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AT+P



at present:

MRES JOURNAL OF ART THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

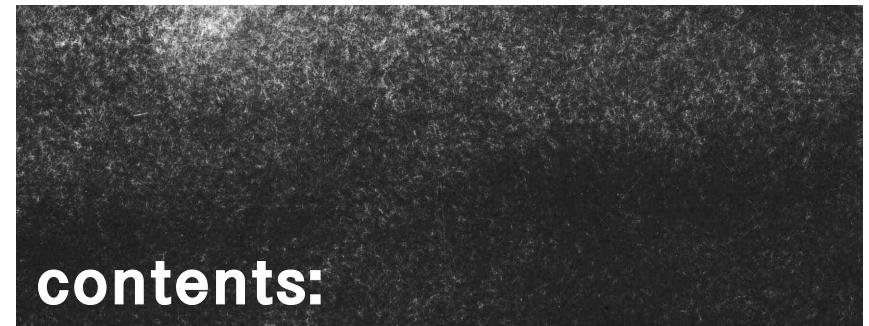


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This collection was produced by MRes Art students for the Central Saint Martins Graduