered on its New York City release, early in 1971, by figures such as Dennis Hopper (whose own film, *The Last Movie*, of the same year, resonates with Jodorowsky’s work) and John Lennon; at various points until the beginning of the 1980s, it appeared that Jodorowsky’s vision might be co-opted by Hollywood. This never happened. Jodorowsky soon lost the rights to *El Topo*, a pattern that seems to have recurred with almost all of his subsequent films - in fact, Jodorowsky claims never to have made any money whatsoever from any of his films, until the Accatone cinema in Paris paid him 500 francs (around £50) for a screening of his film *Sante Sangre* in 1999. He believes that, with a virulent and stubborn vision such as he has pursued since his first film, *Fando and Lis*, he can expect to make no more than a film each decade. Although Jodorowsky has a number of film projects in
development, over a decade has now passed since his last film, Sante Sangre, and he is still looking for a producer for his next film. In Paris, where he lives, Jodorowsky is celebrated primarily as a successful comic-strip book (‘bande dessinée’) author; he works in collaboration with a number of artists, providing extravagant narratives which the artists illustrate, and in 1999 he produced the narrative for the first ever comic-strip book entirely generated by digital-image technology.

El Topo has followed a twisted road. The film achieved a legendary status in Britain during its short period of visibility (and the screenplay, heavily annotated by Jodorowsky, was published in English in the early 1970s), but the film disappeared rapidly from view there, as it had in the USA. Ownership disputes plagued the film, and the aura of El Topo as a lost masterpiece of supreme cruelty achieved overblown proportions. Jodorowsky made a rare appearance in London in 1996 to speak at the Incarcerated with Artaud and Genet festival at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and El Topo was screened on British terrestrial television (its first ever showing on television anywhere in the world) in the following year, giving it a new, if tenuous, existence.

El Topo is an exhaustive projection of individual obsession and self-mythification: it carries the relentless and endless interior journey which is the mark of the road movie, and the entire trajectory of El Topo is that of a multiplicitious interrogation into the interacting roles of the individual, of 'god' and of violence. But El Topo also indelibly marks the moment when the ecstasy of the 1960s counterculture overturned itself into massacre, assassination and terror, and here too it captures the definitive moment of the road movie, at the beginning of the 1970s, as a visual sledgehammer blow aimed at the head of American fundamentalism, militarism and ignorance. At times, El Topo moves with extraordinary slowness, at other times with a cardiac frenzy reminiscent of the momentum driving another great disillusioned Mexican road movie of the early 1970s, Sam Peckinpah’s Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia, which also terminates in a ferocious bloodbath and with the suicide or self-sacrifice that is the only way to mark the end of the road with dignity.

The narrative of El Topo is a journey from atrocity to atrocity, punctuated by bouts of revelation, and structured in two parts. Although some commentators have argued that El Topo’s narrative is incoherent,
it appears a tightly plotted film, intricate and lucidly contradictory from its first to last moment. In the first shots of the film - using an iconography intentionally drawn from the Western film genre - a gunfighter in black leather, ‘El Topo’ (‘The Mole’: played by Jodorowsky himself), shaded by a black umbrella, is travelling through a desert, carrying his naked seven-year-old son with him on his horse. They reach a town that is running with a river of blood and whose population has been decimated: El Topo ascertains that a bandit known as ‘The Colonel’ has committed the outrage, together with his gang. He tracks them down at a Franciscan mission, slaughters the gang (Jodorowsky choreographed their bloody demise with advice from the technicians of Peckinpah’s The Wild Bunch), castrates The Colonel (who dies in a sequence of abject humiliation exactly prefiguring the castration scene in Sante Sangre), and releases The Colonel’s sex-slave, a young woman who then accompanies El Topo and forces him to abandon his son. They wander in a desert, and the woman incites El Topo into a new quest, to kill the four ‘Gun-Masters’ who live in the desert. After El Topo picks off the four Masters, through treachery and cunning, he finally becomes convinced of the futility of his quest and shatters his gun; a female gunfighter who has been jealously following El Topo, and seducing the woman accompanying him, then shoots down El Topo.

In the second part of the film, El Topo awakens twenty years on, from a coma induced by his shooting, to find himself in a cavern populated by dispossessed, inbred human figures; they were imprisoned in the cavern many years earlier, by the inhabitants of a nearby town who view them as its detritus - ‘born from incest and deformed’. After saving El Topo, they now regard him as their deity and source of salvation. El Topo now reverses his earlier self-directed quest and resolves to help the cavern-dwellers, who want to return to the town, even though this is evidently a desperate and futile aspiration. Now shaven-headed and dressed in sackcloth, El Topo decides to build a tunnel from the almost-inaccessible cavern to the outside world, and goes to visit the town with the young dwarf woman who has been caring for him. The town is a site of greed, murder and arcane power systems, with a bogus morality. Although the town is clearly much worse than the cavern, El Topo goes ahead with his plan and, to earn money for the tunnel’s construction, performs mime acts (Jodorowsky trained for many years in France with the mime artist Marcel Marceau) for the cress townspeople, and suffers execration and subjugation. He decides to marry the pregnant dwarf and they visit the
town’s priest, who turns out to be El Topo’s abandoned son, who is now an adult; furious to see his father, he resolves to kill him once the tunnel is built. But, when El Topo finishes his work, the son changes his mind, wailing: ‘I can’t kill my Master’. The liberated cavern-dwellers immediately pour down into the town, where they are promptly massacred by the townspeople. El Topo, in turn, massacres the townspeople before immolating himself (in a sequence that must have evoked, for the film’s first spectators, the monks who protested against the Vietnam war by burning themselves alive). El Topo’s son, now wearing the gunfighter’s black leather clothes, rides out of town with El Topo’s wife, who has given birth to El Topo’s new child at the moment of his death.

Although El Topo has reductively been labeled a ‘metaphysical’ or ‘allegorical’ or ‘psychoanalytical’ Western, its concerns are far more those which lie behind the road movie: it is an exploration of the essential matters of sex and isolation and subjugation and death, all of which obsess and compel the protagonists of the road movie. All of Jodorowsky’s films embody the attempts by peripheral individuals to group together as an oppositional, anti-social community: a preoccupation which is at the core of the road movie’s journey. Jodorowsky’s insistence on the status of the dispossessed as his preferred form of human being highlights his engagement with those who disturb or overturn society or who possess special insights into its malificence. Inspired by the director Tod Browning’s seminal Hollywood horror-film, Freaks (1932), Jodorowsky continues to value physically or mentally ‘abnormal’ individuals - and their capacity to form strong, familial communities with disparate members - above ‘normal’ human beings. Unlike many of the experimental film-makers and artists whose work hit a peak of notoriety at the beginning of the 1970s, Jodorowsky’s attachments also extend to the form of the biological family; he cast all of his own sons in Sante Sangre, and his son Brontis plays the young, abandoned son in El Topo. By contrast, Jodorowsky rejects hypocritical human societies based on greed and on strategies of division and expulsion.

Like many road movies, El Topo possesses a hallucinatory aura, within which the identity of the characters can fluctuate and reverse from moment to moment (El Topo himself declares: ‘I am god’ as he castrates The Colonel; later, in the cavern, he asserts: ‘I am not god’). The film’s
journey itself is precipitated by those abrupt reversals of identity, in which resuscitations and obliterations occur with contradictory tenacity. The aberrant merit of *El Topo* is to make those transmutations into the pivotal element of film narrative itself (as they are in many of David Lynch’s films, such as *Lost Highway*), and to inflict the gruelling challenge of such a journey of cuts onto the film spectator. At the same time, *El Topo* is a film of laughter: it directs disabused laughter at the ludicrous pretensions and ambitions of the film and of Jodorowsky himself, but also at the idiocy of the society he derides.

Jodorowsky’s films have the reputation of being harsh in their caustic depiction of humanity, and he is still particularly attacked for the cruelty towards animals in his work (several hundred rabbits and sheep died during the making of *El Topo*, and Jodorowsky’s subsequent film, *The Holy Mountain*, contains images of entire processions of crucified animals). Jodorowsky retrospectively presents the animal massacres and eviscerations of his early 1970s films as being ‘of their time’ - certainly, in Japanese experimental cinema of the same period, no film ends without the strangulation or beheading of at least one chicken - and states that he was ignorant about animal rights issues. While the film evokes the historical atrocities of the time of its making, *El Topo* also remains a prescient, contemporary film precisely because of its exploration of the visceral: in its incisions into the matter of the body, and in its salutary blurring or removal of the borders between animal and human life, both of which are extinguished without distinction.

Like all unique films, *El Topo* shows what is deemed unshowable. It is a scream of laughter at futility, aimed with precision at the intricate endgames and absolute cruelty of human existence. It is a journey into the matter of the end.
‘Ankoku Butoh’ - the ‘Dance of Darkness’ - was the creation of a choreographer named Tatsumi Hijikata, born in 1928 in the north-western coastal Japanese region of Akita. Hijikata first arrived in Tokyo soon after the Second World War, which ended with the destruction by bombing of most major Japanese cities. Tokyo itself was extensively fire-bombed in the closing months of the war, and very large areas of the city were decimated, with enormous human casualties in the civilian population. In film footage taken of Tokyo in the months following the end of the war, in August 1945, there is almost nothing left to see beyond heaps of debris. Surviving Japanese citizens spoke of this time as being literally the end of their world. However, Tokyo was very rapidly re-constructed under the American Occupation of Japan, which lasted until 1952 and saw a proliferation of black-market activities, and the resurgence of film and performance cultures, which were placed under an often idiosyncratic regime of censorship. With the end of the Occupation, much of the American military and cultural power over Japanese life continued, and resistance to that influence grew throughout the 1950s into an oppositional culture of riotous protest, especially against the presence of American airbases in close proximity to Tokyo, and against the perceived subservience of Japan to the military priorities of the USA with regard to Korea and, in the following decades, Vietnam. The culture of resistance and street protest in Tokyo was a highly disciplined, committed one, and especially at the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1960s, the riotous confrontations between organized student groups and police, in such districts as Shinjuku, were violent and sustained.

The crucial feature of this atmosphere of protest and upheaval was that it often moved almost without transition into the areas of experimental culture. One factor was that the destruction of Tokyo had generated an exhilarating sense of a return to zero in some elements of the younger population of Tokyo. Artists who were children at the time, such as the architect Arata Isozaki and the theatre director Juro Kara, have spoken of the sense of liberation they experienced in looking at the ruins of Tokyo and seeing the world of parental discipline ended, and the militaristic imperatives of the wartime years in dust. That sense of utter
destruction or ruination as forming an integral component of new
strategies of creation was strong throughout the postwar decades in
Tokyo. And Tokyo’s culture was crucially one of the human body,
whereby one set of perspectives on the form of the body had been
abruptly curtailed at the end of the war, and an imagery of a new,
constantly transforming human body was developed. This was a body
infused with the deviant forms of sexual culture and social dissidence
that together powered the experimental cultures of postwar Tokyo.

At the end of the 1950s, when Hijikata began to create his own
choreographic style, these corporeal and urban upheavals in Tokyo’s
culture were already in full swing. They often took the form of nihilistic,
neo-Dadaist experiments in performance and painting and music, but it
was especially in the areas of film and photography that Hijikata’s
choreography found its alliances. Often, collaborative series of events
took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s which formed amalgams of
work in film, dance, poetry and musical cacophony; the series in which
Hijikata’s own projects developed was called the ‘650 Experience’. One
of the important influential figures behind the development of Hijikata’s
work was the novelist Yukio Mishima, who had a preoccupation with
supporting experimental work, even when it clashed with his own highly
individual conception of the Japanese nation and with the militaristic
and imperial forms it should take. Hijikata’s first major performance in
Tokyo - which is seen as the initial manifestation or embodiment of
Butoh - was a confrontation, in the form of dance, with Mishima’s novel
*Forbidden Colours*. Hijikata collaborated on the performance with a
young dancer named Yoshito Ohno. The event took place in May 1959,
and caused a scandal. I spoke to a number of the people who attended
the performance, and almost all gave completely contradictory and
divergent accounts of it - agreeing only that it took place in near
darkness, with brevity and violence, and left its audience stunned.

Hijikata’s first years in Tokyo were itinerant, and he supported his
choreography by working as a dockworker, but in the second half of the
1950s, he met the young choreographer Akiko Motofuji, who owned a
dance studio in Tokyo which her father had given her, named the
‘Asbestos Hall’. Her father was an industrial magnate specialising in
asbestos production (before the time when it was discovered to be
lethal as a building material), thus giving the studio its name. Hijikata
moved into the Asbestos Hall and it became his base for the remaining
twenty-five years or so of his life, with his own work submerging that of Akiko Motofuji herself. The Asbestos Hall was renovated several times during those years; in its final incarnation, before being sold at auction shortly before Akiko Motofuji’s death in 2003, it took the form of a modern detached house with several floors, in a quiet backstreet of the Meguro district of Tokyo. However, in the period when Hijikata was developing his work there, a large outbuilding served as his studio, performance space, cinema room, and also for a time as a drinking club.

The experimental culture of 1960s Tokyo was closely engaged with French culture - partly as a means of dispelling American influence, but much more vitally because the work of French writers and artists, especially Jean Genet and Antonin Artaud, had a preoccupation with the human body in a state of oppositional, sexual transformation which accorded almost exactly with the unprecedented aura of dissidence and anatomical revolution with which Tokyo itself was saturated at the time. Jean Genet was a writer best known for his novels about his own incarceration in prisons and for his accounts of transvestite culture in Paris, and also for his descriptions of how objects such as roses could transmute, merge with the body and come to possess physical substance. Hijikata was especially inspired by Genet’s first novel, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, written in 1941-42 while Genet was still in prison, and which deals with both rural childhood experience and with sexual metamorphosis - both of which would become crucial for Hijikata’s later work. Along with his most renowned collaborator, the dancer Kazuo Ohno (the father of Yoshito Ohno), Hijikata staged a street performance of *Our Lady of the Flowers* in the backstreets of the Ginza district of Tokyo in 1961, which was documented by an American photographer, William Klein. Hijikata’s engagement with the work of Antonin Artaud was sustained, lasting from the 1960s until his death. In the late 1960s, he was especially preoccupied with a book which Artaud had written about the chaotic and excessive reign of the Roman emperor, Heliogabalus. All of Artaud’s work forms a ferocious polemic about the body, and against social institutions, and it provided much of the inspiration for Hijikata’s 1968 performance, *Revolt of the Body* - a performance which is sometimes viewed as constituting Hijikata’s final repudiation of European culture and influence, before he then went on to devote his choreography entirely to Japanese preoccupations and to his childhood world of Akita. But in fact, the engagement with the work of Artaud endured in Hijikata’s work - he based a collaboration with the
choreographer Min Tanaka on a radio recording by Artaud, *To have done with the judgement of god*, which had been censored and suppressed in 1948, just before Artaud’s death. And one of Hijikata’s very last projects, formulated shortly before he himself died of liver disease in 1986, was to have been a collaboration with a young philosopher, Kuniichi Uno, to be entitled *Experiment with Artaud*. This engagement with Artaud’s work is manifest in many of Hijikata’s statements about the gestures of the body, connecting with the idea formulated by Artaud of a return to a point of origin or zero ground in the matter of the body. In his performance notes, Hijikata wrote: ‘Sometimes while standing I become confused as to which leg to put forward first, the left or the right./My confusion leads to a quarrel between the two legs, and my body ends up abandoned in the arid world. Initially, our legs were one, and joined to the pelvis. Bend back as far as you can, and look up - then you will understand the reason for being of the tongue that rolls inside your ultimate aperture. Put one leg on top of the other - and you’ll understand the origin of legs. You are merely maintaining your posture - and your gaze in envy at bodies in movement.’

Much of Hijikata’s work at the end of the 1950s and through the first half of the 1960s was undertaken in the form of collaborations with film-makers and photographers, and it was through these film works that Hijikata’s formulations of Butoh during those years became realized, or transmitted into images. From 1973, Hijikata stopped performing publicly and devoted himself entirely to teaching students; he compiled a more systematic form of choreographic notation in those years, in the medium of scrapbooks, but his film projects have a greater immediacy and are closer to his conception of Butoh in its original form. A prominent contemporary Japanese choreographer, engaged with Butoh, Kim Itoh, has said that his only awareness of Hijikata’s work comes through the medium of film images. And the preoccupation with a visual arena of images that encompasses the body, in tension, remains a compelling strategy of working for many young Butoh-inspired choreographers or performance artists in Tokyo, often developing projects in collaboration with digital media artists.

In Tokyo, I spoke to the three directors who worked on major film projects with Hijikata in the 1950s and 1960s: an American film-maker and writer, Donald Richie, who has lived in Tokyo now for around sixty years; an experimental film-maker, Takahiko Iimura, who was partly
based in New York in the 1960s and worked with Yoko Ono there on projects about the material substance of film itself (Iimura had an exhibition in 1999 at the Lux Centre in London, and he now works on CD-Rom projects about issues of language and perception); and Eikoh Hosoe, who is best-known internationally as a photographer, especially for his book of photographs of Yukio Mishima, *Ordeal by Roses*, but who was involved with the medium of film at the beginning of the 1960s. These collaborations between choreography and film in Hijikata’s work are largely undocumented, but they are probably the closest it’s possible to get to tangible evidence of the multiplicitous, often contradictory origins of Butoh.

The first film collaboration between Hijikata and Donald Richie, *Sacrifice*, was shot in 1959, the same year as the seminal Butoh stage performance, and it has the raw and gestural style of choreography which Hijikata and the dancers of the Asbestos Hall were initiating at the time. Richie shot his film in a deserted schoolyard in an industrial zone of the Shinagawa district of Tokyo. The film dealt with Richie’s and Hijikata’s shared preoccupations with rituals of death and resuscitation - after a procession around the yard, one male dancer is surrounded by the other dancers who urinate on him, defecate on him, and finally tear him open. Richie’s concern was to create a visual alliance between sex and death, and his own inspiration in the style of the film was taken from the images in the French poet Jean Cocteau’s films, and from an early film by the American director Kenneth Anger, *Fireworks*, which has the same preoccupation with the act of looking through the surface of the body via the forces of desire and violence. Richie had been one of the spectators of Hijikata’s stage performance in the same year, and he wanted especially to emphasise the homoerotic element of Hijikata’s work, and also to highlight the ability he saw in Hijikata’s choreography to be able to move, almost without transition, from one sex to another, from life to death, and from youth to old age and back again. Three years later, Hijikata and Richie collaborated on another film, *War Games*, which was shot during a typhoon at the fishing village of Osato, on the long stretch of beach to the east of Tokyo called Kujukurihama. In this second film, the preoccupation of the film-makers is still with rituals of death and resurgence. Hijikata gathered together a gang of boys from the fishing village, and Richie filmed them killing a goat on the beach. He wanted to catch the exact moment at which the boys forgot that they had just killed the goat, and went back to the rhythm of their everyday
lives. While Richie was filming the gang of boys in their confusion, Hijikata danced on the beach, outside the film frame, attempting to provoke the boys. At first, the boys looked at Hijikata in disbelief, then they suddenly broke into laughter, and their act of killing was forgotten. Those two collaborations between Richie and Hijikata deal with the processes of conflict and their impact on the human body, and they also explore the irreconcilable responses of oblivion or else active participation and resistance - the very options open to the inhabitants of Japan at that moment of renewed, social conflict.

The two films by Takahiko Iimura are very distinct from those which Hijikata made in collaboration with Richie, since they fall more into the genre of performance documentation than that of original film works; but they also reflect Iimura’s preoccupation of the time with the capacity of the film image to generate a fragmentary existence in its own right, in reaction to the dancing body. Iimura filmed two of Hijikata’s performances - *Masseurs* in 1963 and *Rose-Coloured Dance* in 1965 - at a time when Hijikata’s choreography was seen as being essential to Tokyo’s cross-media experiments between musicians, painters and visual artists of all kinds. The sets for Hijikata’s performances were often designed and executed by celebrated painters. Iimura’s films constituted what he called ‘cine-dances’, in which the images were assembled in a very rapid montage of fragments of bodies and movements. Iimura shot the performances of Hijikata and his collaborators with an 8mm film camera that enabled him to approach the performers’ movements with flexibility, from different angles and at different levels of proximity. The resulting films are designed to form their own, autonomous visual counterpart to the dance performances, with a parallel exploration of the body and its gestures - some actions being seized in their entirety, and others only partially or peripherally captured. Iimura’s films experiment with the ways in which choreography is perceived by the spectator, with the idea that it is often the incoherently perceived fragment of a gesture that can have a more evocative or direct impact on the spectator’s perception, rather than a smoothly assimilated movement. But, in his films of Hijikata’s performances, Iimura’s overriding preoccupation was with the way in which the film image interacts with the human body, and as a result, the integral space and time of Hijikata’s own work are subsumed into this process.
Eikoh Hosoe made a film entitled *Navel and A-Bomb* with Hijikata in 1960. Hosoe was a young, largely unknown photographer at the time, who had met Hijikata after attending his performance in the previous year. He shot the film on a beach at Cape Taitozaki, near the town of Ohara, on a peninsula to the east of Tokyo. The beach and the sea possessed a particular atmosphere for Hosoe: a place where images that had been forgotten or hidden away in the urban environment could be unleashed. Hosoe viewed the city of Tokyo itself as a sort of living body that could mesmerise its inhabitants like a work of choreography, and induce sensations either of astonishment or of pain. As a boy, Hosoe had been sent away from Tokyo, towards the end of the Second World War, to escape the bombing of the city, and stayed in rural north-western Japan. When he returned to Tokyo at the end of the war, he found that the city had literally disappeared. His film *Navel and A-Bomb* makes direct connections between the body of Hijikata and this force of destruction: Hijikata emerges from the sea as a capricious god of wrath who steals away the navel of a child, engendering a power of dis-equilibrium and of chaos that is the condition of postwar Japan. But the film is also a mixing of sensations, moving abruptly from humour to calamity and back again, and from the sound of a jaunty jazz soundtrack to the noise of a nuclear explosion. Subsequent to this film, Hosoe worked exclusively in photography, often collaborating with Hijikata and the Asbestos Hall dancers. At around the same time as he shot *Navel and A-Bomb*, Hosoe was taking photographs of Hijikata and Akiko Motofuji for a photography book project, *Man and Woman* - this was the book which inspired Yukio Mishima to commission from Hosoe the book of portrait photographs, *Ordeal by Roses*, which is notorious for its multi-layered, hallucinatory and erotic images of Mishima. Hosoe’s most exceptional work is in the form of another photographic collaboration with Hijikata, *Kamaitachi*. That project was photographed in Hijikata’s home region, the Akita prefecture of north-western Japan. In the autumn of 1965, Hijikata and Hosoe made a journey by car through the isolated villages of Akita, and Hosoe photographed vast landscape panoramas of black skies and fields in which Hijikata would be seen running. In some of the photographs, Hijikata embodied a mythical creature - the *kamaitachi* - who stalked around the fields and attacked the peasants, leaving deep but bloodless wounds. The villagers carried Hijikata around on a raised platform; Hosoe had told them the fabricated story that he and Hijikata were from a television company, and the villagers, who were awed by the new medium of television, did
whatever they were asked. For Hosoe, the frozen landscape around the body of Hijikata also took the form of a living corporeal presence, whipped with Siberian wind and glowering with hostility. Hosoe and Hijikata made two further journeys to Akita to work on the project, which was eventually published in 1968. The books of photographs by Hosoe were designed as huge visual objects, so that their images have a sweeping, filmic quality to them.

Hijikata was certainly very aware of the role of the soundtracks used both for the films he was involved with, and also for his own performances. Some of the original films had been silent, and when Hijikata later screened them for audiences at the Asbestos Hall, he would improvise soundtracks from records, at loud volume, often using European music such as songs by The Beatles to accompany a performance film of *Revolt of the Body*. (The mid-1960s music of The Beatles has a very distinctive aura in Japan, resonant of the unrest of the time.) Hijikata would also manipulate the film projector during the screenings of films, so that the images of bodies against the walls and ceiling of the studio became distorted, elongated or concentrated. For the soundtrack of the stage performances of his 1972 work, *Story of Smallpox* - which was one of only two of his stage performances ever to be filmed in its entirety - Hijikata used a recording of a rural folk song from the isolated Auvergne region of France, *Bailèro*, in a version orchestrated in the 1930s by the French musicologist Joseph Canteloube. The deep poignancy of the music accentuates the emotional impact of his solo dance, although the soundtrack also possesses a certain jarring and disjunctive rapport with Hijikata’s movements.

Hijikata collaborated with Kazuo Ohno intermittently for a period of thirty years, on many projects besides the street performance of *Our Lady of the Flowers*, and these collaborations generate much of the complexity and intricacy that Butoh possesses, since in many ways the two performers had deeply contrary views of what choreography was, on questions of improvisation and fixed choreography, and on whether choreography should seek to have an effect on its audience. Kazuo Ohno believed that dance is eternal and infinite, and is imbued with death as a liberatory force; his position was that dance should not have a fixed, inflexible form, and he had no conception of its impact on its audience. By contrast, Hijikata knew exactly what corporeal and ocular demands he wanted to subject his spectators to. Although he withdrew from
those spectators for many years, Hijikata had been planning, just before his death, to dance in public himself, for the first time in thirteen years. The dance he intended to create was to be his image of Japan itself - simultaneously cancelling and inventing Japan from the first gesture of origin - in the form of a dance in which he would embody the gods of wind and thunder, trampling wildly on a ground strewn with hundreds of thousands of cherry blossoms, before an image of Mount Fuji.
The crucial area of Antonin Artaud’s work that has remained substantially closed to investigation is his involvement with Surrealist cinema. Artaud is known as the scenarist of one of the great examples of Surrealist cinema, *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, but this work was reputedly steered away from his original conception by its director, Germaine Dulac, a prolific member of the Impressionist group of French film-makers that included Abel Gance. Artaud’s original screenplay, written in April 1927, came under a certain amount of revision before the shooting period, in August and September of that year; the alterations are evident in the various stages of the shooting script. And the technical heaviness of the film, with its complex superimpositions and distortions, sits badly with the clarity of the original scenario (in which, however, suggestions on how to transfer the written image into the cinematic image are virtually non-existent). But what particularly incensed Artaud was his exclusion from the making of *The Seashell and the Clergyman*. He had intended to co-direct and act in the film, but Dulac and her producers scheduled both the shooting and the editing to coincide with his performance as an actor in Carl Dreyer’s film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. This manoeuvre led to a raucous demonstration in sympathy with Artaud. Although he had been officially excommunicated from the Surrealist movement in November 1926 (largely over his dispute with André Breton on the use of the term ‘revolution’ - a mutual recrimination that lasted until 1947), the Surrealists supported Artaud over the ‘betrayal’ of his scenario. During the film’s Paris première, at the Ursulines cinema on 9 February 1928, the poet Robert Desnos aimed a volley of invective at Dulac that eventually rose into a mêlée, terminating the screening. There are several accounts of Artaud’s own participation in the brawl: in one, he ran wild and shattered the cinema’s hall mirrors, crying ‘Goulou! Goulou!’; in another, he was sitting with his mother and uttered only one word during the glossolaliaic uproar: ‘Enough.’

After this disturbance, *The Seashell and the Clergyman* was dropped from the Ursulines programme, and it has resurfaced only erratically ever since. Its rejection by the British Board of Film Censors came with the justification: ‘The film is so cryptic as to be meaningless. If there is a
meaning, it is doubtless objectionable.’ The work’s obscurity was compounded by the release in the following year, 1929, of *Un Chien Andalou*, Luis Buñuel’s collaboration with Salvador Dalí, a film whose aesthetic success made it appear the paradigm of the Surrealist film. Artaud would claim that *Un Chien Andalou*, along with Jean Cocteau’s film *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), had taken displacement techniques and hallucinatory imagery from the scenario of *The Seashell and the Clergyman*. By 1932, he had reversed his attitude towards Dulac’s film, claiming that it was a precursor of the works of Buñuel and Cocteau.

Dulac’s film actually follows Artaud’s fragmented narrative of sexual and religious obsession with surprising fidelity. Her crammed technical pyrotechnics are all that obscure the substance of Artaud’s scenario. Still, in its surface scrupulousness and theoretical vacuity, Dulac’s film veers away from Artaud’s conception. She could not realize his fundamental idea for a Surrealist cinema, which would have involved a radical obliteration of cinematic history thus far - a reworking of film’s very basis, in the rapport between the pacifying illusions of moving light and the spectator incorporated and enmeshed within them.

Artaud’s objection to Dulac’s film was that it returned his scenario to a flat depiction of the dream from which it had issued. Where the scenarios of Surrealists such as Benjamin Péret and Desnos are essentially mediated descriptions of dreams, Artaud had proposed an investigation of the systems of dreaming, an attempt to discover their mechanisms and their structures-in-collapse. He wanted to reconstitute the freedom and violence of the dream, to project them directly into cinematic imagery. His aim was to ‘realize this idea of visual cinema where psychology itself is devoured by actions’. (1) Artaud drew the material for *The Seashell and the Clergyman* not from his own dreams but from a transcription of one experienced by his friend Yvonne Allendy; he was not relaying a personal experience, but trying to establish the critical distance necessary for analytical creation. The ideas he was addressing emerge most clearly in the intersection between his scenarios themselves and his writings about them and about cinema in general. In juxtaposition, these different kinds of text project a reinvention of cinema based around the visceral, transformational pressure it can exert upon the spectator’s responses and physical reflexes.
In the scenario, the clergyman - the role Artaud intended to play himself - undertakes a sequence of violent and obsessive actions. The fragmented narrative propels him through a perpetually shifting space of long corridors, crystalline landscapes, and narrow city streets. He is sexually tormented in a confessional box by a beautiful woman with white hair, and vents his fury upon the mutilated figure of a military officer. The clergyman’s identity becomes confused with the officer’s, and he is constantly surrounded by shattering glass and flowing liquid. During his multiple confrontations with the white-haired woman, she undergoes grotesque physical distortions: her tongue, for example, ‘stretching out to infinity’. Dulac’s film illustrates Artaud’s scenario carefully, but neutralises the images by treating them as one enclosed dream. The disjunctions between them are fused in their transposition to celluloid. Dulac also infuriated Artaud by announcing the film as being a dream. The actors’ exaggerated performance style suggests artificiality and contrivance rather than the rawness of Artaud’s figurative manoeuvres; and contrary to Artaud’s intentions, the film has an abstract appearance, a consequence of the layering of image upon image.

With the encouragement of Breton, many of the mid-1920s Surrealists were trying to produce films that would liberate the unconscious mind and open out a fertile territory of psychological investigation. They envisaged a worldwide Surrealist cinema with the potential to metamorphose the perception of reality. Only Buñuel, however, was able to produce a fully realized film from his own vision. (Artaud disdained Buñuel’s projects, since the way in which they used chance, as with the Surrealist practice of automatic writing, was opposed to his concern with intentionality and physical struggle.) Artaud himself tried and failed to make a number of projects besides *The Seashell and the Clergyman*. Between 1924 and 1930, he wrote or prepared fifteen scenarios altogether (of which the scenario used for Dulac’s film is the third), including literary adaptations and a commercial project entitled *Flights* (1928). Among these works was a vampire film scenario, *The 32* (1928), which he tried to promote to the German Expressionist film-makers and to those influenced by them in Hollywood, and in 1930 he sent another horror project, *The Monk*, to the Italian Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, by this time an official poet for Mussolini’s fascist regime and an influential figure in Italian cinema. (Artaud’s proposal, and his request to make films in Italy, were met with total disinterest.)
The most extraordinary of Artaud’s scenarios is his last, *The Butcher’s Revolt*, which he intended to direct himself and for which he drew up an intricate, though inaccurate, budget and schedule. The screenplay was written early in 1930, in the crucial period of transition between silent and sound cinema.

In a lecture he gave on 29 June 1929 at the Surrealists’ favourite cinema, the Studio 28 in Montmartre, Artaud had expressed adamant opposition to the introduction of sound in film, arguing that ‘there is no possible identification between sound and image. The image presents itself only by one face, it’s the translation, the transposition, of the real; sound, on the other hand, is unique and true, it bursts out into the room, and consequently acts with much more intensity than the image, which becomes only a kind of illusion of sound.’(2) Sound, then, would have to be either excised or deliberately confronted in order for the image to develop an autonomous evocatory force. In *The Butcher’s Revolt*, Artaud allows certain isolated and obsessive spoken phrases ('I’ve had enough of cutting up meat without eating it’, for example) into the scenario, where they are typographically emphasised by their enclosure in boxes. They are disconnected from the visual flow of the planned film and are intended to serve as abrupt densifications of the visual imagery; from the collision between the seen and the heard, the images would rebound with all the greater ferocity. This aural strategy is resonant of the recording Artaud made for radio eighteen years later, *To have done with the judgement of god*. There, he inserts disruptive sound effects - screams and rhythmic, percussive beatings - into his poetry of expulsion and refusal; immediate incisions of violent physical gesture cut across the escalating rush of poetic imagery. In the way that Artaud formulated *The Butcher’s Revolt*, the primacy it gave to the image would have broken with the dominant cinematic genre of the time - the kind of filmed theatre which Artaud detested - while stressing the spatiality of sound: ‘The voices are in space,’ he wrote in his Introduction to the scenario, ‘like objects’.

Space is a crucial element in Artaud’s conception of film. There is a constant preoccupation with expanding and manipulating the spatial dimension while erasing or reducing time. The passage between images embodies a special danger for Artaud: each image must be made so intense that the intervening passage of time can be as far as possible suppressed. Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty project of the 1930s shows a
parallel concern with spatial movement. There, the actor’s gesture must burn itself out in space with unique immediacy and impact, and must never be repeated in time. The first of Artaud’s film scenarios, *Eighteen Seconds* (1924), describes the thoughts of an actor during the eighteen-second period from his glance at his watch to his shooting himself in the street; time is made dense, becoming an intricate sequence of images and spatial mutations. For Artaud, representation worked on a temporal level. His determination to make cinematic sound spatial rather than temporal in *The Butcher’s Revolt* reflects his negative attitude towards representation. Since his earliest writings, such as the correspondence with the editor Jacques Rivière of 1923-24, Artaud had spoken of a two-way trap in which his activities fell apart: he was faced on one side by the dispersal of his language through its inarticulation, via the slippage that the mental image suffered as it was brought into textual form, and on the other side by the loss of the ‘complete’ text into representation, which stole the relevance that the image had to the physical presence of the person producing it.

For Artaud, any completed artistic representation involved a diminishment of the actual experience of whatever was represented. His hostility towards representation endured, achieving its most forceful projection in *To have done with the judgement of god*, in which he casts representation as inextricably and maliciously social: ‘There is nothing I abominate and execrate so much as this idea... of representation,/that is, of virtuality, of non-reality,/... /attached to all that is produced and shown, as if it were wanted in that way to socialise and at the same time paralyse monsters, make the possibilities of explosive deflagration, which are too dangerous for life, pass through the channel of the stage, screen, or microphone, and so turn them away from life.’ (3) The virtual, non-real dimension of representation could only be overcome by emphasising what was actually physically present. But the cinema especially, with its intricate shadowplay and its institutional support systems, denies Artaud’s movement toward the work in direct contact with the body; it strips the image of its immanence. Artaud’s conception of cinema involved finding a way to make the body in which the film has its axis become immediately present, shattered and dense. The viewer had to experience the film physically. (In parallel terms, of which Artaud must have been aware, the Italian Futurist film manifesto of 1916 had demanded ‘polyexpressiveness’, and had proposed ‘filmed unreal reconstructions of the human body’. And a similar intensity of
interaction within the performance space of the film would appear after Artaud’s death, in the early French Lettrist cinema; at the first screenings of Maurice Lemaître’s film *Has the film already started?* of 1951, for example, the director threw buckets of water and invective at the audience.)

*The Butcher’s Revolt* has a far more cohesive narrative than *The Seashell and the Clergyman*; it also has a specific location, the Place de l’Alma in Paris. The principal figure in the scenario, introduced with some irony by Artaud as ‘the madman’, is in a dangerously obsessive state. Waiting to meet a woman, he watches a carcass of meat fall from a butcher’s truck, and is fascinated by the rapport between the meat and human flesh. He provokes a brawl in a nearby café, then takes part in a sequence of headlong chases (recalling those in Hollywood silent comedy films), which culminate in his arrival at a slaughterhouse and his humiliation there at the hands of the police. As with *The Seashell and the Clergyman*, the identity of the protagonist is volatile, and he lives at a juncture of extreme opposites of sensation, from joy to paralysing despair. The action of the scenario is powered by sudden transformations of space, punctuated by cries and noises.

Artaud described the content of the imagery in *The Butcher’s Revolt* as ‘eroticism, cruelty, the taste for blood, the search for violence, obsession with the horrible, dissolution of moral values, social hypocrisy, lies, false witness, sadism, perversity’, all to appear with ‘the maximum readability’. (4) It is unsurprising, then, that in the context of the time, he failed to find the financing for the film. His theoretical work on the cinema tailed off too, but he continued to act in films, making twenty-two appearances in all between 1924 and 1935. Among these are his startlingly contorted roles in Abel Gance’s *Napoleon* (both the silent version of 1926 and the sound version of 1935), Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), and Fritz Lang’s *Liliom* (1933). His gestural control in these films oscillates between a kind of paroxysmal seizure and an emotional grandeur. Artaud also made the journey to Berlin to act in German films. Though he had a part in G.W. Pabst’s version of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera* (1930), he despised the film for what he called its ‘vulgarity and its complete disorientation’. (5) Most of these films were painful, menial work for him, especially Raymond Bernard’s patriotic blockbuster *The Wooden Crosses* (1931), in which he plays an enthusiastic French soldier who leaps out of his trench towards the
Germans, crying ‘I shit on you, swine!’ ‘Abominable work’ of this sort led to the exhaustion of Artaud’s engagement with cinema of any kind, and in 1932 he would conclude: ‘I am ever more convinced that the cinema is and will remain the art of the past. You cannot work in it without feeling ashamed.’(6)

Nevertheless, an innovative theory of cinema emerges from the short, fragmentary texts that Artaud wrote contemporaneously with The Seashell and the Clergyman and The Butcher’s Revolt. Like all of his work, this theoretical film writing proceeds by flux, with points of abandonment followed by periods of resurgence. It reaches its greatest intensity of visualisation when it discusses abandoned, unrealized projects. Artaud’s proposals for the cinema are intricate, and are best understood by proceeding through both his film writings and another creative form, particularly the texts of his letters. The letter was always a privileged site of articulation for Artaud, where he could ally polemical exhortation to direct address - the imparting of confidential information in the form of a written contract, which, once sent, was binding on the recipient. The letter format is crucial to Artaud’s production throughout the course of his work, from the correspondence with Rivière, on poetic fissuration and slippage, to his final denunciatory and syntactically shattered letters to the Parisian newspaper Combat in 1947-48. The amplitude and potential of Artaud’s conception of cinema is best sought in the connections between his letters, his abrupt critical writings, his scenarios, and the parts of The Seashell and the Clergyman that remain attached to his imagery.

Recognising that some degree of mediation is intractably a given factor in the cinema, Artaud tried both to ambush and to work with it. He wanted to tear the image from a representational role onto the spectator’s alert sensorium. (In a parallel register, the director Robert Bresson described cinematography as ‘the art, with images, of representing nothing.’)(7) Artaud aimed for a densification of the film image through spatiality of movement. Elements are articulated through their suppression or subtraction, so that the film language becomes one of dissolution, and the narrative is broken. The image is pounded down to compact sensation: Artaud wrote, ‘Search for a film with purely visual sensations in which the force would emerge from a collision exacted on the eyes.’(8) (There is an obvious resonance here with the image of the slitting of the eye that opens Un Chien Andalou, which was in
preparation at the time of The Seashell and the Clergyman’s première. There, the ‘collision exacted on the eye’ is performed literally on the figure on the screen as well as being empathetically suffered by the viewers in the cinema.) The concentrated impact that Artaud’s planned films would possess emerged from the isolation of disjunctive elements within the textual system, producing a dynamic and spatial inscription. With a project such as The Butcher’s Revolt, the imagery’s visceral charge would be further accentuated by the breakdown of filmic space and the insertion of discontinuous sounds.

Artaud’s conception of cinema moves away from the film fiction that invisibly integrates sound and image (such as the films in which he acted), toward a kind of documentary interaction of chance and control. All of his scenarios project an atmosphere of darkness, blood and shock at the interstice between these two points. There is an endless doubling and division here, between reality and fiction, and between subject and object. Artaud’s film writings delineate a conflict upon borderlines, charting the trajectories of what he called ‘the simple impact of objects, forms, repulsions, attractions’. (9) These impacting collisions include that between subjectivity and sociality, and between the unconscious - as a site of oppositional tension - and the language that surrounds and penetrates it. At the zone of contact between these collisions, there is an insistent presence and forcible seizure of the physical content that Artaud sought to harness and direct in his imageries of the fragmented human body.

The traversal of textual borders in Artaud’s film work involves a negative drive: the viewer is repelled from the screen, barred from the identification and absorption that the cinema usually constructs. The image stays an image or else risks annihilation. Artaud’s film texts move towards a fall into catastrophe, toward what cannot be realized. Artaud imagined a dangerous state of negative, magnetic interaction between film image and spectator. His texts suggest a cinema that would attempt to force spectators into multiple confrontations, with its powerfully fractured language of disintegration and disaster, while simultaneously they would remain grounded in the tactile world, excluded from cinema’s usual fictive illusions. Those spectators would alternate between subject and object, on a border where narrative is cut and broken.
The suturing negativity of Artaud’s scenarios is necessary to retain the form and force of these confrontations. The relentlessly self-attacking logic of the scenarios is never transgressed, and demands an image at its most stripped-away, condensed and expressive - at its most resistant to the process of representation. This densified negative imagery is expelled under great internal pressure, suddenly emerging from what Artaud called ‘the convulsions and jumps of a reality that seems to destroy itself with an irony where you can hear the extremities of the mind screaming’. (10) For Artaud, film was a stimulant or narcotic acting directly and materially on the brain. He called his project ‘raw cinema’. (11) As in his formulation of the Theatre of Cruelty, his language of film was to work only once, avoiding the word in its role as a sign constituted in order to repeat itself. Instead, his imagery would be compacted together from chance, control, and the projection of the body.

Artaud’s project for the cinema is largely unrealized, although the work of some film-makers has approached it - Buñuel, notably, although the meshing of sound and image that Artaud denounced in 1929 also effectively terminated the first headlong rush of Buñuel’s film-making. A few hybrid or experimental documentary films, such as Georges Franju’s *The Blood of the Beasts* (1949), or the Vienna Action Group artist Otto Muehl’s performance films of the late 1960s, made in collaboration with the film-maker Kurt Kren, have also envisaged the collision of blood and chance that Artaud envisaged for the cinema: an inassimilable territory of fragmentation and eruptive reconstitution in which the spectator moves to the very edge of the capacity to evaluate. Physically exposed to forces that demand a transformation of the viewing position, that spectator would be driven toward a unique resistance to representation. Artaud’s own position within the movement of Surrealism and the history of cinema itself parallels that interrogative resistance.

Notes
9. ibid, 3:20.
10. ibid, 3:20.
The translations in this essay are my own.
ARTAUD’S THE MONK
(2001)

Antonin Artaud’s The Monk forms an extreme and wild sensory provocation as well as a deeply pleasurable reading experience. In his only sustained work of prose fiction, Artaud took Matthew Gregory Lewis’s novel of 1794 as the basic raw material for an experiment into the boundaries of language and the body. Artaud’s language possesses a headlong logic of aberration, in which power is always exploded and all sexual acts must extend themselves on into deviance or atrocity. In Artaud’s narrative of massacred nuns, raped virgins and satanic retribution, the reader is placed on volatile, precarious ground. The impact of Artaud’s language on the reader’s perception mirrors its own acceleration into unknown sensory terrain - the textures of the sexual pleasure or elation experienced by the reader are abruptly overturned into horror and infinite chaos. The reader of Artaud’s The Monk is simultaneously ensnared, gratified and sexually abused.

A contemporary of the Marquis de Sade, the English writer Matthew Gregory Lewis wrote The Monk at the age of nineteen, during a period of ten weeks when he was training as a diplomat in Holland. By all accounts, Lewis was a sombre, homosexual dwarf who spent the remainder of his short life failing to live up to the brilliance of his first work. On its publication, The Monk was rebuked as abominable and sacrilegious, but it proved an enormous public success. Like Arthur Rimbaud - another precocious writer whose work generated great scandals - Lewis pursued a second career in slavery, and owned a number of plantations in the West Indies. But where Rimbaud mixed slavery with gun-running, Lewis took the far more ignoble step of also becoming an English Member of Parliament, in the same year as the publication of The Monk. However, he could never bring himself to make a speech in Parliament, and he relieved his growing sense of creative humiliation and sexual ostracism in English society by making long journeys to his plantations, where he could pursue ‘the English vice’ with impunity. During the return voyage from one of his visits to his slaves, Lewis contracted yellow fever and died suddenly; his corpse was rapidly packed into a wooden chest and jettisoned into the ocean, where it obstinately refused to sink.
Antonin Artaud undertook his own version of *The Monk* in 1930, at a time of acute desperation in his life. His alliance with the French Surrealist movement had ended four years earlier, and he had been making a bare living - and sustaining his lifelong drug addictions - by acting in a long succession of films, often crass melodramas of the lowest order. A number of these films were shot in both French and German versions, and Artaud spent part of 1930 in Berlin, where he appeared in the French-language version of G.W. Pabst’s film taken from Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera* (a work Artaud reviled); he probably undertook at least part of his work on *The Monk* during his stay in that city, whose late 1920s atmosphere of sexual exhilaration had already begun to plummet into the chaos which would eventually resolve itself in the form of Hitler’s dictatorship. The entirety of *The Monk* exudes a malignant aura of haywire sexual obsession. Certainly, all of the individual order that had disciplined Artaud’s life up until that point had cracked open, unearthing the mental terrain of revolution, plague and corporeal upheaval which would preoccupy him for the remainder of the decade. However, in the year following his work on *The Monk*, Artaud would experience the revelation of the Balinese dance performances at the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931 - a revelation which sparked his project for the Theatre of Cruelty. But as ever, the momentum of Artaud’s preoccupations overshot that one particular project, taking him on to his calamitous journeys to Mexico and the Aran Islands, and finally to a decade of incarceration and sensory torture in the wartime insane asylums of France.

Artaud exacted a wholesale transformation - in effect, a radical anatomisation - of Lewis’s original book. He had been commissioned to re-create *The Monk* by the young publisher Robert Denoël, who would be assassinated in the streets of Paris in 1945. It was clearly a work which Artaud already intimately knew. At the same time as he was working on *The Monk*, he formulated an unrealized project to make a film from the book, and - in an attempt to interest film producers - he had a number of photographs taken from key moments in the narrative, in which he himself took the main part of the monk Ambrosio. During the same period, Artaud was attempting without success to make a film of his most extraordinary film scenario, *The Butcher’s Revolt*, and his film of *The Monk* would undoubtedly have explored the same preoccupations which he enumerated as being those of *The Butcher’s Revolt*: ‘eroticism, cruelty, the taste for blood, the search for violence,
obsession with the horrible, dissolution of moral values, social hypocrisy, lies, false witness, sadism, perversity’.

In January 1931, after completing his work on the book, Artaud wrote: ‘I told The Monk as though from memory and in my own way’. In assembling his version of the book, he used both the original English-language text and a literal translation dating from 1840; both appear to have incited him to create his own distinctive version of the work, since Artaud could read almost no English at all and he clearly found the literal translation to be restrictive and stultified. It’s possible to gauge the extent both of Artaud’s usage and disregard of these two sources by consulting the annotated edition prepared by Paule Thévenin for Artaud’s Collected Works, published by Gallimard in France. In letters to friends, Artaud wrote that he admired the ‘profound authenticity’, the ‘hallucinatory poetry’ and the ‘imposition of magic’ in Lewis’s work; on an individual level, he valued Lewis especially as an ‘enemy of priests’ who had been indifferent to ‘the limits of reality’. But this sense of regard for the original author and work of 1794 also contrarily provoked a summary cancellation of that work, and the development of Artaud’s own obsessions. In all, Artaud’s The Monk forms a mark of livid negation imprinted over the entire face and history of literature. It signals the invention of a language capable of scanning a unique sensory ground of burning sexual furore - a prescient language which now brings Artaud’s book directly into the contemporary moment.
PIERRE GUYOTAT: TOMB FOR 500,000 SOLDIERS
(2001)

‘I dreamed this book high up on the watchtowers, half-asleep on guard duty, with before me the space of the night illuminated only by the moon and the stars.’ At the time when he began to visualise *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, among the arid zones and mountains of wartorn Algeria at the beginning of the 1960s, Pierre Guyotat was a young French soldier, in his early twenties, who participated in the Algerian war of colonial liberation after leaving his isolated home region in the mountains of south-central France for Paris. Although Guyotat had actively wanted to fight in the war, he eventually sided to a large degree with the Algerian rebels, incurring the wrath of the French military authorities; the book’s incarcerated character Thivai undergoes much of the treatment Guyotat himself was subjected to. The spectacle of the Algerian war - with its immense cruelties, tortures and arbitrary massacres of civilians (on both sides) as well as of soldiers, prefiguring many other conflicts over the subsequent forty years - deeply marked Guyotat’s vision and language; the speech of his fellow soldiers, with its sparse set of expelled phrases, counterpointed his own lavishly hallucinatory, epic generation of language. The book - Guyotat’s second extended work, after a novel entitled *Ashby*, set on the Northumberland coast of northern England - was written after his return from Algeria to Paris, where he lived in poverty and constant hunger in the mid-1960s.

The publication of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* in October 1967 shattered the future course of French writing, and made Guyotat a highly public and controversial figure in France, often subjected to violent controversies over the sexual and insurgent intensity of his work. Over the thirty-five years since its first publication, the book has become widely viewed as the greatest and most ambitious French novel of modern times, and Guyotat himself is often seen as the sole living writer to rank with such crucial figures as Artaud, Bataille, Genet and Sade. For all young French writers, artists and film-makers of originality in the subsequent decades, from Hervé Guibert to Leos Carax, exposure to Guyotat’s book would prove to be a seminal and determining creative experience, capable of coalescing and pushing further their own obsessions. Even while still in the process of writing the book, Guyotat was aware of the profound experimentation with the matters of
language and the body which he was undertaking: an experiment that propelled his work far beyond the range of the literary novel, into an extreme sensory, visual and linguistic zone, capable of vitally inciting and transforming the perception of its reader. Early in 1965, after writing a hundred pages of the book (which he had started in October 1963), he gave a newspaper interview in which he was already intimating that his work in progress would radically overhaul and negate the preoccupations and strategies habitually associated with the form of the novel. He said: ‘Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers is not a novel, it’s a kind of epic, a story of adventures of war and emotion, with as its framework an imaginary country in Africa: a country under Occupation, and with a civil war going on. There are a few major heroic characters, then characters drawn from the crowd of inhabitants and soldiers from the two warring factions. There will be a mass of repetitions, words, images...The idea for the book came to me after watching again Buñuel’s film Los Olvidados.’ Guyotat’s emphasis on film - rather than literature - as an immediate inspiration for his book demonstrates its acute openness to every visual medium, though simultaneously each source-component of the book (elements of mythology and history, Lautréamont’s Maldoror, the Bible, and a vast range of works in art and cinema) becomes challenged or obliterated in its incorporation into Guyotat’s language.

In its anatomisation of the forms of conflict and massacre, Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers is historically pitched between the 1962 end of the Algerian war, which saw France expelled in angry humiliation from its now-devastated colony, and the legendary Paris street-riots of May 1968, aimed at the overthrow of the repressive French state. Guyotat’s book, published only months before those riots, contributed to the unprecedented aura of exhilaration and dissent of that moment, and phrases from Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers appeared stencilled among the graffiti that saturated the walls of Paris. But other historical moments, of catastrophic and enduring cruelty, are also deeply engrained in the book, as in the scene in which bound children hung from hooks have their limbs gradually sliced off, until their bodies form a heap of severed flesh on the ground. The second edition of the book was dedicated by Guyotat to his uncle, who had been deported to the Nazi concentration camp of Sachsenhausen for his Resistance activities during the Second World War. In July 1991, I travelled with Guyotat to the site of that concentration camp, to the north of Berlin, where his young uncle had been murdered. The medium of death at that particular camp was via a
lethal injection or a bullet in the back of the neck; as we watched a film of Sachsenhausen’s 1945 liberation in the camp’s empty and godforsaken cinema, it seemed as though the spectators of those filmed atrocities still needed urgently to watch out for bullets in the back of the neck. At that time, soon after the dissolution of East Germany, the camp’s site was undergoing a reversal of its historical status - the Nazi genocide was being downplayed, and media attention was focused instead on ‘the crimes of communism’ perpetrated by the Soviet occupying forces, who had taken over the camp in 1945 and used it as a detention centre where many more inmates died, of starvation and exhaustion. Another part of the camp was then under threat of being demolished and turned into a supermarket (though in the end, this plan was abandoned). History itself was disintegrating in front of our eyes. In the camp’s subterranean dissection room, through which his uncle’s body had probably passed, Guyotat broke off a floor tile to keep as a fragment of memory. From its act of witness to the projects of Hitler, Lenin and Mao, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* presciently embodies many subsequent conflicts - among them, those of Cambodia, Bosnia and Kosovo - as well as more recent, and contemporary, historical figures exacting massacre or revolution.

*Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* is utterly semen-drenched by innumerable sex acts - their forms and participants infinitely permutating between slaves, masters, soldiers, generals, dogs and prostitutes. In his book, Guyotat assembled a unique vision of life as a relentless spectacle of slavery, prostitution, elation and degradation, in which only the delirious intervention of sex can explode power. In large part, this overriding presence of sex, layered into the book’s relentless enumeration of acts of atrocity, led to the media furore which met the book’s publication. Guyotat’s own response was definitive: ‘I don’t need to justify myself. In the end, I have something much worse to do, which is to live through my book.’ The ongoing sexual detonation of the book has both generated and defeated numerous failed attempts to film it, though it has formed the raw material for several celebrated theatre performances, notably that directed by Antoine Vitez at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, in 1981, during a period in which Guyotat fell into a near-fatal coma from the corporeal demands of his work. Guyotat’s output since *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* has constituted a supremely resilient and innovative body of work, from *Eden, Eden, Eden* (1970), to *Prostitution* (1975), and through to his contemporary collaborations with artists and
choreographers, and his immense multi-volume work, *Progenitures* (the first volume of which appeared, together with a CD of Guyotat reading from the book, in 2000).

English-language readers have been denied the experience of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* for nearly four decades, though that delayed impact makes its final availability all the more miraculous. English-language writing possesses no parallels whatsoever to Guyotat’s work, which stands ferociously alone even within the context of French writing; the reader of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* enters uncharted sensory terrain, the engulfing ‘anus of the world’, in Guyotat’s words. Soon after the book’s original publication, the sole typescript of an English-language version by the translator Helen Lane was destroyed by fire, either by accident or intentionally; even Guyotat himself is unsure of the exact circumstances of this notorious calamity, though Helen Lane (who suffered a profound spiritual crisis during her work on the book) had certainly viewed its action - which she perceived as being situated in a post-apocalyptic timeframe - as disorientatingly unlike any other work she had approached. Less combustible translations, notably that into the Japanese language, have projected the physical and visual matter of the book into other cultures, with consequences similar to those in France. Romain Slocombe’s new translation - retaining all of the dense splendour, linguistic rhythm and sheer virulence of the original book - allows English-language readers their first opportunity to enact their own confrontation with Guyotat’s seminal work.
Crime in urban Japan often appears hard to pinpoint at first. The visitor to its contemporary cities almost always inhabits a supremely safe and comforting space, even in such volatile areas as the hectic night alleyways of Tokyo’s Shinjuku Kabuki-cho district, and the pacified atmosphere seems worlds away from the raw turmoil of many European and American cities. The avenues are lined with reassuring police boxes, the neighbourhoods appear to be under a benign regime of surveillance, and the only evident signs of eruption seem to be the momentary, fractious quarrels brought on by subway-train crushes. Often, on the surface of Japan’s cities, the inhabitants appear far too exhausted by work and commuting, or too immersed in their cellphones’ digital screens, to be contemplating acts of crime.

But, with a second glance, crime soon begins to assert its presence and imagery, as an enduring, albeit subterranean, force in Japanese daily life and memory. And in a culture dominated by ever-younger and more provocative designers, even the media forms of contemporary Japan are starting to take on darker, more unsettling dimensions. In cinema, the gangster films of Takashi Miike show invasions of mobs from China and Brazil overturning the long-instilled familiarity of yakuza crime, while also nonchalantly splintering notions of Japanese national homogeneity itself. Even the advertising screens of Tokyo’s avenues and department stores seem increasingly to be adopting images of glamorous anarchy and outlaw culture as their primary selling points for clothing and media channels. But, in its pervasive media focus on youth crime and urban breakdown, contemporary Japan may simply be manifesting just one more variant in a long series of preoccupations with its own social flaws and conflicts - a popular obsession which has always centred on crime, sex and murder.

In his book *The Dark Side*, Mark Schreiber has assembled a compendium of crime in Japan, from its origins (though he really only gets started in the seventeenth century) to its most recent forms. The result is a catalogue of almost ludicrous ambition - the surveying of the entirety of Japanese crime, in all of its styles and transformations - and that alone makes the book a fascinating if disjointed read. The book is
compiled from articles written by Schreiber for the Mainichi Daily News between 1998 and 2001, and it still retains some of the cryptic journalistic sub-headings (‘Berserk Cop’s Legacy a Scarred Czar’) which betray its earlier incarnation. The rapid-fire tone of the book, with anecdotes and historical accounts rarely extending over more than a page, also means that it is often haphazardly sourced and has a hazy sense of its own chronology. But strangely, the way in which the book passes so abruptly between curtailed accounts of crimes, without providing contextual bridges between them, proves in the end to be engagingly effective, generating almost filmic flashes and bursts of violent crime in front of the reader’s eyes. The book finally condenses the entire history of Japan down to one awry narrative of crime and retribution.

Some of the most horrifying stories unearthed by Schreiber are those which deal with the punishments exacted upon criminals in Tokugawa-era Tokyo. He describes protracted decapitations and mass crucifixions, inflicted on both men and women, often for the most trivial of crimes. The recruitment of executioners varied according to the social status of the condemned: ‘The most extreme form of punishment, called nokogiribiki, was, in theory at least, open to all comers who could work up the courage. It involved sawing off a criminal’s head while he was immobilized in a pit. Saws were supplied at the site.’ Ever a thorough researcher, Schreiber visited all of the sites of gruesome mass-executions and their accompanying burial grounds in contemporary Tokyo, though he usually found himself confronted only with a concrete temple of recent vintage surrounded by urban landscapes of convenience stores and traffic junctions; as a consequence, the reconstruction of the traces of long-lost crimes in Edo demands a great deal of telling detail, and Schreiber succinctly provides this, along with appropriately appalling prints and illustrations from the period.

Schreiber is at his most entertaining in his wry and atrocious accounts of early European and American visitors to Japan and their experience of crime, either on the receiving end of murderous assaults by passing Satsuma samurai, or in their witnessing of executions; in 1873, the correspondent for the London Times reported on a public mass-execution session: ‘I never thought a man’s head could come off so easily; it was like chopping cabbages, only accompanied with a peculiar and most horrid sound - that of cutting meat, in fact... There was a
dense crowd of Japanese present, including many women and even children; these people never ceased to eat, smoke, and chatter the whole time, making remarks on the performance, and even occasionally laughing, just as if they were at a theatre.’ The European disdain for the public ‘performance’ of decapitation in Japan contributed to the gradual adoption of hanging, within prison walls, as the main means of execution from the early years of the Meiji era. The compulsive public spectacle of execution also intimately connects with the often-sexual nature of crime - a theme that runs throughout Schreiber’s book, with violent crimes of murder often resulting from sexual frenzies, and owing their detection to furtive voyeuristic observation. The theme of sexual crime is one that is also expertly disentangled by Timon Screech in his study of shunga prints and their rapport with criminality and voyeurism, *Sex and the Floating World* (1999). In both books, Japanese crime and sex are uniquely welded together in act and representation.

Schreiber’s book becomes progressively more unstuck as he approaches the modern era and as his definitions of crime become increasingly vague and contradictory. The last gasp of the book’s picaresque, often-ironical tone is reserved for the infamous sex-murderess Sada Abe, the heroine of Nagisa Oshima’s film *In the Realm of the Senses*, and Schreiber entirely jettisons that element of black humour when he starts to deal with the crimes of the serial-killers active in the devastated Tokyo of the immediate postwar years (historical crimes which have perhaps been most incisively explored in the medium of manga art, notably in Suehiro Maruo’s book *Ultra-Gash Inferno*, 2001). The book loses its own coherence in examining what it sees as the chaotic, opaque matter of recent Japanese history, with its unprecedented crimes such as those of the AUM Shinrikyo cult, the child-killer Tsutomu Miyazaki, and the Kobe killings of 1997 (the focus of Japan’s greatest media furore of recent years). Japan appears a far more frightening place when its murders can no longer be ascribed to instantly-comprehensible causes such as avarice and sex, and Schreiber’s book seems designed to induce a dubious nostalgia for a lost moment when criminals were summarily decapitated *en masse*, rather than turned into television celebrities.

In dealing with the postwar period, Schreiber flails around for themes with which to anchor the final sections of his book. He deals schematically with the traumas of social repression, urban alienation
and enduring militarism in post-war Japan, with their consequences most clearly evident in the 1960s student protest-riots and the terrorist acts of the early 1970s, but his treatment of the period forms a flimsy overview that fails to define how he equates such acts (symptomatic of an entirely different kind of ‘dark side’ in Japan) with more commonplace crimes; Schreiber’s glib style is singularly mismatched with such intricate social and historical matters. Even the self-inflicted death of Yukio Mishima in 1970 is clumsily crammed into the book’s unwieldy criminal lineage: ‘Yukio Mishima, forty-five, was a gifted but eccentric writer with reactionary political views. He made worldwide headlines with a spectacular suicide.’ Mishima’s close collaborator, the celebrated choreographer Tatsumi Hijikata, certainly possessed his own original ideas on crime, as a form of artistic act, and wrote polemical manifestoes, inspired in part by the French criminal and poet Jean Genet, with such titles as To Prison.

The Dark Side cuts off suddenly (appropriately enough) with its account of the AUM trial, leaving its reader with the impression of having been the witness to a vivid panorama of criminal acts, with their depiction pitched - sometimes uneasily - between grotesque horror and salutary entertainment. The book’s journey beneath the skin of Japan, into its criminal heartlands, forms a compelling, often-gruelling excursion.
TOKYO’S URBAN AND SEXUAL TRANSFORMATIONS  
(2001)

The explorations of performance art media in Japan over the past forty years have pursued combative strategies towards their two principal preoccupations in consumption and sexuality, each located within an urban context of rapid transformation. Many of the cross-media approaches in the work of individual performance artists or groups of artists in contemporary Tokyo draw upon the durable influence of the cultural situation in the city at the end of the 1950s, in which art works were often assembled for one performance only, as ephemeral amalgams of photography, film, choreography and improvised music; each performance was inflected both by the riotous situation of the surrounding city, as immense demonstrations amassed in order to protest against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (perceived by its opponents as subjugating Japan to the cultural, social - and sexual - imperatives of the USA, as well as to its military objectives), and also by the dynamic sexual flux of the city, as entire districts of Tokyo experienced an intensive sexual upheaval, with the construction in areas such as Shinjuku of multi-storey concrete blocks filled with clubs and bars devoted to every nuance of sexual experimentation. Performance art at the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s took place in a context of escalating sexual furore, within an encompassing urban culture where the close rapport between sexuality and commerce had always possessed a strong - though often spatially peripheral - presence. The performance art of the period, though transient in form and not intended to prolong itself beyond the moment of its own event, existed within a more durable framework of sexual and commercial interaction.

In a number of ways, contemporary Tokyo carries the residue of that volatile mixing of multiple cultures of sexuality, protest, art, commerce and urban change, though the exterior forms of the city which held that mix have been long supplanted, and the raw creative energy (which many of the participants of the performance art cultures of the late 1950s and 1960s perceived as potentially revolutionary and certainly unprecedented) has entirely disappeared. On the surfaces of contemporary Tokyo, the rituals and visual screens of consumption seem at first sight to have definitively taken the upper hand in the intervening decades, and to have relegated sexual culture to rigidly
segmented and repetitive systems of human behaviour and perception, within which any notion of aberrance is already permissible, nullified and so rendered obsolete; much of the performance art undertaken in contemporary Tokyo reflects the city’s imageries of codified or pure repetition in which sex and consumption are magnetically paired together, in visually spectacular and lavish - but concurrently void - forms and acts.

However, Tokyo carries a scattering of cracks in the apparently invulnerable digital code that transmits its urban consumer culture, in which pervasive images of sex function as a kind of perpetual neural overload - which the city exists to incite and then to immediately defuse. Any journey outwards from the areas of concentrated consumption which form an intractable barrier around the western approaches to central Tokyo - in the forms of the districts of Shinjuku, Harajuku, Shibuya and Ebisu - brings the eye up against the suburban expanses of the city, which extend out seamlessly for many miles on end in the form of commuter dormitory settlements, comprising dense conglomerations of near-identical apartment blocks, punctuated only by tracts of over-illuminated convenience stores: Lawson, Seven-Eleven, Sunkus and Family Mart. Whereas the central districts of the city convey a powerful visual texture of intense sensory attractions, the visually drained suburbs (populated briefly in the mornings and evenings by commuter workers heading for or returning from each district’s railway station, and otherwise almost deserted, surrendered largely to the aged inhabitants of the suburbs) intimate only brief apparitions of unhurried action, framed at each side of the day by great rushes of exhausted human figures. The sexual imagery which the centre of the city projects relentlessly is almost entirely absent in the intricate alleyway forms of the suburbs, and the empty spaces instead articulate the underlying human tensions and corporeal implications of the commuter lifestyle, with its frenzied and endlessly repeated transits through clogged urban space, eased only by the reading of erotic manga comics.

To the east of the central districts of Tokyo, there appear entirely divergent urban landscapes to that of the suburban homogeneity of the western dormitory areas; the saturation of sexual images within the media thrall of the city’s centre is utterly alien in the destitute peripheries of eastern Tokyo. Along the walkways of the river Sumida, long swathes of blue plastic tents accommodate human figures lost
through the economic fissures of contemporary Japan. In the adjoining
district of San’ya, home to innumerable cheap hostels for impoverished
day workers, even the basic level of advertising imagery and the usually
ever-present convenience stores lose their grip on the surface of the
city, which can erupt in San’ya into an uncontrolled riot of vocal
languages and disruptive acts otherwise extinct in contemporary Tokyo.
The homogeneously Japanese population of the city also splinters to
some degree in such areas of the city, with populations of Iranian and
Indian menial workers existing alongside other tenuous inhabitants of
the city from South Korea and the Philippines. To the north of Shinjuku,
in the district of Shin-Okubo, the centre of international prostitution for
the city brings rapidly-replaced populations to the streets, with transient
women and men transported from eastern European and South
American countries, the pimps constantly adapting to the changing
caprices of their clientele. And even within Shinjuku itself - the lurid
heart of Tokyo’s consumer culture - networks of cardboard cities
proliferate among the subterranean underpasses of the district’s vast
railway station (the miniature houses are often painted on their exterior
surfaces with meticulous representations of the houses’ inhabitants,
their figures standing against urban backdrops of the Shinjuku corporate
towers and the district’s forty-seven-storey government building).
Beneath its initially-visible surface skin, Tokyo forms a more shattered
arrangement whose intricate systems of power, sexuality and inclusion -
together with the anomalous absence of those systems - all contribute
to the visual and sensory arrangement of the city.

The peripheral zones of Tokyo form the particular axis of the work of
the Gekidan Kaitaisha performance art group, which also resonates with
equally peripheral imageries of European urban and sexual cultures, and
with those cultures’ rapport of opposition or oblivion towards corporate
and consumer media.

The link between the contemporary moment and the past is essential
but elusively multiplicitous in Tokyo. In particular, the connections
between the city’s contemporary performance art culture and that of
the end of the 1950s and the 1960s carry that multiple and often
intangible history. In some respects, contemporary performance art
practitioners in Tokyo are deeply aware of the collaborative, cross-media
experiments of the late 1950s and 1960s which prefigure a number of
the vital concerns of contemporary work, particularly in its adoption of a three-way confrontation between digital imagery, the human body and the urban arena. But the material traces and evidence of that prior performance art culture are often sparse and dispersed, not least because of their in-built combustibility and of the derision of that culture for ideas of repetition or permanence. It is a culture that is transmitted to the contemporary world through fragments of images, rather than through a complete documentation. Whereas the work of parallel European performance art movements of the 1960s, such as the Vienna Action Group - seen as highly provocative, obscene and illicit in its time - has been the subject of extensive catalogues, retrospective exhibitions and government honours, Japanese performance art of the period has not received the same degree of exhaustive documentation or valorisation.

One of the numerous cross-media collectives or groupings of artists which began organising performances in Tokyo at the end of the 1950s, the ‘650 Experience’, staged their intermittent events in hired clubs and other improvised spaces, for small audiences. The participants of the flexible group included several who would become the seminal figures in the experimental culture of the following decade, notably the choreographer and artist Tatsumi Hijikata, the poet and film-maker Shuji Terayama, and the American expatriate writer and film-maker Donald Richie. Each participant contributed work in many media, and the identification of the artists through one primary activity was momentarily rendered unnecessary. The events possessed an explicit hostility towards processes of representation, and many of the performances have survived only in the form of tattered handouts or posters. Hijikata - still perceived in Japanese performance media as crucial for his extraordinary capacity to organise innovative collaborations between writers, film-makers, artists, photographers and musicians - pursued a preoccupation with corporeal upheaval which gave a particular focus to the experiments. The late 1950s and early 1960s was a moment at which aspects of European culture formed a strong inspiration within Tokyo’s own creative cultures, especially through the theories of the French writer Antonin Artaud and the work of the novelist and film-maker Jean Genet; Genet was notorious for his imprisonments and Artaud for his asylum incarceration, and these influences imbued the ‘650 Experience’ performances with a self-projected aura of social resistance, sexual experimentation and
criminality. The participants would also leave Tokyo and stage performance events on the beaches, such as Kujukurihama, to the east of the city.

In the face of such artistic strategies - incorporating elements of opposition and negation, and the exploration of an imagery of the human body through a kind of intensive cross-media furore - the contemporary cultural memory of Tokyo’s performance art of the 1950s and 1960s is necessarily fragile and multiplicitious. In the autumn of 1997, the Japanese art museum in the city of Mito staged an exhibition around visual arts in Tokyo of the period 1960-64, with an emphasis on performance art cultures. The poster for the exhibition showed an aerial photograph taken of the Japanese National Diet Building (or parliament) in Tokyo on the day of the most prominent demonstration against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty, in May 1960. In the photograph, the entrance to the pyramid-topped parliament building is barricaded with a double row of lorries, while many thousands of demonstrators converge on the building from every direction. The roads in front of the parliament building run at right-angles to one another but at oblique angles to the front of the building itself; as a result, the mass of converging bodies forms an immense and distinctive ‘X’ shape, with its centre located precisely at the gates to the parliament building, as though in the act of inflicting its own mark of summary negation upon the political power of the country.

The empty first room of the Mito exhibition also evoked the performance art culture of 1960s Tokyo through visual images of its counterpart in urban unrest, with film loops projected on the bare walls, showing the streets of the city burning and coursed with rampaging human figures. The second room was filled with video monitors in which contemporary interviews with the participants of art movements of the era were simultaneously transmitted, in a kind of sonic babel of memory, into the museum space. Since many seminal figures of the time such as Hijikata and Terayama had succumbed to liver disease (the great occupational hazard of the alcohol-fuelled Japanese avant-garde) in the intervening decades, the ranks of potential interviewees had been severely depleted. In subsequent rooms, reconstructions of art works of the period (the originals having often been destroyed by the artists shortly after their construction or been composed of materials which had rapidly degraded) were assembled in an attempt to gather some
tangible residue of a performance art culture which had almost entirely evanesced.

The performance art culture of 1950s and 1960s Tokyo possesses both an in-built uncollectability and a relatively peripheral or opaque status in Japanese museology. As a result, imageries of the time that carry into the city’s contemporary performance art culture tend to be isolated works able to seize the creative exhilaration of the era in short bursts or through idiosyncratic strategies of documentation. Examples of such works are the short super-8 films - employing multiple superimpositions, rapid camera movement, scratched celluloid and a jagged editing style - which the young film-maker Takahiko Iimura made of performance events in Tokyo in the early 1960s. In the area of photography, the documents which best convey the immediacy and sexual imperatives of the performance art cultures of the time are those images in which naked or cross-dressed human bodies career through the city streets, as in the photographs which the American photographer William Klein included in his 1964 large-format city-book *Tokyo*, and in the work of the photographer Eikoh Hosoe, who has been the most persistent and sensitised recorder of Tokyo’s performance art cultures from the late 1950s through to the present day.

The space of performance art in contemporary Tokyo forms a determining element, especially given the ways in which the city, its memory, history and media all intractably accent every art event. The innovative strategies adopted by a group of artists such as those associated around 1960 with the ‘650 Experience’ still survive, in a modified form, since contemporary art performance in Tokyo comprises an often rigorously commodified and delineated entity, with performances staged in venues attached to large department store corporations or in sanitised museums; the imperative to create oppositional or distanced spaces continues to incite a degree of improvisation and flux in the way in which artists collaborate across media - and especially extend performance art into the field of digital media - in order to generate fragmented imageries of the corporeal, psychic and sexual tensions that run through Japan’s incessantly-transforming urban arenas.
The era of financial ascendancy in late-1980s Japan led to the building of a proliferation of contemporary art museums across the country. The prestige that a city could gain from the presence of a prominent art museum, and the way in which that prestige could then enhance the city’s corporate culture, were primary factors in the suddenness with which contemporary art venues saturated the urban landscape of Japan at that time. (The swift financial upswing on which this wave of constructions rested proved to be precarious: a number of contemporary art museums closed down during 1997-98, the most catastrophic years of corporate instability and financial uncertainty in Japan’s recent history.) The art museums were often owned by - and named after - vast business conglomerates whose other holdings, such as commuter railway networks and department stores, accumulated in the same areas as the museum spaces. Notoriously, considerations of what materials the museums could actually collect and display manifested themselves only after the buildings’ completion. The design and novelty of the museum buildings also proved crucial to the ways in which urban centres or business complexes could attract attention to their often out-of-the-way location. For example, the Mito Art Tower, where the exhibition surveying performance art in Tokyo from 1960-64 was held, is situated in a small and otherwise undistinguished city - arranged largely along one long main street, with its axis in a node of multi-storey department stores - in Ibaraki prefecture, to the north of Tokyo. The art centre was designed by the architect Arata Isozaki, best known outside Japan for his ‘Team Disney Building’ in Florida and his Museum of Contemporary Art building in Los Angeles, as well as for the outrage generated by his plans for the reconstruction of the area around St Paul’s Cathedral in London; Isozaki witnessed the wartime devastation of the Japanese cities in his early teens, and participated in the intensive cross-media creative furore of late-1950s and early-1960s Tokyo. Isozaki’s design for the Mito arts complex centred upon an elongated metal tower (equipped with a lift and an observation point at its summit) whose striking form is visible throughout the city; the luxuriant galleries of the museum are supplemented by a wood-panelled concert hall and other lavish performance spaces. The entire complex emanates a fluid meshing of visual arts culture with corporate culture and urban prestige.

In Tokyo itself, the close contact between the spheres of visual arts and of business conglomerates, and the implications of that rapport for
performance art culture, can sometimes appear less seamless and more raw. However, the rapport between art and corporate culture is rarely seen in contemporary Japan as one of direct contradiction. Very different imperatives and perceptions are at stake in Japan as opposed to, for example, Germany, where an artist with strong countercultural or anti-institutional preoccupations might hesitate to accept patronage or prizes from the country’s industrial corporations. Even the Japanese *zaibatsu* (family-owned conglomerates operating simultaneously in many different spheres of business) which, in previous incarnations, supported the militarist build-up and colonial expansion of 1930s Japan, carry little or none of the enduring stigma attached to those German corporations which participated in the slave and death camps of Nazi Germany. In the Tokyo district of Ikebukuro, to the north of Shinjuku, the east and west sides of the area’s main railway station are owned by rival corporations, each of which controls vast multi-storeyed department stores for young consumers - Seibu and Tobu - together with commuter train networks (whose termini are located adjacent to or directly beneath the department stores) and art spaces. Gekidan Kaitaisha’s 1997 performance *Zero Category* took place in a small venue designed for experimental performance events in the basement of the spectacular Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space edifice, part of the Tobu corporation complex, which also incorporates a large concert venue and areas for the display of two-dimensional art works. To some degree, the strategies and concerns prevalent in the performance culture of Tokyo in the late 1950s and 1960s have mutated into a contemporary situation whereby far vaster audiences are now receptive to the preoccupations of such works, but in which the cross-media flexibility that characterised that earlier period has largely dissolved; each component (performance, music, film) has become filtered out and assigned to a different space within the encompassing structure of a vast corporate arts complex. Performance art events need to take place within such prominent venues as the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space in order to achieve a certain degree of media visibility (contemporary Tokyo is as competitively saturated with artists as it is with image screens); and a performance event which confronts the financial and sexual power of consumer cultures necessarily finds its imageries accentuated by its actually taking place within the domain of a particular corporate complex - which itself habitually benefits from the exchange by charging high rental fees for the use of its art venue, and, in any case, remains blissfully oblivious to any challenge carried by the event.
Nevertheless, alternative spaces for performance art exist in Tokyo, often in the peripheral areas far beyond the consumer heartlands of Shibuya, Shinjuku and Ikebukuro. As at the end of the 1950s, such spaces are ephemeral venues - more habitually used as factories or nightclubs - in which performance art exists alongside and often entangled within the parameters of music, choreography, experimental theatre and cinema. Within these spaces, the direct connection with the cross-media explorations of 1960s Tokyo has endured to some degree, since a number of the entrepreneurs and producers who co-ordinated arts events at that time still operate in contemporary Tokyo; the entrepreneur Hironobu Oikawa, for example, began organising collaborations between performance artists, musicians and film-makers at the beginning of the 1960s, as part of the Japanese response to such movements in Europe and the USA as Fluxus (the early 1960s was a period of intensive international transit and conceptual cross-fertilisation between Tokyo and New York, Paris and West Berlin, with many Japanese artists and film-makers, such as Yoko Ono and Takahiko Iimura, operating principally between Japan and the United States). Under the aegis of his cross-media organisation in Tokyo, the ‘Scorpio Project’, Oikawa continues to curate one-off collaborative events - structured around an often caustic preoccupation with Japan’s consumer, sex and media cultures - between young performance artists such as Mari Tanigawa, artists working in digital media such as Taqueya Yamashita, and noise-musicians such as Keiji Haino. Mari Tanigawa performs in shredded, layered remnants of Tokyo’s instantly-obsolete fashions, obsessively manoeuvring an expansive debris of consumer products which envelopes the floor of the performance space; that excessive mass of objects evokes both the slowly-accumulated possessions of the Tokyo homeless and also the rapidly-discarded possessions of the city’s near-professional young consumers. The Scorpio Project events form potentially volatile, multiple and certainly irreplicable works. However, this direct historical continuum in Tokyo’s performance art culture is nearing its point of extinguishment, since the surviving producers and entrepreneurs able to sustain the concerns and cross-media forms developed in the 1960s and adapt them to the world of contemporary Tokyo are now rare. Such events and spaces are aberrant presences in the vastly homogenised city, simultaneously deeply archaic and vital.
Gekidan Kaitaisha possess a degree of notoriety in the Tokyo art world, where their projects (incorporating elements of performance art, digital media art, Artaud-inspired experimental theatre, choreography, cinema and social manifesto) have been viewed as exceptionally difficult to categorise or define, even within a city whose postwar cultural history has been distinguished by a high level of volatility and transmutation in the visual arts. The emphasis in their work on an imagery of incessant corporeal struggle - always placed in intimate juxtaposition with images resonant of urban media power and its implications for the human body, for sexuality, and for the spectator of the performance - also opens up a distance from the more insular, self-absorbed preoccupations which are more habitual in performance art in Tokyo. On the other hand, the participants of the Gekidan Kaitaisha project - ten or twelve young performers, centred on one ‘creative director’ - form part of a more familiar framework of culture in Tokyo, where cross-media groups of artists almost invariably collect around one - usually male - dominant figure (as, for example, was the case with the ‘650 Experience’); the dynamics of the power system within which such artistic groupings in Japan operate are often as opaque as the social power structures that the groups seek to probe or challenge. Gekidan Kaitaisha’s performances take place two or three times each year in Japan (almost always in Tokyo itself), with occasional appearances at arts festivals in other East Asian countries and in Europe. Their project is an ongoing one, with each performance forming a tangential continuation of the previous one. As with many other Japanese performance art groups of the past forty years, their work presents itself as utterly unprecedented and unlinked to any other artistic project, while at the same time attempting to form a kind of combative and acerbic mirror to the sexual, media and corporate cultures of urban Japan and beyond.

The intended internationality of the Gekidan Kaitaisha project itself reflects the way in which Japanese performance art (and Japanese culture in general) seeks to position its explorations outside of a limited frame of reference. The verve with which Japanese visual culture spills out into the international arena forms a provocative and productively unsettling force, with particular implications for the ways in which contemporary art is perceived in Europe and the USA. (In Japan, perhaps because of the riotous intensity of 1960s visual arts culture or the sheer dis-recognition of disciplinary boundaries, the preoccupation with the
idea of international avant-garde or innovative cultures remains a vital and compelling concern in a way that is unknown anywhere else in the world.) The creative flux between Japan and Europe certainly transmits sensorial insights in both directions, and sends inflexible preconceptions and apparent contradictions into liberating freefall. The proximity of art, sexual and consumer cultures in Tokyo generates an intimately entangled mass of images within which even those art projects with an explicitly oppositional rapport to corporate culture find the traces of that culture deeply embedded in their work. The titles or sub-titles of Gekidan Kaitaisha performances (rendered prominently in English on their advertising posters and other promotional materials) - such as *The Season of New Abjection*, and *Into the Century of Degeneration* - themselves carry reverberations of the Tokyo consumer culture in which department-store carrier-bags are imprinted with intricate but maladroit philosophical statements in a capricious mixture of English and French. In particular, the impact of twentieth-century French philosophy on Japanese culture has been considerable, extending flexibly and unexpectedly through every domain. For example, the abject corporeal matter probed in Julia Kristeva’s book *Powers of Horror* is transposed entirely in Gekidan Kaitaisha’s work into the field of undifferentiated consumer matter. And the rigid stratification of relative values which is applied to intellectual and consumer cultures in a country such as France becomes utterly levelled in Japan - when Jean Baudrillard recently lectured in Tokyo, the event took place in the Parco multi-storey department store in Shibuya.

However, Gekidan Kaitaisha’s work also sets out independently to examine more precarious areas of urban life to which corporate cultures are hostile presences; the peripheral spaces of Tokyo - as surely as parallel spaces in European cities - carry zones of exclusion for poor, alien or inassimilable populations. For a period in the early to mid-1990s, the group worked on performances based around the idea of a ‘Tokyo ghetto’, dismantling the conception of the then-economically vibrant and confident Japan as being inhabited purely by an ethnically homogenous - and homogenously wealthy - population. The group’s creative director Shinjin Shimizu summarized their preoccupations: ‘Our creativity is based on an acute criticism of society, which can sometimes translate to social issues including racism, identity in the refugee context, political pretension and hypocrisy.’ Most of Gekidan Kaitaisha’s early performance events had been presented in small venues or
improvised out-door locations, such as ruined factories, as though the participants had themselves been excluded from inhabiting a visible space in the cultural arena of the city. Images for performances were gathered on the participants’ journeys on foot around the edges of Tokyo, through districts in which the habitual visual system of the city’s consumer centres had been suspended; such exposure to a more corrosive, hazardous system of compulsive staring and enforced invisibility had served to determine the ways in which performers and spectators would evade or engage with one another. Shimizu described these origins of the Tokyo Ghetto performances: ‘Two years ago, I found myself lost in a certain district of the city. There, people were skinning the animals…. I felt countless eyes staring at me, through the opening in the surrounding wooden fence. I was not able to stare back.’

The group’s projects also probed the corporate and political power of Japan and its sexual consequences, developing a repertoire of corporeal gestures indicative of power struggles (for example, human bodies incessantly thrown from one anonymous figure to another, or beating one another to the point of exhaustion) which were subtracted from a specific social and historical context, and presented in their raw state - as movements intended simultaneously to incorporate the gestures of consumption, of sexual acts, and of political control. In the performance space, the participants’ hooded faces and otherwise near-naked bodies carried a dense content of power, as well as evoking the performance experiments which Tatsumi Hijikata had undertaken in the early 1960s with similarly black-hooded figures (the celebrated photographs taken by William Klein of Hijikata’s street performances had rendered that iconography a familiar reference point for Tokyo’s performance art). However, the danger of such stripped-down work lay in projecting potentially incoherent imageries of violence or subjugation to its spectators. Later in the 1990s, Gekidan Kaitaisha began to use layers of pre-existing visual imagery - archival film and digital images - in their performance work in order to give a more explicit dimension to their representation of power; archival film of such events as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, of the American Occupation of Japan, and of more recent conflicts in eastern Asia all worked directly to infuse historical imageries of inflicted power into the performances, while digital images of contemporary cityscapes in eastern Europe and Japan served to exacerbate the tension between physical or sexual acts and corporate or media imageries. The eventual development of Gekidan
Kaitaisha performances in large art venues at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s brought these imageries to the forefront, in the forms of multiple digital monitors in the performance space and film-image projections over the performers’ bodies.

The most recent performances by Gekidan Kaitaisha in Tokyo have taken place in such venues as the Art Sphere, a newly-constructed venue intended for performance works incorporating a high degree of interaction between digital media and human movement. The Art Sphere is located on Tennoz Island, one of a number of islands along the sides of Tokyo Bay which mostly came into existence through sustained programmes of land-reclamation. The most spectacular of these artificial islands is Daiba Island, a huge space alongside the Rainbow Bridge at the north end of Tokyo Bay, where a monorail originating in one of the city’s central business districts links a succession of extravagant corporate complexes, multi-storey hotels and department stores, arranged around an artificial beach; the Fuji Television Center (the headquarters of a private television channel), in particular, possesses a large art museum on the top storey of its extraordinary metal-fronted building, in which contemporary artworks generated by digital technologies are placed alongside collections of works from twentieth-century European art movements such as Surrealism. Such art and performance venues as the Tennoz Island Art Sphere indicate the future direction of art exhibition in Japan as well as its potential fragility. The immense costs incurred in the construction of such privately-owned venues require the sustaining of a lucrative art market and of a performance culture able to permanently generate compelling new work, as well as the continual existence of an engaged (and usually very young) audience eager to attend such art events. In such a situation, financially-induced artistic innovation is an imperative demand placed on Japanese contemporary visual culture with an urgency perhaps unparalleled since the European Renaissance.

Gekidan Kaitaisha’s performance at Art Sphere explored the contradictions of creating cross-media performance art within a context in which such English-language vocabulary elements as ‘degeneration’ and ‘abjection’, together with oppositional imageries depicting corrupt political systems, sexual subjugation and the exclusion of vulnerable communities, all form part of an enveloping and uniquely powerful consumer culture. But contradiction forms a thriving and vital principle in Japanese visual culture, and the necessity of locating flaws within the
apparently seamless media screen of Tokyo remains a crucial project for contemporary art in the city. The Gekidan Kaitaisha performance took the form of movements of figures across the performance space, interspersed with the projection of historically-resonant film-images and of images of concrete-block suburbs and corporate towers. The confrontations between the figures in the performance space comprised sequences of relentlessly repeated, violent embraces (resonant of those designed by the Butoh-trained choreographer Bernardo Montet for the French director Claire Denis’ 1999 film about foreign legionnaires in the deserts of Djibouti, *Beau Travail*). The human figures were surrounded by a detritus of images and objects from a moribund consumer society; they performed gestures of power from which any specific association had been drained, and to which any content could be re-attached. The sexual acts presented in the performance oscillated between those suggestive of the acts undertaken in Tokyo’s subterranean sex club culture - accompanied by a sonic cacophony - and a more tense, corporeally demanding sexuality, unresolved and poised in silence between extinguishment and fury. Finally, the performance extinguished itself in exhaustion.

The future of performance art in Tokyo hinges upon the contrast between the contemporary moment densely occupied by the event, and the survival of the traces - objects and images and memories - left by the performance. In the case of the performance art culture of late-1950s and early-1960s Tokyo, the dearth of surviving material or documentation is in itself an articulate witness to the irreplicable vibrancy of the events within their moment. Exhibitions tracing that period, such as the exhibition at the Mito Art Tower, and another at the Ikeda Museum of Twentieth Century Art in Ito, presented little tangible trace of the events: torn posters and super-8 film fragments. The major exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object*, staged at the Isozaki-designed Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 1998, indicated the crucial position that film had played in the international performance art of the 1960s (this was particularly the situation in the work of the Vienna Action Group, where artists and filmmakers such as Otto Muehl and Kurt Kren produced film documents of many performances, including those with a strong sexual content which were staged in private or for invited audiences). Contemporary artists such as Shinjin Shimizu point to filmic documents as their primary source
of engagement with the performance culture of 1960s Tokyo, but also to the creatively inciting, even elating, void or absence left by such a lack of evidence of the events.

The filmic documentation of 1960s performance art was rarely undertaken for explicitly promotional or commercial purposes, either in Japan or in Europe - celluloid copies of the films of Muehl and Kren, for example, were acquired by independent film co-operatives (such as the London Film-Makers’ Co-operative in Britain) and very occasionally projected for members over the subsequent decades, while films of 1960s Japanese performance art possessed a similarly fragile status within the country’s experimental film culture. Film works were often conceived as forming part of the performance event itself, reflecting both its impact on the spectators’ perception and those spectators’ sensorial capacity to view and experience all or only part of the event. Such documents have only achieved a new degree of prominence with the attention directed on the period from the mid-1990s by art museums. The documentation of contemporary Japanese performance art possesses a completely different form and dissemination. Every performance is rigorously and completely documented in the medium of the digital image (a notable feature of Tokyo performance events is that there are often more people filming the event than watching it), and the resulting documents form an essential part of the way in which the work is presented to the international performance art system, via internet transmissions or promotional packages disseminated by galleries or producers. In terms of the cultural history of Tokyo’s performance art, the film-maker Takahiko Iimura now possesses a unique if peripheral status, since his body of work extends from 8mm film documentation of the performance art culture of early-1960s Tokyo (intermittently subjected to censorship in the intervening decades because of the films’ record of sexual acts), through to contemporary digital image installations based around the corporeal and facial manipulations induced by digital technology, and their implications for the rapport between image and language in performance. Retrospectives of Iimura’s work tellingly demonstrate the acute variance in the media used for representing performance art in Japan over a period of forty years.

In Tokyo, digital culture possesses its own contemporary museology; the present moment immediately acquires its own intricate cultural history of preservation, collection and dissemination. This simultaneity
of event and representation has its most evident form at the NTT InterCommunication Center in Shinjuku, a museum devoted entirely to digital media as an art form. The luxurious museum - housed within several storeys of a massive corporate tower which also encompasses an opera venue - is owned by the NTT telecommunications conglomerate but is curated as though it were a contemporary art centre devoted to intensively probing the parameters of human perception. The space of the museum forms a sequence of installations for spectators (comprising such spaces as an anechoic room and a number of virtual environments), with the emphasis on the multiple ways in which digital media impact upon perception. The visitor to the museum participates in the installations in both corporeal and sensorial dimensions - and a total engagement of the spectator moving through every installation would induce such contrary responses as disorientation, fascination, vertigo, nausea, compulsion, and exasperation. A sustained preoccupation throughout the installation works, by such artists as Seiko Mikami, is that of the cancelled or erased human figure, and in every installation space, bodies persist as ghost images, lost traces, or signalled absences; the spectator necessarily reconstructs a tangible human aura within the digital installations from fragments, voids and annullings of the body.

The NTT InterCommunication Center differs from parallel museums in Europe in that its works pivot centrally upon the relationship between the digital image and the occluded human body; equivalent European media art centres or museums - V2 in Rotterdam, ZKM in Karlsruhe and Ars Electronica in Linz - each possess far wider concerns with such issues as political and ethical cultures, and with the ‘creative benefits’ of technological mishap or malfunction (by contrast, there exists absolutely no potential for malfunction at the NTT museum). By so markedly subtracting or deflecting the human body, the NTT museum’s digital installations serve to reinforce it as an overriding concern, so that the succession of installation rooms function as a kind of demanding performance art space in which the spectator combats sensory disorientation in order to visualise or experience corporeal presence.

The relationship between media culture and the human body in Tokyo intractably includes an exploration of sexuality and of the ways in which it transmutates within the urban environment. In every worldwide urban centre with advanced media systems, the visual forms of sexual culture may evolve unrecognisably from one decade to another, and to some degree, those transitions of sexuality in Tokyo constitute only an
exacerbated and accelerated variant of a process which operates pervasively and homogeneously in every wealthy contemporary city. But sex and media are integrally linked in Tokyo’s visual cultures through the forms of art and performance as well as via the more familiar forms of fashion, advertising and momentary consumer furores. Sex is perpetually re-imagined in contemporary Tokyo in both corporate cultures and in visual art and performance. In the 1960s, the artists, performers and film-makers who worked in Shinjuku drew directly from the proximity of their studios or spaces of exhibition to the concentrated sex club cultures of Shinjuku’s Kabuki-cho area, as well as from the riots and violent protests which intermittently traversed the avenues of the district during that period. In the intervening decades, the volatile mix of media and sex in Tokyo’s visual culture has permeated art to a greater degree, but has also generated a more elusive character in the visualisation of sex. The human body possesses a precarious and even negated status within the domain of Japanese digital culture, while the representation of sexual acts has taken overloaded, wayward forms in print-media, internet and film cultures - channelled into mass-market erotic manga comics and into a vast industry of internet and DVD pornography around schoolgirl figures; sexuality is left as a residue with a drained, exhausted character in urban life itself. This elusive but crucially determining nature of sexuality in Tokyo generates a vast area of exploration for visual and performance art, whether it intends to celebrate, ironise, oppose, or place itself in an oblivious rapport with Tokyo’s sexual culture. All such rapports are intimate ones.

In the French artist Chris Marker’s seminal film Sunless (1982), which presciently anticipated the subsequent twenty years of visual transformation and digital culture in Tokyo, the city is one stop on a long journey of memory which also encompasses the volcanic terrain of Iceland, the revolution-torn jungles of Guinea-Bissau and the far calmer landscapes of the Île de France; but it is Tokyo which gives the film its resolute structure, as one formed of unexpected cuts, aberrant preoccupations and visual compulsions. Apart from a few moments in the film, such as Marker’s visit to the outlying Gotokuji temple dedicated to the city’s cats, Tokyo - twenty years on - is superficially almost unrecognisable from the city which he filmed then. But the city retains its visual provocations and its upheavals in perception as strongly as ever. To a large extent, the essential inspiration for European performance art - and for European culture in general - of Tokyo’s
experiments in the visual image and the human figure is that they overturn preconceptions, evanesce contradictions, and dismantle formulaic reflections.

However, Japan also counterpoints Europe in its growing dilemmas over social exclusion and racism, with poverty and alienation, as well as with the environmental consequences of its rapid ascent into economic prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. And the interrogation in Tokyo’s performance art of corporate culture and its powerful relationship with the human body and with sexuality possesses a harsh dimension which may increasingly provide a revealing indicator for explorations into Europe’s own cracked media screens.
On 3 January 1889, in the Piazza Carlo Alberto in the northern Italian city of Turin, Friedrich Nietzsche watched an old carthorse being frenziedly beaten by its driver; Nietzsche abruptly flung his arms around the horse’s neck, weeping and protesting, before fainting into a syphilitic coma. When he re-emerged into consciousness, the philosopher had become irretrievably insane; although he lived for another eleven years, until 25 August 1900, he wrote almost nothing further and immersed himself in a profound silence, in his sister’s house, as he awaited death.

This volume collects Nietzsche’s final fragments from the period leading up to that collapse; the last words in the volume emerge from the final days before Nietzsche’s desperate urban intervention. This is the first English-language publication (after their German-language publication in 1996) of Nietzsche’s ultimate pronouncements on power and totalitarian imperatives, on sensation and ecstasy, on the summary repudiation of the Christian religion, on the figure of the Antichrist, and on the active nihilism which Nietzsche viewed as seminal and essential at the moment of the onset of the philosophical and political obsessions which would turn the twentieth century into a scorched-earth terrain of atrocity, with the twin gods of communism and fascism commanding the near-eradication of the tainted human species.

Nietzsche’s use of the fragment anticipates that of many of the figures who most directly probed the intimate relationship between language, ecstasy and madness in the first half of the twentieth century: prominent among them, Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud in France, Franz Kafka and Robert Walser in the German-speaking world. The fragment, for Nietzsche at this extreme point in his work, is the matter which implosively compacts an otherwise inarticulable content and directly unleashes it for the reader (although that reader, through the hesitancies and suppressions of editorial policies, needed to wait over a century before being subjected to its sensorial and linguistic charge). The fragment had been a pre-eminent means of expression for the German Romantic poets, formulated to articulate a consciousness in disarray at the mass stimuli of urban or natural life; but in Nietzsche’s work, the fragment is transformed into a weapon of attack and repudiation rather
than a means for the surrendering of consciousness. Nietzsche’s fragments, with their intensive internal conflict, form a zone of corporeal and sensory intensification which magnifies his preoccupations to almost infinite dimensions: the imposition of Nietzsche’s will nullifies every religious system, together with all conceptions of human stability and control, in order to institute a limitless imposition of self-divinifying, insurgent power.

The reader’s sensory experience of Nietzsche’s final fragments is as testing and unsettling as Nietzsche’s own mental condition at the moment of their composition. The process of reading such evocations of power is a precarious and even vulnerable one, in many ways. The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze - whose own collaborations with Félix Guattari constitute a vast, fragmentary incorporation of the ultimately flux-driven human consciousness at the end of its political tether - often argued that, in his exacting final work, Nietzsche philosophically sodomises his reader: ‘He gets up to all kinds of things behind your back. He gives you a perverse taste - certainly something neither Marx nor Freud ever gave anyone - for saying simple things in your own way, in affects, intensities, experiences, experiments.’ (1) The psychoanalytical philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s combative response to this position is that Deleuze himself strategically and systematically philosophically sodomised Nietzsche, and Žižek’s own counter-theoretical, meta-corporeal strategy is to suggest that the reader - inevitably a male reader, in Žižek’s Lacanian cosmogony - needs to reposition himself behind Deleuze, effectively sodomising Deleuze at the same time that he sodomises Nietzsche, who in turn is simultaneously sodomising the reader(2) - so that, finally, the reader is able determinedly to collapse that deviant chain of signification and become engaged in a creative and active process of self-sodomy: an ultimate state of jouissant and necessarily violent liberation.

In his study of the denigration of vision in twentieth-century thought, the American political philosopher Martin Jay notes that: ‘Nietzsche’s critique extended to the putatively disinterested purity of even the partial perspectivalist gaze, which was assumed by positivists and their aesthetic correlates, the Impressionists and Naturalists. Himself plagued by failing eyesight from the age of twelve on, Nietzsche knew of the pitfalls of relying on visual experience alone... He insisted that every viewpoint was always value-laden, never detached. Vision was thus as
much projective as receptive, as much active as passive.’(3) It is this caustic assault on the obstructive ‘blindness’ of vision that is most intensively marked in Nietzsche’s final fragments. His own philosophical imperatives are carried sensorially, with an ultimate collapsing of representation which allows the reader to enter a state of radical visual and linguistic abbreviation - whatever is sought in these fragments can be instantly located, de- and re-visualised in a readerly act of nihilistic self-will. From that point onwards, the fragment forms an endless source of propulsive incitation, constantly refigured with each act of reading.

The Antichrist, ultimately, can only articulate himself through the fragment (in direct repudiation of the biblical, genealogically and temporally amassed character of Christianity and its antecedents): the fragment is the point at which language is unhinged from its imposed strata of signification - necessarily constrictive and deadening, for Nietzsche - in order to flare, however briefly and catastrophically, in its own autonomous direction. No longer language, no longer vision or image (though still conceivably an active work of art), Nietzsche’s final fragment is the terminal zone at which every obsession and compulsion becomes immediately expressed, in a sensorial rush, before everything (and everyone: Nietzsche above all) precipitately combusts in the white-hot infinity of insanity, disintegration and silence.

The critical demands of Nietzsche’s work have been misunderstood more than those of any other writer of his stature. Jean Genet read the entirety of Nietzsche’s then-published work on the island of Corfu in 1961 and commented in a letter from 1963: ‘The idea that to think of possessing thousands of acres and castles, to imagine that that is to live like a superman - that’s simply imbecilic. Nietzsche demanded a more rigorous morality for his superman.’(4) The publication of Nietzsche’s final fragments now salutarily provides their reader with an ultimate rigour and an ultimate challenge.

Notes
2. Slavoj Žižek, lecture at the Kunsthalle am Karlsplatz, Vienna, 9 November 2002.
The attention given to Julian Schnabel’s *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, awarded the Best Director prize at the 2007 Cannes film festival, calls to mind the extraordinary artist/film-maker whom Schnabel credits with having given him the impetus and confidence to execute such a radical shift of discipline, from figurative painting to film-making: Marcus Reichert. Reichert, like Schnabel, broke from an ongoing career in painting to enter film-making, and grafts into film an intensive concentration with the boundaries and layers of the visual image - but in many ways, Reichert is the more compelling figure: still oscillating between disciplines, and always driven by unsubduable and irreconcilable obsessions with the corporeal and the urban, most recently propelling his work into the zone between film and photography.

Reichert’s most celebrated film is *Union City* (1980), a hyper-noir evocation of urban paranoia and disintegration, often lauded as having launched the pre-eminent imageries of darkened urban space and isolated, near-comatose human figures that have inhabited American and European film of the subsequent decades. Shot in the rundown periphery of New York City and lovingly probing the unravelling lives of its deranged, distrustful human figures, enclosed by blighted urban facades and garishly-lit interiors, the film appears suspended in space, as though a malign miracle had somehow brought it into existence. In fact, the film simultaneously forms a miraculous presence among innumerable abandoned, absent film projects pursued by Reichert since the early 1970s, most infamously *Wings of Ash*, his project to film the life of the legendary Surrealist poet Antonin Artaud. Having begun the film-project in 1971, Reichert spent most of that decade developing his script and attempting to cast Artaud from wayward rock-star material - he shot a fourteen-minute pilot with Mick Jagger in the role of Artaud in 1978, and also discussed that role, in a palatial hotel by the Wannsee lake in Berlin, with David Bowie (a long-term admirer of Artaud’s transformational performance theories), before finally abandoning the project. Reichert’s lost Artaud is a far more vulnerable figure than the vitriol-spitting, combative Artaud played by Sami Frey in the version of his life eventually filmed by Gérard Mordillat in 1993, *In
the Company of Antonin Artaud: in Reichert’s filmscript, Artaud is a deeply fragile, fraught presence, harassed by psychiatrists even before his decade-long asylum incarceration, seen weeping over his filthy socks in a scene with his fellow Surrealist poet, Robert Desnos. Artaud disintegrates so profoundly, in Reichert’s conception of his life, that the film-making process itself falls into disintegration.

In many ways, in Reichert’s work, film’s dissolution demands and instigates another image, and that image is the photographic image. But the photographic image inhabits a zonal perimeter still infused by film and its power, notably the power to transmutate the face of the city. Especially over the past seven years, Reichert has been incessantly photographing building-facades, abandoned areas and tenement-surfaces, mostly depopulated of any human presence, as though seized by an almost-Ballardian preoccupation to minutely scan the sets for films that have already been erased, even before their conception: cinematic photographs of denuded, often-ruined facades, like the traces of films from which the interiors and figures have been excoriated, in an all-engulfing human apocalypse of the kind that Artaud, too, dreamed of, and attempted to find imageries for. Reichert collectively titles some of those ongoing images his Human Edifice project, to accentuate the absence of the corporeal, which may somehow find a way to insurge back into the image, after its eradication.

All of Reichert’s Human Edifice photographs experiment with ocular power and its rapport with urban and corporeal surfaces. The photograph retains a filmic charge, generating an incandescent screen upon which that three-way confrontation - between city, image and body - is deployed, accentuated by the voiding of the body from it. The photograph is the volatile medium able to delineate the uniqueness of that rapport, its awry power fraught with cancellation just as it exacts strategies of subjugation on the eye, and existing primarily to tear itself away from every other image. The photograph forms a fixing of sensation, welded from its disparate components. The image’s ocular urban power is, above all, infinite in its impacts and in its capacity for creative seizure; but the surface of the human body, even more than the urban surface, is subject to dereliction and transformation. Every image-surface holds the sensory accumulations that the passage of time embeds in the layers of the city; the photograph performs a delicate operation to extract the matter of the temporal, to sift it out from the
multiple furore of the visual. The formation of time is exposed in the photographic image, as in the filmic image.

In Reichert’s post-filmic photographs, the gestures of the eye delineate the dynamics (often, the ailing dynamics) of space. Those gestures of the photographing eye are attuned with the dilemmas and split-second intuitions that also determine the gestures of the film-making process. But photography opens out a contrary issue. At the moment of the historical origin of photography, the desire to paralyse space and time through the intervention of the image rendered the nineteenth-century Parisian boulevards frozen, while the corporeal figures that traversed those spaces, blurred by the interval of exposure, preserved their own gestures of movement: gestures that would be taken up and revivified, as though seamlessly sustained, by the figures crossing Leeds Bridge in the very first filmic image, shot by the French inventor Louis Le Prince in 1888. The history of photography itself, from its origin to its digital form, has pivoted on those seminal aberrations and separations between urban surface and corporeal surface, and between the image and movement - as well as between the intention of the photographer or film-maker and the urban accident or caprice that always inescapably eludes the subjugation of the image. Reichert’s photographs encompass all of the vital contradictions that make up the contemporary image: the intention to still the gesture of movement, and that intention’s self-refutation; and the integral ambivalence of seizing and losing images of urban and human surfaces. From those contradictions, only final image-residues and eroded components of time and space survive.

The human body often forms the primary locus of all forces of dereliction, in film and photography, but the urban image, too, possesses its own, contrary collapses and abrasures, which Reichert’s photographs painstakingly irradiate. That contradiction, in marking out the vital collapsings and absences at the heart of urban and corporeal forms, impels Reichert’s images. Each image is an element in a chain or sequence that accumulates voids in space. Reichert’s photographed facades hold a particular charge of corporeal memory, so that memory and its compulsive obliteration form a volatile mix within the conception of the image. In Reichert’s photographs of emptied-out Madrid tenements and salt-seared Georgian terraces of the English south-coast, the urban surface is imprinted with its own cancellation, multiply
enacted across that surface. Often, the main body of the building has vanished entirely, that void barred-across by wooden erasure-marks of negation, and only the shredded carapace remains, in a blaze of light: the body without organs, figured in urban terms.

The future of photography itself, in its rapport with film and the digital, is a medium faced with its own eradication, mutation and transformation, and that status meshes it with the status of the urban and the corporeal. Such processes require perpetrators of terminal images that themselves unleash and propel forward untold and unscreened visions. Reichert’s facade-photographs focus on surfaces that have been impacted-upon (by memory, by damage) so intensively that surface mutates into another material, which the spectatorial eye then has to explore, to open out - into a corporeal substance of a new image-skin, and into an accentuated form of visual immediacy and engrained memory. Together, the images form a carapace of wounds in intimate juxtaposition with the surface-carapace of the urban.

To collect and assemble images of the urban and the voided human form demands a tenacity in that search, and an intuition in gesture. The recording eye, both in film and photography, itself forms an eminently abraded and wounded surface, with its own densely impacted layers of memory. Reichert’s images exist in a medium in flux between film and photography, in which those inflections of the eye upon the image generate essential surfaces: urban spaces stripped to the bone, compacted to their raw architectural components. Photography, throughout its history, has been a medium both of death and of the arresting of time - its seminal revelations generated by the image’s power (noted by Roland Barthes) to inflict its own deaths, damagings and resuscitations upon the spectatorial eye, and to make that eye propel itself at a terrible velocity (in ecstasy, in loss) through the delirious passages of time. Reichert’s images form a seismography of that ocular flux, stopped-dead on the face of the image and upon two of its critical forms: the urban and the corporeal. The eye, above all, is itself a visual detritus of time as well as a medium for deifying its own vision.

The survival of the image demands aberrant, contrary textures, together with the creation of insurgent amalgams of the urban and corporeal for the lost, powerful eye. Reichert’s images form an excavation directed into those textures and amalgams, between the
filmic and the photographic - an excavation that rigorously scours all vitally excessive and contaminated surfaces, until only the primary gestures of the eye remain, held by the image.
The acts of excess, atrocity and aberration of the Roman Emperors have provoked richly obsessional responses from innumerable writers over the centuries. In the twentieth century, that compulsive fascination (now shared too by film-makers) emerged at moments of profound upheaval and social disintegration: in Germany during the 1910s, in France during the 1930s, in Japan during the 1960s - and worldwide, in the contemporary moment. The grandiose abuse of colossal power, the overriding desire for immediate sexual ecstasy and oblivion through violence and torture, and the arbitrary eradication of entire populations, are ever-more vital and relevant preoccupations. Of all the Roman Emperors, it is the figure of the anarchist child-god Heliogabalus (along with the crazed Caligula and the matricidal Nero), with his ephemeral and implosive reign of gold, blood, semen and excrement, which most intimately connects into contemporary manias, panics and desires. The four-year reign of Heliogabalus, who was slaughtered at the age of eighteen, was characterised by spectacles of incest, sodomy, butchery, debauchery, and an anarchic ridicule for the powers of government. And of all the many responses to the Roman Emperors, right across the centuries, it is the French writer Antonin Artaud’s extraordinary biography of Heliogabalus which most exactly aligns those divine forces of uproar with the seisms that now seize contemporary empires, audiences and perceptions.

Antonin Artaud is most renowned as the legendary instigator of the Theatre of Cruelty - the inspirational project which irreparably transformed the nature of theatre and performance - and as the dissident Surrealist poet and film-maker who effortlessly out-imagined and out-hallucinated André Breton, and faced expulsion from the Surrealist movement as a result. It was in 1933 that his publisher Robert Denoël (who would later be assassinated) proposed that Artaud was the ideal candidate to write a biography of Heliogabalus. The figure of Heliogabalus was a supremely revelatory one in the France of the 1930s, as its moral systems disintegrated towards warfare and Nazi Occupation (the writer Jean Genet would compose a play about Heliogabalus during the Occupation years, though he lost or destroyed it). Artaud researched the book over many months in the National Library in Paris, consulting
ancient esoteric and astrological texts as well as books of Roman history; the finished book (which he dictated, largely by improvisation, from his notes) transmitted his own preoccupations as intensively as those of Heliogabalus’ life. In outlining the book’s intended sensorial impact upon its readers, Artaud displayed considerable hostility towards historical authenticity: ‘I have written this Life of Heliogabalus as I would have spoken it and as I speak it. I have also written it to help those who read it to un-learn history a little; but, all the same, to find its thread.’ Artaud revealed the degree of his deep affinity with Heliogabalus, emphasising ‘the central figure where I have described myself’. The novelist Anaïs Nin was an intimate friend of Artaud in Paris during that period, and she evoked Artaud’s wild temperament as he exhaustively recreated Heliogabalus’ life: ‘Artaud sat in the Coupole cafe pouring out poetry, talking of magic: -I am Heliogabalus, the mad Roman emperor, because he becomes everything he writes about. In the taxi, he pushed back his hair from a ravaged face. The beauty of the summer day did not touch him. He stood up in the taxi and, stretching out his arms, he pointed to the crowded streets: -The revolution will come soon. All this will be destroyed. The world must be destroyed...’. Through this first-ever translation into the English language of Artaud’s revolutionary masterpiece, its acute power of apocalyptic fury now becomes more seminal and prophetic than ever.
This essay explores the origins and the impact of one of the most influential books published by the San Francisco-based publisher City Lights Books in the 1960s: the anthology of writings by the French poet and theorist Antonin Artaud. Especially in anglophone countries, and to some extent worldwide, the City Lights *Artaud Anthology* exerted a vast influence across the visual and textual arts - from performance and film to poetry and choreography - and worked effectively to annul the boundaries between those arts; in this, it reflects the integrally cross-media work of Artaud himself, whose activities extend across manifestoes on performance and revolution, writings on film, theatre and visual art, and experiments in radio recordings, in drawings and paintings - as well as the poetry of the insurgent human body which forms the principal element of the *Artaud Anthology*. The first part of this essay outlines the way in which the *Artaud Anthology* originated and the means by which it was assembled; the essay then examines several examples of the ways in which it inspired and provoked its readers, both at the time of its publication in 1965, and also in the contemporary world.

A brief summary of Artaud’s work will be useful in determining the particular elements of that work which were incorporated into the *Artaud Anthology*, or excluded from it. Artaud moved to Paris in 1920, from his home city of Marseilles, and joined the Surrealist movement four years later, although he was expelled by its leader André Breton in 1926. During those same years, he also pursued a career as both a theatre and film actor, appearing in celebrated films such as Carl Dreyer’s *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. He formulated plans to direct experimental films with exacting demands on their spectators’ perception, and wrote numerous film scenarios in his unsuccessful attempts to realize those projects; at the same time, he began to write manifestoes about the theatre, which accumulated in the early 1930s into his Theatre of Cruelty project - the texts and letters he wrote around those vast ambitions for performance were collected in 1938 as the volume *The Theatre and its Double*. After the collapse of the Theatre of Cruelty project in 1935, Artaud began a series of journeys, firstly to witness the peyote rituals of the Tarahumara peoples in northern
Mexico, and then to the remote village of Eoghanacht, on the Aran Islands, off the western coast of Ireland. Artaud was arrested and forcibly deported from Ireland, then incarcerated in a series of lunatic asylums during the wartime years, notably at the asylum of Rodez in southern France, where the head doctor, Gaston Ferdière, gave him a series of over fifty electric shock sessions. Artaud was released from Rodez in May 1946 and spent the prolific final eighteen months of his life back in Paris. It is from the writings of this final period - up to March 1948, when Artaud died at the age of fifty-one - that the greater part of the City Lights *Artaud Anthology* (around 150 out of its 250 pages) is drawn.

Like the celebrated Pocket Books series published by City Lights, the *Artaud Anthology* exerts a very particular presence in its physical and tangible form. Although its dimensions are larger than those of the Pocket Book, the *Artaud Anthology* adapted itself to its readers as a kind of battered and mutating icon - in conversations with readers who acquired a copy in the 1960s, I’ve often heard how their attachment to it compelled them to carry the book around with them for years on end, so that it came to acquire its own, often-damaged and over-inscribed dimensions, which intimately corresponded to its reader’s preoccupations. Because the chronological and thematic order of the texts included in the *Artaud Anthology* is often disordered and opaque, and also because that content is largely composed of fragmentary texts of no more than a page or two, the book lent itself to multiple, individual readings: short or intensive readings, undertaken on the run, on journeys, or while engaged in creative projects. It possessed its own mobile sense and presence as a kind of infinite book, open to re-creation and reformulation with every repeated reading. City Lights published the work of a number of seminal French-language poets, both before and after the appearance of the *Artaud Anthology*, including works by Jacques Prévert and Henri Michaux; however, in the context of the vitally adaptable, mutable book, in intimate contact with its reader, the *Artaud Anthology*’s form corresponds most closely to that of a book by Jean Genet, published by City Lights in the summer of 1970 with an introduction by Allen Ginsberg: *May Day Speech*, which Genet had delivered earlier that year at Yale University, before an outdoor crowd of thirty thousand spectators, and in which he had instructed his audience of young students that the revolutionary culture of the then-prominent Black Panther Party superseded and should take urgent precedence for
them over their own university studies. Genet’s text had been rapidly translated for the occasion by the scholar Richard Howard, and then published by City Lights with a parallel rapidity and proximity to the event’s concerns. Since Genet’s *May Day Speech* is only twenty-five pages long in its published form, it could be rolled or folded, carried or brandished, quoted or displayed by its reader (like any incendiary pamphlet); in a similar way to the *Artaud Anthology*, it worked both as a creative incitation, throughout every art form, and also in a combative sense, in relation to its readers’ conception of their position in society.

Although the first part of the City Lights *Artaud Anthology* mainly comprises translations of Artaud’s poetry and manifestoes from the period of his 1920s alliance with the Surrealists, the major part of the volume is devoted to writings from the final part of Artaud’s life, when he had been released from the asylum of Rodez and was living in the Paris suburbs, in a pavilion in the grounds of a convalescence clinic. The photograph of Artaud used for the cover of the first editions of the *Artaud Anthology* is also taken from the final period of his life (though it has since been replaced by a photograph, by Man Ray, of Artaud as a much younger man). At the end of his life, Artaud was writing incessantly in notebooks, and also dictating his longer texts to a young woman, Paule Thévenin, who would become his literary executor and the editor of his *Collected Works* after his death. During that final period, Artaud also made a series of recordings for radio, the longest of which, *To have done with the judgement of god*, was prohibited by the radio station that had commissioned it; the *Artaud Anthology* includes the text of Artaud’s first, much shorter radio recording, *The Patients and the Doctors*. Artaud was also engaged in executing a series of around seventy large drawings during those final months of his life, two of which are reproduced in the illustrations section of the *Artaud Anthology*; although Artaud exhibited a number of his drawings during his lifetime, at the Galerie Pierre in Paris, in 1947, they would not be shown in their entirety for a further forty years. As a result, the *Artaud Anthology* provided a very rare source of evidence, during its first decades of publication, for that crucial visual element of Artaud’s work. Probably the most exceptional aspect of the material included in the *Artaud Anthology* is that it comprises many texts which were originally published in small, ephemeral journals, started by young poets in postwar Paris, which had appeared in print-runs of only two or three hundred copies. In their translation and inclusion within the *Artaud*
Anthology (which has sold in excess of one hundred thousand copies since its first publication), those writings shifted from their original, insular status into that of massively-read and widely-influential work in the English language. Many of those texts have never been reprinted in the French language, and an anomalous situation has arisen in which Artaud’s final fragments achieved great prominence within the Artaud Anthology, while they became subject to an almost-total oblivion and neglect in their original language. Although Artaud had a very corrosive view of the nature of representation, this massive audience for his work achieved by the Artaud Anthology accords to some degree with his own aims; in that final period of his life, he was attempting to project his preoccupations to a mass audience through the medium of his radio broadcasts, and he also repeatedly tried (with little success) to have his poems published in the Parisian daily newspapers of the time.

The City Lights Artaud Anthology actively excludes Artaud’s writings on theatre and performance, which constituted a major strand of his work’s impact during the 1960s. In fact, the translated collection of Artaud’s theatrical texts, The Theatre and its Double, which appeared in France in 1938, had already been published in the USA by Grove Press, in 1958, seven years before the Artaud Anthology appeared. The translator of The Theatre and its Double, Mary Caroline Richards, had previously been a faculty member of the legendary Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and had translated the volume at the instigation of the composer David Tudor; the origins of that publication emerged in part from the particular circumstances of the experimental cross-media arts culture of Black Mountain College. The writings published by Grove Press already formed an influential basis for the growing engagement by anglophone readers with Artaud’s work, by the time when the editor of the City Lights Artaud Anthology, Jack Hirschman - who possessed his own distinctive set of preoccupations - began his work towards compiling a collection of Artaud’s non-theatrical writings in the early 1960s.

Jack Hirschman was born in New York in 1933, and was in his late twenties at the time when he started to assemble the Artaud Anthology and to co-ordinate translations that were largely executed by young poets of around the same age; he began his work in 1962, and in the following year he wrote a short theatre piece in the style of Artaud’s early performance works of the 1920s, which he entitled Artaud is Dead.
In the present day, Hirschman remains very active as a poet, translator and social activist, and in 2002 City Lights published a collection of his own work in the Pocket Poets series; his work has also been translated into Italian and he himself has translated the work of many Italian poets. The period in the early 1960s when he was assembling the *Artaud Anthology* was that of a great engagement in the USA with the work of French writers, particularly from the Surrealist period, but the moment of the book’s eventual publication, in 1965, marked a pivotal shift, both in the way in which a combative poet like Hirschman operated, and also in the way in which Artaud himself was perceived. With the onset of the Vietnam War, that moment signalled the beginning of a lacerating period in American culture and society. Artaud’s status in the USA in subsequent years became a multiple and shifting one: as an iconic figure of revolutionary opposition to warfare and social oppression, as a totem of many different kinds of drug cultures, and as a theoretical inspiration for work in performance-art, theatre and film. In 1966, the year after the *Artaud Anthology* appeared, Jack Hirschman was dismissed from his university post as an Assistant Professor at UCLA (where Jim Morrison of The Doors had been one of his students), in connection with his active protests against the Vietnam War. In the four decades since his work on the *Artaud Anthology*, Hirschman’s own poetry has confronted issues of homelessness, social exclusion, the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent conflicts of the US-dominated global world order; he joined the now-dissolved Communist Labor Party in 1980. Hirschman has very caustic views on the intimacy between contemporary poetry and university cultures; in an interview with the Italian poet Marco Nieli, he notes: ‘It is not possible for a poet to create an authentic world-vision if he or she is inside the university world... Since there have not been major outbreaks of political activities coming from the university world [since the 1960s], one can say that the corporate-throttling and bribery have been very effective’; Hirschman advocates what he calls ‘a breakthrough of *guerrilleros* of education to counter the corporate education that students are being brainwashed with’. (1) Such outcries possess strong resonances of Artaud’s own condemnations of such institutions as psychiatry and religion, although the particular political charge of Hirschman’s attacks is entirely absent from the work of Artaud, who argued primarily for a ‘corporeal’ revolution.

While I was researching Artaud’s work in Paris in the mid-1980s, I met and interviewed the two people who had supplied the principal
materials for the City Lights *Artaud Anthology*: Paule Thévenin, Artaud’s assistant and close collaborator at the end of his life, and Gaston Ferdière, the doctor who had treated Artaud with electric shock therapy at the asylum of Rodez from 1943-44. With their contrary perspectives, as the devoted ally and the psychiatrist formerly in absolute authority over Artaud, those two figures detested one another with a vengeance. Hirschman’s contact with them in Paris came during a long visit he made to Europe in 1964-65. Paule Thévenin contributed photostat pages of the small, rare journals from which much of Artaud’s work included in the *Artaud Anthology* is taken, such as a special issue from 1948 of the journal 84. Gaston Ferdière supplied a number of photographs, including one of himself, seated with Artaud in the grounds of the Rodez asylum on the day before Artaud’s release. Thévenin died in 1993 and Ferdière in 1990. Neither of them read English and so neither had been able to scrutinise the translations included in the *Artaud Anthology*, though both held firmly negative and dismissive views of the volume, for different reasons. Thévenin associated the volume with the American drug cultures, which she believed had appropriated Artaud in a facile way; in addition, she objected to the volume’s editorial structure, and noted that Hirschman had managed to mis-spell her name in the acknowledgements section of the book. The reason why so much of the material in the *Artaud Anthology* is from the final period of Artaud’s work may be attributed to Paule Thévenin: it was simply the material she liked best, since it dated from the period of her own association with Artaud, and it was the material she most wanted to disseminate. Gaston Ferdière had experienced his contact with Hirschman as one of mutual incomprehension; one result of this was that he contributed a number of reproductions of art works by asylum patients as illustrations for the volume, believing that he was actually being approached for material relating to the links between art and psychiatry. At the time, Ferdière was involved in the internationally-renowned ‘Art Brut’ movement which sought to exhibit and analyse the work of psychotic or untrained artists. As a result of this confusion, the illustrations section of the first edition of the *Artaud Anthology* features reproductions of material from Ferdière’s collection which has no connection whatsoever with Artaud, including a number of variants of an over-drawn photograph of the actress Gina Lollobrigida.

The American poet Clayton Eshleman is now the best-known translator into English of Artaud’s work, and his major volume of
translations, entitled *Watchfiends and Rack Screams*, was published by Exact Change Press in Boston in 1995; Eshleman met Jack Hirschman in the mid-1950s at the University of Indiana, where Hirschman was a teaching assistant and the slightly-younger Eshleman was a student (Eshleman noted that they eventually became distant, since he could not tolerate Hirschman’s incessant praise of Stalin). On the issue of the veracity of the translations included by Hirschman in the *Artaud Anthology*, Eshleman emphasised the sheer variability of styles and expertise, which renders the translations unjudgeable in their entirety; they extend from Hirschman’s own heated translations, full of vivid invective, gesture and momentum, to the more sober translation of Artaud’s essay on Van Gogh, *The Man Suicided by Society*, which was co-translated by the City Lights publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti himself. Artaud’s poetry itself varies widely in its resistance to translation: the final short fragments are not difficult to translate, although autonomous fragments find themselves scrambled-together in the *Artaud Anthology*; contrarily, long poems such as *Here Lies* form much more intricate challenges (it took Eshleman many years to create what he felt to be an accurate translation of that poem). Some of the most exceptional translations in the *Artaud Anthology* are those by the poet David Rattray, who was in his mid-twenties at the time he undertook his translations, and who died in 1993. Rattray’s intensely vocal recreations of Artaud’s work for the *Artaud Anthology*, with their elements of insistent repetition, were also profoundly experienced by his audiences in the field of poetry performance; the New York-based philosopher Sylvère Lotringer, a native French speaker, noted that it was the experience of hearing Rattray’s public readings of translations of Artaud’s work that made him understand how that work needs always to be read aloud to exert its full impact, including Artaud’s often textually-inscribed drawings of the human figure. However, Eshleman remembered that Rattray complained to him that Hirschman had made some arbitrary changes to his translations, and that Rattray attempted to publicly denounce those changes to the French media. Finally, it was what Eshleman perceived to be the capriciousness and overall lack of rigour of the translations in the *Artaud Anthology* that formed one inciting factor in his decision to undertake his own translations of Artaud’s work.(2)

Jack Hirschman’s manuscript archive of the translations assembled for the *Artaud Anthology*, together with the collection of letters he received
from the translators and other collaborators (such as Lawrence
Ferlinghetti and Paule Thévenin), is housed in the Special Collections
section of the Doheny Memorial Library of the University of Southern
California in Los Angeles. Two drafts of an introductory essay, written by
Hirschman during his work on editing the *Artaud Anthology* but not
eventually incorporated into the published book, articulate his particular
conception of Artaud’s work; he writes that Artaud ‘set up camp on the
white-heat star of his own lucidity. There he wrote the poems of his last
mad years, shaping them like screams, raining them down on doctors,
literary surrealists, his old anguishes, on Russia and France and America’.
Although Hirschman emphasises the primary significance of Artaud’s
final work in both drafts of the introductory essay, he asserts in the first
draft that it was actually Artaud’s 1937 text *The New Revelations of
Being* (a long poetic text written in the form of an apocalyptic prophecy,
and originally published shortly before Artaud’s departure for the Aran
Islands and subsequent asylum incarceration) that formed the
‘culmination’ of his work. In his drafted introductory material,
Hirschman assigns the original idea for the *Artaud Anthology* to the
celebrated novelist and diarist Anaïs Nin, who had been a close friend of
Artaud in Paris in 1933 and had since moved to the United States; she
had suggested the project to Lawrence Ferlinghetti in 1961. Hirschman
de-emphasises his own role as editor and translator, and highlights that
of the other translators: ‘My job being one largely of doublecheck and
assemblage, thanks for the contents should go to its translators,
especially to David Rattray, who assumed so much of the job’; elsewhere
in his drafted introductory essays, he refers to Rattray as an ‘important
new translator’ whose ‘contact with Artaud is almost a matter of blood’,
though the published volume would omit any reference to the depth of
Rattray’s contribution. Until a late stage in the editing of the project, the
*Artaud Anthology* translations were intended to form two separate
published volumes, with Artaud’s period at the asylum of Rodez marking
the chronological dividing-line between the sets of translations;
Ferlinghetti decided to amalgamate the two projected short volumes
into one only when all of the translations had been completed.
Hirschman’s drafted introductory essays date from the period when the
project was still conceived as being intended for publication in two
parts; he writes that the volume he is introducing forms ‘the first of two
scheduled by City Lights to bring the non-theatrical writings of Artaud to
an American audience which for the past decade has been actively living
out his foremost obsessions’. 
Hirschman’s editorial work on the translations he assembled for the *Artaud Anthology* is light and flexible, as his amendments to the translators’ manuscripts demonstrate; in general, he allows free rein to the translators’ wide range of styles, and confines himself to correcting mistakes and condensing unwieldy sentences or phrases. His only sustained work of amendment is in connection with Rattray’s translations of Artaud’s texts from the 1920s, which reveal extensive errors of translation (by contrast, Rattray’s translations of texts from Artaud’s final period demonstrate more intensive work and involvement, and contain far fewer inaccuracies). Although, as Clayton Eshleman reported, Rattray appears finally to have been dissatisfied with the published form of his translations, he explicitly invited Hirschman to make changes to his work: ‘if you feel that way’, and Hirschman assured Ferlinghetti during the project’s editing process that he had received the authorisation of his translators to amend their work: ‘I already have the okay from the translators to make editorial shifts so that’s okay.’ Although Hirschman exercised that right only loosely on most of the work of the other translators, the manuscripts of his own translations for the project indicate a prolonged struggle to resolve the multiple dilemmas raised by the resistant material of Artaud’s language. In most instances, Hirschman’s strategy is to generate an initial draft typescript in which the less difficult passages are rendered into English and the more obtuse elements retained in French; Hirschman then works on the passages in French directly on the typescript, in pencil and pen, often formulating several disparate options for a passage before finally selecting the one he considers most valid. This strategy of evaluating translation options that are simultaneously present on the page, in order to reconcile them into a single, fixed form, evidently constitutes a challenging and near-insoluble process, exacerbated acutely by the particular complexity and openness of Artaud’s language of intricate wordplay and glossolalia, which resists fixity. The demands of this process are particularly at stake in the final translation included in the volume, *Here Lies*, which Hirschman translated in collaboration with F. Teri Wehn. Wehn heavily annotates Hirschman’s typescript and adds expert nuance to it, but at the same time notes dismissive observations on the poem: ‘non-existent words: amusing, meaningless’. As a result, the manuscript emanates a tension between two highly divergent translation approaches to the original text; although, in the published book, Hirschman placed Wehn’s name before his own in the translators’
credit, he often disregarded his collaborator’s amendments and cooler input, maintaining intact the erratic results of his own fierce engagement with Artaud’s language.

The letters that form part of Hirschman’s archive of the *Artaud Anthology* reveal the project’s origins and the level of disagreement and exasperation in its prolonged editing process. The project was initially Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s, and in its early stages he intended to edit or co-edit the book himself. After Anaïs Nin had suggested the project in 1961, Ferlinghetti attempted to formulate a structure for it; at the instigation of the Paris-based translator Bernard Frechtman, he wrote to Paule Thévenin on 22 March 1962 to ask her to draw up a provisional list of contents for the proposed book. However, Ferlinghetti had little time to develop the project alongside his commitments to running the City Lights publishing house and bookshop, and to working on his own poetry; after an encounter with the young university professor and poet Hirschman, then based in Los Angeles, Ferlinghetti passed the project on to him that summer. On 19 June 1962, he wrote to Hirschman in a tone of friendly pleasure at their collaboration: ‘Well, it looks like we’re finally going to get together on a project! I don’t know why I didn’t think of you before for Artaud. I’ve been fiddling around with the project for over a year, trying to find time to get it off the ground, and was just really getting to work on it this summer. Well it’s all yours: “edited by Jack Hirschman”... Let me know what kind of arrangement you prefer. I’ll “co-edit” it with you, if you like; but you can have it all to yourself, if you want, since I am hung up on other projects continually.’ Hirschman’s knowledge of Artaud’s work at that point appears to have been partial and limited. Ferlinghetti initially aimed for the book’s editing and production process to be rapid, with the completed translations to be assembled by March 1963 for a publication date in June of that year; he suggested potential titles for the project to Hirschman, such as *Selected Revelations* and *Mad Writings*. At that early stage, he envisaged a long-term programme to publish further volumes of Artaud’s work, including a selection of poetry for the Pocket Poets series, although that plan eventually shrank to the two short projected volumes which finally became amalgamated into the single form of the *Artaud Anthology*. In part, this scaling-down was due to the relatively high expense of securing translation rights for Artaud’s work from the French publisher Gallimard; Ferlinghetti complained to Hirschman in an undated letter from early 1963 that he was faced with paying ‘an enormous amount of
money’ (an advance of $500, and royalties of 7% to 10%) in order to publish the project, and hinted at the negative financial implications this would have for Hirschman and the translators. However, Hirschman appears to have been entirely oblivious to the financial aspect of the project, and it is clear that he did not edit the Artaud Anthology primarily for the money; there is very little trace of any preoccupation with remuneration for the project either in his dealings with Ferlinghetti or with the translators. No firm arrangements appear to have been made with the translators; one of them, Daisy Aldan, wrote to Hirschman on 13 January 1964: ‘Pay me what you feel you can from what you get.’ The volume’s principal translator, David Rattray, who was based in New York at the time, expected to receive a payment of $100 for his work directly from Ferlinghetti. Its non-arrival led him to berate Ferlinghetti in an undated letter to Hirschman: ‘I wish that Ferlinghetti would, as they say uptown, “get his business together and start takin’ care of business”. I would be overjoyed if he would send me my $100 check...’; in a further letter, the payment takes on a pressing urgency: ‘I could really use it now... It is just a question of desperation and needing the bread is getting to be a life/death matter.’

The final letters in the Hirschman archive indicate the extent of the discord and confusion that accompanied the Artaud Anthology as it neared publication. (Although the discord between Ferlinghetti and Hirschman appeared heated, it was not terminal: over forty years later, Hirschman would edit City Lights' Pasolini Anthology, published in 2010.) At the beginning of 1964, Hirschman sent Ferlinghetti the assembled translations in the order in which he envisaged their publication. Ferlinghetti returned them to him, rejecting both the accuracy of the translations and the order in which Hirschman had arranged them; in his accompanying letter of 17 February 1964, he wrote: ‘I have been going over the translations for several days now, with the intention of checking every bit of text. But by the time I reached Letter to the Directors of Insane Asylums and found three major mistranslations in the first two sentences, I was really discouraged. I can see it would take me several weeks to get through the whole mss. in this fashion, and I just haven’t got the time. If I had had the time before, I would have done the whole volume myself; but I guess this is where I expected you to come in... I feel that the translations I have so far gone over are so far from the originals that something will have to be done.’ He concluded that ‘I cannot publish the book in its present condition’. Although Hirschman
replied to Ferlinghetti: ‘You were right to chide’, and promised to conduct ‘a phrase by phrase word by word of the whole mss., then a doublecheck with Anaïs, or another’, only a limited amount of subsequent corrective work on the translations was undertaken; Hirschman’s work on the Artaud Anthology was curtailed several months later, when he left Los Angeles for his year-long stay in Greece, England and France (funded by a UCLA writing grant), although he was able to meet Paule Thévenin and to collect illustrative material for the project - including the reproductions of art works by asylum patients mistakenly supplied by Gaston Ferdière - on a visit to Paris during that stay. When the book was finally published in 1965 (two years later than Ferlinghetti’s original publication date), Hirschman was still away in Greece. Ferlinghetti’s second major objection to Hirschman’s editorial work concerned the order and chronology of the translations; in his letter of 17 February 1964, he wrote: ‘I don’t really understand how you operate... I do not understand your criteria for the order, or sequence, of the contents as a whole. It’s not chronological, is it? What is it?’.

Hirschman’s conception of the chronology of Artaud’s work, notably that of his final period, was slight; although the texts from that final period possess a distinctive and crucial chronological sequence, Hirschman dismissed it in describing the texts in his drafted introductory material for the Artaud Anthology: ‘There is no chronology here, all of them roughly within the years 1945-1947.’ In his response to Ferlinghetti’s objections, Hirschman justified his ordering of the translations as embodying his own instinctual response to the ‘obsessionality’ of Artaud’s work: ‘I based it on the process of the mind of Artaud (roughly chronological through the first Gallimard volume) re his obsessions.’ Although Hirschman’s reply to Ferlinghetti noted that it was ‘only a suggested order’ and ‘can be changed’, the sequence in which he had arranged the translations (in two parts, with the second and much longer part beginning in 1943 with Artaud’s work from his Rodez period) was maintained when the book was published in the following year; the only significant innovation was the merging of the two sets of translations into the form of a single book. Although that publication’s impact would be enormous in the USA and in a number of European countries, both in terms of its wide-ranging inspiration and the sheer numbers of readers it reached, the Artaud Anthology was received with considerable disdain in Paris itself. On belatedly receiving copies of the published book, Paule Thévenin wrote in anger to Ferlinghetti on 20 November 1965 about the asylum patients’ art works wrongly attributed
to Artaud in the book’s illustrative section. That material would be omitted from the second printing; but Thévenin also articulated profound reservations about the conception of the book as a whole, and denounced Ferlinghetti’s choice of Hirschman as its editor: ‘The more deeply I look into the work Hirschman has done, the more furious I become... How on earth, to be frank about this, could you have put your trust in a person who doesn’t speak a word of French and also doesn’t understand a word of it? I was forced to speak with Hirschman in English and he understood my very bad English better than my French. From that point on, I was full of doubts about the project... You would have done better to have put David Rattray in charge of the book. It would then have been more faithful to the spirit of Antonin Artaud.’(3)

Many American artists, poets and musicians first experienced the impact of the City Lights Artaud Anthology around the time of its publication. Two figures, in particular, have been prominent in attempting to transmit Artaud’s work to cross-media, international audiences: the painter and film-maker Marcus Reichert, and the poet and musician Patti Smith. Reichert is now best-known as a figurative painter of crucifixion scenes, but in the mid-1970s he spent several years preparing a film based on Artaud’s life, provisionally entitled Wings of Ash; the film was to have been produced by Francis Ford Coppola, and after discussing the project extensively with David Bowie in Berlin, Reichert went on to shoot provisional material for the film with Mick Jagger in the role of Artaud, in 1978, before the project eventually dissolved because of financial and drug-related problems. Reichert remembers his initial sighting of the Artaud Anthology precisely within the sensory and sexual context of the New York art-scene of 1966, the year after the book’s first publication. His evocation of that first experience of the book conveys the immediacy and intensity with which the volume first seized the engagement of its readers: ‘Ilona S. lived in a small nondescript apartment building which stood incongruously at the centre of a long tree-lined street of rather grand early-American houses. She spoke with a light Polish accent, wore her long dark hair bound tightly to her head, and radiated the kind of quiet excitement that sensually inclined intellectuals sometimes do. It was a rainy autumn evening and I was to meet Ilona at her flat at eight o’clock. That was all there was to it. I had never been with her before and I can’t now recall what had transpired that had led to this meeting. She welcomed me without ceremony, her hair wet with rain, and
suggested I relax while she took a shower. The flat consisted of one big room with an alcove at the front overlooking the street. Against one of the walls, not far from the door onto the common hallway, was a chest of drawers. It was this chest of drawers that finally had my full attention... I decided to wait for Ilona to return from her shower, sitting comfortably on her bed. As my eyes strayed over the top of the chest of drawers, I became more and more curious about the various objects stationed there. What would a twenty-two-year-old - she was four years older than I - artist from Poland keep on the ready? Naturally, I left the bed and crossed the room. When encountered, all of these intimate things, fascinating though they may have been, faded from view as my eyes fell upon the image of the attenuated Artaud. Immediately, I was fixed on Artaud’s profile, petulant and somehow atrocious, as it fastened this paperback book to the top of the chest of drawers, but to no time or place. Examining the volume more closely, I found that Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose City Lights Books I knew, had published this anthology of Artaud’s writings. There were more stark black-and-white images inside, all of which, along with the eruptive language - caca, peepee, jiji-creecree - thrilled me to the depths of my neurotic being. This book would, I instantly understood, be a limitlessly enriching source of disorientation and mystery. Artaud’s disfigured presence had acted upon me. When Ilona appeared from the shower, I asked her if I could borrow the book. With a knowing smile, and without selfishness, she said yes.’(4)

Patti Smith’s first contact with the Artaud Anthology also took place abruptly, and became the launching-point for an exploration of Artaud’s work, deeply embedded within her own preoccupations with the creative act; at the time of the exhibition of Artaud’s drawings in New York, in 1996, Patti Smith described how she had discovered a copy of the Artaud Anthology by accident in a bookshop near her home, thirty years earlier (although she also emphasised the overriding, cinematic impact of seeing the image of Artaud’s face, on film, in his acting role of 1927 in Carl Dreyer’s film The Passion of Joan of Arc). As with Reichert, Patti Smith’s experience of the Artaud Anthology subsequently became projected into a range of works across music, visual art and poetry. For Patti Smith, it also formed an element in the creation of combative alliances of imagination between contemporary artists and now-dead artists: a strategy which Artaud himself had instigated in the final period of his work. In the talk she gave at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in
London for the *Incarcerated with Artaud and Genet* festival, in 1996, Patti Smith spoke of those intricate creative amalgams forming across space and time, in the context of the figures closest to her work: ‘Artaud, Jean Genet and Robert Mapplethorpe took very complex aspects of the human condition - whether it was homosexuality or thievery or madness - and magnified it in their work. They took on what other people called shame and called it beauty. All three attempted to create space for others. I think *that* is an artist's duty.’(5)

There exists a multiplicity of other creative engagements with the City Lights *Artaud Anthology*, across literature, choreography, visual arts and film, over a period of forty years. One of the most outstanding of those engagements was the work of Julian Beck and Judith Malina’s ‘Living Theatre’ collective. In 1972, seven years after the appearance of the *Artaud Anthology*, City Lights published Beck’s book, *The Life of the Theatre*, in the same format and with the same dimensions as their volume of Artaud’s writings. *The Life of the Theatre* is composed primarily from Beck’s journals of the preceding years, including those written in conditions of penal incarceration, notably in Brazil. Beck’s reflections on Artaud’s work - and its rapport with his own struggle to realize a liberatory performance-art that negated or transformed social boundaries - often come back to the question of Artaud’s incarceration, and to his forceful repudiation of the contradictory definitions of madness that had been imposed upon him by his doctors, from Jacques Lacan at Sainte-Anne, in Paris, to Gaston Ferdière at Rodez. Artaud declared emphatically, in his recorded work and elsewhere, that he was not mad, at least in the sense in which his asylum incarceration had been justified. That intricate refutation inspired many of the now-vanished probings of the nature of socially-constituted madness, by the worldwide ‘anti-psychiatry’ movements of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as by practitioners such as Beck and Malina. The Living Theatre was always itinerant, like Artaud’s own work, and often had its base in European countries such as Italy, both before and after Beck’s death in 1985. Beck and Malina had been engaged with Artaud’s work from the very beginning of its English-language publishing history in the 1950s, with *The Theatre and Its Double*; so it is not the case that the *Artaud Anthology* first sparked that enduring commitment. But for City Lights readers of the 1970s, the *Artaud Anthology* and Julian Beck’s *The Life of the Theatre* were often read and experienced together, as mutually challenging and interlocking explorations.
Artaud’s work continues to exert its impact in the contemporary moment, particularly in digital media art and theory, with their preoccupations with the transforming or evanescent human body, and with the media power-formations behind representation. In particular, the prominence of Artaud’s drawings - first seen internationally in the context of the *Artaud Anthology* - has increased in the past decade, through a number of large-scale exhibitions, most recently at the Vienna Museum of Modern Art in 2002. Since the publication of the *Artaud Anthology* in 1965, several other collections have appeared of English-language translations of Artaud’s work, such as Clayton Eshleman’s volume, and the collection of *Selected Writings* edited by Susan Sontag. But in many ways, it is City Lights’ *Artaud Anthology* which remains the most contemporary: it seizes and reveals the insurgent movement across poetry, recordings, drawings and film which is the focus of the current preoccupation with Artaud. The form of the *Artaud Anthology* is that of a harsh, often-incoherent, aberrant, furious, flux-driven, and fragmented body of work - and this is what gives it its enduring proximity to Artaud.

Notes
2. This paragraph is based on discussions with Clayton Eshleman in London in 2002, and on discussions with Sylvère Lotringer in Vienna in 2002.
3. I have translated Paule Thévenin’s words from the original French.
PASOLINI AND SADE: A MALEFICENT OBSESSION
(2005)

1. Ante-Inferno

*Salò* is the unique space where film terminally collides with death.

‘Death does determine life, I feel that, and I’ve written it, too, in one of my recent essays, where I compare death to film-montage. Once life is finished, it acquires a sense; up to that point it has not got a sense; its sense is suspended and therefore ambiguous...For me, death is the maximum of epicness and myth.’(1)

Pier Paulo Pasolini, 1968

2. Circle of Obsessions

During the production in 1975 of what would be his ultimate film, *Salò* - adapted from Sade’s novel *120 Days of Sodom* and transposed to the final moments of the fascist dictatorship in mid-1940s Italy - the film-maker and poet Pier Paulo Pasolini often asserted that he wanted that film to be ‘the last movie’(2): not only his own last movie, but also that of the entire human species: a film of terminal images, before the processes of cultural and social erasure which Pasolini incessantly denounced had engulfed and nullified the visual image entirely. The images of *Salò* - revelatory of the structures of cruelty and of the sexual origins of human atrocities and massacres - would then form a kind of malign legacy, left for any non-human species which, at some point in the future, might want to look back upon the memories and obsessions of the human species. The concept of the ‘last film’ was one that attracted many other film-makers during the era of tumultuous upheaval, revolutionary terrorism and worldwide violence that extended from the mid-1960s to the late-1970s; in the USA, the actor-director Dennis Hopper had already adopted that notion of a ‘last movie’ for the film-title of his seminal, drug-disintegrated masterwork of 1971. However, *Salò* was not the first Pasolini film to be conceived of as a terminal exercise; like his contemporary, the West German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Pasolini was perpetually announcing his abandonment of film-making, while simultaneously planning another
film-project that would push beyond the extreme limit of his current film. Similarly, the novelist Jean Genet - a profound source of inspiration for Pasolini - declared in *The Thief’s Journal* (1949) that it would be his last novel, then asserted in that novel’s final two sentences that it would, after all, have a sequel (which never actually transpired). For Pasolini, that film beyond-the-end was to have been a project entitled *Porno-Teo-Kolossal*, which was in preparation to be shot, in New York, Naples and Paris, in the first months of 1976, based on a 75-page film-treatment largely composed of dialogue. However, whether by chance or intention, *Salò* would mark the very end of Pasolini’s work - shortly after he had finished editing it, he was savagely murdered by a boy-hustler whose penis he had been sucking only minutes earlier.

*Salò* was a terminal aberration in Pasolini’s work. Unusually, he took on a project which he had not developed himself; his collaborator Sergio Citti had initiated the project, intending to direct it himself, but could not find a producer for it. Pasolini had no difficulty in attracting the producer Alberto Grimaldi, who had had an immense success with *Last Tango in Paris*, directed three years earlier by Bernardo Bertolucci. Once Pasolini had taken on the project, at the beginning of 1975, he researched it intensively; alongside Sade’s own work, he read essays on Sade by Georges Bataille (notably, Bataille’s preface to Sade’s book), Roland Barthes, Pierre Klossowski and Maurice Blanchot, as well as conducting research into the last phase of Italian fascism. And in August 1975, following the film’s shooting-period, he would meet with the Surrealist artist Man Ray, who had painted an ‘imaginary portrait’ of Sade in 1938; Pasolini was contemplating using the portrait on posters for his film.

The Marquis de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* details the acts of four atheistic Parisian ‘libertines’ who possess the wealth and power to realize a plan to have sixteen aristocratic young boys and girls kidnapped from their homes, and brought to an isolated castle in Switzerland, the Castle of Silling; accompanied by four story-tellers and eight well-endowed ‘cockmongers’, the libertines spend four months inflicting an escalating series of sexual tortures on the boys and girls, before finally slaughtering them and returning to Paris. The boys and girls to be massacred are all selected for their exceptional beauty (especially that of their rear-ends), for their young age (between twelve and fifteen), and for their social origins: Augustine, for example, is described by Sade as
‘fifteen years old; daughter of a Languedoc baron, with an alert and pretty face’(3). Sade completed his account of the first of the four months, November, while imprisoned for acts of debauchery at the Bastille prison in Paris in 1785. However, the remaining three parts of the book (for the months of December to February) were only written in the form of notational drafts: skeletal enumerations of the acts undertaken by the libertines, and cryptic summaries of the accompanying story-tellers’ narratives. It appears that Sade intended to publish the first part of the book separately, and then to complete each of the three other parts as the publication progressed; however, the manuscript, written on a long scroll of paper, was lost during the revolutionary riots of 1789, and only re-discovered in the early twentieth century. The French Revolution changed Sade’s fortunes: released from the Bastille, he initially became a revolutionary judge (though a lenient one, who rarely condemned anyone brought before him), but then fell into poverty and ended his life in the benign incarceration of the Charenton asylum-hospital, on the edge of Paris.

Pasolini moved the action of the novel in time, to the period 1944-45, thirty years prior to the moment of the film’s making. He also moved the action geographically, from an impregnable, mountain-top castle in Switzerland to a salubrious lake-side villa in the small resort town of Salò, overlooking a bay on the Riviera Bresciana, on the banks of Lake Garda in northern Italy. It was in Salò that the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini (who had held power since the year of Pasolini’s birth, 1922) established his short-lived ‘Republic of Salò’ with his remaining supporters. Although Mussolini does not appear as a character in Pasolini’s film, his desperate, extreme situation of that period is omnipresent; his ‘Republic of Salò’ was a final pocket of fascism, ready to defend itself at all costs, by acts of atrocity, after the Italian government had concluded a surrender with the British and American forces, thereby changing sides in the last phase of the Second World War. The Italian government had then deposed and imprisoned Mussolini in 1943, confining him to a hotel on the inaccessible peak of the Gran Sasso mountain in the Abruzzo region, east of Rome, expecting to be able to try him at the end of the war; but Mussolini’s friend and ally, Adolf Hitler, was determined to rescue Mussolini from Gran Sasso, and dispatched his best pilot to land on the mountain-peak and spirit Mussolini away to the Lake Garda region, which was still held by the German forces. Mussolini was then installed as the dictator of the
northern part of Italy still under the control of the Germans, while the invading British and American forces were rapidly advancing northwards through Italy, after landing in Sicily. As that advance reached the north, Mussolini’s chaotic ‘Republic of Salò’ quickly disintegrated; on the run from partisans, he was captured and cursorily machine-gunned to death in April 1945, in a village alongside Lake Como, then hung upside-down, alongside his mistress, in the Piazzale Loreto in Milan. News of the ignominy of Mussolini’s killing led Hitler to commit suicide, in order to avoid meeting a similar fate, as Josef Stalin’s Soviet army closed-in on Hitler’s own headquarters in Berlin.

Pasolini knew the Salò region of Lake Garda well, and had lived for a time in that area in his youth (his father was a professional soldier: in fact, a professional fascist, and the father’s military postings had meant that the Pasolini family had moved constantly from one region of northern Italy to another, during Pasolini’s youth). Pasolini also had intimate personal knowledge of the atrocities committed by the Italian fascists on the civilian population during the final stages of the conflict; he had witnessed the aftermath of acts of mass execution. In an interview about his film's location in space and time, he said: 'It was an epoch of sheer cruelty, searches, executions, deserted villages, all totally useless, and I suffered a great deal.'(4) During the period in which Salò is set, Pasolini’s only brother, Guido, was executed at the age of twenty, in March 1945, in the course of his anti-fascist guerrilla activities, first wounded and captured along with his group of partisans, then coldly finished-off with a bullet in the head; after the war was over, Pasolini learned that his brother had died uselessly - he had not been killed by the Nazis or Italian fascists after all, but instead had been executed as the result of a chaotic squabble between two rival anti-fascist partisan groups.

In writing the film-script for Salò, Pasolini made a number of significant changes in the characters of Sade’s novel; in particular, he placed more emphasis on the four libertines’ social position. In Sade’s novel, the libertines are obstinate outsiders who, despite their colossal wealth, exist on the disgraced periphery of eighteenth-century French society, and are largely oblivious to it, except to the degree that it can provide them with human materials for their projects of sexual torture and slaughter. But the libertines of Salò, inflected by Pasolini’s idiosyncratic version of Marxism, are conceived as ‘types’, and are
clearly fully complicit both with Mussolini’s fascist project, and with Italian society in general. The young girls and boys brought to the libertines’ villa in Salò have all been captured at gunpoint, from peasant farms and wretched urban areas; they are the opposite of Sade’s rarefied cast of the abducted children of aristocrats and wealthy military officers.

Despite that difference in emphasis in the social status of the characters in Salò and 120 Days of Sodom, there are close correspondences between the figures of Sade and Pasolini. Even before his imprisonment in the Bastille, Sade had been burned in effigy in the market-place of Aix-en-Provence, after fleeing to Italy to escape being executed for his crimes of sexual debauchery. At the time when Salò was made, the openly-homosexual Pasolini had already spent twenty years being reviled by the Italian media for his sexual and political declarations, as well as for the experimentation of his films and books; even in death, he would be assailed and ridiculed by the Italian right-wing media, which unashamedly relished his murder (just as the West German media would relish Fassbinder’s cocaine-induced death, seven years later). And both Sade and Pasolini sought, in their disparate ways, to discover means to finally detonate the narratives and foundations of social power-systems.

Pasolini finished the script for Salò in February 1975, working with his collaborators Sergio Citti and Pupi Avati. After its casting-sessions, the film was shot very rapidly, over the course of thirty-seven days, from 3 March to 14 April 1975, in a villa near the city of Mantua, not far to the south of the town of Salò. The film was shot with a cast that mixed young, inexperienced actors with veterans of the Italian film-industry, some of them familiar character-actors who would go on to appear in the wave of late-1970s chic Nazi-porn exploitation films which Pasolini’s own film unwittingly helped to spark. Before the shooting of each scene, Pasolini only gave instructions at the last moment to the young actors and actresses (most of them non-professionals, who never appeared in any subsequent films) playing the captive boys and girls, thereby inducing an authentic sense of unease and disquiet in their performances. The only break in the gruelling shoot came when Pasolini discovered that Bernardo Bertolucci (whose films, including Last Tango in Paris, he detested as crowd-pleasing, consumerist fodder) was shooting his current film, 1900, in the nearby countryside around
Mantua; Bertolucci had briefly served as Pasolini’s assistant on a previous film, and 1900 was being produced by the same producer, Alberto Grimaldi, as Salò. The football-obsessed Pasolini immediately challenged Bertolucci to a game between the two casts; however, in the subsequent match, marked by violence, the Salò cast (captained by the fifty-three-year-old Pasolini, and including the young actors playing the well-endowed ‘cockmongers’) unexpectedly lost 3-6 to the 1900 team, and Pasolini left the pitch several minutes before the end of the game, exhausted and cursing. Once the filming had been completed, Pasolini moved to other commitments in his writing of fiction, poetry and journalism, returning to the project in early October 1975 to edit it (as with the cinematography of the film, its raw editing shows signs of having been accomplished urgently, while Pasolini’s obsessions were still vividly alive), and then travelled to Sweden for screenings of his previous films, and to Paris to prepare a French-language version of Salò, before arriving back in Rome on 31 October, the day before his death.

Pasolini was aware that, in many ways, the obscenity and uncompromising cruelty of Salò formed a complete break from his earlier films. Although some of those films, especially his first film, Accatone (1961), had created scandals of their own, Pasolini knew that Salò constituted a new kind of film-making for him. As a result, in 1975, he publicly ‘denounced’ his previous three films, in order to clear the ground for the reception of Salò. Pasolini’s previous films had often presented positive and dignified depictions of the poor; in Salò, by contrast, the poor and defenceless subjects of torture and slaughter would be relentlessly degraded and excoriated, their status as passive ‘victims’ provocatively set under interrogative questioning, in order to dismantle it.

Pasolini expected the first screenings of the film to create a furore throughout Europe, and to bring down unprecedented media attacks upon him. He noted: ‘Salò goes so far beyond the limits that those who ordinarily speak badly of me will have to find a new language.’(5) But by the time the film was screened, Pasolini was dead. Salò had initially been refused a visa by the Italian censorship board, then passed on 23 December 1975; it was projected in Italian cinemas during the period when newspaper photographs of Pasolini’s murdered body - the corpse lying on its front, the mud-caked vest pushed up to reveal its naked back, its chest and head exploded into a pool of blood - were still being
avidly consumed by the country’s population. After being shown for only three weeks, *Salò* was abruptly withdrawn; for the next three decades, the film faced suppression and censorship-battles in numerous countries around the world, without the presence of Pasolini to defend its driving obsessions.

3. Circle of Shit

The core of *Salò* is the anus, and its narrative drive pivots around the act of sodomy; no scene of a sex act has been confirmed, in the film, until one of the libertines has approached its participants and sodomised the figure committing that act. The filmic material of *Salò* is one that compacts celluloid and shit, in Pasolini’s desire to burst the limits of cinema, via the anally resonant eye of the film-lens. In order to achieve an inciting relentlessness in his narrative, and to engulf his victims in the aura of excrement emanated by the film, Pasolini intersects his images with puncture-points of story-tellers’ narration. Those story-tellers’ sequences in *Salò* carry a more tangential role than that in *120 Days of Sodom*, where they possess a status equal with that of the libertines’ acts, in Sade’s double-barrelled narrative-technique. In *Salò*, the story-tellers’ narratives solely carry the momentum which propels the film’s passive victims and viewers into its infernal ‘circle of shit’.

In *120 Days of Sodom*, Sade’s libertines are all eager shit-eaters, constantly provoking the captive boys and girls to deposit ever-larger consignments of excrement into their mouths, thereby also escalating the number of sex acts which the libertines can accomplish. But the inspiration of Sade’s obsession with the human anus extended much further than that of shit-eating, in his influence upon the French Surrealist movement in the 1930s, and on film-makers and theorists of the postwar era, from Pasolini to Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard. The seminal element in Sade which proved so inspirational is his profound preoccupation with violent anatomical manipulation, with its focus on the anus; once the human body has been radically re-configured, it is in a state of volatile flux which renders it more resistant or unrecuperable to stratified power-formations. In Sade, that reconfiguration of the body is simultaneously both an act of corporeally-endowed power, and the annulling or overturning of that entire structure of power; for example, a libertine, in Sade’s book, severs the
flesh-partition between a girl’s anus and vagina, so that she is forced to defecate through her vagina.

Pasolini faltered in his desire to make the young actors and actresses of the Salò cast commit un-simulated sodomy and to eat actual excrement, serving them instead a palatable mix of chocolate and orange marmalade, which he retrospectively justified as a material which helped to adhere his film’s ability to make connections between elements of consumerism and fascism (in which consumption, even of excrement, is never authentic, and is always the result of a fascistic simulation of the kind denounced by Baudrillard and the Situationist theorists). Until the expansion of the hard-core pornographic industry into shit-eating films at the end of the 1970s, it had been left to experimental film-makers - notably Kurt Kren and Otto Muehl, of the Vienna Action Group, with their seminal work Scheisskerl (1970) - to demonstrate that excrement could be eaten, and that act combined with an explicit sex-act, on film.

4. Circle of Blood

Salò exerts a unique impact of violence and disruption on the viewer’s eye, exploring a ground of extreme sensorial disruption more usually associated with non-narrative experimental cinema. The film adroitly manoeuvres the viewer’s perspective between that of the victim and that of the torturer, finally situating the viewer firmly in the torture-seat. In Salò, the viewer is positioned firmly on the side of monstrosity, and then has a long way back to travel, corporeally and mentally, at the end of the film, if the decision is taken to repudiate that position.

In the final part of 120 Days of Sodom, Sade’s story-tellers range over a vast ground of dismemberment, disembowelment, torture and human eradication, while the libertines, incited by those narratives, perform concurrent acts of torture and killing. Sade’s story-tellers recount an entire catalogue of bestiality, some instances of which appear to have been a source of prefiguring inspiration for the performance-acts of the Vienna Action Group: ‘This libertarian fucks a turkey whose head is gripped between the thighs of a nude, prostrate girl, so it appears he is buggering her. As he pumps away his valet sodomises him without mercy, and at the moment he ejaculates, the girl slits the turkey’s
Many of Sade’s narrated acts form spectacular performances which evidently have their source in medieval strategies of torture and execution, but also work to compact rituals of killing with obsessional sodomy.

At the end of *120 Days of Sodom*, a careful accounting is made by Sade of the previous four months, detailing the eradication of the children and the numbers of story-tellers and ‘cockmongers’ who have survived the event. That final calculation is in contrast to the description of the children’s intricate slaughter which, even in the fragmentary, unfinished state of Sade’s manuscript, always contains minute, lavish detail: ‘Next Giton is dragged forth; a burning bodkin is driven through the end of his cock, his remaining testicle is impaled with needles, and four of his teeth gouged out with chisels. Then comes Zelmire, whose death is not far off; a hot poker is run deep into her cunt, six gaping gashes are carved into her tits, and each master pummels her face twenty times with a gloved fist. They rip out four teeth and explode one eye with a skewer, whipping and buggering her for good measure.’

The viewer of *Salò*, positioned explicitly by Pasolini into the viewpoint of the binocular-wielding succession of libertines, experiences more fragmentary sequences; the killings of the boys and girls, in the courtyard of the villa, oscillate from close-ups to long-shots, in a volatile rhythm. The acts of slaughter are clearly drawn in large part from those which Pasolini himself had heard of or witnessed in the final stages of the Italian fascist forces’ hold on power in 1944-45, and which were common punishments for civilians’ acts of support for the partisans: eye-gougings, torture with fire, and anal-rapes followed by execution by hanging. Pasolini’s last act in *Salò* is to cut from the slaughter to a tender encounter between two of the young fascists guarding the villa: the two male youths (one of whom is played by Claudio Tròccoli, Pasolini’s final lover) dance obliviously, as music from the radio plays.

Pasolini’s own violent last act took place seven months after he had filmed that final shot of *Salò*. Many of his friends rejected the official conclusion that he had been battered to death by a lone hustler, and believed instead that he was murdered, in the night of 1-2 November 1975, by agents of the corrupt Italian Christian Democratic Party government, in collusion with neo-fascist elements; at that time, very little investigation was conducted by the Italian police into Pasolini’s killing, and much of the forensic evidence from the site of his death had
soon mysteriously disappeared. Thirty years later, it was confirmed by the successors of that government that, from the end of the 1960s until the beginning of the 1980s, at a time of considerable social tension in Italy, it had been covertly organising and inciting acts of terrorism and of murder, with the aim of terrifying and subjugating the Italian population into supporting that government’s repressive, right-wing agenda, against which Pasolini had fiercely protested. As yet, however, no confirmation has ever been made that Pasolini’s killing was executed or directly ‘facilitated’ by the Italian government or its neo-fascist associates.

Three weeks after Pasolini had completed the editing of Salò, and on the day after he had returned to Rome from Paris, where he had worked on the film’s French-language version, he picked up a seventeen-year-old hustler, Giuseppe Pelosi, late on the evening of 1 November 1975, outside Rome’s Stazione Termini central railway-station. On the afternoon of that same day, Pasolini had given his final interview, noting: 'In a certain sense, we are all weak because we are all victims. And are guilty because all are ready for the massacre game...'.\(^\text{(8)}\) Pasolini offered Pelosi the modest sum of twenty thousand lire, and then drove him in his Alfa Romeo Giulia 2000 sports-car to isolated waste-ground near the sea at Ostia, to the west of Rome, where Pasolini sucked the boy’s penis, with the two men still seated in the car. After Pasolini and Pelosi had exited the car to continue their sex act in the wasteland, Pasolini was abruptly attacked, and had his penis and testicles kicked with such violence that he suffered a severe internal haemorrhage; he then had his head clubbed so savagely with a wooden plank that his skull burst open, and brain-matter stuck to the plank. As he lay on the ground, he had his upper body driven-over by his own car, and died instantly from (as the autopsy stated) ‘tearing-apart of the chest’ (his heart literally burst under the pressure of the car’s weight) and the crushing of his skull. The hustler Pelosi then drove off in the stolen car, stopped at a water-fountain in Ostia to wash Pasolini’s blood from his clothes, and then sped off on the highway towards Rome in an exhilarated frenzy; he was almost immediately arrested and detained by the police for speeding, and confessed to the killing later that day. Pasolini had remained where he fell until he was discovered on the wasteland at dawn, on his front, one arm trapped under his body, his chest and skull almost flattened-down to the level of the ground, a foot-wide pool of congealed blood like a mythic halo around his head.
At Pelosi’s trial, it was finally decided that he had acted alone. But the severity of the attack on Pasolini indicated the likelihood that Pelosi had been working in collaboration with four of his hustler-associates from the Stazione Termini, with whom he had talked briefly, at the railway-station’s bar, before then leaving for the Ostia wasteland with Pasolini. The group of five hustlers may have attacked Pasolini simply in order to rob him, or the killing may have been a kind of initiation-ceremony for Pelosi (many of the Stazione Termini hustlers were murderous thugs, and carried greater prestige after having accomplished their first act of killing), in which Pasolini had the misfortune to be the ‘old faggot’ who was in the wrong place at the wrong time; in that scenario, the other four hustlers drove separately to Ostia, trailing the Alfa Romeo Giulia 2000 sports-car carrying Pasolini and Pelosi, and then all five hustlers attacked Pasolini together, holding him down to beat his head with the plank. Although Pasolini was over fifty, he remained tough and muscled from his regular football-games, so it was unlikely that one young hustler alone could have inflicted so much damage to his body. Pelosi served seven years of a nine-year prison-sentence for the murder; after his release in 1983, he undertook a career as a criminal, committing robberies and acts of violence, and gave magazine and television interviews about his role in Pasolini’s killing; he never admitted the participation of other hustlers in the murder, and, in recent years, even denied his own involvement.

A final scenario, raised by Pasolini’s more pessimistic friends at the time of his death, was the possibility of an intentional suicide, orchestrated by Pasolini himself, in his despair at the dissipation, by 1975, of the 1960s’ riotous momentum towards revolutionary social change, and the onset of a terminally consumerist, media-dominated Italian society, which increasingly mocked and dismissed Pasolini’s work.

Whether Pasolini was murdered by the Italian government’s agents and neo-fascist associates, by one hustler alone, or by five hustlers together, or as a result of his own suicidal desire, the story of his killing, in the end, is reduced to the status of Sade’s bare, notational narrative-fragments in Parts Two to Four of 120 Days of Sodom. The account given of that killing by Pelosi’s trial-judge (a lenient judge, like Sade himself), drawing from Pelosi’s testimony, resonates with the relentless narrational momentum of Sade’s story-tellers at the Castle of Silling: ‘Pelosi added that Pasolini brought him to the playing field; that Pasolini
took Pelosi’s penis in his mouth for a moment but did not finish the blow-job; that he made Pelosi get out of the car and came up behind him, squeezing him from behind and trying to lower his trousers; that Pelosi told him to stop and instead Pasolini picked up a stake of the kind used for garden-fences and tried to put it up his behind, or at least he stuck it against his behind though without even lowering his trousers; that Pelosi turned around and told him he was crazy; that Pasolini by now was without his glasses, which he had left in the car, and on looking him in the face it seemed to Pelosi so much the face of a madman that he was frightened; that he tried to run but stumbled and fell; that he felt Pasolini on top of him, hitting him on the head with a stick; that he grabbed the stick and flung Pasolini away from him; that he again started running, and again was caught and struck on the temple and various parts of the body; that he noticed a plank on the ground, picked it up and broke it over Pasolini’s head; that he also kicked him once or twice “in the balls’”; that Pasolini seemed not even to feel those kicks; that then Pasolini grabbed him and struck him again on the nose; that Pelosi no longer saw what he was doing and repeatedly hit Pasolini with the plank until he heard him wheezing to the ground; that he ran in the direction of the car carrying the two broken pieces of plank and the stake, which he threw away near the car; that he got immediately into the car and fled in it; that he did not know whether or not in his escape he had run over Pasolini’s body with the car... and that during these events, he and Pasolini had always been alone.’(9)

In his death, and in his final act as a film-maker with Salò, Pier Paulo Pasolini confirmed a definitive declaration he had made in an interview several years earlier: ‘I love life fiercely, desperately. And I believe that this fierceness, this desperation will carry me to the end... How will it all end? I don’t know.’(10)

Notes
5. ibid, p.41.
7. ibid, p.284.
Alejandro Jodorowsky is the master of transformation for the last four decades of the history of imaginary cinema: more aberrant that Buñuel, effortlessly more perverted than Lynch, more esoteric than Fellini. With Jodorowsky, everything is pushed to the extreme, with the result that his audiences experience the impact of his films from uniquely sensitised, unforeseeably displaced viewing positions. Jodorowsky’s perspective on the human world is situated at precisely such an unprecedented, tilted angle, at which the mundane irresistibly metamorphoses into the extraordinary, and the incendiary trace of that process of mutation is the film itself.

For the first time, this book gives the reader the chance to appreciate the entire range of Jodorowsky’s work, including the projects which misfired or imploded, most compellingly, in this book, his years of preparation on *Dune* (surely the greatest lost work in the history of cinema, equivalent to ten careers’ worth of abandoned projects by one of that film’s potential stars, Orson Welles) - cursorily annulled, like so many of Jodorowsky’s projects, by the void-headed caprices of corporate producers. No wonder that Jodorowsky finally realized many of his most monstrous and astonishing projects in the form of comic-books (the medium for which he is best-known, and revered, in many European countries), unobstructed in his solitude with that medium.

Ben Cobb’s book takes the reader through Jodorowsky’s encounters with seminal figures of the early-1970s film and music counterculture, most of them in thrall to Jodorowsky’s 1971 film *El Topo*; Dennis Hopper was famously at the receiving end of Jodorowsky’s castigation for contemplating the introduction of an element of coherence into the editing of his enigmatic film-masterwork, *The Last Movie*. Jodorowsky also cuts a swathe through the Surrealist movement, berating Breton, but finding himself hopelessly enmeshed in Dalí’s machinations. More recently, Jodorowsky’s increasingly feted work has attracted more acolytes than detractors, Marilyn Manson among them. Although the preoccupation with the maleficent double has been crucial to the narrative of Jodorowsky’s films, his own lifelong response of horror and desire to the Hollywood film industry has possessed its own tortuous
dynamic of repulsion and attraction, revealed most explicitly in this book’s account of the production of his most ‘mainstream’ film, *The Rainbow Thief*. It’s evident that Jodorowsky and the Hollywood industry work according to two irreconcilable conceptions of time and myth, but it remains tempting to envisage what would have become of that industry’s future if it had been the hallucinatory intergalactic spectacle of Jodorowsky’s *Dune*, rather than Lucas’s turgid *Star Wars*, that had imposed itself irreparably upon the sensorium of worldwide cinema audiences at the end of the 1970s.

For many years, Jodorowsky was best known for the cruelty of his (legendary but unseen) films, often reduced to the role of a mass-slaughterer and crucifier of animals, on a par, in 1970s experimental cinema, with the great kneecapper of camels, Werner Herzog, and the serial decapitator of chickens, Shuji Terayama. Time has resolved or rectified that facile conception of Jodorowsky’s work. But his world remains one imbued with, and determined by, divine cruelty; he has spoken in his interviews of how his own lineage is one defined by rape, pogroms and expulsion. From the first to last frame of his films, cruelty incises and overturns whatever is human, and it is up to the individual to seize back that flesh, in autonomy and freedom, at the last instant before obliteration, as Fenix does in *Sante Sangre*.

Ben Cobb’s book also explores deeply into the vast array of inspirational sources behind Jodorowsky’s obsessions, from the Bible to the trashiest of horror films: innumerable components for the knowledge-compendium of his life. But Jodorowsky is a great supplanter of all knowledge: a figure such as Artaud exists for him primarily as an incitation, to be exceeded by the outrage or impact of his own work. Jodorowsky’s life is one of incessant cancellations, failures and obstacles in which such impediments mean nothing, and vanish, beyond contempt, into thin air. It’s a misconception that Jodorowsky is anything as ordinary as a ‘Surrealist’: the alchemical overruling he exerts upon his inspirations is what transformed his own obsessional life into magical raw material, conjured out from his peripheral origins in Chile within a family displaced at the geographical far end of the world, and then undertaken in the form of a sequence of headlong journeys into the heart of vision.
Throughout Jodorowsky’s career, much of the reluctance of film-producers to support that vision has been the result of suspicion that his obsessions are, in some way, bizarre, freakish, or madly extravagant. From his birth onwards, Jodorowsky has inhabited literally outlandish and wayward territory, often staking claims, in the preoccupations and locations of his films, to terrains that, at first sight, nobody else would ever want even to approach. It’s undoubtedly true, too, that Jodorowsky is mad - though in the sense (a far more authentic sense than those punitive definitions of ‘madness’ imposed by society, via language, on its enemies) that Artaud perceived: madness as a force of infinite disrule that overturns the fixed edifices of the image, of language, and of social mental health too, creating insurrectional fire from salutary madness. Madness is also a negation and outright refusal of subjugation, and though Jodorowsky is clearly passionate and interrogative about the process of living, his career has also been one of superlative creative obstinacy, of self-generation, and of independence in the most profound sense of the word.

When I invited Jodorowsky to make his first-ever London appearance in 1996, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, he agreed on the strict condition that the auditorium would be packed with human anomalies, fanatics, ‘freaks’ (‘interesting people’, as he said - the banal, standardised forms of the contemporary world hold no interest for him), though what undoubtedly pleased him most was the degree of laughter displayed by that audience as he recounted for them the extraordinary life story which Ben Cobb has now meticulously assembled for this book - for Jodorowsky, that sound was ‘the last sign of life of the human species’. 
At the periphery, the city illuminates itself, negatively. Every image seized there, at the precipice where the urban compulsively extinguishes itself, is a story so concertinaed by sensation or absence that it fixes the eye profoundly into that image. Human life has been swept away, with magisterial cruelty or nonchalance, but the emanation projected by the empty zones of streets, highways, buildings, pivots on a kind of neural inkling within the membranes of the eye, an intimation of vision, that something may be resuscitated or restituted from the detritus that forms that void. Such an inkling, in its flux and in its desire for revelation, propels the eye on from image to image.

No void subsists at the city’s edge, for any longer than the instant in which it is registered; the debris tracing that void reconfigures itself like a set of magnetised iron filings, in an endless sequence of invisible, irresistible transformations. From image to image, the periphery convulses. It is in danger of eluding the eye, but it is constellated with flowers: the traces of death attached to the desiccated earth or crash-barriers along the now-stilled highway; or it is constellated with semen and its discarded surfaces, the traces of evanesced bodies: flowers and semen, with the corporeal long burned out.

Detritus itself speaks in the image, conjuring those scorched and exposed traces, via a vocal tract scarred by memory. If the urban periphery possesses a memory, that memory adheres itself to such instantaneous manifestations, weighs itself down with the random manoeuvres of stones around that terrain, vanishes in the vapour of human fluids sucked into the sky above the periphery, and coalesces again across the window-indent ed facades of low-grade concrete apartment buildings. The eye that circuits or penetrates the urban periphery generates marks of memory that form precarious explorations: they bleed over for an instant into oblivion, oscillate for a moment into their own annulling, then vertiginously overbalance backwards, to cohere into images.

In Europe, from Marseilles, to Berlin, to Rome, to London, the cities are engulfed: rendered into negligible corporate outposts, all images
relentlessly pitted-out - except on their resistant peripheries. Europe survives as a caustic residue on those peripheries, its visual components meshed and contaminated, vital in their damage, occluded and randomly expelled, but offering themselves up to the eye that can locate them and restore to them their dirty glory.

And with Europe always comes the scar of the human body: even in its most abysmal desertion, at the height of its human emptiness, the urban periphery is still instilled by a seminal touch of transmuted flesh, in the forms of vectors or incisions: a blur of laundry zigzagged across the facade of a tenement, arbitrary apertures inflicted in walls, pathways - random at first sight - that intersect, begin and end as though created to mark an act of negation: every story of a human act collapses into itself at its point of origin, leaving a configuration of debris that only the image can seize.

There exists an intractable ambiguity between the city and the image, and the process that explores that space (not an area, not an interface, and not even space) involves an intricate excoriation choreographed by the eye against and into that mystery, whose elements are exacerbated and intensified on the urban periphery. One moment, those elements can be formed of brilliant light, another moment, from the most discarded human traces. That ambiguity remains obstinately intact even when the human and social forms around it have transformed themselves wholesale, instantly, as in the leisure parks of the former East Berlin, constellated with concrete table-tennis constructions, built to last for centuries, then permanently disused and subtracted from the city, but still able to emanate their mysterious tenacity, as improvised grave-markers for vanished time, or as coagulations of disappeared human gestures, along the pathways interconnecting newly-appeared hypermarkets. That mystery exerts its presence too among the concrete towers on the peripheries of Marseilles, where the erased zones around the high-rise apparitions are studded with the barely-surviving foundations of Phocaean or Roman buildings, and where obsolescence moves so rapidly, erratically, that the hypermarkets appear already negated, standing steel-shuttered, the redundancy of their exclamatory insignias underpinned by the matching graffiti inscriptions that wryly replicate them.
The vital conjunction undertaken between the periphery and the image creates an aberrant mutation in urban space, a kind of seismic centering of the periphery, against the grain (otherwise, the periphery would be left to its own oblivion): an overruling by the image that also unleashes a sensory jolt in its viewer. In sequences of images, those impacts are carried through more deeply, and the essential configurations of human absence, and of human density, reveal themselves: the abraded facades of tenements, each identical in its arrangement of windows overburdened by drying clothes, or simply vacant; the carbonised highway-edges, where fire unearthed unforeseen layers of debris or damage for assembly by the eye. In those sequences, the periphery is exposed so intensively that an anatomy of dead time is taking place in the image.

Where the outlying city enters the image, every narrative of the human body has already been derailed, and whatever still remains of a corporeal trace, its form condensed or skewed, irresistibly attracts the eye. Those elusive traces have been abruptly sieved away from the city, which has acted with the velocity of a centrifuge to scatter them across the periphery, in an arrangement (traces of fire, traces of semen, and endlessly variable movements in the zone) that requires a sustained work of the eye to pin down; those human traces have been ground to the point of surfacelessness, often raw to the eye, and demand a careful moment of envelopment and ease in which to incorporate themselves - within a sanctuary - before the next zonal mutation. Equally, there can be no threshold of return to the edifices of power or ecstasy in the heart of the city; the periphery’s boundaries are implacable and inescapable.

Traversing the urban peripheries, in search of that delicate, barely-existent space where the city meets the image (a space always ready imminently to deliquesce, and able to coagulate into the image only as the result of an exhaustive exploration and of an interrogatory patience), is open corporeal work, mediated through the eye - only ocular journeys ever take on substance, in those peripheries; that is the work of Xavier Ribas. Such an evanescent coagulation, swept out of its danger of extinguishment, in the gap between two moments of annulling, and sited alongside other such images, in a sequence of fragments torn from time, also forms a perfection.
That perfection is an already striated one, intimately in complicity with its shadows, that fall or flail across the image even in the most dazzling light, and double the absences of human life. Those pivotal shadows indicate where something has come unstuck; simultaneously, they form the source for ocular excavations. Under the surface of the city, and especially at its sensitised boundaries, the layers of surpassed moments roar downwards, with ever greater speed, carrying every precious image ever created along with them, words too, together with all evidence of human immediacy or ecstasy, all the way to the terminal point of the city’s origin.

The marks of memory resurge obliquely, finally exposed to light, and they, too, are ultimately precarious: vivid for an instant, then consigned to a blackout fall, then to oblivion, until they arise again, as memories of the periphery. From such extinguishments in memory, images seep back suddenly, into space and its discarded or dislocated objects. In movements through that space, off the beaten track (or on tracks themselves beaten to insensibility by scars of memory), the markers into such memories are dispersed, unforeseen, liable to transport the eye into death, via the skeletons of flowers, or into historical or sexual voids, where an urban pressure has exploded, or has been lifted, leaving only an abyss; a deeper movement pinpoints the marks of resuscitation or liberation or illumination that survive only in such peripheries, but to seize such images requires an intake of breath held almost to vertigo, before its exhalation. The virtual or obsessive expirations that form the essential substance of the periphery demand special enticements to manifest themselves, and the work of an almost neural or instinctive scanning, born out of the compulsions of the city’s detritus.
In the course of many years of travelling over the landscapes of eastern and central Europe, I realised that, below its homogeneous corporate carapace, it remained intricately layered by the fissures of conflict, its parameters and peripheries determined by the arbitrary psychogeography imposed, with nonchalance, by the victors of Europe in 1945, in the Cecilienhof mansion in Potsdam, and by their successors. From the perspective of some omniscient eye, able to concertina time into the rush of a condensed film sequence, the cities of Europe might appear as a dispersed arrangement of igniting matchheads, accelerating in destruction as time went on, and now only momentarily stilled, as though awaiting the momentum for a more intensive conflagration. In that moment of silence, the fissures of conflict took the opportunity to spread outwards, in new manifestations of the mutations of colonial history, more powerful and virulent for their virtuality, creating new landscapes of warfare in the marshlands at the interstice of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where, in the 1950s, the explorer Wilfred Thesinger had tracked the already-vanishing corporeal gestures and water-bound vectors of the inhabitants of that terrain in flux, disappearing and deliquescing at the same moment that it became, for the first time, mapped: a prescient terrain, for the impositions on landscape of the contemporary moment. Freud noted, in the course of a dialogue with Einstein, in 1933, on the unlikelihood of peace, that ‘it is war that brings vast empires into being’.

In the memorial garden of the Soviet war memorial in Bratislava, below a colossal obelisk dedicated to the Red Army’s westward transit across Europe in 1945, I looked at the lines of gravestones, almost all of them marked with the same date, 4 April 1945. Many of them carried photographs that had been embossed into the surfaces of the gravestones, of the young faces of the combatants, Ukrainian shock-troops, male and female, that had been killed in the assault on the city. From the perspective of the hill on which the memorial had been constructed, out across the plain to the west, beyond the vast Petrzalka housing-estate, the city of Vienna was almost visible in the clear air - and there, in an almost identical cemetery-garden, similar photographic traces marked the phantom presences of the combatants who had
survived the assault on Bratislava, and moved on across the void landscape of Europe, before being killed in the assault on the next city, Vienna, one week later. Those dates appeared as deep puncture points inflicted in time, on the undifferentiated surface space of Europe. In the city below, at that moment, the President of the United States of America was giving an open-air speech in the main square, before a huge and exultant crowd, promising that the USA would now help Slovakia build up its military power. And all around that square, immense digital-image screens transmitted ultra-high-resolution corporate animations lauding the multinational conglomerates of Europe, a billion pixels expended every second. In extreme contrast to those digital screens, the faded photographs of the combatants on those gravestones possessed the lowest possible resolution still capable of projecting the human face to the eye, and still registering their presence, for an instant, at least, on their viewer’s retinal photoreceptors. The emulsion of the photographs had cracked, from cold or age or intentional damage or some unknown factor, and the corporeal content of many images had seeped out almost entirely from the enamel casings which anchored them to the gravestones. But, in their stillness, they retained a hold on time, and on the resonance of the image, as revelatory shards of memory, almost lost within the image-frenzy of contemporary Europe.

Napoleon notoriously responded with horror (or, like Kurtz, with horror, and again, with horror) to reports of the edenic island of Okinawa, at the periphery of the world, south of the main islands of Japan, whose inhabitants, he was told, possessed no weapons, and had never known conflict or warfare. Like much of Europe, the entire surface of that island became incinerated by warfare in the final battles of 1945, and left as a near-emptied terrain of ashes, before the postwar US Occupation of that island transformed it, for the subsequent decades, into a toxic dumping-site for the detritus of peacekeeping. The periphery no longer exists. But if those photographs of evanescent faces, seized before their collective moment of death, could be transplanted onto the digital-image screens that surmount the banalised city, and projected there, supplanting the habitual corporate animations, then an optimal site could be created - a memory zone - in which all images, all languages of warfare could be expunged, to the last ash or ghost. But the screen that held such a sequence of images would irresistibly cancel itself out, before the retina could seize the very first image.
From the historical origins of cities, their rise and celebration has been incessantly countered, through social or religious or political or artistic preoccupations, by ideas and philosophies of the necessity to denounce or erase or annul cities, as maleficent sites: the Khmer Rouge’s decision in 1975 to depopulate Cambodian cities by expelling their populations, effectively inverting their form with that of the empty landscape surrounding the cities, in a violent oscillation of urban space and the human body, presents an extreme application of the permanent unease generated by the conjunction of the forms of the urban with the forms of conflict. The film image, more than any other medium, carries an exhaustive archive of the traces of that three-way confrontation, between the terrain of the city, its emanation of conflict, and the human body - the very first film-image of a city, recorded by the inventor Louis Le Prince, in northern England, in 1888, unleashed an enduring obsession with recording the impacts of that confrontation, most tellingly present in the films of the ruined cities of Europe, in 1945, shot from above, in majestic aerial tracking shots, that demonstrated to the viewers of those images, that the film image and the eye had now become allied, conjoined media, in projecting the pivotal fragility of Europe’s urban landscapes.
In the Austrian artist August Walla’s work, the area of interconnection between word and image forms a zonal landscape of mutation and transformation between two entities which remain equally in irresoluble turmoil and uncertainty. An image alone cannot render the extreme urgency and density that Walla instils into his work, and a word alone has a parallel deficiency; their dual autonomy, in separation, constitutes a defusing of the preoccupations with sexuality, corporeality, divinity, warfare and death, that amass to activate Walla’s work. By contrast, the intersection of text and image unleashes an unstoppable velocity and volume of conjoined forms that overspill the two-dimensional surface and must exert their presence on whatever environment surrounds Walla’s own body: on the walls of his room, on all objects in that room, and on the exterior environment, in the form of road-surfaces, trees, and derelict buildings. In turn, a three-dimensional object, inscribed with text, held and displayed within Walla’s hands, must enter that surrounding environment and, through the medium of a photograph which documents its presence, dislocate the natural or urban world so that it, too, is transformed into image. The presence of the inscribed word, inserted into the natural or urban world, imposes a dislocation on that world, subjugating it to the inscribed word that has entered it, so that it can exist as nothing but image, confronted by text. In that escalating affrontment between word and image, all objects and surfaces become inescapably enmeshed: the natural and urban world is engulfed, metamorphosed into the status of exposed, raw material for the mediation of Walla’s preoccupations; the conjunction between word and image leaves nothing untouched, allows no respite: the obsession to magnify all objects and surfaces, into components for a vast terrain of combat between image and text, forms the sole tenable medium of survival for Walla.

While Walla’s work demands that the world exist solely as an emanation of it, and of its need for infinitely renewed content for the intersection of text and image, that work itself exists in the world by accident, by an aberration in the conjunction between psychiatry and art-history that mirrors that between text and image. In the 1950s, the Austrian psychiatrist Leo Navratil began to experiment with instructing
his patients to draw, at the Lower Austria Psychiatric Hospital in Klosterneuberg, a few miles north of Vienna. Navratil’s experiments developed at a distance from the French artist Jean Dubuffet’s conception of Art Brut, as encapsulating the work of artists with no artistic training, no social standing, and no relationship to the history of art, and from Dubuffet’s own collection and promotion of those artists’ work; Navratil’s experiments also existed at a provocative tangent to the work of psychiatrists who, since the nineteenth century, had been inducing their patients to draw solely in order to gather diagnostic materials. Navratil viewed his patients as existing in a limbo-state between insanity and art, and assessed their drawings as both indicators of psychosis, and as art-objects; in the decades until his death in 2006, he wrote a number of monographs on his individual artist-patients, probing the works that held that intractable contradiction.

By the late-1960s, Navratil had assembled a small group of institutionalised patients, mostly men in their forties, with diagnoses ranging from schizophrenic catatonia to manic-depression, several of whom had fought in the Second World War and had suffered permanent trauma as a result, such as Oswald Tschirtner (a Stalingrad combatant) and Johann Hauser. In order to move their work beyond the asylum, into the urban art-world, Navratil planned an exhibition of his patients’ work at a prominent gallery for experimental art and performance-art in Vienna, the Galerie Nächst St Stephan, in 1970, with the support of celebrated Austrian artists such as Arnulf Rainer; the drawings to be exhibited often demonstrated acute sexual obsession and focused primarily on excavations of the human figure, depicted as undergoing intensive and hallucinatory upheaval. At this point, Navratil became aware, by chance, of the work of Walla, who was in his early thirties and lived with his mother, in extreme poverty and isolation, at an abandoned barracks in the town of Klosterneuberg, rather than in the psychiatric hospital. Although Walla had spent his youth, during the years of the Second World War, in special schools for maladjusted children in Vienna, and had subsequently been interned in the Lower Austria Psychiatric Hospital from the ages of fifteen to twenty-one, he had then remained outside the asylum, under the care of his mother, since 1957. Throughout that period, Walla had worked incessantly, painting and inscribing objects around him, in the dilapidated room he shared with his mother, and also performing actions in the streets of Klosterneuberg and the surrounding countryside, which his elderly mother documented.
in the form of photographs; his work remained unchanged by Navratil’s engagement with it. Navratil included Walla’s work in the exhibition at the Galerie Nächst St Stephan; although the exhibition created huge international interest, Navratil’s project was attacked both by young activist art-historians and exponents of the anti-psychiatry movement in Vienna, who accused him of exploiting his patients and called for them to be liberated from their asylum, and also, contrarily, by traditional psychiatrists, such as Gaston Ferdière (the psychiatrist of Antonin Artaud) who denounced him for misrepresenting his patients’ psychotic scrawls as art-works. Walla himself denied that he was creating art-works, and insisted that his intention, in making his image/text works, was solely the desire to be obliging (‘aus Gefälligkeit’)(1). Navratil continued to exhibit his elite group of artist-patients’ work in art-museums, and it gradually became assimilated into the Art Brut movement, while also generating art-market interest during the early-1980s resurgence in figurative art; in 1981, Navratil created a separate pavilion for twelve artist-patients in the extensive grounds of the psychiatric hospital, and encouraged curators and art-historians to visit them. Walla moved to the pavilion in 1983, when his mother became too senile to look after him outside the asylum, and continued his work there until his death in 2001.

Word and image can never remain equivalent, in the work of artists, such as Walla, who intensively explore their point of intersection. A word or phrase may be inserted into the domain of the image to draw out and accentuate the impact of its historical and mythological underpinning (as in the work of Anselm Kiefer), or an image may accompany a text in order to distil a content which an over-accumulation of textual layers has obscured (as in innumerable works of illustration); in either instance, the accompanying word or image is relegated to a role of subjugation, at the service of its counterpart. A number of factors may instigate a combative collision between word and image that negates that illustrative or equivocal rapport; an artist may require the abrasive zone between word and image as the point from which to fire a preoccupation with the disintegration of the status of language and image, or else that area of collision may activate an exploration of corporeality, conflict and sexual obsession which can only take form and be mediated as a direct result of that collision, and would otherwise hold an insufficient visual or linguistic charge. Integral to the
intersection between word and image, in work such as Walla’s, is the human body. The point of encounter between image and text is one that works to unhinge and dislocate, and without a specific focus for the sensorial velocity generated by the image/text intersection, that velocity dissipates, even when exacerbated by the element of aberrance that attends the mutant conjoining of language and image. In Walla’s work, the human body is infinitely vulnerable; text and image must conflictually amass in order to safeguard it, but also to mediate the engulfing, multiple danger that assails the corporeal.

In Walla’s work, text always exclaims itself, concertinaed to the most concentrated enunciation and curtailed by the full-stop and exclamation mark that launch it into space. If Walla exclaims a name - ‘Hitler!’, ‘Teufel. Gott! [Devil. God!]’ - nothing else is necessary. Extreme textual brevity averts the ability of language to entrap and enmesh the body that inscribes it, the mouth that speaks it. A corporeal danger - or, conversely, a protective presence, since all words may intimate both a hazard and its contrary, simultaneously - has been named, and exposed to the images that accompany it. Even when Walla invents a name, or takes a name from a language other than German (Walla spent much of his time reading foreign-language dictionaries), it must stand alone, without further textual commentary, as one element of a constellation of textual exclamations. By contrast, the image requires infinite elaboration; a human figure or god-figure must be shown with all of its attributes, in the form of an array of signs and objects that accord distinction to that figure; even clothed, its sexual organs must be displayed. Those figures are interlinked, threatening or defending one another. But Walla’s work has no narrative; the body is instantaneously and multiply threatened, and its textual element exclaims the cataclysm it faces.

One of the unique attributes of the intersection between image and text is its capacity to mediate historical upheaval, to intimate traumatic memory, and to reveal corporeal fissuration and fragmentation, in a way that is closed to any medium that is solely visual, or solely textual. That zone between word and image is one that gathers confrontation, and sensitises the work to transmit corporeal, political, historical or sexual conflicts. In Walla’s work, the history of twentieth-century Europe insurges in an excoriated but awry form, dense with apocalyptic forces and murderous figures, of weaponry and political insignia.
(interchangeable hammer-and-sickles and swastikas), all of it concentrated around Walla’s body, as though it required the acute social withdrawal of Walla’s perception to reveal that history, and to expunge that history of all narrative and anecdote. History is urgently exclaimed, by the intersection of text with image, and instilled into the body, rather than recounted or mythologised. In Walla’s work, the confrontation between word and image possesses a momentum that has already arrived at apocalypse: the final point has permanently been reached. But at the same time, Walla occasionally conjures angelic presences to accompany that apocalypse, as though, even in its definitive erasure, history still betrays its own negation, and the human body may still escape itself. In many of Walla’s works, he exclaims the word ‘Halbholle.’: the ‘half-hell’ (as intangible and unseizable volatile as the interstice between text and image), beyond death, beyond all devils and gods, inhabited by a body still possessing the remotest chance of miraculous survival if it can project itself, or withdraw itself, away from all danger.

One of the pre-eminent threats to Walla’s survival is sex. His work appears simultaneously utterly sexless and naïve - Walla’s mother noted to Dr. Navratil that her son had never had any sexual experiences: ‘nothing at all, thanks be to God!’ (2) - and sexually obsessed. Almost all of Walla’s male figures possess prominent sexual organs, often doubled (in Walla’s work, everything irresistibly duplicates itself, or multiplies itself infinitely) and accentuated by the textual exclamation ‘Doppelbube.’ ['Double-Boy.']. Sexual fluids and urine, from both male and female organs, are also pervasively visualised in his work, but textually sent off-kilter, in their sexual charge, by their naming as ‘condensed-milk’ or ‘honey’. Walla’s sexual self-conception is one of forcible transformation: already dead, he has undergone a kind of transgenerding autopsy, at the hands of the Russian military-occupiers of Austria during his childhood, which has rendered his female sexuality masculine. The visual element of the works depicting this ‘Russian Operation’ shows an array of surgical instruments and threatened or lacerated sexual organs which resonate - in a parallel encounter between psychosis and the art-world - with those surrounding the performance-art works of the Vienna Aktionists, during the late-1960s, in which Günther Brus and Rudolph Schwarzkögler undertook performances which explored acute sexual vulnerability and rituals of self-laceration. But whereas the Aktionists were denounced and
marginalised in Austria as psychotic, anti-social criminals (Brus was given a prison-sentence for a performance-action at the University of Vienna in 1968 in which he publicly defecated and then sang the Austrian national anthem while masturbating), Walla’s works of sexual obsession took the inverse trajectory, from the context of institutional psychosis and social isolation towards that of art-world acceptance.

The rapport of text with image, in Walla’s work, unleashes spatial disruption that further impels the human body into that volatile interstice. Although much of Walla’s work was undertaken in interior spaces, and involved the saturation with his words and images of those spaces’ surfaces, he also undertook extensive performance-actions in the peripheral areas of Klosterneuberg (never in the central streets, where he risked provoking the town’s conservative inhabitants, who viewed him with hostility - unlike the Aktionist Brus who, conversely, headed directly for the centre of Vienna, and began his Wiener Spaziergang [Vienna Walk, 1965] performance-action, which would terminate with his arrest, from underneath the palace-balcony where Hitler had announced the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany); occasionally, Walla’s performance-actions involved his standing directly in front of derelict urban spaces, such as demolition sites, and performing manual gestures, but more usually, the performances integrally cohered his body with textual and linguistic elements. In numerous photographs of his performances (Walla’s mother invariably served as the adept documenter of his performance-work, despite her senile dementia), Walla stands and gestures in front of buildings, trees, objects, roads, on which he has already inscribed his texts or images in paint; in other performances, he holds placards or other objects on which a text (usually a word from an invented language, or a word drawn from Walla’s dictionary-searches) has been inscribed in large letters, so that it mutates into the status of an image in its rapport with its urban or natural context (the placard is often held awry, or inverted, to destabilise the pre-eminence of text), and thereby enmeshes that urban/natural context into the intricate arena of Walla’s preoccupations. Performance-photographs also show Walla in the act of inscribing his texts and images on roadways, in chalk or paint, and then laying on the ground alongside the completed inscription, as though the presence of the body validates that work, and momentarily stalls the open confrontation between text and image. During his performances in
exterior space, Walla is photographed heavily-clothed; in interior space, he is often photographed naked.

In Walla’s work, the text/image collision, together with the presence of the body in the painting or performance, exacerbates the need for an ultimate expansiveness that will occupy all space, all bodies, all languages and images, and all histories, so that the dangers they raise for Walla’s own body become concurrently lessened and defused. A desire for extreme density is generated by the collision between text and image, and must manifest itself in a maximal spatial pervasiveness. Nothing must escape inscription: the painting’s surface shows no space uninscribed by text or image, and the urban/natural world surrounding Walla’s body must demonstrate a parallel inhabitation by that body’s image/text presence. After Walla had spent a decade or so at the Lower Austria Psychiatric Hospital, in the early-1990s, the entire grounds, roadways, buildings and surrounding woodland held multiple evidence of his work; even six years after his death, the grounds remained constellated by the faded traces of that work.

In order to determine the rapport of text with image in his work, Walla requires the command of all global languages. In his conversations with Dr. Navratil and with his visitors, Walla always asserted that he was developing a comprehensive knowledge of every language in the world, and incorporated elements from those languages into his work, combining and deploying them as the demonstration of omniscient textual authority. Any income that reached Walla from sales of his paintings was spent on the acquisition of a collection of foreign-language dictionaries, and any time not devoted to his work was spent in studying those dictionaries. By contrast, the image remains something which is already known, by Walla, in its entirety; Walla’s supreme indifference to art-history and all visual culture ensures that the element of image in his work retains its autonomy. But the cultural autonomy of the image, in Walla’s work, will also not be subjugated to his textual authority; that work never shows a body that attains the status, free from engulfing dangers, that Walla desires. Always, the body’s image is subject to proliferating exposure and violent fragmentation, to disassembly by scalpels and weapons; text and image form terminally irreconcilable entities.
The axis of text and image, in the work of artists probing their intersection, is often an intangible zone of slippage, in which the status of word and image may fluctuate, as one erases the other, one accentuates the other; the location at which word and image mesh habitually remains in perpetual movement. However, with Walla’s work, in which the human body always intrudes or is seized into that intersection, and takes on an essential role as transmitter or exacerbator of the text/image confrontation, that axis possessed a specific and fixed location, from which the expansiveness of his work originated and emanated: Walla’s room in the pavilion that Dr. Navratil had created for his group of artist-patients. In 1992, I visited Walla in his room, and was shown into it by one of the psychiatric nurses. The entire surface-space of the room, including the ceiling, and all objects within it - the television set, the radiators, the side-table, the chairs - had been saturated with Walla’s figures, including those that mediated his own body, together with his textual exclamations of contested identities, of maleficent corporeal threats and of protections. That room possessed an aura both of forming a spatial aperture into engulfing terror, and also of constituting an irrevocable refusal: of history, of the human body’s vulnerable form, of the relationship between language and image, and of time itself: everything perceived by Walla demanded an immediate repudiation, and simultaneously, a transformational overturning, generated by the collision of text, image, and the human body. Spatially fixed, the room remained in temporal movement: Walla had constantly reworked his texts and images during the nine years he had lived there, so that the space was becoming ever-more saturated, ever-more dense. The only element of the room that had been excluded from Walla’s reformulation of its time and space was the threadbare, institutional carpet, and the equally uninscribable curtains, pulled back from the window, through which I could see the wooden walls of a storage-hut, and the trees adjoining the pavilion, all of them meticulously covered-over with Walla’s work.

To most questions, Walla responded with exclamations of two or three words that resonated with the texts inscribed on the room’s walls. He spoke about an etching he had made in 1970, entitled *Hitler Sein Baum!* [Hitler’s Tree!], in which a huge axe and two swastikas - unintentionally inverted, along with the work’s textual element, by the etching process - accompanied a tree inhabited by a lemur. How had Hitler come to own such a tree? All Walla had to say on the matter was
that yes, it was Hitler’s tree. Then, he spoke of how, as a small boy during the Second World War, he had heard the voice of Hitler, giving speeches on the radio, and had decided that it must be the voice of his father (who was always absent, having abandoned the family before Walla’s birth); later, he had discovered that the voice on the radio was not what he had thought it was, and the world around him was apocalyptic.

In Walla’s work, image and text cannot accord with one another, and their mismatched intersection forms a fissuration that transmits a content always focused around the corporeal: one of terror, but also one of transformation, in which corporeal mutation seeks to elude death. Word and image, together, constitute one variant of an endless proliferation of doubled entities whose imminent threat Walla must exclaim, but whose expansive inscription (in the form of painted surfaces and objects), and performance (in the form of photographed actions), allows him to defuse to the point where, for a moment at least, that threat will not yet reach his body. Text and image, in their rapport, hold an integral presence of monstrousness in Walla’s work, like the aberrantly doubled penises of his boy-figures, that resonates - in an intensively amended form - from the exterior world, from the social, institutional and corporeal histories which surround Walla and mediate their apocalyptic potential to him, like radio-static. The combat between text and image, then, is an element in what is literally a life-or-death struggle, to overturn the world and to survive.

Notes
2. Ibid, p.17.
The translations in this essay are my own.
MISHIMA: DEATH-FRAGMENTS
(2007)

In a television interview recorded in 1969, the year before his death by self-disembowelment and decapitation by one of his acolytes, Yukio Mishima spoke of how ‘an extreme form of eroticism’ had always driven his life, unleashed by his experiences of Tokyo under warfare and the sensation of imminently-expected death he experienced there, and carrying him far beyond the stratified parameters of Japanese literary and cultural life, as though that life had been choreographed towards death, by his close friend of the 1960s, the instigator of Ankoku Butoh dance, Tatsumi Hijikata - as a set of compulsive gestures, simultaneously pathological and exquisite, and propelled too outside the anticipated boundaries of the corporeal and the rigorously annotated sensory categories of Japan, always a hairsbreadth away from both orgasm and erasure.

Three years before his death, Mishima wrote The Way of the Samurai from his lifelong engagement with the Hagakure, an eighteenth-century manual on samurai life, compiled in the form of fragments imparted by a now-retired samurai (who had expected to be allowed to commit ritual suicide on the death of his master, but through an anomaly, was prevented from doing so, and chose instead to distance himself from life) and transcribed by a young assistant. The Hagakure is a set of austere interdictions about the necessity of the samurai’s readiness for death at every moment, but it also contains elements of gratuitous contradictions, black holes of nihilism, as though the profound rigour of samurai life, and its ultimate futility (as in the comparison the manual draws with puppetry-gestures) together form part of the same movement of implosion.

In exploring the Hagakure, Mishima refines the material that is vital for his own death: the act of death that engulfs every gestural act, every creative act, every sexual act, reversing in time to simultaneously validate and erase all of those prior acts. Mishima is always irresistibly compelled, almost unable to restrain himself for another instant, from his act of death; as in the theoretical texts and novels of Georges Bataille, if every act of outrage, excess and death-obsession cannot be concentrated into an identical moment of life, now, then everything
must be done to ensure that it will happen in the next moment of life. What French philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva learned from their reading of Mishima is that, if death cannot be carried through immediately (the state of perpetual suspension which is that of the samurai’s life), then it must, at least, be made the sole focus of representation: representation with its own cancellation engrained within the obsession to expose, to transmit, to project.

The year before writing *The Way of the Samurai*, Mishima had co-directed a film which represents and anticipates his ritual suicide, acted by himself, though without the participation of his private army of erotically-uniformed young men, the ‘Shield Society’, who accompanied him in 1970 on his death-mission to the Ichigaya barracks in Tokyo. The pre-eminent writer on contemporary Japan, and close friend of Mishima, Donald Richie, attended the shooting of Mishima’s film, and remembered: ‘In time, he asked me to come to the Daiei film studio... The movie, *The Rite of Love and Death*, based on the short story "Patriotism", was already half-completed and this was the second day of filming. A container of pig intestines stood ready and after rehearsal, these were packaged inside Mishima’s trousers. When the knife seemed to enter the author’s abdomen it actually cut into the plastic sack containing the guts... This transformation was strong.’

Mishima’s film is pitched so tightly at the interstice between orchestrated sexual bliss and blood-drenched corporeal chaos, with its loving shots of his own thighs, muscled chest, barely-covered penis, immediately before the act of self-laceration, that it exceeds and annuls all linear narration, and projects itself in the form of a sensorially-attuned sequence of fragments - exactly the same form he sets to work in *The Way of the Samurai* for his exploration of the *Hagakure*. All language, all image, must be dismantled, disassembled, into the form of the fragment, so that it detaches itself from its tainting by its habitual social misuse, in order to become the medium of pure obsession, perpetual orgasm, with the instant of the onrush of death sustained into infinity.

In *The Way of the Samurai*, Mishima contrasts the eighteenth-century samurai era with that of contemporary Japan (that of 1967, a year poised between the two ratifications of the US-Japan Security Treaty, which had rendered Japan an obsequious client-state of the USA, and
shortly before the great end-of-the-decade era of violent street-riots which Mishima lived to witness, but rejected as just one more void consumer-experience), tellingly castigating a city in which consumerism-induced frenzies have overridden the grandeur and stature he wants to accord to the corporeal, in its moment before death: ‘Throughout Tokyo, pygmy romances are rampant today.’ In doing so, he parallels the temporal system of the *Hagakure*, in which the retired samurai laments an era, thirty years before, in which samurai warriors had been authentic, and had not been consumed only by thoughts of wealth and ‘effeminacy’. A gap of time must always be generated, in Mishima’s obsessions, in order for the contemporary moment to be conjured into such vilification, that the only recourse is death.

Mishima experiences those boundaries of time as spatial boundaries, too. In his conversations with Donald Richie, he projected himself into the excessive time and space of imperial Rome, but also into a contemporary space of Tokyo denied to him: that of the sexual and alcohol-driven sensory furore of the down-at-heel San’ya district. Donald Richie recalls: ‘Mishima sometimes said he felt so cut off from the things he really liked. He said that some time in Rome under Tiberius would have been interesting. Or maybe Diocletian - he was thinking of Sebastian. He toyed with the idea of reincarnation - not seriously, but as a kind of joke, wondered if he hadn’t been a Persian slave boy in an earlier life, or an indulgent emperor. As for San’ya (a district something like the Bowery of Tokyo, home of the proletarian worker), here the barrier was spatial, not temporal. He could not go there because of who he had become. He would have been recognised.’

To reconcile his unique time and space, and to project it to the world as an act beyond representation, Mishima’s final act of death forms the embodiment of that ‘extreme form of eroticism’ which led, as he said in the same television interview of 1969, to ‘a proud form of death’: ‘*Harakiri makes you win.*’ In the police photographs of the aftermath of Mishima’s death, in which his severed head had been placed upright, on a cloth, alongside that of one of his Shield Society acolytes, and photographed in close-up, his face emanates an oblivion that has passed through every corporeal, sensory and sexual aperture, in order to mediate his obsession, stopped-dead in that instant of raw bliss, for the eye of his reader and spectator.
INTO THE ZONE: GUYOTAT AND FILM
(2007)

Pierre Guyotat's work has an intricate rapport with cinema, from its origins: an intensive, sensorial, experiential rapport. Guyotat's work, in many ways, is an experience of cinema - the space of cinema, the history of cinema, and the history that exists around and in tension with cinema - that infiltrates both that work and also his corporeal presence in relation to the film image. Guyotat has also made a number of films, notably in the course of his journeys of the 1960s and 70s, and at moments of transition and transit in his work. His links with cinema are profound ones, and the power of images - together with the power of the experience of cinematic space - often inflects his work's trajectory. The preoccupation with cinema is a 'lived' one for Guyotat: an inhabitation of images of cinema and the history that is instilled in cinema, together with the gestures and faces and traces of cities shown in films. At the same time, that preoccupation with film also forms a perpetual transformation from image to language, and from language back to the film image. Since the 1960s, Guyotat has been concerned incessantly with the question of accomplishing impossibilities in language, and it has been cinema - with its impossible images, time and space, and movements - that has often irresistibly presented a model, or a set of revelations, to him, for his work, whether he wanted that model or not.

The first filmic site for Guyotat, in the 1940s, was the cinema in his home village, the 'Foyer' cinema, whose name indicates the intimacy mediated by cinemas of that era, especially in the context of life in the mountainous regions of southern France where images appeared primarily through the medium either of photography or film. Many of the images which marked Guyotat most deeply in the late 1940s postwar period were photographic images of concentration camps and lines of refugees crossing destroyed European wastelands; photography possessed its own time, while film images - especially in newsreels - went too fast for perception, mixing everything at full speed, during an era when it was essential to examine all images for the duration they deserved, since they held otherwise unseizable, unbearable history. By contrast, film directly incited sensations, and those sensations then multiplied themselves to infinity. Guyotat remembered that: 'As a child,
in the newsreels, a boxing match between women violently stirred me.' His book *Coma* also contains a memory from his time watching films in the Foyer cinema: a memory from 1947, when he was seven years old, of a film without a title, partially re-imagined in his account (but recognisable as John Huston's film of that year, *Let There Be Light*), about traumatised prisoners of war. Guyotat evokes the return to life of a totally amnesiac soldier who is corporeally seized by that furious moment of reactivation, which operates simultaneously through memory and the body.

The Cinémathèque Française in Paris was the seminal filmic site for Guyotat's experience of the city, in the early 1960s, following his return from the Algerian War. In his notebooks from November 1962, when he was about to arrive in Paris from Algeria, he imagines that arrival as an inhabitation of the Cinémathèque, where he would soon be watching three screenings each day (as many cinema-crazed people of his age did, in that era), joyfully obsessed by film, constantly reading books of film history, and seeing celebrated directors introducing their films there; for Guyotat's memory of the time, the most important of those near-magical contacts were his sightings of Dreyer and Chaplin.

Buñuel's film *Los Olvidados* was a crucial inspiration for Guyotat's first major novel, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*. That caustic, hallucinatory film, dissecting conflicts between young inhabitants of Mexico City's peripheral zones, formed one of the vital sources of the novel. In a newspaper interview from the beginning of 1965, Guyotat asserted that the idea for the novel had come to him after repeated viewings of the film. The book's origins are impossible to reduce to only one source, and form a vast, multiple archive of images and texts, but at the time of the novel's writing, Guyotat was actively searching out films which would provide examples of combinations and editing techniques which he could apply to his sequences of all-engulfing combat and massacre in the novel. In his notebooks of the era, the English word 'like' often appears, designating a rapport of parallel conception which linked his creative process to films such as Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*; in those films, spectacular battles always transmuted into catastrophes. He also searched films for the presences of noise: the sounds of fires, and the cries of animals distinctly heard even within filmic sequences of battles and massacres. At the time when he was writing *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, Guyotat also watched more austere and mysterious films, in
order to refine a transparent form of language within which to insert a dark content, often transected with delirium, and articulated through repetition. That form of language would be one intimately close to film, and capable of containing contrary and irreconcilable elements, to project them towards his reader. In his notebooks, he wrote: 'Take the example of *The Eclipse* by Antonioni for the taking-forward of a number of scenes. Scenes that will be naked, that will exact delirium, dramatically. That will give delirium an order and a necessity.' Films also accompanied Guyotat in his engagement of the 1960s with the question of how to end a text or novel: a pressing question, in the context of a body of work in which almost nothing can ever end, and in which the movement of narration is almost always torn out of its ostensible moment of finishing, and propelled towards infinity. In the work of the Czech filmmaker, Jan Němec, Guyotat saw examples in which a film's deep layering of time and memory could explode, as he wrote, 'on the ending with the final image'.

After that intensive engagement with film during the writing of *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers*, Guyotat's rapport with film (as well as with other art forms) changed. It became rarer, more accidental, but also more concentrated, as well as being surrounded by his social engagements of the end of the 1960s, and their aftermath. That rapport continued throughout the period of journeys which led to Guyotat's state of coma in 1981. For Guyotat, a pivotal topographical and corporeal correspondence with cinema's history was that the clinic in which he was treated in the months following that coma - the Clinique Jeanne d'Arc in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Mandé - was the same clinic in which Dreyer had convalesced in the 1920s following the exhausting film-shoot for *The Passion of Joan of Arc* in Paris: a film very closely tied, in many ways, with Guyotat's book *Coma*.

In *Coma*, Guyotat recounts his experience, in July 1981, several months before his fall into a state of coma, of joining a group of friends in the town of Montauban to watch the film *The Clash of the Titans* (an English film based on Greek mythology). Guyotat's separation from the rest of the cinema audience is total and determining. He writes: 'This film which made its spectators roar with ironic laughter: I entered into it as though into my future coma.' The experience of a film - in extreme solitude - can be so strong and engulfing that it accords with the experience of a coma. And the screen on which the film is projected
forms the aperture which offers liberation, or leads directly into death. Guyotat describes the figure in the film of Andromeda, who is split in two, against her will, existing simultaneously in the world and in death. In Coma, her figure is no longer that of Andromeda, but instead that of a creature who has been reinvented, half-human, half-goddess, and engaged in an act of tightrope-walking, between the corporeal and the void. But the cinematic space also possesses its corporeal presence in Coma, and during the film's screening, Guyotat descends a set of stairs beneath the auditorium, to vomit his pills in the toilets, but continues to hear, from that infernal subterranea of the cinema, the overhead voices of the gods battling over his future.

In the context of a reading and exhibition of his work in Marseilles, Guyotat compiled a list of the films which had been most important for his work and life, including Japanese films by Kurosawa and Ozu, a film by Léos Carax, and Godard's 1962 film, Vivre sa Vie. And it was Godard, almost forty years after Vivre sa Vie, who incorporated Guyotat's voice into his film The Origin of the Twenty-First Century, commissioned for the Cannes Film Festival of 2000. Guyotat's voice appears in the film with an almost visual and corporeal presence, in fragments and bursts: a voice which becomes a tangible layer of sound, above the layer of Godard's film-images, entirely taken from archives and newsreels, and showing, in part, the massacres and revolutionary acts of the twentieth century, alongside extracts, each of several seconds, from fiction films, including Los Olvidados. That strange amalgam, of images of massacres and filmic nostalgia, appears necessary in order to mark, in a permanent way, the existence of film as a medium of history, violence and imagination, before film's total abandonment and vanishing, in the digital era. Guyotat's vocal reading, from his book Progenitors, also forms an incantation about images, and at the heart of images - and recalls his stated desire, at the time in the late 1960s of his writing of his novel Eden, Eden, Eden and his alliance with the journal 'Tel Quel', to make his texts actively create and generate images, as an act directed against abstraction. In The Origin of the Twenty-First Century, Godard often stalls his film's movement, in order simply to show dates: the key dates of the twentieth century, and simultaneously, the dates of an individual history. Among those dates are 1940, that of the Fall of France to the German army, and also the year of Guyotat's birth; 1960, the year of Guyotat's attachment to the films of Bergman and Bresson (especially Pickpocket), and of his decision to leave France for the war in Algeria;
and 1975, the year of the publication of Guyotat's novel *Prostitution* and of the murder of a close friend in Marseilles. Even against its will, the filmic image cannot prevent itself from telling multiple histories.

After their collaboration on *The Origin of the Twenty-First Century*, a period of discussion between Godard and Guyotat followed on the possibility of making a jointly conceived film; the project was abandoned. Alongside his contacts with Godard, other intersections - often brief, but intensive - with directors and actors have marked Guyotat's work, notably that with Lillian Gish, from whom Guyotat receives an affectionate kiss in his book *Coma* (whose filmic and photographic illustrations finish with a still of Gish in the film *The Wind*). Guyotat also had encounters with producers seeking to film his books, including a calamitously meeting with Claude Nedjar whose memory proved so unbearable to Guyotat that, in *Coma*, it is transposed into an encounter with the artist Michel Nedjar.

The films which Guyotat has made himself began at the moment when he arrived in Paris for the first time, at the age of nineteen, in 1959 - three years before his second arrival in Paris following his time in Algeria. That process of filmmaking was conceived by Guyotat as a means to research and visually seize gestures and acts, and to make spaces and objects materialise. They were films with their own existence and autonomy, but at the same time formed an element in the assembly of his texts and novels. In *Coma*, Guyotat evokes his filming in the Parc Saint-Cloud, to the west of Paris: 'I film statues, flora, animals, insects, birds, I wait for long periods of time, at the far side of the park from its entrance, beside burrows and holes, for the emergence of the rabbit, the mole, the snake, I wait.' During his two journeys through postwar Algeria, each of several months, in early 1967 and early 1968, Guyotat filmed mountains and villagers. In his notebooks, he used an English word for those films: his 'rushes', as though that word aimed to capture, with rapidity, and even after a long wait, the gestures and landscapes he was looking for, just as he had previously aimed to seize, in film, the animals of the Parc Saint-Cloud. While writing *Eden, Eden, Eden*, in December 1968, in his apartment in the Parisian suburb of Vitry-sur-Seine, he projected those films of Algeria for himself, in order to activate and sustain his writing process, and to infiltrate it with film-images; those 'rushes' contained images of flowers and animals, but also, as he noted, that of 'a lorry-driver, jeans covered in semen'. In 1998, while
Guyotat was preparing *Progenitors*, I sometimes accompanied him to cafes in the Belleville district, in which he filmed, with a hidden video-camera, transactions and chance gestures. All of Guyotat's own films, over a period of five decades, form a layer of images which, in its rapport with his texts, resonates with his voice's presence in Godard's *The Origin of the Twenty-First Century*. Guyotat's own films constitute an intermittent presence, above his texts: film as an unforeseen and volatile illumination, in the form of fragments.

I visited the spaces of cinemas with Guyotat on two occasions. The first was in July 1991, at the site of the concentration camp, Sachsenhausen, to the north of Berlin, where his uncle, Hubert Vianney, had been killed in 1943 after being deported for resistance activities from France. During the recently-vanished era of the East German state, one of the camp's wooden barracks had been adapted into a cinema space, where a single, twenty-minute film, the celluloid worn-out and the Russian-language soundtrack disintegrating into cacophony, was projected repeatedly. The film showed the camp's liberation by the Soviet army in 1945. Even in summer, the concentration-camp cinema was frozen, and empty, with only Guyotat and I, and the decrepit old projectionist, positioned menacingly behind us, at the back of the room. With extreme concentration, Guyotat entered into the images and the sounds of the film. Afterwards, there was a jarringly immediate transition, from the film images in darkness, to the execution terrains and experimentation blocks of the camp outside. The film image, with its unique space and time, can launch such moments of outlandish transition - that can never be repeated, that can not even be lived, except in the form of a text. Shortly afterwards, the camp's topography abruptly changed, and the cinema-barracks was demolished. The second visit to a cinema space with Guyotat, around seven years later, was in Paris, at the Forum des Images. We were watching a film Guyotat was deeply attached to: Georges Lacombe's *The Zone*, from 1928, shot on the impoverished peripheries of Paris, and showing the faces and gestures of that wasteland's inhabitants, especially those of children. During the screening, Guyotat kept up a whispered vocal commentary on the film's images, as though his voice were that of the figure in silent Japanese cinema - the 'benshi' - who stood beside the screen and deployed his voice to accentuate and isolate those special elements of the images that it was vital to keep in memory, and never consign to
oblivion: those elements that would irresistibly come to possess another existence, in a space beyond that of cinema.
TOKYO 1969:
REVOLUTIONARY IMAGE-THIEVES IN THE DISINTEGRATING CITY
(2009)

Tokyo's period of urban unrest extended across the 1960s, beginning with widespread rioting, and demonstrations around the parliament building, in 1960, and culminating in sustained protests and confrontations that lasted throughout 1968 and 1969, before mutating into other forms; film constituted a sensitised medium for the exploration of that uproar, with a number of directors initiating stylistic experiments and outstanding approaches to the representation of urban space in transformation. In particular, two films from 1969, Toshio Matsumoto's *Funeral Parade of Roses* and Nagisa Oshima's *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, probed the intimate rapport between the dynamics of Tokyo's urban unrest and the intensive artistic and sexual experimentation ongoing during that period in the city's Shinjuku district. This essay gives an account of the unique cultural history of postwar Tokyo, and its relationship to film-making; it then examines the particular challenges faced by film-makers in creating images of the excessive space of Tokyo, looking in particular at sequences in films by Chris Marker and Andrei Tarkovsky. The essay then considers *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* as exceptional filmic explorations of the urban culture of Tokyo (a culture viewed by many of its participants as a revolutionary one); it then concludes by evaluating the enduring relevance of that strand of urban film-making for contemporary Tokyo's visual culture.

Urban film-making in Tokyo at the end of the 1960s reflects the very particular dynamics and range of film-making practice during that era, as well as the wide-ranging architectural expansion and experimentation that had been taking place in the city during the preceding decade. In the face of a studio system which appeared to be increasingly disintegrating, Tokyo-based film-makers operated in a vast range and combination of forms and styles, from the structuralist experimental film-making exemplified by Takahiko Iimura, to independently or collaboratively funded projects, often preoccupied with issues of sexuality and dissident political issues, as in the films of Shuji Terayama. Film-makers often oscillated between working on studio-funded projects...
and more independent projects, at a time when the hard-pressed studios were focusing their attention on previously peripheral genres, such as pornographic and horror films, often commissioning directors to work on entire series of such films. To some extent, this flexibility and mutability of late-1960s film-making in Tokyo replicates that of European film-making of the same period, including its concerns with political and sexual issues and with stylistic experimentation; however, the particular historical and cultural context of Japan in the late 1960s, and its influence on urban life and on urban representations in film, is distinctly different from that of Europe.

Both the visual form of Tokyo as an urban entity, and the tensions which generated the exceptional film-making of the late 1960s, have their origins in the large-scale destruction of the city during the Second World War, and the Occupation by US military forces which succeeded that destruction. As with many other industrial cities in Japan, Tokyo was extensively fire-bombed, especially in March 1945, with enormous casualties in the urban population; entire areas of the city vanished, and four million people fled the city in the war's closing months. As well as the human losses, the firebombing also engulfed Tokyo's libraries, film-archives, and historical buildings such as temples and shrines, so that much of the city's historical and cultural history became erased. The American film-historian and film-maker, Donald Richie, arrived in the city in the following year, 1946, and commented on the visual reconfiguration of the city which its destruction had generated: 'I stand at the main crossing on the Ginza, nothing between me and the mountain [Mount Fuji]... I stand and watch the mountain fade. From this crossing it had not been seen since Edo times, but now all the buildings between are cinders. Between me and Fuji is a burned wasteland, a vast and blackened plain where a city had once stood.'(1)

For many young film-makers, artists and architects in Tokyo, such as Arata Isozaki and Juro Kara (the theatre-director who plays one of the central characters in Diary of a Shinjuku Thief), the erasure of the city also entailed the sweeping-away of the constrictive militarist and familial structures of the pre-war era, so the city's destruction also possessed an exhilarating aspect, with the sense that the city could now be transformed from scratch into an entirely new entity. However, the US Occupation of Japan, which extended from 1945 to 1952, created its own unprecedented cultural impact, including that upon cinema, since the American authorities imposed an often idiosyncratic censorship
regime on Japanese film-making. American military forces remained in Japan, and during the era of the Vietnam war, air-bases close to Tokyo were to be used extensively to supply and reinforce the US war-effort. However, the most significant legacy of the US Occupation was the imposition upon Japan of a long-term treaty which many Japanese citizens, students and film-makers, saw as subjugating the country to both the military and cultural power of the USA. The treaty, known as the 'Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan', needed to be ratified once a decade after its initial signature in 1960, and the violent urban-protests and street-battles - which form the key narrative event that frames late-1960s films such as *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* - were related in part to the treaty's imminent renewal.

Those two films, then, are impelled by a very specific set of cultural and historical traumas, which impact directly upon the urban space of Tokyo as the location for the fast-moving riots and protests which inflect the films' narratives. Urban space is in a multiple state of turmoil in such films, and therefore needs to be captured in a mobile way which accentuates the ongoing process of urban and human mutation taking place; film-makers such as Matsumoto and Oshima responded to those imperatives by adopting styles of film-making such as extensive use of handheld cameras and blurred or manipulated images, to indicate the speed with which the city's uproar is being perceived.

In many ways, the process of filming the urban space of Tokyo presents very distinctive challenges and imperatives for film-makers. The city has often been perceived, especially by visitors, as an excessive urban space, impossible to grasp in its entirety, labyrinthine in structure, extending into limitless suburban sprawl. Those demands of the city upon its film-makers are present in works such as those of Matsumoto and Oshima, and the turmoil of the period of fast-moving street-protests, at the end of the 1960s, served only to exacerbate that aura of excess. But the urban gestures and movements of Tokyo have also been revealingly seized by film-makers from other countries, who have often incorporated fragments from the engulfing space of the megalopolis into films which are composed of trajectories across the city, generated in order to probe issues of memory and representation. From this perspective, Tokyo requires images which approach it at a tangent, either those resulting from a distinctive style of urban film-making, or
those which disregard the archetypal images of a city of packed crowds, image-screens and multi-storey corporate towers, and seek to realign urban space, in a parallel way to that in which the street-protestors of the late 1960s aimed to do.

The French film-maker and traveller, Chris Marker, visited Tokyo over a period of time that spans the city's seminal filmic moment of 1969. Marker arrived in Tokyo with the plan to film the Olympic Games of 1964, the preparations for which entailed a wide-ranging transformation of urban space, including the construction of many inner-city highways, often poised one on top of the other in the city's most crowded areas. During that visit, Marker made the film *The Koumiko Mystery*, about his obsession with a young Japanese woman. But the most revealing of Marker's Tokyo images were collected in his film *Sunless (Sans Soleil)*, from 1982, in which Marker returns to the city after a long absence, and films the locations of the city in which his memory has concentrated past moments - with those moments represented by past film-images, so that film itself supplants the city. Marker visits sites with individual resonances for him, such as the Gotokuji temple, dedicated to the cats of Tokyo, but also amasses his images on the move, in transit from site to site, and from moment to moment, filming the sleeping inhabitants of subway trains, and interposing the hallucinations and nightmares drawn from Japanese popular culture and television shows - which occupy their mental space. In his commentary, Marker evokes Tokyo's unique urban space: 'Tokyo is a city criss-crossed by trains, tied together with electric wire, she shows her veins... One could get lost in the great architectural masses and the accumulation of details, and that created the cheapest images of Tokyo: overcrowded, megalomaniacal, inhuman. He thought he saw more subtle cycles there, rhythms, clusters of faces caught sight of in passing, as different and precise as groups of instruments.' Marker also filmed confrontations between protesters and riot-police, just as Matsumoto and Oshima had done, though Marker's images are primarily those of protests about the construction of the Narita airport in the countryside outside Tokyo, which involved the uprooting of numerous farming communities. He includes images of those violent riots in the computer-treated sequences of *Sunless*, as images which have entered the area which he calls the 'Zone': an area, inspired by Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, that propels the human eye beyond the habitual parameters of both the filmic and the urban, into an amalgam of future technologies and endless spatial mutations.
Andrei Tarkovsky himself visited Tokyo during September 1971, at a time when the urban protest-movement of two or three years earlier had itself mutated, with many of its young participants despairing of the possibility of radical or revolutionary social change, and entering a kind of 'internal exile' within the ascendant corporate Japan of the 1970s, while others, inspired by terrorist movements in Europe, joined Japan's own terrorist groups, notably the Japanese Red Army, the 'Sekigun-ha', founded in 1971 and allied to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Palestine. Tarkovsky perceived Tokyo as a salutary urban space, writing in his diary: 'Japan is a wonderful country, of course. Nothing in common with Europe or America. Tokyo is an amazing city. There's not a single factory chimney, not a single house that looks like any other.' (2) In this sense, Tarkovsky's perception of Tokyo's urban space is at profound variance with many other visitors to the city, who saw it as a site enduringly imprinted with the residues of its US Occupation, and also noted an extreme homogeneity in its architectural forms, especially those of its suburbs. Tarkovsky effectively streamlines and reconfigures the city for his filmic purposes. He had arrived in Tokyo to shoot a sequence for his film Solaris, in which an astronaut, Berton, is inhabiting what Tarkovsky calls 'a town of the future': an unnamed megalopolis entirely composed of highway underpasses and overpasses, bordered by immense towers. Berton has an argument with another astronaut, Kelvin, who is shortly to leave on a mission to the planet Solaris; Berton then abruptly leaves Kelvin's rural house, and in an extended five-minute sequence, the astronaut drives through the urban terrain of Tokyo at speed, from underpass to overpass, through the dense network of highways which had been constructed in advance of the 1964 Olympic Games. Finally, the camera ascends, away from Berton's car, in order to view the chaos of intersecting highway-junctions from above. Once the sequence is over, Tokyo, which has never been identified, vanishes from the film. The city may be reinvented by such fragmentary apparitions within the films of visitors to Tokyo, such as Marker and Tarkovsky, in which memory, imagination and duration are intensively probed by transits across the face of the city, using the film-camera to examine urban facades and to unleash sensations. But in films actually centred within the axis of Tokyo's unrest of the late-1960s, as with Funeral Parade of Roses and Diary of a Shinjuku Thief, that charge of urban tension comes to generate very distinctive stylistic forms of urban film-making.
Matsumoto's film *Funeral Parade of Roses* was principally shot on the streets of Tokyo, notably in the district of Shinjuku, which in the late 1960s was intimately associated with experiments in visual arts, as the location of nightclubs for the city's gay cultures, and especially as the axis for the mass street-protests which took place throughout 1968 and 1969. One area, in particular, a large plaza alongside the area's railway station, was seen as a gathering place for both demonstrators and for sexual outcasts; it also formed an impromptu space for spectacles by performance artists, and also comprises the key location for Oshima's *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*. The department stores and business towers surrounding the plaza were already illuminated with immense neon hoardings advertising technology corporations, and by the end of the following decade, those hoardings had been replaced by the moving-image screens which reputedly inspired Ridley Scott, in planning his film *Blade Runner* (1982), for the depiction of an urban amalgam that oscillates between Los Angeles and Tokyo. The Shinjuku district had a heavy police presence, and Matsumoto was unable to obtain official permission to film there. As a result, the exterior sequences of the film were done covertly, usually in one take, before the police arrived to break up the film-making process. This urgency and spontaneity in part determines the stylistic form of *Funeral Parade of Roses*, as it does with *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, shot in similar conditions of rapidity. The film image becomes one infused with a sense of immediacy, with urban space caught by hand-held cameras in single takes, which focus primarily on the faces and bodies of the characters in their juxtaposition with the surrounding buildings' facades; such approaches resonate from the strategies of neo-realist film-making in Europe. The film's interior spaces form similarly improvised ones, shot in small rooms, often crowded with figures dancing or undertaking sexual acts, so that the camera has to manoeuvre and negotiate its way through space, with a perpetual sense of mobility.

That element of flexibility also relates to the particular forms of film-making adopted by young directors such as Matsumoto and Oshima in late 1960s Tokyo, and to the ways in which their films were financed and distributed. Film-makers could form alliances with the studio-system, and adapt their preoccupations to the demands of the studios' prevalent genres of the time, such as youth-culture, pornographic, and horror films. At the same time, several collective organisations of independent film-production existed in Tokyo, as they did at that time in European
countries such as Germany, and both *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* were produced by the Art Theatre Guild company, which had been formed in 1961 and also produced films by Shuji Terayama. Although such production structures possessed relatively small budgets, they were associated with networks of autonomous cinemas which allowed the films to be widely seen. Both independent and studio-based film-making of the time presented combinations of flexibility and constriction, either in terms of the funds available for film-making, or the stylistic parameters of film-making. *Funeral Parade of Roses* was Matsumoto's first feature film, and rather than moving subsequently into studio productions, his later work extended further into experimental forms, in short films which analysed issues of camera movement and the manipulation or multiplication of visual images.

The narrative of *Funeral Parade of Roses*, drawn obliquely from Greek mythology, concerns a young transvestite named Eddie who has previously murdered his mother and now works as a prostitute in a gay bar in Shinjuku, the Bar Genet. He also pursues friendships with other transvestites and with a group of young revolutionaries who are preoccupied with the ongoing street-riots. Eddie has an affair with the bar's drug-dealing proprietor, but when the proprietor discovers that he is actually Eddie's father, he stabs himself to death in their apartment, leading Eddie to then pierce his own eyes with the same knife, before going out onto the street, still clutching the knife, and attracting a crowd of onlookers; the final shot of the film circles through those onlookers before focusing on the knife, poised against the face of the city.

*Funeral Parade of Roses* is located in the gay sub-cultures of Tokyo, which literally take place underground, below street-level, especially in bars, night-clubs and art-galleries, as well as on the urban surfaces. In many of the subterranean, interior sequences of the film, dense crowds of figures amass, so that the film-camera must infiltrate its way between the human figures. Similarly, once the action shifts to street-level, the camera follows the film's characters through enclosing masses of figures, who often obstruct or assault those characters. The filming of Tokyo's urban space demands a sense of mobility that remains adhered to the bodies of the protagonists, as they attempt to penetrate that space. The opening-out of urban space only emerges when the camera ascends to a viewing-position above the city, in the same way that Tarkovsky, in the final image of his Tokyo sequence in *Solaris*, films the highway junctions of Tokyo as a panorama, from above. In *Funeral Parade of Roses*, those
openings of urban space, from density to expansion, are situated at moments when the camera either looks down on the plazas of Shinjuku, from the summits of adjacent buildings, or else when the characters ascend to the viewing platform of a tower which gives a perspective of the entire city.

In *Funeral Parade of Roses*, the urban space of Tokyo is seen by its characters as being involved in a process of disintegration, reflecting the widespread perception of the time in Japan that rapid urban proliferation, together with pollution and the exhausting of natural resources, had radically destabilised the environment of the country, whose precarious existence was also mediated by the culture of violent protest against the country's presence of US military power. Urban space constantly fragments in the film. In one of its sequences, the funeral takes place of the manager of the Bar Genet, who has committed suicide out of jealousy about the relationship between Eddie and the bar's proprietor. After the funeral has ended, Eddie notices that much of the vast, decrepit cemetery has become waterlogged, and that many tombs have subsided, vanishing below the water. That disintegration of the cemetery is explicitly that of Tokyo itself, and Eddie exclaims that he wishes that not only Tokyo, but the entirety of Japan, would sink below water and disappear. The city is moving in precarious transits between moments of past disappearance, such as that of its destruction by firebombing in 1945, to future moments in which its excess, or the violence generated by its protest movements, may also entail the vanishing from sight of its space.

The title of a film directed by Shuji Terayama in the same era incites its spectators: *Throw Away Your Books, Let's Go Out Into The Streets*. However, the young revolutionaries of *Funeral Parade of Roses* are never seen in the streets of Tokyo, and decline to participate in the demonstrations taking place at the moment in which the film is set. Instead, in company with Eddie, they remain enclosed in interior spaces, engaged in wild sex parties, and watching the television news broadcasts which show images of the ongoing confrontations between young protesters and riot-police. They also make films of the television news images, and then project those films, of the media images of riots, to themselves, in the same room, with the film-images distorted by technological processes of replication, in a parallel way to those which Chris Marker includes as the contents of the 'Zone', in his film *Sunless*. Matsumoto anticipates a global obsession with media images of conflict,
and the loss of a direct physical contact with urban protest. Revolution has been abstracted, and transformed into ever-diminishing media images, which form a source of excitation, for sexual acts or for the filmmaking process itself, but not for social activism.

Matsumoto also demonstrates the estrangement and familiarisation of urban space through film, by including a number of interview sequences in *Funeral Parade of Roses*, clearly resonant of those in films by Jean-Luc Godard, and which insurg into the film, as documentary elements, to intentionally fracture its linear narrative consistency. In those sequences, Matsumoto conducts dialogues with young transvestites in the avenues of Shinjuku, filming them at night against the background of the district's illuminated buildings. Most of the interview sequences follow a set framework, in which the same questions are posed and the same answers are given, so that they form a repetitive element of the film, providing a sense of stability within the disintegration and furore which the narrative itself carries. In part, that stability is provided by the recognisable urban presence, of the familiar plazas and hoardings of the Shinjuku district. The city may be eroding and submerging into riots, and the film's characters are all heading into death, but the distinctive urban aura of Shinjuku allows momentary coherings of filmic space.

Oshima's film *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, filmed around the same period as *Funeral Parade of Roses*, opens with a sequence set in the same Tokyo location: the plaza alongside the Shinjuku railway station, where a theatre company are staging an open-air performance. In fact, the film never leaves the Shinjuku district, focusing on a narrow psychogeographical area which the film relates to the interior journey of its central character, Birdey, a young book-thief who steals books from the shelves at the huge Kinokuniya bookshop, located directly alongside the Shinjuku plaza. In many ways, the film attempts to generate a narrative element from the particular resonances of that urban location, and its reputation as a site for countercultures and sexual experimentation, in the way that film-makers of the same era might have selected as locations the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, or the Kreuzberg district of West Berlin, in order to conjure a parallel aura of urban exploration. Oshima's film is concerned more explicitly than *Funeral Parade of Roses* with making connections between sexual acts and revolution, cutting directly between sex-scenes and shots of the
street-riots in Shinjuku; the film ends with an extended sequence of rioting, so that its narrative is one that is left open, as though prised-apart by the engulfing violent uproar of the period.

However, one factor which unites the two films is their obsession with the work of the French writer Jean Genet, whose novels are cited in both films' titles, and whose film *Un Chant d'Amour*, from 1950, had been distributed internationally via film-makers' co-operatives and seen by directors in Japan; it exerts a strong stylistic influence on the filming of sexual acts in *Funeral Parade of Roses*. The naming of the nightclub where Eddie works in that film forms a homage to Genet, and when Birdie steals books from the Kinokuniya bookshop, he heads directly for the works of Genet, who had himself been a book-thief and was imprisoned several times for those thefts. Genet was at the height of his international reputation in 1969, engaged in that period in his support for the Palestinians, for the Black Panther movement in the USA, and for the rights of immigrant workers in France itself; all of his novels had been translated into Japanese, and he was a seminal figure for many of Tokyo's experimental film-makers, artists, choreographers and theatre directors, as he remains in contemporary Tokyo. By an aberrant urban coincidence, Genet spent part of 1969 in Tokyo, where he visited his friend Jackie Maglia, and took part in several of the largest and most violent of the confrontations between the student movements and riot-police, in November and December of that year. Maglia recalled Genet's participation in the demonstrations: 'People hooked up to one another... so they'd be harder to arrest. Genet pretended to be "reviewing" the masked soldiers who'd come to control the crowd. He looked each soldier squarely in the eye (many of them were handsome).'(3) However, Genet declined to meet film-makers and artists while in Tokyo.

Even more than Matsumoto's film, *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* is a film of urban fragments, in which narrative elements are disconnected and subordinated to the exploration of urban space. The film comprises a set of momentary encounters, transits and pursuits, between the book-thief and a female assistant at the Kinokuniya bookshop who arrests him in the act of theft, and between them and a theatre director played by Juro Kara. As with *Funeral Parade of Roses*, the film focuses on the ability of the mobile camera to scan the surfaces and subterraneas of the city, and collect traces and residues, including those imprinted upon exterior walls and buildings in the forms of graffiti and advertising hoardings, which then amass, to form a representation of the city, in many ways
allied to those created by neo-realist works, as one in a state of crisis. Although the exploration of urban space is largely accorded the work of defining and carrying the film - to the point at which, in *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, the characters occasionally appear peripheral to the film's preoccupations - that urban space is itself one which is seen as disintegrating, subject to perpetual amendment, and presented as a sequence of fragments which will never cohere.

In both *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, the revolutionary aspirations of the protesters are treated by the film-makers with a degree of irony, and linked to the ideas of revolution as an art of performance which Genet had developed in his theatrical work. The revolutionary 'cell' in Matsumoto's film never leave their room, and become consumed by the media images of the riots taking place in the avenues outside; the sexual imperatives around the relationship between the two characters in *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* also render them largely oblivious to the riots which finally engulf the entire film. This preoccupation with an oblique, ambivalent relationship to activism and revolutionary commitment is also present in films by the director Koji Wakamatsu, who analysed the rapport between sexual and revolutionary acts in his films of the same era, structured in the form of exploitation or pornographic films. Wakamatsu was also preoccupied with the connections between the protest-culture of late-1960s Tokyo and the terrorist movements which emerged, directly or indirectly, from that culture; he visited the Palestinian liberation movements in 1971, and recently made a new film, *United Red Army* (2008), which looks back at the terrorist groups of 1970s Japan and at their implosive internal dynamics. Both *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* appear prescient of the aftermath of the urban riots in late-1960s Tokyo, in their depictions both of an all-consuming apathy, and of forms of terrorism whose imageries and definitions could be endlessly manipulated and distorted.

In that same period, the Tokyo-based film-maker Donald Richie made his film *Cybele*, which, like *Funeral Parade of Roses*, adopts a mythic narrative structure and uses a cemetery location, that of the vast Yanaka cemetery in eastern Tokyo, to explore its concern with urban and cultural disintegration. In the final sequence of his film, Richie depicted a group of naked figures who appeared to have been slaughtered and piled-up on top of each other - images which led to the censorship and banning of the film in numerous countries. In some ways, those images
intimate an overturning of the sense of exhilaration and often-playful experimentation which had occupied Tokyo-based film-makers during the second half of the 1960s, and resonate instead, even against the film-maker's intentions, more directly from wartime images such as those of the results of the US firebombing of the city in 1945. Those unexpected transits across time, in Japanese cinema of the late 1960s, are as revealing as the perpetual movements through urban space which propelled those films' narratives and determined their distinctive stylistic texture.

The images of Tokyo's urban space, in a state of violent turmoil, remain resonant ones for film-making and for digital arts in contemporary Tokyo, evident, for example, in the work of the director Shinya Tsukamoto and the mutating megalopolis of his films, such as *Tokyo Fist*. The films of Takashi Miike carry an allied preoccupation, to those of *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief*, with the city's Shinjuku district as a unique urban environment in which events habitually occur that would otherwise be impossible and unconceivable, and which need to be seized at speed. The particular ethos of late-1960s film-production and distribution structures in Japan, exemplified by the Art Theatre Guild, still survives in Tokyo through institutions such as Image Forum. After being rarely seen for many years, *Funeral Parade of Roses* and *Diary of a Shinjuku Thief* were, in many ways, resuscitated by the DVD medium, which allowed viewers the opportunity to reconstruct the time and space of their fast-moving urban transits. Even though the urban space of Tokyo, including that of Shinjuku, is now largely unrecognisable from its late-1960s documentation in films such as those by Matsumoto and Oshima, it still presents an open environment for film-makers and digital artists preoccupied with the scanning of urban mutations, and with the exploration of pivotal moments of disquiet and unease with the forms of the city.

That filmic exploration often took the form of an intimate examination of urban surfaces, and their interaction with the human figures poised against them. The urban surfaces of Tokyo, at the end of the 1960s, mediated a set of traces and indicators, about memory and conflict and sexual dynamics, that appeared precarious and unstable, and had to be recorded with both urgency and flexibility, in movements across the face of the city, generating films which enduringly appear as vital archives, of the forms of urban space in a state of uproar and transformation.
Notes
FILM'S CONJURORS: THE SKLADANOWSKY BROTHERS
(2010)

Introduction

In exploring the final detritus of cinematic projection, embodied in the shattered and gutted projection-boxes, the dust-encrusted cans of negated celluloid, and the once-luxurious, now-decrepit auditoria of the cinema-palaces of the 1920s, whose facades still constellate the Broadway avenue, in Los Angeles' Downtown, for my book Abandoned Images, I often experienced the sense that filmic time was held on a knife-edge in that precarious urban location, erasing any linearity of futures or pasts or presents, and could veer from one extreme to another, from film's end to its origins, or back again, in the blink of an iris. And that preoccupation with the seminal welding-together of cinematic projection's end and its initiation then took me from Los Angeles to Berlin, where two near-forgotten brothers, Max and Emil Skladanowsky, had originated public film-projection by showing a programme of their own films, on celluloid stock, to a paying audience at the Wintergarten Ballroom, in Berlin's Central Hotel, on 1 November 1895, almost two months before the Lumière Brothers undertook their own first film-projection for a public audience, at the Grand Cafe in Paris, on 28 December of that year. The Skladanowsky Brothers were almost immediately overtaken, in both technological and aesthetic domains, by their many rivals, so that they became stranded in film-historical no-man's-land, their status overlayered within the conflicting, multiplicitous traces both of film's origins and of the onset of film-projection. Just as the end-point of film is vitally indeterminate, but can be tentatively excavated in fragments in the lavish ruins of cinema-palaces, the origin of film is itself correspondingly indeterminable: quantifiable only within limits, in terms of speed, media, audience and location, among other factors, and also in the non-collaborative, often-vitriolic competitiveness of film's 1890s pioneers. The impasses generated by such multiple and irreconcilable narratives invariably lead to re-invention, in which the time of film's origin becomes malleable, subject to contrary imperatives according to the priorities and demands of narration, with the result that any origin forms a tenuous one, in its telling. The Wintergarten film-screening of 1895 constitutes an initiating event that is tightly enmeshed within conflicting historical, film-
historical, urban-historical and cultural strata, and subject, across the intervening decades, to an intermittent process of visibility, oscillating between prominence and near-extinguishment. But the Skladanowsky Brothers' hold on the temporal origin of film-projection remains a distinctive and ineradicable one, in many ways perversely enhanced by the vanishing of many of its traces and locations, within the urban space of Berlin.

The Skladanowsky Brothers hand-constructed their own projector, with the explicit aim of enabling spectators to assemble in a specific location, orient their vision towards a large-scale screen, and view a programme of films, together, as an audience. They named their projector the 'Bioskop', from the Greek: 'to see life': an instrument that would exact an ocular and sensorial form of entrancement. They also built their own film camera and shot a number of films, and had already reached the stage of experimenting with test-projections of those films, for private audiences of friends and colleagues, in the entertainment room of a cafe in one of the industrial districts of northern Berlin, before they were commissioned by the directors of a far larger and prestigious venue, the Wintergarten Ballroom, to project those films to a paying public, over the duration of a month, as part of a programme that would predominantly feature live performances. After undertaking those projections, they toured across northern Europe with their films, for a period of eighteen months, before abruptly encountering obstacles which halted their experiments and consigned them to oblivion for several decades. The two brothers, Max and Emil, possessed elements both of showmen and of untrained, resourceful inventors, though Max worked principally with the technical aspects of their filmmaking and projection, and Emil's primary contribution involved the promotion of their inventions and arrangements for bringing those inventions to public audiences.

The audiences for public manifestations of moving images, across the pre-filmic and early-cinema eras, from the 1880s to the beginning of the twentieth century, ranged widely. Eadweard Muybridge's scrapbooks of annotated press-articles on his pre-filmic public slide-projections of moving-images, with his 'Zoopraxiscope' device, indicate a breadth of spectators encompassing artists and scientists, aristocrats and royalty, alongside the public audiences that attended his lecture-demonstrations at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. From 1905, the audiences and
venues for film-projection began to acquire elements of a disreputable aura, through the prevalence of nickelodeons, their projection-spaces often improvised through the adaptation of shopfront rooms in rundown urban areas, intimately packed with spectators. The envisaging of a moving-image audience, and of film-spectatorship itself, constituted an intensively mutable one, in perpetual transformation and reorientation, across those formative decades. But the public audience for the Skladanowsky Brothers’ first film-projection event, on 1 November 1895, had a particular form: it was a wealthy audience, of sensation-avid Berliners and international travellers, in sharp distinction to the relatively impoverished artisan-showmen who projected their films to that audience.

The Skladanowsky Brothers possessed a specific urban location, in their attachment to industrial northern Berlin, especially the heavily-populated tenement-districts of Prenzlauerberg and Pankow, which were inhabited at that time mainly by factory-workers, employed notably in the area’s many breweries; as well as living in those districts, Max and Emil Skladanowsky also rented their workshops there, and shot their first film on the rooftop of a building above one of the area’s main avenues, the Schönhauser Allee, its images holding a panorama of factory-chimneys and church-steeples. When the brothers made incursions into central Berlin, and took on engagements to demonstrate their inventions in deluxe venues, such as the Wintergarten Ballroom, it was largely unfamiliar territory for them. But alongside their localised urban attachments, they were also itinerant showmen, who had already spent many years crisscrossing Europe for performances of their earlier inventions and spectacles. That quality of itinerancy, with its incessant exploratory trajectories, is imprinted too in the work of many other critical figures of the first decades of moving-images: Muybridge, above all, with his travels from Kingston-upon-Thames to San Francisco and out into the then-remote regions of California, such as Yosemite Valley, and also Louis Le Prince, who shot the first-ever film, in 1888, while displaced from France to the industrial English city of Leeds, before mysteriously disappearing without trace in the course of his travels. The Skladanowsky Brothers' work took place in fixed, localised parameters in northern Berlin, while simultaneously being encompassed by spatial dimensions that rapidly expanded through the necessity of making public that work.
In many ways, it is the volatile city of Berlin itself which makes the Skladanowsky Brothers' projection-event insurge into life, as though the localised, internally-focused dimension of their work, devised on the urban periphery, were being overruled through the all-engulfing compulsion to strip innovations down and thereby extract new sensations for the constant revivification of the city-centre's lucrative public spectacles. In the 1890s, after many decades of being dismissed as a militaristic, austere city, Berlin had finally emerged as a pre-eminent European site of avid, visually-based spectatorship and lavish over-consumption, manifested above all in the form of variety reviews, staged in luxurious venues such as the Wintergarten Ballroom. The urban historian Alexandra Richie notes: 'The new reviews extolled the virtues of the big city, glorying in its consumerism and cosmopolitan nature and advertising new forms of entertainment which would later be associated exclusively with the Weimar period.'(1) It was in that context that the Skladanowsky Brothers' film-projection event took place: swallowed-alive by that desire for urban spectacle, but simultaneously, in some ways, a profoundly misplaced, aberrant presence within it, as though, even at its origin, film possessed an element of the resistant inassimilability and idiosyncrasy that formed such an essential part of its future history.

The Skladanowsky Brothers

In many ways, the Skladanowsky Brothers conjured public film-projection into existence, their blind determination indicating that they were aware of undertaking something unprecedented and original, and at the same time, unsure exactly what direction they were heading in, or precisely how to accomplish their plans, technologically or financially, but, out of audacity, simply heading on (like the young bell-founder in the final sequence of Tarkovsky's film Andrei Rublev). Like that of Muybridge, the Skladanowsky Brothers' work forms a volatile amalgam of showmanship and invention, with, in their case, the former element often taking the upper hand. In the way in which their career shifted abruptly and illogically, intersecting directly with film for a relatively short period, and also in their capacity to vanish almost without trace and reappear unexpectedly, decades later, in a different guise, they are, in one sense, immediacy-obsessed 'tricksters'. The press reviews of their Wintergarten Ballroom projection-event intimate something of the near-
diabolical transmutations which the unleashing of film-images into the audience's space generated; although enthralled, those spectators appeared simultaneously disturbed, as though subject to a maleficent, askew conjuring-trick able to steal-away their faculties, their hold upon time and reality, and even their corporeal presence. But alongside that capacity to initiate the uncanny, capricious power of film-projection, with its uniquely mysterious aura, the Skladanowsky Brothers were also irrepressible, keenly-focused inventors, finetuned by their social and urban origins to disregard all setbacks and calamities.

The Skladanowsky Brothers, like much of the population of industrial northern Berlin, originated from a social history of displacement, with their name revealing Polish family origins, their ancestors having relocated to the city in the early nineteenth century at a time of mass migration from the impoverished rural regions to the east of Berlin.(2) After the Nazis took power in 1933, their main priority, in assessing the potential for the Skladanowskys' innovations in film to be co-opted into their nationalistic and expulsive agenda, was to determine whether the brothers came from a family of Polish Jews. Their father was a skilled glass-worker but also a performative showman, involved with developing popular public spectacles using 'Nebelbilder': literally, 'fog-images': a particular variant of magic-lantern projections that often exhibited terrifying or macabre images; however, the Skladanowsky family's adaptation of 'Nebelbilder' spectacles focused particularly on historical and mythical scenes, and on spectacular landscapes. Their involvement in 'Nebelbilder' spectacles was situated during the medium's last phase; its main decades of popularity were from the 1800s to the 1890s. Sequences of non-photographic glass slides, hand-painted or inscribed with images, were projected in intricate, rapid sequences, onto a large screen, with complex dissolves and overlayered optical effects, sound-elements, and an ongoing vocal narration. Although he had received only a limited apprenticeship in glass-making, Max Skladanowsky was especially proficient in constructing multi-lens 'Nebelbilder' devices, capable of simultaneously projecting up to eight or nine separate sequences of images. The two brothers, Max and Emil, accompanied their father on numerous cross-European tours of 'Nebelbilder' spectacles in the years from 1879 until 1895, from their mid-teens to early thirties; their older brother, Eugen, worked for several decades as a clown and acrobat, employed by prominent European circuses for touring engagements, and was not closely
involved in their experiments with film-projection. The Skladanowsky
Brothers' final 'Nebelbilder' tours of the mid-1890s were undertaken
without their father; they re-named themselves 'The Hamilton Brothers',
and began to experiment with incorporating new elements, such as
fireworks displays and water-spectacles, into their performances, in
order to accentuate an atmosphere of innovation.

In part, that obsession with expansion and innovation, and their
capacity to design and execute intricate projection devices, led the
Skladanowsky Brothers to film. Although the first films had been shot
several years previously, in 1888, by the engineer and inventor Louis Le
Prince, the technological capacity to project films before public
audiences had not been realized in the intervening years; many
inventors, including Edison, saw the development of public film-
projection as a dead-end, and potentially worthless, while other
inventors from engineering backgrounds, including Le Prince himself,
approached the dilemmas surrounding film-projection with conflicting
imperatives and aims from those of the Skladanowsky Brothers. In some
ways, after the demands of his excessive, multiple-projection
'Nebelbilder' devices, the realization of Max Skladanowsky's film-
projector, the 'Bioskop', may have been in some ways a less exacting
challenge: almost an exercise in streamlining his previous work. The
Lumière Brothers, in Lyons, operated on a sophisticated and well-funded
technological basis, in contrast to the Skladanowsky Brothers' artisanal
and impecunious form of production in Berlin; but, as with the Lumière
Brothers, Max Skladanowsky flexibly meshed precedents and pre-
exisiting experiments. Such technologies were, to varying extents,
accessible for adaptation, through accounts in patents and trade
journals, and could, for itinerant performers such as the Skladanowsky
Brothers, often be witnessed at close proximity during the course of
their travels around Europe. At the same time, the Skladanowsky
Brothers' movement into filmmaking and film-projection forms an
aberration and an unprecedented leap into the dark, exhibiting a
reckless desire for innovation akin to that of Muybridge, with their
conception, however partial, of film as possessing a distinctive entity as
a new moving-image medium, with, integral to that medium, the
amassing in front of a projection-screen of an admission-paying
audience.
The Skladanowsky Brothers devoted their primary attention to the medium of film from 1894, during breaks between their 'Nebelbilder' tours. Although Max Skladanowsky retrospectively backdated the construction of his first film camera, and of his shooting of experimental test film-footage, to 1892, even according a specific date to that first act of filmmaking in Germany, 20 August 1892, the historian Joachim Castan has established that a far more probable date for the film-footage was that of the summer or autumn months of 1894, with the possibility that Max Skladanowsky had been gradually developing his camera, towards that eventual experiment with filmmaking, since 1892 or 1893.(3) Such strategic or hallucinatory manipulations of time were rife, among early cinema's competitive participants, in the subsequent decades' establishment of stratified chronologies and 'formative events' for film. Since the Wintergarten Ballroom film-projection event would only take place in November 1895, Max Skladanowsky justified the inexplicable three-year delay, from his own 1892 starting-date, as being the result of the consistent refusal of funds for the development of his experiments, by bank-managers who derided his plans as being mad and delusional; the financial necessity of constantly having to leave Berlin to undertake extensive 'Nebelbilder' tours had also contributed to the long delay. In 1925, he asserted: 'I could really have made the world the gift of cinema three years earlier.'(4)

The date of the Skladanowsky Brothers' first engagement with film as a medium has vanished in those retrospective conjurations of memory. But by July 1895, they definitively possessed the three vital artefacts for the exhibition of self-shot films to an audience: a film camera, films, and a film projector. As well as having assembled a programme of their own films by that time, they had also hand-constructed both their camera and projector, in their workshop, housed in a five-storey building containing innumerable other artisans' workshops, in a small street that led off the Schönhauser Allee avenue in the Prenzlauerberg district of northern Berlin. While the Skladanowsky Brothers, as adept glass-makers, had previously been able to produce all of their own, hand-painted glass-plate negatives for their 'Nebelbilder' spectacles, they had needed for the first time to order an industrially-produced medium, Eastman-Kodak celluloid film-stock, for their new experiments. But with everything in place, they now envisaged their first public film-projections.
The Wintergarten Ballroom Film-Projection

The Skladanowsky Brothers undertook their experimental film-screenings in the entertainment room of a large cafe, the Cafe Sello, in July 1895, projecting films which they had shot two months earlier. The Cafe Sello was located on the avenue which led from the Prenzlauerberg to Pankow districts of northern Berlin; it was a popular venue for factory workers to drink beer and dance to music. In the future, the entertainment room would become one of Berlin's first cinemas, before being demolished in 1927 and a new, purpose-built cinema, the Tivoli, constructed in its place; the Tivoli, situated in the postwar eastern zone of Berlin, survived the decades of East Germany intact, but not the redevelopment frenzy of the re-unified city, being demolished in 2003 and the site used for a supermarket. The Skladanowsky Brothers invited small, non-paying audiences of friends and fellow photographic artisans and showmen to their test-screenings. Emil Skladanowsky's role was to publicise the brothers' innovations, and Franz Dorn and Julius Baron, the proprietors of the far grander entertainment venue, the Wintergarten Ballroom, attended one of the experimental screenings. Dorn and Baron had taken over the Wintergarten eight years earlier and transformed it into an upmarket variety review venue, one of the most successful in Europe, in which original, international spectacles were especially prized by the audience, though the programme's format and content also drew on that of the small-scale local satirical cabaret-shows, of story-telling and music, distinctive to Berlin, that were pervasive at that time in cafes and beerhalls in industrial areas of the city, such as the Cafe Sello.

Impressed by what they saw of the Skladanowsky Brothers' experiments, Dorn and Baron decided to commission the brothers to demonstrate their film-projector as part of the variety review spectacle they were developing for the month of November, four months into the future; a contract for the engagement was signed in September. But the Wintergarten proprietors were not only interested in the Skladanowsky Brothers' film-projection 'act' for that spectacle, and were searching for attractions in any medium that could serve to seize the attention of their innovation-avid audiences; they also engaged the brothers for the entirety of the preceding month, October, to present an entirely different attraction: a water-theatre spectacle which the brothers had recently been developing as an addition to their 'Nebelbilder'
performances, in the form of a spectacular re-staging of the Roman Empire-era sea-battle of Alexandria.

Max Skladanowsky had hand-built his film-projector, the dual lens Bioskop, in his workshop, from wood, glass and steel components, during the months immediately preceding the Cafe Sello test-screenings. It was entirely his own work, and used a dissolve technique adapted from his previous 'Nebelbilder' projectors; he had commissioned a set of steel parts from a nearby artisans' workshop, and bought lamps for the projector's two lens, but had assembled everything singlehandedly. The result was an unprecedented, irreplicable and idiosyncratic artefact: one of its kind, as with Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope - and utterly dissimilar, in its effective but maladroit construction, from the far more technically proficient device employed by the Lumière Brothers, for their own film-projections in December of that year. The projector used a manually-turned wooden handle with a metal chain, which advanced two separate reels of film, their trajectory extending, via revolving cogs at the base of each side of the projector, almost to floor-level. To reach the projection-speed of 16 frames per second necessary for the images' movement to be perceived as a continuous sequence by the human eye, without excessive flicker, each film's images were assigned alternately to the two reels, and a serrated, revolving circular steel-plate, positioned in front of the two lens and regulated by the handle which also advanced the film-reels, allowed one lens to project while the other was obscured. Max Skladanowsky used his Bioskop projector for both the Cafe Sello and Wintergarten Ballroom events.

The Wintergarten Ballroom was situated within the lavish Central Hotel, one of Berlin's new, grand hotels, modelled on those of Paris and New York, and taking up an entire street-block in the Friedrichstrasse, an avenue of shopping arcades and restaurants in the centre of the city; the hotel was one of the first buildings to be seen by travellers disembarking from trains at the adjacent Friedrichstrasse railway station. The ballroom was a vast, elongated and glass-roofed space with several stages, extending from one end of the hotel to the other, along its ground floor; its clientele sat around circular tables, on several levels, rather than in rows. That clientele encompassed both wealthy, elegantly dressed Berliners, avid for new sensations, and also the hotel's international guests, who reflected Berlin's abrupt expansion as a new destination for prosperous travellers. As Alexandra Richie notes: 'a million visitors a year
were arriving via the new water and rail networks which encircled the city, and the small dank inns of old gave way to the newest additions to the Berlin skyline, the grand hotels. In the late nineteenth century the size and style of hotels were considered a measure of the city's greatness, and Berliners were eager to compete with their rivals. (5) The Wintergarten programme was not intended for spectators from the overcrowded and impoverished industrial areas of the city, nor for its artists and scientists. That site of the Skladanowsky Brothers' initiatory film-projection event would vanish almost fifty years later, when the Central Hotel was destroyed by British wartime bombing on 21 June 1944; the ballroom's roof-less ruins survived for several years before being dynamited and razed by the East German authorities in the 1950s and left as a wasteland. The site is currently occupied by newly-built multi-storey offices and shops.

The Skladanowsky Brothers' film-projection event began on 1 November and continued for four weeks, with a total of 23 projections in all. The entire evening's programme lasted for over three hours and was held daily at 7.30pm, with the Sunday shows beginning at 7pm. The Skladanowsky Brothers' contribution to the programme appeared on advertising posters mid-way down the hoardings, with an exclamatory emphasis on its status as a never previously experienced innovation. Top-billing went to Mlle Gabriele Juniori, advertised as travelling to Berlin 'from the Empire Theatre in London', along with other acts, such as Mr Tompson ('with his three elephants'), 'Die Wüstensohne' ('The Sons of the Desert'), and 'Griffin und Dubois' ('eccentrics'). The Wintergarten Ballroom held 1,500 spectators and each show was invariably at full capacity, but not all of the audience watched the Skladanowsky Brothers' films. Their contribution to the evening was spatially assigned to a small side-stage at the northern end of the auditorium, away from the main stage, and could only be experienced by spectators sitting around tables directly in front of the screen. And the film-projection was kept until the conclusion of the evening's entertainment, when part of the audience had already dispersed. The curtained screen was surrounded by elaborate gilt decorations featuring winged angels and mythical figures. The Skladanowsky Brothers' film-projections lasted for around fifteen minutes in total. (6) The screen had to be kept wet to enhance its transparency and the clarity of the film-images; rear-projection was used, with the Bioskop situated directly behind the screen, rather than in front of it, and a loud music score had
been especially composed, capable of drowning out the cacophony of the projector's operation.(7)

The film-projections were successful; although the Skladanowsky Brothers had no fallback device on hand in case the Bioskop malfunctioned, the month's projections passed without major mishap. Press reviews of the Wintergarten programme especially emphasised the three performing elephants as the evening's main attraction, but the Skladanowsky Brothers' contribution was evoked as being well-received, by audiences who responded with prolonged applause and threw flowers at the screen. Max and Emil Skladanowsky appeared on stage at the conclusion of their projections, appearing from opposite sides of the screen and thereby replicating the content of the final film in their programme, in which they had been filmed performing the same manoeuvre. Berlin newspapers of the time were rarely critical of variety reviews staged by the city's principal venues, since they depended on advertising revenue from those same venues; no criticism was made, for example, of the technical limitations of the Skladanowsky Brothers' projections, which were praised for being innovative and enthralling, but with a distinct undertone of unease. The Berlin newspaper, the *Staatsburger Zeitung*, reviewed the projections on 5 November 1895: 'The skilful technician employs delightful moments of photography here, bringing them in enlarged form into representation, but in a living rather than stilted form. How he does it, only the devil knows.'(8) In that evocation of the devil omnisciently masterminding the Skladanowsky Brothers' film-projections, a trace is present of the future suspicions of outlandishness and ungodliness, closely associated with film and its cinematic sites for their first thirty or so years, before such qualms were finally dispelled in the 1920s by the architectural lavishness of 'cathedrals' or 'palaces' of film, their decor often literally replicating that of religious buildings, such as Segovia Cathedral, and embodied above all in that era's designs for the cinemas of Los Angeles' Broadway district.

The Skladanowsky Brothers had been paid a substantial sum - 2,500 gold marks - by the Wintergarten Ballroom's proprietors for the month of November 1895.(9) The success of their projections, at such a prominent venue, led to further commissions, but they had only achieved the first public film-projection event by a hairsbreadth, and that success rapidly unravelled. The brothers were contracted for an engagement at the prestigious Folies Bergère venue in Paris, to begin on
1 January 1896, and travelled to Paris with the Bioskop on 27 December; on the 29th, one of the proprietors of the Folies Bergère took them to see the second evening of the Lumière Brothers' film-projections at the Salon Indien, situated in the basement of Paris's Grand Café (a far smaller projection-room than the Wintergarten Ballroom, seating only around 30 spectators, each of whom had paid one franc for admittance), and abruptly cancelled their contract, either due to international patent conflicts, or else because the Lumière Brothers had requested that cancellation. In addition, the technical superiority of the Lumière Brothers' 'Cinématographe' projector and the image-quality of their films was evident. Another engagement, at the Empire Theatre in London, was also annulled. But the Skladanowsky Brothers were able to tour extensively with the Bioskop, until September 1896, in Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, including occasions, as with an engagement at the Concerthaus in Hamburg in mid-December 1895, when only their films were shown, without an enveloping programme of variety-acts. As their tour progressed, it became apparent that the Skladanowsky Brothers were being rapidly surpassed by their competitors.

The Films of the Skladanowsky Brothers

The films which the Skladanowsky Brothers projected at the Wintergarten Ballroom during November 1895, and on their subsequent film-tour until September of the following year, were almost exclusively sequences showing variety performers: together, their films assembled a slightly downmarket programme of variety acts to those appearing on the main stage of the Wintergarten, so that spectators exposed to those moving-images must have felt they were experiencing - through the medium of film, and at the evening's end - a concertinaed, phantasmatic variant of the live performances that had just finished. The Skladanowsky Brothers' films of the urban life of Berlin, recorded both in the peripheries and at the heart of the city, would be shot only in the following year, and projected only once, for their final screening-event in the city of Stettin in March 1897. And the brothers' very first film, shot as an experimental test on the rooftop of a building above the Schönhauser Allee avenue, belongs more to that second set of films than the first. In the film, Emil Skladanowsky is seen standing on the building's roof, dressed in a suit and tie, and holding his hat; he performs exaggerated corporeal gestures, pitched between gymnastics and
clowning, alternately lifting each leg high into the air. The film camera is facing south, towards the centre of Berlin, in the opposite direction to the Skladanowsky Brothers' own local districts, as though intimating the direction in which their experiments were now taking them. The shadows cast by Emil Skladanowsky's figure indicate that the film was shot around midday, in direct sunlight. Behind his figure, a panorama is visible of factory and brewery chimneys, and large tenements, with the distinctive pointed steeple of the nearby Zionskirche church prominent in that cityscape. A notable strategy of early filmmakers was to focus their cameras on sites in which a maximal concentration of urban traces could be registered by their potential spectator, as with one of Le Prince's first films from 1888, of human and vehicle traversals of Leeds Bridge; with the Skladanowsky Brothers' film, the gesturing human body is in the foreground of the image, with the Berlin cityscape forming a cohering framework for it. But, as with Le Prince's film of Leeds Bridge, the Skladanowsky Brothers' first film was never projected, and was not included in the Wintergarten programme. It survived only in fragments; the Prenzlauerberg Museum in Berlin possesses four celluloid frames, two of them exceptionally clear, with considerable detail of the urban panorama behind Emil Skladanowsky's figure, and the other two frames blurred and scratched, holding residues of damage in the form of scorch-marks from fire or smoke. The entire film had comprised 48 frames, so if it had been projected at 16 frames per second, it would have had a projection-duration of three seconds.

The eight short films projected at the Wintergarten Ballroom were all longer, comprising between 99 and 174 frames, and were each shown repeatedly, in loops. Shot in May 1895, two months before the Cafe Sello test-projections, they showed physical spectacles, dances and acrobatics. The first film to be projected each evening simulated an Italian peasants' dance, performed by two children; a further film depicted a wrestling contest featuring a celebrated bodybuilder and wrestler of the era, Eugen Sandow, fighting another wrestler named Greiner; the other films showed a boxing kangaroo, an acrobatics display, a human pyramid, a juggler, and a Russian cossacks' dance; finally, the film of the Skladanowsky Brothers themselves, appearing from either side of the screen, ended the programme. In some cases, the films held only a fragment of the complete action, which had either already begun before the camera started to record it, or else continued after the film had run-out. Other than their shared recording of
contemporary variety performers, the programme's film-fragments held no linear or interlocking cohesion; together, the films formed a disjointed sequence of moments of eruptive and compelling spectacle, similar, in some ways, to the forms of 1960s European and American experimental cinema, such as the films of Kenneth Anger and Kurt Kren, which also possessed something of the aura of diabolical outlandishness, noted by the Wintergarten programme's press-reviews. In compiling and filming that programme, even before they had been commissioned to show their work at the Wintergarten, the Skladanowsky Brothers evidently devised a content which could be dependably well-received at a city-centre variety hall, and would allow their spectators, to the maximum possible extent, to recognise, situate and respond to the moving-images they were faced with. The brothers' specific choice of performers was clearly influenced, too, by their recent exposure to the Edison company's 'Kinetoscope' individual film-viewing machines, designed by William Dickson, which had been installed at another prominent Friedrichstrasse entertainment-venue, Castans Panoptikum, in March 1895, two months before the brothers shot their own films, and which showed similar physical feats and dances.

For the Wintergarten Ballroom projection, the Skladanowsky Brothers used film-strips of 44.5mm-wide unperforated Eastman-Kodak film-stock, which they meticulously cut and perforated by hand, so that it could run with the minimum disruption in front of the Bioskop's twin lens. The film-celluloid was also coated with a special emulsion, devised by Max Skladanowsky and applied with a brush. The films were all shot out-of-doors, either in the garden of the Cafe Sello or those of the venues in which the performers were then appearing, in direct sunlight, to achieve clarity and contrast. But most of the work of preparing both the shooting and projection of the films was undertaken in the Skladanowsky Brothers' own workshop, which functioned in that sense as an improvised and formative film-studio, prescient, in its artisanal dimensions, of the studio of the film-pioneer Georges Méliès, similarly installed on the urban periphery, in the eastern Paris suburb of Montreuil, and in which Méliès (who, like the Skladanowsky Brothers, attended the Lumière Brothers' film-projections at the Salon Indien in December 1895) began to shoot his hundreds of extravagant film-conjurations from March 1897 onwards. The Skladanowsky Brothers' workshop-studio also, in some ways, prefigures the spatial form of the far larger Weissensee film-studio, constructed in 1913 as a one-storey
brick building in a Berlin district adjacent to that of their own workshop, and in which many of the seminal films of early German cinema, such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, were shot, before that studio abruptly went out of business in the late 1920s, in the face of competition from industrial-scale film-studios, with the derelict Weissensee film-studio building eventually being utilised, as it is today, as a sub-divided space for numerous artisans' workshops, in much the same way as the Skladanowsky Brothers' workshop-building operated in 1895. The brothers' first film, of Emil Skladanowsky's gestural movements against Berlin's urban panorama, was shot only a short distance from that workshop; access to the building's roof could be gained since a friend of the brothers operated his own business there.

The Skladanowsky Brothers' final films were shot during the later months of their projection-tour across Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, and also immediately after it, upon their return to Berlin. By that time, the original films shown at the Wintergarten Ballroom had worn out through over-use, and had become severely damaged (nothing now survives of the originally-projected films, only copies); in addition, the brothers had become aware that they urgently needed new films to seize the attention of their future audiences, and urban film-sequences fulfilled that desire. For their new films, they used 63mm-wide celluloid film-stock. In the centre of Berlin, they documented concentrations of horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians in one of Berlin's main squares, the Alexanderplatz, and along the Unter den Linden avenue; in their own districts of industrial northern Berlin, they filmed at the Schönholz railway station, and also shot a further panorama from the rooftop of the building on which Emil Skladanowsky had performed his gymnastics movements, but this time with the camera facing in the opposite direction, northwards, focused on a busy street-corner, the Ecke Schönhauser, and without the foregrounded presence of a human figure. They also shot extremely brief 'fiction' films, depicting choreographed quarrels, such as one filmed in a public garden in Stockholm during the final phase of their projection-tour. In anticipation of future public screenings of their new films, Max Skladanowsky constructed a more sophisticated projector, the single-lens Bioskop-II, during the summer of 1896. But a second film-tour proved impossible to arrange. The Skladanowsky Brothers demonstrated their new projector and films to the Wintergarten's proprietors, with a view to being commissioned for a second engagement there, in February 1897, but
were turned-down in favour of rival film-exhibitors with more advanced projection-devices and films. The only engagement they could secure was in the provincial port-city of Stettin, north-east of Berlin, at the 2,000-capacity Zentrallhallen-Theater (later destroyed, like the Wintergarten, by British wartime bombing, along with most of what was then a German city, but became the postwar Polish city, Szczecin, its surviving German inhabitants expelled, and replaced by a population displaced from Polish territory annexed by the Soviet Union); the Skladanowsky Brothers showed their new city-films there for the only time, adding to that programme a new city-film shot and then rapidly developed in Stettin during the course of their two-week engagement. It was also the only occasion on which the brothers used their new projector, the Bioskop-II, for public screenings. On 31 March 1897, exactly seventeen months after their first Wintergarten screening, the brothers projected films for the last time.

The Oblivion and Memory of the Skladanowsky Brothers

The Skladanowsky Brothers' brief film-career collapsed abruptly, in disarray and acrimony, on their return to Berlin from Stettin. In that highly regulated and bureaucratic era, expensive trade licences were required in Germany for such activities as public spectacles; the Berlin authorities declined to renew the brothers' license, which had expired on the last day of their engagement in Stettin, on the grounds that too many other film-exhibitors were now in operation (since the Wintergarten Ballroom projections, further film-screenings had become commonplace, and the first cinema-space in Berlin, devoted exclusively to the projection of films, had been opened in April 1896 by the film-entrepreneur Oskar Messter, in the backroom of a restaurant on the Unter den Linden avenue). In addition, the Skladanowsky Brothers would have had difficulty in paying for a new license even if it had been granted, since their long film-tour, with its cancellations and its necessity for sustained technological investment, had not been profitable. The two brothers, Max and Emil, fell out bitterly in June of that year, on their father's death, in a dispute over inheritance matters; Emil Skladanowsky was accused of attempting to defraud the other family members, and was ostracised by them. The quarrel was never resolved, and the brothers remained alienated from one another for the rest of their lives. In the following years, Max Skladanowsky switched his operations to the
production of 'Daumenkino': small-format flick-books, which proved relatively lucrative. The flick-books' images were shot with a film-camera, with the resulting stills then compiled into handheld, elongated books, thumb-flicked to create continuous visual movement; the flick-books' contents ranged widely, from mild pornography to Berlin street-scenes and sequences showing political or aristocratic figures. Max Skladanowsky also created promotional flick-books to sell to manufacturing companies, such as one showing his daughter Gertrud drinking a meat-extract called 'Liebig's Fleischextract'.(11) Although he was not a pioneer of flick-books (they had been in existence since the 1860s), his original use of film-image sequences as their contents gave his products a distinctive aura, and he was able to make a living for at least a decade by producing and distributing them. During that period, he still had a residual interest in film-projection, and experimented in the years 1901-03 with ideas for colour film and three-dimensional technologies; however, he had no resources to exploit those experiments further, and with the decline of interest in flick-books, he instead established a workshop, in the industrial Prenzlauerberg district, for the production and sale of amateur photographic and filmmaking equipment. During the subsequent decades of obscurity, in which his film-projection innovations had been almost completely consigned to oblivion, he concentrated on taking photographs during long journeys on foot around northern Berlin, notably images of advertising hoardings announcing the building of new tenements in wastelands, as Berlin rapidly expanded northwards, and also panoramic photographs, often taken from the elevated summits of water-towers, documenting the traces of that urban expansion; at least some of those photographs were intended to be used for postcard-images. In some senses, Max Skladanowsky moved backwards in time after the dissolution of his seminal film-projection innovations, to the pre-filmic era, with his flick-book and photographic work. Emil Skladanowsky also returned to the kinds of spectacles he had been involved with before the Wintergarten film-screenings, notably managing tours of a successful water-theatre spectacle, before eventually gambling away all of his money.

Max Skladanowsky experienced an unexpected resurgence, and a return to public prominence, when the Nazi government came to power in Germany in 1933. Determined to recast all cultural lineages in order to highlight the pre-eminent role of Germany, the Nazi cultural authorities seized on the Wintergarten Ballroom film-projection event in order to
elevate the now-elderly and semi-forgotten Max Skladanowsky to the status of a great German inventor. The propaganda minister Josef Goebbels appeared at a gala-evening dedicated to Max Skladanowsky at the lavish Atrium cinema in Berlin on 4 May 1933, and Hitler himself attended a private screening of the Skladanowsky Brothers' films in 1935. (12) Celebratory tours around Germany were arranged at which Max Skladanowsky spoke about his projection experiments and showed the 1896 city-films, which had since been transferred onto 35mm film. On the 40th anniversary of the Wintergarten projections, a month-long commemorative event was held at that venue, and Max Skladanowsky projected copies of the original 1895 films with the Bioskop; the estranged brothers were unwillingly brought together for the first time in almost forty years, for photographs in which each stares fixedly in opposed directions. Max Skladanowsky was fully complicit in the Nazis' support for his 1890s work, adding numerous 'Heil Hitler!' exclamations to his letters and also declaring the Bioskop to be an authentically German, non-Jewish invention; however, that support came at a moment when he was impoverished, following the collapse of his photographic business, and his enthusiasm for Nazism may have been, to some degree, feigned. The Nazi authorities were also ambivalent in their endorsement of Max Skladanowsky, in part because of his Polish family origins, but also because it was apparent that, since the mid-1920s, he had been clumsily reinventing the chronology of his filmmaking activities, backdating the rooftop film of Emil Skladanowsky to 1892, and also including the 1896 city-films among those screened at the Wintergarten in the preceding year. The Nazis' interest in him had declined by the time of his death in 1939, just after the outbreak of the Second World War; Emil Skladanowsky outlived his brother, and died shortly after the war's end, in 1945. During wartime British bombing-raids on Berlin, many of the Skladanowsky Brothers' filmmaking and film-projection artefacts, stored at the Reichsfilmkammer building, were incinerated; other materials, kept at the Skladanowsky family home in the district of Pankow, were destroyed during the chaotic house-to-house looting which took place once the invading Soviet army had reached northern Berlin in April 1945.

In the postwar era, the Pankow district was incorporated into the eastern, Soviet-controlled zone of Berlin. The surviving collection of the Skladanowsky Brothers' artefacts became dispersed. Max Skladanowsky's children sold much of that collection, including the
Bioskop-I projector itself, to the East German state film-archive in 1966; an initial assessment of the material's condition categorised it as being 'in a terrible state'.(13) Much of that newly-acquired material was then sent to Paris on loan, in 1970, to the Cinémathèque Française, and was either forgotten or neglected there, before finally being returned to the now re-unified Germany in 1994; that material eventually became part of the German Bundesarchiv collection of film and theatre artefacts. The Bioskop-I projector has been exhibited since 1983 at the Potsdam Filmmuseum, close to Berlin. In Berlin itself, surviving artefacts of the Skladanowsky Brothers are held at the Deutsche Kinemathek film-centre, including copies of the films shown at the Wintergarten Ballroom in 1895, together with flick-books, travel-schedules, and press-books from the brothers' film-projection and 'Nebelbilder' tours (disordered counterparts, in some ways, to Muybridge's meticulous scrapbook-documentation of his own Zoopraxiscope tours). The Deutsches Technikmuseum displays the Skladanowsky Brothers' camera, used for the films shown at the Wintergarten, together with the Bioskop-II projector, both on loan from the Bundesarchiv collection. The Prenzlauerberg Museum, in the district of industrial northern Berlin where the Skladanowsky Brothers undertook their workshop-based experiments and shot their first film, holds many of their fragile glass-plate negatives, along with the photographs taken by Max Skladanowsky during his final decades.

At the time of celebrations for the centenary of public film-projection, in 1995, a new engagement with the Skladanowsky Brothers' work led to the restoration, from surviving copies or photographic images, of the programme of films shown at the Wintergarten Ballroom in 1895, undertaken, in part digitally, by the Optronik company in Potsdam; that programme of films was then shown in February 1995 at the Zoo-Palast cinema in Berlin, as part of that year's Berlin Film Festival. In the same year, Wim Wenders completed his semi-fictional film on the Skladanowsky Brothers' projections with the Bioskop, Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky (Trick of the Light), directed in collaboration with film-students of the Munich Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, and incorporating a sequence shot at the Potsdam Filmmuseum of the actor Udo Kier, playing Max Skladanowsky, operating the original, re-illuminated Bioskop projector; the film also includes extracts from interviews with Max Skladanowsky's youngest daughter, Lucie. At the film's end, a horse-drawn black carriage, carrying ghosts of the
Skladanowsky family, disappears into the vast construction-site then engulfing the Potsdamerplatz in central Berlin. On the 70th anniversary of Max Skladanowsky's death, in 2009, the German Bundesarchiv completed its digitisation of images of its archival artefacts, and made them openly available online.(14)

The traces of the Skladanowsky Brothers in contemporary Berlin are simultaneously engrained, and erased: subject to oblivion, but also held within the profoundly shattered urban and filmic memory of the city, which compulsively projects its twin dynamics of illumination and catastrophe: a projection to be intimately experienced, in standing directly in front of the Bioskop, with its dual lens, one open, one closed.

Notes
4. Fürstenau, p.10.
5. Richie, p.212.
7. Castan, p.57.
9. ibid, p.23.
14. The images are on the website: www.bild.bundesarchiv.de Thanks to the Potsdam Filmmuseum, the Prenzlauerberg Museum, the Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin, the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin, and the Bundesarchiv Film-Archiv Berlin. Translations from German are by the author.
Pierre Guyotat's *Coma* is a book of fragments that, in their amassing and accumulation, recount a narrative of simultaneous corporeal and linguistic disintegration and emaciation, in the form of a journey of hallucinations and travels undertaken through France, that leads towards a dead-end: a near-fatal physical coma, and a terminal breakdown of language - which, through a further aberration (one of many to be experienced in Guyotat's work), eventually transmutates into the form of a book of resuscitation, and into a new language: *Coma*.

The timeframe of the book begins almost twenty years in the future from the moment of Guyotat's coma, so that we know immediately that the book projects itself as an act of survival as well as one of disintegration. In 1999 - at 'the close of one of the last afternoons of the last century of the millennium', as Guyotat writes - he and a companion attend a performance of Balinese dance (a re-creation of a performance at the Vincennes Colonial Exhibition, witnessed by the theorist Antonin Artaud in 1931) at a theatre in Paris, but their perspective onto the performance is askew: 'Seated in the chamber of the red and gold hall, and to the right of the stage, we see the show at an angle: profiles of bodies, objects and instruments.' That askew and intermittent vision, obscured by obstacles and necessitating extreme effort on the part of the spectator, serves to intensify the spectacle, and mirrors the reader's experience of *Coma* itself: in many ways, that of unbearable physical meltdown, anguish and depression, plummeting beyond consciousness and impossible to grasp in its entirety, and, at the same time, a revelatory experience of language. Leaving the theatre after the performance, Guyotat witnesses a derelict writer of his own age, standing in the street and trying to sell shreds of paper inscribed with handwritten poems, and he observes that: *That's me, really... that should be me... That man is myself if I was not myself.* The last-gasp, end-of-millennium starting-point of *Coma*, and of Guyotat's act of memory, backwards in time to the period of his physical and linguistic disintegration, is sparked by that mysterious vision of identicality: the itinerant writer who, in his dereliction, appears to be Guyotat, but is simultaneously not him, through the scandals and legends unleashed by
his own distinctive past history, thereby unpeeling him from that mirror-image, so that the book is now able to begin.

Guyotat has a unique position in French writing and theory through that distinctive background of scandal, censorship and legend; his work, suppressed for its perceived sexual and political outrages, had to be defended by many of the prominent European artists and theorists of the 1960s and 1970s: Pier Paolo Pasolini, Roland Barthes, Jean Genet, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, among many others. Guyotat is the son of a mountain doctor, born in rural France in 1940: the year of the Fall of France to the invading German army, leading to the Resistance activities and deportations to concentration camps which became an integral part of Guyotat's family history and of his developing consciousness, in which photographs of carbonised bodies beside extermination-camp barbed-wire fences (one reproduction of which appears in *Coma*) and photographs of pornography, passed hand to hand at his boarding-school, are formatively welded together. As a young man, Guyotat volunteered to become a French soldier in the war of colonial liberation in Algeria, and was arrested and imprisoned for his support of the Algerian rebels; subsequently, he returned several times to Algeria, after it had gained independence from France, and travelled to other African countries, especially Niger, on precarious desert journeys which provided many of the locations - battlefields, wastelands and brothels - for his celebrated novels of the 1960s, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* and *Eden, Eden, Eden*, which experimented both with the writing of death and sexuality, and also with the process of writing itself: *Eden, Eden, Eden* formed one, open-ended, book-length sentence, linguistically hypnotic and unstoppable in its relentless incantation of acts of torture, massacre and prostitutional sex. That novel, in particular, led to widespread social and political outrage and was placed under censorship measures for more than a decade, while the earlier *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* had an immense readership among the young students who attempted a street-riot revolution in Paris in May 1968.

*Coma* is positioned in time in the period after those furores, when Guyotat had become a celebrated public figure, lauded by theorists such as Foucault and Barthes, and with a wide readership in France, but simultaneously a profoundly subterranean and near-invisible one, living in poverty in the tiny, cemetery-adjointing apartment where he suffered
his coma, or restlessly travelling in a camper-van between the gardens of friends in rural southern France, living itinerantly and out-of-doors. He published only one novel in the 1970s - *Prostitution*, in which the corporeal obsessions and linguistic experimentation of *Eden, Eden, Eden* are exacerbated, and intercut with vocal shards from other languages, especially Arabic - but continued to work incessantly, with an accumulating, headlong velocity, while experiencing periods of depression and hallucination; the timescale of *Coma* is both that of the resulting end-point of his calamitous overdrive, and also that of a moment in which time becomes stilled and malleable, and may be propelled infinitely, into the past or future.

Guyotat's own future after the near-fatal breakdown-period narrated in *Coma* was one of gradual re-assembly and rehabilitation to life. He published one of the two novels he had worked on in the period leading up to his coma, *Le Livre (The Book)*, 1984, while the other novel, *Histoires de Samora Machel (Stories of Samora Machel)* remains unpublished; he began giving public readings, notably at the Centre Pompidou arts-centre in Paris, as a kind of performance art, especially in the form of improvisations in which he invented narratives from scratch, often developing them across several hours' duration. He continues to publish intermittently in France, and his most recent book, *Arrière-fond (Background)*, 2010, interrogates the sexual hallucinations he experienced during a journey as a youth to north-eastern England in 1955. His status in France has, in some ways, reversed from that of the peripheral, obscene reputation he had in the early 1970s; *Coma* won a major French literary prize, and Guyotat is often presented as a last-surviving avant-garde legend, in an era in which all other living French writers now appear banalised and consumerism-enslaved, by contrast with his particular history. The French national library, which holds his archives, is planning to digitise his dense, corporeally-inscribed manuscripts, and his work has been translated in recent years into other languages, including Japanese, Russian and English; the *Semiotext(e)* edition of *Coma* cryptically offers no clues about this, so you would have to be psychic to know that Guyotat's seminal books, *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* and *Eden, Eden, Eden*, are readily available in English-language translations, published in the UK respectively in 1995 and 2003, and that extracts and fragments from Guyotat's work have appeared in English in journals of theory and poetry, especially *Curtains*, as far back as the 1970s.
Coma is the story of a man who writes himself to death, but is brought back from death (Guyotat literally had to be resuscitated from a heartstopped state, in a hospital emergency-room), and writes a book about the experiences - many of them experiences of ecstasy - that created that coma.

Only the final eight or so pages of the book concern Guyotat's coma, his experience of falling into it, the dreams and hallucinations (many of them indirectly filtered and re-figured from the corporeal and spatial occurrences in the hospital ward around him), and his gradual awakening, in which his self - the 'I' that narrates - is shattered. The remainder of the book constitutes the journey of Guyotat's disintegration, extending over several years but irrevocably heading towards his coma, as though all of his travels are undertaken and synchronised to give that fall beyond consciousness its maximum impact. As a result, the book forms a topographical exploration of landscape, with successive trajectories from location to location, by camper-van, across southern France and the island of Corsica, layered over and into the intensive excoriation exacted by Guyotat on his own body, which becomes progressively more emaciated and fossilised during the course of those travels; Guyotat is always working outdoors, in open fields, fearing constraint and confinement, including literal incarcerations in clinics (in the early part of the book, his friends have him temporarily committed to a private psychiatric clinic in the Paris suburbs). He incorporates the landscape and its figures into his texts: 'by moving my campsite around, I change my ground; I change my historical direction. In the work at hand, I change the very ground on which I settle... People that walk by, farmers toiling in fields around mine, children, animals, they enter my pages, transformed in time and space.'

Coma's concentration on Guyotat's incessant journeys, narrated as fragmentary episodes, generates a mobile, mutating text within which the reader is always on slippery, displaced ground. Guyotat's journey of self-disintegration parallels that of Jean Genet, who travelled, mostly on foot, across Europe in the 1930s, crisscrossing the continent in solitude and exposure, including a traversal of Nazi Germany, begging, stealing and prostituting himself as he went, and eventually narrated that journey - in his book The Thief's Journal - as one which ultimately
returned him to Paris, where he began his career as a criminal, poet and novelist. Genet, too, perceived a seminal, creative identicality between himself and the human figures he encountered, and wrote of being face-to-face in a train compartment with a decrepit, drooling old man, and feeling their identities exchange themselves, backwards and forwards, between their bodies. And as with Genet's nomadic and literally outlandish travels, Guyotat's journey finally returns him to Paris, but even there, he remains constantly on the move, as he walks the entire face of the city each night to locate pharmacies in which he is not known, and where he can purchase drugs that assist in the relentless stripping-down of his self.

Coma is, above all, a book of hallucinations, and of the creative directing and wielding of hallucination as a disciplined act, into the form of language. In an interview from 2010, Guyotat noted: 'Hallucination is my natural state, but it's a kind of hallucination that I control.' However, the hallucinations in Coma, in the form of the passages Guyotat narrates from the journey that leads towards his breakdown, are often ones in which the hallucination is dangerously unstable, and jolts between media. While driving at night through rural France, he hallucinates while at the wheel, conjuring hordes of dogs which threaten to engulf him and can only be controlled, from within the hallucination, by a form of vocal outburst: 'But in a village, where a spike of terror has made me stop and step out of the van, settle on a bench in the middle of the central square with its circle of insect-veiled street lamps, here they come lunging from all convergent avenues. As they pause, suddenly, in their charge, a cry rips out that I think might free me, but terrorises my own limbs instead. The dogs bolt in the opposite direction.' In another passage, Guyotat hallucinates while vomiting an overdose of drugs in the toilets located beneath a cinema auditorium; the film's cacophonic soundtrack is audible through the ceiling, and Guyotat immediately integrates it, along with sequences from the film, into the ongoing hallucinations for his writing-process. The hallucinations he narrates in Coma are almost always in the medium of abrupt flashes, written in condensed form and separated from one another, so that the book itself often appears more a filmic rather than literary experience, comprising intensive, rapid bursts of probing and demanding imagery like those of experimental films by Kurt Kren and Stan Brakhage.
Much of the scandal attached to Guyotat's work in the 1960s and 1970s emerged from its pervasive sexual content, which led to parallels with the Marquis de Sade's novels, rather than to genres of erotic fiction; his novel *Eden, Eden, Eden*, written in 1968-69, recounted an unending, escalating succession of sexual acts between predominantly male prostitutes, overseers, clients, animals and inanimate objects in desert brothels, surrounded by an aura of warfare, and Guyotat's work in that era became so excessively and uniquely pornographic that its overkill served to destabilise and overturn the status of pornography itself. Guyotat viewed pornography as the emanation of society's power. Almost forty years on, in *Coma*, it is Guyotat himself who becomes the tentative protagonist for his book's sexual episodes, in which, for example, he encounters a young Algerian man on a building-site in the desolate peripheries of Marseilles. But rather than the sexual act itself, he writes of the darkened, improvised surroundings in which it takes place, as though even the final gestures of sex undertaken by his ailing body, as it descends in emaciation towards its coma, are inflected by the abyss into which he is gradually falling: 'he leads me, in a large warehouse area under renovation, up to a high building, gray and red, with a broken window from which tattered strips of black and khaki covers hang and flap. In a long hall with cast-iron pillars, where parts of the wood floor are rotting upon black earth, silhouettes, young, bundled-up, err from one pillar to another. At the end, on raised flooring and near a hole that a plank runs through - water, underneath, toilets or the sea? - are five, seven mats where other bodies sleep under covers, except for arms, bandaged or not.'

Most of the episodes of Guyotat's corporeal and linguistic disintegration in *Coma* take place in isolation and solitude, including his final fall into a comatose state (only the chance intervention of a friend leads to his last-minute discovery and reanimation in hospital). Although the act of being humiliated - sexually or otherwise - or of self-humiliation, has always been an important one throughout his work, and presented by him as part of the exacting process by which a new language emerges, through the shattering and re-figuring of the self, such acts are almost invariably closed to view, like body-based performance art actions of laceration and sexual endangerment (those of the Vienna Action Group, for example) which were staged without an audience, and documented only through photographs. Only very occasionally does Guyotat allow his state of exposure and vulnerability
to be witnessed, as in a sequence in which, unable either to eat or defecate, his body has stalled, and his humiliation is witnessed by the friend in whose garden he is staying: 'Later during the week, when the family has gone for lunch somewhere in the city, my friend returns early to find me on all fours, in the bathroom, a branch sticking out from my ass, fiddling inside my anus and trying in that way to extricate the faeces that have grown more and more compact. I am not surprised by his shock, not does it hurt me.' *Coma* is a book whose acts of acute corporeal exposure and the process of their transmutation into language finally require a reader or witness, who may be horrified and repelled, but is irresistibly enmeshed and implicated in that process.

Guyotat's resistant politics of the body extend far beyond the theoretical parameters which ally his work with the corporeal preoccupations of, among others, Foucault and Deleuze. Although Guyotat collaborated with the 'Tel Quel' theoretical journal in France at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, publishing several texts of work-in-progress during an era of political tension, following the unravelling of the aspirations of the May 1968 events, he remained resolutely apart from all organisations or entities, literary or otherwise. That socially distanced, inassimilable politics of the body is nowhere more tangible and exposed than at the moment when the 'I' that writes it irreparably splits apart, at the moment of Guyotat's coma in December 1981. Narrating that moment, in *Coma'*s final pages, he writes: 'I am in the intensive care unit at the Broussais hospital... What little is left of my body is strapped to the automatic hospital bed, my nostrils, mouth and other orifices jammed with tubes, clamps... I have the bit in my mouth and I hear myself from inside the coma snorting like the most robust and furious of horses.' From that point onwards, the 'I' becomes impossible to speak or write, without the most exhaustive questioning and interrogation of the body and language.

Jean Genet observed that the creative act was like that of a tightrope walker, always in danger of falling from the wire in the act of performance: 'You will experience a bitter period - a sort of Hell - and it will be after this crossing through a darkened forest that you will emerge, the master of your art... This is one of the most moving mysteries of all.' Guyotat is a performative showman of his own body as well as a self-negating, peripheral figure, and he asserts, in *Coma*, that
what he is trying to do is to project unprecedented forms of language: 'No one before me, and in this language, has written as I write, as I dare to write, and as it is my pleasure and my plenitude.' But that new language is a very dissimilar one, inflected by a more fragmentary, denuded corporeal form, from his linguistic and sexual experimentations of the 1960s that provoked scandal and censorship. *Coma* is a book within which language falls into an abyss, along with the body that writes it - and what emerges, after that shattering, sees itself as being identical to every other body and language, but, through the very act of imagining such an infinitely conjoined body and language, remains terminally apart and unprecedented: a vital aberration.
Many forms of creative media intersect with the work of scanning, interrogating and incising urban surfaces as a method of cultural and historical analysis. Film, visual art, photography and digital-image generation, among other media, all possess a range of intricate (and often intersecting) dynamics in their relationship to the perception of urban surfaces: walls, hoardings, screens, facades and other exterior 'projections' into space. In analysing the residues of urban explorations, as with those of densely layered surfaces in cities such as Berlin, the eye of an urban 'spectator', on foot and moving through the city, may juxtapose what is seen with memories of those surfaces' rendering in film, art or digital images, intentionally or involuntarily, through the infiltration of film and art images into the perception of urban architecture. In his short, fragmentary essays of the early 1930s, from transits through the space of Berlin and Paris, Siegfried Kracauer's seminal urban writing conjures an amalgam of oscillations between the immediate instant of what he is viewing, and that act of viewing's inflections from film and visual-arts cultures, along with equally irresistible historical insights and premonitions. Similarly, Chris Marker's essay-film traversals of Tokyo's space, exacting a vertical archaeology of its surfaces, in his 1982 film Sans Soleil, are always intercut with the abrupt intrusions of memories, of other films and media images, which then determine the film's future course.

The medium of cinema attached itself to urban space, and to interrogating its surfaces, from the first film images, such as Louis le Prince's film of Leeds Bridge and its adjacent warehouses in 1888, and the Skladanowsky Brothers' panorama of northern Berlin's brewery chimneys and tenements, in the originating film images of Berlin, shot from the roof of a building in 1894; such experimental sequences, often fragmentary in form, were almost invariably shot from vantage points, so that they appeared simultaneously omniscient and vertiginous. Around the end of the 1920s, at the zenith of the 'city-film' genre of urban film-making, exemplified by such works as Dziga Vertov's Man with a Movie Camera (1929), the filming of urban surfaces often probed the division between aimlessness and intentionality which is implicit in all urban methodologies. A specific element of urban space must be
sought, but it may often reveal itself unexpectedly, in defiance of the method used, in an underhand and aberrant way. One of the great urban city-walk films, through Prague, Alexander Hammid's *An Aimless Walk* (1930), probes this issue: in order to seize pivotal urban traces, a rigorous structure must be set up, but may then productively be dissolved - in the process of moving through that urban arena - through the lapsing or erasure of intention.

The juxtaposition of a human figure against an urban surface always formed a dynamic filmic preoccupation, from the Skladanowsky Brothers' dancing figure filmed against a panorama of Berlin, to figures in extreme crisis, as in the urban-maddened figures in Andrzej Zulawski's film *Possession* (1981), set against the surfaces of emptied-out West Berlin avenues and subway-passageways that become imbued and marked with corporeal convulsions and internal psychoses, which threaten to make those surfaces erupt. In visual art, such as painting, the relationship between corporeality and urban surface necessarily produces volatile concoctions of traces that may either be conjoined or inassimilable. Urban painting, divested of any human presence, may transmit a melancholic aura, as in Gustav Wunderwald's 1920s paintings of vast, windowless Berlin firewalls, as though denying the gestural and exclamatory imperatives which always made such surfaces the privileged site for direct inscriptions, such as tea-painted advertising hoardings and graffiti.

Photography and painting - notably, the overpainting of urban photographs - forms a further conjoined medium which has absorbed contemporary artists, and often intimates an oncoming catastrophe or abandonment, as in Anselm Kiefer's book of overpainted photographs, *Grass will grow over your cities* (1999), in which the photographic traces of an anonymised megalopolis (viewed from a tower or overflying aeroplane) may either be eroded or accentuated by the paint which screens-away those traces. Even in the early decades of urban photography, as in Eadweard Muybridge's innovative San Francisco panoramas of 1877-78, the photographic image's juncture with painting formed a vital and sensitised one in establishing and re-casting urban 'auras'; Muybridge would manually paint moons onto his negatives to transform his sun-lit cityscapes into nocturnal ones, alongside an extensive array of other manipulations of urban surfaces that fragmented and overhauled the spectatorial perception of urban space,
which was often cast into intentional disorientation by those strategies. Muybridge's distortions of urban space formed tactile, artisanal ones, achieved though multiple exposures, but contemporary digital photography allows a new limitlessness of such ocular manoeuvres, in which urban surfaces and components may be dislocated and seamlessly reintegrated at will, and uprooted from city to city, as in the work of the Berlin-based photographer Beate Gütschow, which scrambles contemporary and obsolete facades into borderless urban configurations that, like Kiefer's images, appear to project the traces of near-abandoned, forgotten or depopulated cities.

That preoccupation with urban surfaces which undergo a seeping of memory, to the point of dereliction and effacement, is also one that haunts Japanese digital art, such as the work of Takao Minami, and counterpoints the experience of urban environments and facades that initially appear to be saturated, over-inscribed ones, constellated by image-screens that project relentlessly looped corporate animations, but also integrally transmit their own capacity for imminent extinguishment, through an all-engulfing digital crash, or a self-regulated shutdown such as that enacted in Tokyo in March 2011 during the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake. Japanese performance-art and dance, from the work of influential collectives such as dumb type and Gekidan Kaitaisha in the 1980s and 90s through to contemporary work, frequently employs projections of digital sequences of densely inscribed urban facades and surfaces across the bodies of the performers, in the form of an intensive probing of corporeal and urban boundaries, in which the body (often viewed as 'surpassed' and 'anachronistic' in digital art and its theoretical context) may transmutate to the extent that it simultaneously emits both new urban elements and new organs. Digital art is often closely integrated with the material forms of urban architecture and the spectatorial perception of it (since many digital art works are built into the ground-level display-facades of buildings, or projected from large-scale screens on the summits of towers, in cities such as Los Angeles, Bangkok and Tokyo), and as a result, it may infuse its preoccupations with vanishing corporeal traces and imminent ecological, political and structural calamity - directly into, and through, those surfaces.

Contemporary cities, in the context of urban research, form experimental laboratories in which the future manifestations of perception and media - and urban life itself - are in the process of being
formulated in ways which require disciplinary amalgams and infinite flexibility, since such ongoing experiments are never linear ones, and prove elusive to fixed methodologies. Similarly, the intersection of art and film with urban surfaces, over a century or more, has amassed a multiplicitous sequence of contacts and traces, so that contemporary digital projections invariably hold, embedded within them, an intricate and often colliding history of filmic, photographic and other visual engagements with urban space.
BALLARD'S TERMINAL TREATMENTS
(2012)

1. To the Insane

'The Atrocity Exhibition's original dedication should have been "To the insane." I owe them everything.'(1)

In the mid-1960s, J.G. Ballard intensified a process, already a preoccupation of his earlier work, by which his fiction underwent condensation, narrative compacting, and insurgence into visual arts forms. That process generated a series of image/text works, the Advertiser's Announcements, which he published on the back-covers of issues of Ambit magazine between 1967 and 1971, and formed exploratory test-zones towards his most exhaustive experiment in condensed fiction, The Atrocity Exhibition (1970). In Ballard's short fiction, that process also involved the appropriation of pre-existent medical reports, on such subjects as interventions on sexual organs, in which Ballard restricted himself to the insertion of the names of prominent actresses and public figures, or rearranged and accentuated elements of the sparse medical narratives. In many ways, that process of experimentation with fiction, as the systematic reduction of text to its core obsessions, was undertaken through the transformation of text into image, in which text is rendered so dense, and subjected to such pressure, that it mutates into image. Image, in turn, is exacerbated to the maximal degree, with all emotional aspects rigorously excised, with the result that the narrated image abruptly oscillates from pressurised reduction to maximal, excessive expansion, and its relationship with ocular scrutiny finally disintegrates or combusts, erasing all recognisable parameters. 'This magnification of image to the point where it becomes unrecognisable is a keynote of The Atrocity Exhibition', as William Burroughs wrote in his introduction to the book. An insane text, with the capacity to mutate into image, is the only form able to project Ballard's wasteland-citescapes, abandoned cinemas, motorways and mental hospitals, all populated exclusively by the terminally insane. That unsustainable strain of condensation in Ballard's writing was released by 1973 with Crash, but by a final aberration, it returned to his work in the
notebook form of his final fiction project, *World Versus America*, from around 2005, when the contemporary world has become a global insane asylum of arbitrary reversals and compulsions, and a European coalition of America's former allies must now unite to destroy it, using terrorist strategies, as the only means to annul its irrepressible neo-colonial manias.

To condense the projection of reality to an obsessional or psychotic core always resonates with the art works and textual writings of the insane. Condensation generates an intensity and an immediacy which concurrently negate the banal and superfluous; as such, that process will also pivot at the boundary with hallucination or incoherence (like the Surrealist poetry which Ballard admired), but also instils itself with grandiosity, myth and velocity. When Ballard retrospectively assigned the dedication of *The Atrocity Exhibition* to 'the insane', for the book's 1984 RE/Search edition, he also intimated his own direction as a writer in the book's era, heading into a salutary proximity to psychotic zones (and their imageries), but stopping a moment before immersion and engulfment. All 'insane' writing and visual art is poised at that volatile precipice (otherwise, insane writers and artists would transmit only silences, voids or screams) and indicates the mutability of definitions of insanity.

In 1966, at the onset of the process of experimentation which generated the *Advertiser's Announcements*, *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash*, Ballard interrogated his own aims and what his work would 'gain' through reduction and concentration: 'In *The Terminal Beach* the elements of the sequential narrative had been almost completely eliminated. It occurred to me that one could carry this to its logical conclusion, and a recent group of stories [for *The Atrocity Exhibition*] show some of the results. Apart from anything else, this new narrative technique seems to show a tremendous gain in the density of ideas and images. In fact, I regard each of them as a complete novel'.(2) The disintegration of sequence is a preoccupation that had also been pivotal to the first photographs of human figures and animals in motion. On *The Atrocity Exhibition*'s first page, Travis assembles his set of 'terminal documents' which include 'Chronograms' by the French scientist and photographer Étienne-Jules Marey; along with his English collaborator of the early 1880s, Eadweard Muybridge, Marey had instigated the process by which sequences of human movements are seized and registered
through the photographic image (Muybridge, in his proto-filmic innovations, used banks of twenty or more cameras to amass multiple but separate images, while Marey deployed a single 'photographic gun' able to expose his figures near-simultaneously on the same surface, as though an image were integrally an assassination document). In order to anatomise human movement, a process of elimination necessarily took place: all continuous movements between those registered in the split-second images vanished, with the result that, in the images of Muybridge and Marey, the human body often appears subject to convulsions, facial gapings and rictus, sexually-resonant limb-spasms and oscillations - the accentuated gestural movements which fascinated Francis Bacon in his re-workings of Muybridge's images (some of which were photographic sequences of insane-asylum patients).

In his emphasis on the perceived 'tremendous gain in the density of ideas and images' to be extracted from his work on condensed fictions, Ballard evokes the contradictory proliferations that result from reduction and elimination. Much of the Surrealist art which attracted Ballard, especially the work of Max Ernst (such as The Robing of the Bride, 1940, and other works whose titles are incorporated into The Atrocity Exhibition), possesses a dynamic of infinite proliferation, in which all space on the canvas must be excessively filled, to its maximum density. But in order to achieve that spatial excess and heighten the 'dense' mystery of figures such as those of Ernst, all conceptions of the coherent depiction of space and time must be jettisoned; Surrealist film, too, notably with Buñuel and Dali's Un Chien Andalou (1929) occupies its own duration through the projection of ellipses, erasures and vanishings, often those marked with violence, upon the eye or body. Across The Atrocity Exhibition and Surrealist film, the fragments which remain from a process of violent elimination are saturated with a concentrational amalgam of image and text, with a distinctive ocular dynamic.

Even when his work is dedicated to the insane, and approaches their terrain, Ballard still conceives of the 'logical' process of condensation which takes him there in resolutely positive terms: his gain will be 'tremendous'. The first sentence of The Atrocity Exhibition evokes the exhibition of art works by the 'long-incarcerated patients' of the research-centre or insane-asylum where Travis and Nathan conduct their work. To amass or exhibit the work of the insane (and to transform that work's obsessions, into books, films or art works which inhabit a
world beyond the asylum, as Ballard and innumerable others have done) possesses a lengthy history, from Hans Prinzhorn's collection of the early 1920s to large-scale 'art brut' and 'outsider art' exhibitions of the postwar and contemporary periods. Most notably, the Austrian radical psychiatrist, Leo Navratil, physically 'collected' insane artists as well as exhibiting their works, by grouping them together to live at his 'artists' house' initiative in the grounds of the vast psychiatric institution at Klosterneuberg, near Vienna, enabling that grouping of the (male) insane, whose paintings and drawings envisioned sexual compulsions and global apocalypse with the same unerring concentration as the patients of Ballard's asylum, to be exhibited together to the asylum's visitors - though each patient carried his own particular narrative (as combatants in scorched-earth conflicts such as Stalingrad, just as Ballard's figures are the ex-combatants of Vietnam, mind-destroying consumerism or car-crash duels), in a parallel way to that in which Ballard's fragments, seized at the intensively hallucinated moments between gaps of elimination, each formed, as he noted, 'a complete novel' in its own right: one proliferating to infinity.

Ballard eliminated or discarded almost all of the manuscript materials relating to The Atrocity Exhibition; in the archive of his work from that era, conserved after his death at the British Library in London, almost all that he allowed to survive was his own collection of the Advertiser's Announcements, together with a single postcard from Dealey Plaza and a short text, written in 2008, at the end of his life, in which he reflects back on the era of the book's writing and the 'overheated realm' it inhabits, focusing especially on the figure of Ronald Reagan: 'At the time, 1967, Reagan seemed a vital key to what was going wrong, both with America and the world-wide media landscapes.'(3) By 2008, the other 'key' figure in The Atrocity Exhibition, Ralph Nader - author of the polemical car-safety book Unsafe at Any Speed (1965) whose overturning precipitated Crash, and still a young anti-corporate activist at the time of Ballard's preoccupation with him - had himself made numerous attempts to seize the American presidency, but failed, impeded by the inability of the American population to conceive him filmically, as they effortlessly had with Reagan. The survival in Ballard's archive of his Advertiser's Announcements, with their particular 'density of ideas and images', intimates their seminal role in the generation of his condensed fiction, and that fiction's transmutatory infiltration into the domain of the visual image and of London's late-1960s visual arts
culture. The documents' archivist, Chris Beckett, places the absence of materials relating to *The Atrocity Exhibition* within the dynamics of self-erasure projected by Ballard's archive: 'Considerably more than a brief blur, there is nonetheless a self-effacing and reductive character to Ballard’s papers at the British Library: the archive is concentrated upon the successive drafts of his novels in manuscript and in typescript. Unfortunately, the draft material that has survived does not extend to Ballard’s many short stories... The absence of short fiction in the archive extends to *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), the discontinuous narrative—or cluster of interfolded narratives— that for some critics has a greater claim than *Empire of the Sun* to be considered Ballard’s key work.'(4)

2.

Ballard's Advertiser's Announcements

'Gesturing Catherine Austin into the chair beside his desk, Dr Nathan studied the elegant and mysterious advertisements which had appeared that afternoon in the pages of *Vogue* and *Paris-Match*... He rapped the magazines with his cigarette case. "These images are fragments in a terminal moraine left behind by your passage through consciousness."'(5)

Ballard's sequence of *Advertiser's Announcements* traverse art, text, and film. They form art for the globally insane; literary anti-therapies that suture unwriteable text by condensation, but simultaneously also open-up and expose the development of *The Atrocity Exhibition* into its form as a book; and double-edged 'treatments' too in a filmic sense, dually announcements (posters or billboards, like those positioned outside cinemas or on the motorways leading towards them) prefiguring impossible films that consist of only one image and are therefore the concentrated residue of an image-sequence from which all else has been eliminated, and also films that 'treat' ocular maladies - with the necessary severity of Buñuel wielding his razor at the opening of *Un Chien Andalou* - with a volatile concoction of image and text. Ballard's texts for the first, third and fourth of the five 'announcements' filmically emphasise that they are 'A J.G. BALLARD PRODUCTION', as though only the first and last movements in any creative process possess any relevance, and the advertised film-product *Homage to Claire Churchill*
had undergone a jump-cut directly from its initiatory treatment to its final 'credits' and the assignation of the film's powerful ownership, without the actual making of the superfluous film itself. Ballard's persistent highlighting in *The Atrocity Exhibition* of the figure of Abraham Zapruder, the Dallas resident who accidentally seized the instant of the Kennedy assassination in the images of his Bell & Howell 'Zoomatic' super-8 camera's Kodachrome colour celluloid frames - those isolated images (above all, frame 313, in which Kennedy's head is seen to explode) endlessly analysed and conspiratorially re-imagined, while the rest of Zapruder's extensive amateur film-oeuvre was consigned to oblivion - indicates Ballard's film-casting imperatives, and the significance of revelatory filmic residues, highlighted between eliminations or voids, in the conception of the *Advertiser's Announcements*.

In Ballard's own archive of *The Atrocity Exhibition* era, what survives are the detached covers - and in only one case, an entire copy - of the issues of the literary/arts magazine *Ambit* that published the *Advertiser's Announcements*; in most cases, Ballard has simply torn-out or scissored-away his work from the rest of the magazine's contents, so they are annulled from his archive, which is reduced to a focus on five image/text works. Ballard had worked briefly as a young man, in the early 1950s, as an advertising copywriter, and his short stories, in particular, manifest an ongoing engagement with urban or motorway-edge billboards, hoardings, screens and posters - within which the dynamics of speed and vision are always urgently present, with the advertisement often passed-by too rapidly for any text to be assimilated by the eye (before vision shifts focus to the next instance in the sequence), so that the presence of text itself is rendered into an enigmatic blur or fragment, as with the fragments from *The Atrocity Exhibition* incorporated (in amended or expanded form) into Ballard's *Advertiser's Announcements* project. Ballard noted that, despite being an editor of *Ambit*, he had paid the magazine's commercial advertising rate (which, as its editorial information indicates, was a negligible one) for the publication of his 'announcements', had published them also in European experimental literary/arts magazines (though no trace of those further publications subsists in his archive), and had envisioned their expansive publication into global mass-media magazines such as *Vogue* and *Paris-Match*, if the advertiser's costs had not been prohibitive.
Homage to Claire Churchill, incorporating text-in-progress towards The Atrocity Exhibition, appeared in Ambit's issue 32 in 1967; Ballard's copy of the work is cut from the rest of the magazine, and he signed the back of the detached page in blue ink, with his surname, explicitly positioning it as an art-work whose unique status required the inscription of his signature. The Angle Between Two Walls, with its image-content drawn from a still from Alone (1963) by the London-based American experimental filmmaker Steve Dwoskin and its textual content again aligned to The Atrocity Exhibition, appeared in Ambit's issue 33 in 1967; again, Ballard has detached his contribution from the magazine. A Neural Interval uses an image assigned in the work's textual elements to 'Collection: Eduardo Paolozzi' but later remembered by Ballard, in an interview with RE/Search journal, as being sourced from a bondage fetish-magazine.(6) The work's relationship to the development of The Atrocity Exhibition is explicitly highlighted by the presence in the same issue of the magazine (Ambit issue 36, 1968) of an entirely textual work-in-progress extract from the book; even so, Ballard has again detached his Advertiser's Announcement from the rest of the magazine itself. Placental Insufficiency, published in Ambit issue 45 after a break of two years, in 1970 - the year of publication of The Atrocity Exhibition - draws its visual element from a photograph by Les Krims, then a young and relatively little-known American photographer, and its prominent textual content (taking up a greater part of the page's surface than in the other four works, but impeded by its printing in white text on a partly white background) from The Atrocity Exhibition; again, in Ballard's own copy, the work is detached from the magazine. The final Advertiser's Announcement, published in Ambit issue 46 in 1971 and with one of its textual elements interposing the name of a car (a Ford 'Zephyr V6') between those of the unaware subject ('Claire') and the photographer ('J.G. Ballard'), is the only one in Ballard's archive to remain attached to the entire magazine; again, its textual content is drawn from The Atrocity Exhibition. Each variant, prefiguration or adapted fragment from that book, across the five 'announcements', forms an autonomous art work in its own right, just as Ballard expansively conceived of the elimination-enhanced publications of work-in-progress elements of The Atrocity Exhibition (and other texts of that era) as 'complete' novels in themselves. For that final work, at the top-left of the page, Ballard also incorporates the binding title for his sequence of isolated works: 'Advertiser's Announcement'.(7)
Ballard originally devised the entirety of *The Atrocity Exhibition* as a large-format visual project, similar in conception to an experimental art catalogue, collaged to incorporate documentary film images and medical documents alongside the textual content, and the *Advertiser's Announcements* project forms a tangential detritus of that ambition. The art work of the classified-insane, such as that of August Walla and Henry Darger, demonstrates that no distinction can ever be made between visual and textual production; when Ballard acknowledges that he owes 'everything' to the insane, that debt encompasses the exemplar of 'logical' psychotic traversals across creative processes, along with more familiar debts to the insane such as corporeal mutation, hallucination, sexual delirium and apocalyptic obsession. Figures more dominantly associated with the production of fiction or essays who abruptly 'announced' themselves as artists, whether introducing textual elements into their art works or not, often undertook that aberrant expansion under the influence of drugs, as with Henri Michaux's mescaline-induced preoccupation with proliferating projections of the human face. Ballard's preferred Surrealist artists, such as Dalí and Hans Bellmer, were also prolific writers, or perceived no disjuncture between text and image alongside more pressing and profound disjunctures within the human body and ocular perception.

Ballard's *Advertiser's Announcements* are simultaneously low-technology and non-professional art (he had to pay for his art works to be made public, and they possess resolutely hand-made and idiosyncratic dimensions, like pages from the scrapbooks of Muybridge and Tatsumi Hijikata) and also form seminal artefacts that anatomise his preoccupations with raw sophistication, as in the exposures of Zapruder's amateur camera-work which irresistibly distilled assassination. They possess a condensed open-endedness which is also that of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, as a sequence of viral art-works that could prolong itself indefinitely (to be displayed in a book, or as a film of stilled images, like Chris Marker's 1962 *La Jetée*, which Ballard admired, or through an undifferentiated amalgam of all media), but they are also abandoned work - Ballard's visual experiments of 1967-71, including his 'Jim Ballard: Crashed Cars' exhibition of April 1970, are terminal ones, pre-instilled with their own eradication and elimination (as a 'logical conclusion').
3. Ballard's Dangers: World Versus America

""There are dangers," he continues. "There is this deadening of the human sensibility. You go to somewhere like Kingston-on-Thames... that is very close to a modern hell. Go to the Bentall Centre" - he pronounces the name as someone might say Auschwitz-Birkenau - "and you see these huge galleries with people wandering around...".(8)

Ballard's 'dangers' of the final phase of his work intersect in many ways with those he had perceived in the second half of the 1960s, in the era of *The Atrocity Exhibition* and its *Advertiser's Announcements*, in proliferating American media-landscapes and their projections, and in the engulfing neo-colonial warfare epitomised by American intervention in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 70s. A number of Ballard's short stories, across the intervening decades, propose a situation in which a lengthy military or cultural conflict flares in which America and its manifestations form the 'enemy'. For Ballard, in the final years of his work, homogenising corporate consumerism constitutes a danger as malevolent as more aggressive and tangible incursions, since it annuls and deadens imagination and subversion. The history of consumerism is the history of a petrifying insanity, always the exact contrary to the active insanity to which Ballard owes 'everything'. Consumerism appears almost always American in origin for Ballard, resonating with his Shanghai childhood of vast, luxurious cars and extravagantly illustrated magazines dispatched to alien landscapes from the USA, and linked to a warfare-enhanced invasion of the European imagination. That attribution of the USA as the origin of dual invasive strategies of consumerism and neo-colonial warfare, focused on negation, formed a prominent locus of 1960s and 70s art and film (in Wim Wenders' 1976 film *Kings of the Road*, the itinerant characters, born at the Second World War's end and now struggling to keep cinematic culture alive by repairing its last film-projectors in the warfare-created wasteland between West and East Germany, analyse how America has 'colonised our subconscious'); that meshing of consumerism and neo-colonial warfare also possesses its theoretical underpinning, in widely different idioms, in French philosophy - notably that of Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, and Paul Virilio - which directly impacted on Ballard's work, particularly through Baudrillard's essay *Ballard's Crash* (1976) and
Ballard's own lauding of Baudrillard's *America* (1986). Ballard's last published novel, *Kingdom Come* (2006), located principally in a suburban multi-levelled atrium shopping-mall inspired by the Bentall Centre in Kingston-on-Thames - 'a town I hate', as Ballard emphasised, and dangerously close to his home in Shepperton - had interrogated those dynamics of an irresistible, ocularly-propelled consumerism, which insurges into warfare within the miniaturised zonal-city of the mall; in interviews around the book's publication, Ballard recounted his own visit to the Bentall Centre, and how his eyes and body were unwillingly meshed into the mall's spatial compulsions: 'I thought, Jesus, get out fast.'(9)

On the completion of his work on *Kingdom Come*, Ballard formulated a new project, *World Versus America*, which envisioned a more direct confrontation of his preoccupations with American military-based neo-colonial power (now, following the aerial attacks on American targets on 11 September, 2001, inextricably meshed with the disputed dynamics of terrorism) and its all-engulfing, image-driven consumerism - and also reactivated preoccupations which had been seminal to *The Atrocity Exhibition*, such as the assassination of the American President. *World Versus America* is an abandoned work, existing solely in the form of five notebooks and taken no further, and its concentrated, fragmentary formulation resonates with the condensed fictions with which Ballard had experimented in the second half of the 1960s (the British Library's cataloguing of Ballard's archive dates the notebooks to around 2005, and one possible sequence of events is that Ballard, on learning of his terminal illness, decided to pursue his final, autobiographical work, *Miracles of Life*, 2008, in preference over *World Versus America*). Ballard intended to incorporate into the project elements drawn from television news, propaganda films, internet clips and magazine articles, in a way that recalls the collaging techniques of *The Atrocity Exhibition* and its accompanying art works; one of his formulations of the novel's narrative was that it would take the form of 'a series of testimonies'. And following on from the feature-films made of Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* and *Crash* (both mentioned in the project's notebooks), he already explicitly envisaged *World Versus America* as a filmic project, that could even transmutate from the form of a novel into that of a film-script, and as a result, it resonates too, in its process of origination, with the filmic conception of *The Atrocity Exhibition* and its projections into the *Advertiser's Announcements*. 
The weapons at Ballard's disposal for his last-ditch assault on the obliterating dynamics of America's neo-colonial and media-instilled corporate power formed slight ones: five mass-produced, spiral-bound notebooks (many pages from which have evidently been torn out for other purposes), still adhered with stickers from 'The Card Centre, Shepperton'; four of the notebook were priced at 80p each, alongside a more luxurious, gold-coloured one, the focus of Ballard's principal work on the project, that cost 99p. Ballard's densely notational and fragmentary elements occupy only part of the notebooks' available space (in one notebook, only two pages are used, leaving the remainder of the surfaces blank). The back cover of one notebook is signed, 'JGB', as with the single signed reverse-side of one of Ballard's Advertiser's Announcements. All work on World Versus America was done by hand, mostly in blue biro with some black-biro and red-biro passages, apart from one typewritten sheet of paper which concisely summarises the project in the context of its eventual publication and, in its condensed and film-inflected form, constitutes a terminal treatment. In his essay on the Ballard archive, its curator Chris Beckett describes those materials: 'The archive includes a set of five undated notepads containing outline ideas for a novel that was not to be written, about a world war referred to as WVA, or World Versus America. Post-Iraq, a coalition of World forces has reached the end of its diplomatic patience with America's destabilising "imperial reach" and initiates global conflict by making a pre-emptive strike. Ballard summarises: "A backstory would describe the US imperial reach & attacks on other countries – its threats, use of force etc. The events that have brought a sense of despair to its last allies, & the decision to attack the US before it is too late."' (10)

In its formulation within Ballard's five notebooks, World Versus America presents figures, rather than characters; he evidently intended to develop a range of characters with direct involvements and commitments, to propel the novel's expansive and intricate narrative, but in the project's curtailed notebook formulation, his figures remain mysterious ciphers, unable to enter a narrative of prefigured erasure (in which America 'effectively destroys itself - a chain reaction begins'), thereby evoking the figures of Xero, Kline and Coma, poised at the peripheries of half-built or derelict motorways in The Atrocity Exhibition. The figure who assassinates the American President, in the envisaged book's final part, forms the 'central character', but remains hidden and
disguised (for the act of assassination, he may dress as a Disneyland attendant in a Mickey Mouse costume). The targets and means for European terrorist attacks on America form far more closely delineated presences; Ballard creates lists of those targets, sub-dividing them into primary and 'miscellaneous' categories and using an intricate system of red-ink ticks and triple asterisks, cross-referenced across the notebooks, for such destructive means as 'suicide attacks' and 'suicide plane attacks', and to separate 'iconic' targets such as 'Hollywood Signs and Studios' from such lesser targets as 'Big Macs, Holiday Inns, etc'.

Ballard positions his narrative's terrorist war against America's maleficent neo-colonial and consumerist dangers as a deadly serious one, with satirical elements, but no element of irony; the focus of the book's planning is on the contemporary moment, but its timeframe extends backwards across seven decades, to seminal historical exemplars such as Vietnam and the Second World War. In his plan for the book and its ending, America will be approached: ‘as if the country was as dangerous as Nazi Germany or the Stalinist S.U. [Soviet Union]. Not an ironic and ambiguous ending. Given that most people’s feelings are broadly admiring of the US, taking it as the enemy (like a book written by a Viet Cong) would be all the more startling. An ironic ending would weaken it... Sept 11 suggests a psychological approach striking at the US’s main weaknesses – its sentimentality, religiosity, adolescence...’. The end-phase of the conflict, and America's elimination, will itself form an atrocity exhibition: 'frenzied and brutal'.

Ballard also envisaged his potential reader's experience of *World Versus America* in a way that evokes (backwards and forwards across time) the emotionless but profound transits, disorders and revelations that a reading of *The Atrocity Exhibition* may precipitate. The planned novel's condensed structure would be that of: 'short chapters, almost diary-like, each seeing events from point of view of one of say 6-10 characters (it’s probably not so vital here to involve reader emotionally, since the story is so strong and strange)'. (11) The curtailment of *World Versus America* itself forms a 'strong and strange' presence that intensifies its residues, and resonates too with the anti-narrational curtailments of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, on Lee Harvey Oswald's starting gun, and the *Advertiser's Announcements*, on Claire Churchill's seaweed-inscribed body, and on 'transits of touch and feeling, as serene as the movements of a dune'.
Notes
11. All quotations from the *World Versus America* project are from the notebooks in the J.G. Ballard collection, British Library, London.
I'm grateful to Chris Beckett at the British Library for his guidance.
THE MASSACRE GAME
(2012)

'And we are all guilty, because we are all ready to play the massacre game....'.

This volume focuses on the final year of Pier Paulo Pasolini's life, especially the preoccupations and research that underpinned the shooting of Salò, and his intricate responses to the cultural and political impasse experienced in Italy in that year, leading up to 1 November 1975, when Pasolini terminated his last press interview, in which he spoke about 'the massacre game' as a collective process, and, having ignored a final question about how he would 'avoid danger and risk', drove to Rome's Stazione Termini to pick up the hustler Giuseppe Pelosi who - alone, or more likely with a gang of his associates - would murder Pasolini later that night, in the wastelands of Ostia.

As well as a collection of Pasolini's interviews from that last year (including a self-interview conducted on the film-set of Salò), this volume also presents the extended medical-legal report synthesised from the investigations into Pasolini's murder, and which reads, in many ways, as a film-treatment authored by Pasolini himself, rather than by Professor Faustino Durante, as though one of the death-inflected fragments of Salò 's celluloid had proliferated into a new film, in which the corporeality of Pasolini's past, present and future - so immediately exposed in his anguished final interviews - had been compacted together in an act whose traces now needed to be meticulously analysed and enumerated, through a 'technical report', to reinforce the profound mystery embedded in Pasolini's final gestures. The volume also includes a close analysis of the planned film Porno-Teo-Kolossal (the film 'beyond' the terminal film, Salò) which Pasolini envisaged shooting at the beginning of 1976, and for which he had prepared a treatment. Like Rainer Werner Fassbinder's planned films to follow his last film Querelle - I am the Happiness of this World and Cocaine, both annulled by his sudden cocaine-induced death in 1982 - Porno-Teo-Kolossal forms a virtual annex to Pasolini's films, with its sparse textual traces demanding their visualisation (into a film with a parallel depth and provocation to Salò) by the reader/spectator of the film's residues.
Pasolini’s final interviews emanate deep despair and isolation, and the sense that not only his own body, but Italy and the entire world, were about to be engulfed by an amalgam of arbitrary slaughter and maleficent technological consumerism. But at the same time that Pasolini arrives at an erasing impasse, he also films *Salò* and compulsively envisages new projects. Those paradoxes and contradictions - so integral too to Jean Genet's approach to his work - drive both Pasolini's working process and his perception of the wider cultural and political context for his work. Film-making is habitually seen as involving some degree of a collective or collaborative process, but the interview with *Filmcritica* makes clear the utterly rigid solitude and isolation in which Pasolini filmed *Salò*, 'all alone' on the film-set to avoid 'complicity', with his film-crew silently subjugated in their position of intuiting and carrying through his desires. While articulating, in his interviews, a last-ditch renunciation of Italian political culture and its collusions, Pasolini was also planning further active participation in debates at future political conferences.

In the final period of his life, Pasolini travelled extensively outside Italy (to Sweden and France in his last weeks), and moved between his apartment in Rome and his preferred working-place, the 'tower of Chia', a thirteenth-century construction isolated in the rural Viterbo region north of Rome. Beyond Pasolini's own corporeal, public and sexual itinerary, Italy was undergoing acute upheavals in the period on which this volume focuses, thereby intensifying Pasolini's despair and accentuating his creative and vocal responses (just as they inflected the parallel preoccupations of Michelangelo Antonioni, whose film of in-transit journeys through terminal zones and scorched-earth human identities, *The Passenger*, was released in the USA on the same weekend as Pasolini's death). Political violence and corruption, accelerating urban consumerism and corporate power, and the rise of both left-wing and right-wing terrorism, all marked Pasolini's final year. On 5 June 1975, five months before Pasolini's own death, the left-wing Red Brigade (Brigate Rosse) terrorist movement leader Mara Cagol was trapped and summarily shot dead by police in the Piedmont region of Italy - photographs of her body, fallen on her front, then turned over for facial identification, resonate closely with the police photographs of Pasolini's body on the Ostia wasteland. In the final period of Pasolini's life, the Red Brigade movement was only at an emergent stage and its principal activities would be undertaken later, at the end of the 1970s, after his
death; by far the greatest concentration of terrorist activity in Pasolini's final years was instigated by right-wing forces, including the so-called 'strategia della tensione' in which the Italian state was often intimately complicit; the investigating judge Fiorenza Giorgi, analysing the period retrospectively from the 1990s, calculated that between 1969 and 1975 (the year of Pasolini's death), a total of 4,584 terrorist acts were carried out in Italy, with 83% of that total assigned to right-wing perpetrators. It was an era in which political complicity, such as the March 1975 'historical compromise' allying the Italian Communist Party with the Christian Democrats, precipitated the formulation of countercultures and innumerable autonomous acts. Countercultural manifestations took the form of immense music-festivals such as the Festival del Proletariato Giovanile and the rise of influential independent radio stations such as Rome's Radio Onda Rossa, as well as individual gestures of social negation and political refusal; the drug culture of Italy also grew vastly during that era, and in the month following Pasolini's death, new legislation separated the definitions of 'dealer' and 'user' for the first time, with the result that personal users of drugs were no longer subject to legal punishment. And appropriately, for Pasolini's final year, with its dynamics of slaughter, torture, sex and despair, 1975 was a year decreed by the Pope, Paul VI, as a 'Holy Year' of remission and pardon for all sins.

*The Massacre Game* collects together, for the first time, the essential traces and documents from the extreme experimentation of Pasolini's last year.
HIJIKATA IN ASTRORAMA
(2012)

The seminal 'lost' Tatsumi Hijikata film, believed irretrievably vanished as a memory of Hijikata's work until its rediscovery in 2011, was one shot for projection at the Osaka Expo world's fair of March-September 1970, using an experimental shooting and projection system, 'Astrorama'. The film was titled *The Birth*, and was created to be shown in the Midori-kan (Green Pavilion), constructed to display Japanese innovations in image-projection and related technologies, within the city-sized grounds of the Expo, located at the peripheries of Osaka. The event, together with the Tokyo Olympic Games of 1964, was intended to demonstrate Japan's new ascendancy and its postwar rehabilitation, and attracted vast, dense crowds and international attention throughout its duration. World's fairs and 'Expo' events have possessed an intricate and sustained history as showcases for experimental projection technologies; most notably, for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair ('World's Columbian Exposition'), Eadweard Muybridge constructed the first-ever purpose-built hall for the projection of moving-image sequences to public audiences, the Zoopraxographical Hall, within which he projected his sequences with his self-designed Zoopraxiscope projector. As a result, the Osaka Expo 70 was an ideal context for the developers of Astrorama, Goto Inc, to show off their new projection technology, developed in the same lineage as IMAX and intended for large-format projections and audiences, within expansive spaces. The inclusion of many avant-garde artists as participants in Expo 70 formed an attempt to accentuate the event's aura of innovation; Hijikata's collaborator, Tadanori Yokoo, was closely involved in conceptualising the event, and it provided valuable income for experimental artists whose work (as with Hijikata's) otherwise generated virtually nothing.

*The Birth* was shot on the slopes of the volcanic Mount Atosanupuri ('naked mountain' in the area's original Ainu language, and also known as Mount Io) in north-eastern Hokkaido, in June 1969; the volcano, close to the caldera Lake Kussharo, remained active and constantly emitted sulphurous steam. Hijikata, still recovering from the corporeal ordeal of his *Revolt of the Body* performances of the previous year, remained rigorously self-isolated from the team of twenty-one Astrorama technicians, including their supervising director, Tomohiro Akiyama; he
stayed alone at an inn on the shore of Lake Kussharo and refused all food, appearing each evening for the week-long filming sessions, which were shot at night. Hijikata appears in only one sequence of the ten-minute colour Astrorama film, as a magician or shaman - wearing a robe and with the distinctive long hair and beard from his previous year’s performances, as though the film had irresistibly manifested itself as a coda to Revolt of the Body - who originates the world as part-miracle, part-malediction; at the end of the sequence, Hijikata wildly leaps at and over the Astrorama camera. The film’s incoherent scenario had been written by the poet Shuntaro Tanikawa who had specially requested Hijikata's appearance as the 'monstrous and grotesque' figure present at the world's formative dance-conjuration; other sequences displayed primal natural landscapes, and fragments of cities, about to be destroyed. A further sequence, shot in Tokyo, showed Hijikata's Asbestos Hall dancers, filmed from above, naked and apparently engaged in sexual acts, the images superimposed with images of hell from paintings by Bosch and others. The Astrorama camera used five lenses simultaneously to create sensorially engulfing, multi-dimensional sequences recorded on a special 70mm film stock whose exacting development process required it to be sent to specialist laboratories in Hollywood for processing.

The Astrorama film was projected, with an ambitious system simultaneously projecting five celluloid film-reels, onto the internal dome of the Midori-kan, across five screens, thereby generating a 360-degree, immersive environment for its audiences. Fifteen million people are estimated to have visited the Midori-kan during the six-month run of the Expo, though most were in the act of rapidly passing-through the pavilion, as part of tour-groups, rather than gathering specifically to watch The Birth as an audience. At the event’s end - as with all such spectacular, ephemeral expo-megalopolises, including the 1893 Chicago fair with Muybridge's short-lived Zoopraxographical Hall - the extravagant pavilions were immediately abandoned and left to deteriorate into ruins, despite the vast expense entailed in constructing them. Several years later, the site was almost entirely razed and converted into a suburban 'commemorative' park for the citizens of Osaka, with Expo 70's emblematic 'Tower of the Sun' allowed to remain standing at its entrance. Astrorama, too complex and cumbersome for commercial exploitation, also became redundant, and the original celluloid film-cans containing The Birth were stored-away without being
documented, and forgotten, until researchers from the Hijikata archive at Tokyo's Keio University re-discovered them, forty years later, in the Osaka storage-facilities of the Sanwa Midori-kai alliance of corporations whose previous incarnation had sponsored the Midori-kan pavilion. The film had been preserved, more through oblivious neglect than active conservation, as a trace of the defunct Astrorama technology, rather than as a film-documentational residue of Hijikata's performance work or a record of the Expo 70 event itself. Rediscovered and re-projected, that document possessed all of the aberrant experimentation of Hijikata's work at its most vital moment. Film-memory itself forms a transformation, for the eye, from disintegration and oblivion.


A Virulent Sign of Life appeared in the catalogue X-Position, published by Schwarzkopf Verlag/Akademie der Künste Berlin (Berlin), 1994. (The X-Position project, curated by Romen Banerjee, took place at venues around Berlin over the first months of 1994.)


Heyndels, Schena Editore/Alain Baudry et Cie (Fasano/Paris), 2010. This text originated in a talk given at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in June 1996, as part of a three-day festival of events, performances and films, entitled *Incarcerated with Artaud and Genet*, which I curated in collaboration with Barbara Read, Simon Field and Alan Read.


_Pierre Guyotat: The Matter of Writing_, based on a number of discussions with Pierre Guyotat in Paris, originated in a talk given at the French Institute, London, in March 1995, as part of a conference on the journal _Tel Quel_. It appeared in _Sulfur_ (Ypsilanti), Issue 38, Spring 1996. It also appeared in French in the collection _De Tel Quel à L’Infini_, edited by Philippe Forest, Éditions Pleins Feux (Nantes), 1999. (Guyotat’s manuscripts are no longer at the IMEC centre; they are now held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.)


_Berlin: A Stab of Light_ appeared in German in the catalogue _Lichtblicke_, published by the Landesverband Berliner Galerien (Berlin), 1996.

_Berlin: The Ocular Crash_ appeared in the catalogue _Wahrnehmung_, published by Die Gestalten Verlag (Berlin), 1996. (The _Wahrnehmung_ project, curated by Romen Banerjee, took place at venues around Berlin over the final months of 1996.)

_Zero Category: Displacements and Extremities_ appeared in English and Japanese in a publication accompanying a series of three performances entitled _The Season of New Abjection_, Gekidan Kaitaisha (Tokyo), 1998;
the performances by the Gekidan Kaitaisha performance art group took place at the Art Sphere venue in Tokyo in August 1998.


*Empire of Crimes* was commissioned for the magazine *Japan* (Leiden), Issue 3; the magazine folded shortly before the issue’s publication, planned for February 2002.


Into The Zone: Guyotat and Film originated in a talk given in French at the Bibliothèque de France in May 2007, and appeared in a special issue on Guyotat's work of Europe (Paris), Issue 961, May 2009. Translated into English, it also appeared in 3:AM (London), issue of November 2012, and in Fractured Eye (Chicago), Issue 1, February 2013.

Tokyo 1969: Revolutionary Image-Thieves in the Disintegrating City appeared in Fractured Eye (Chicago), Issue 1, February 2013.

Film's Conjurors: The Skladanowsky Brothers appeared in Senses of Cinema (Melbourne), issue 56, October 2010, and in Slow Travel Berlin (Berlin), August 2012. An extract appeared in Directory of World Cinema: Germany, edited by Michelle Langford, Intellect (Bristol), 2011.


Traces and Surfaces appeared in the collection Urban Constellations, edited by Matthew Gandy, Jovis (Berlin), 2011.

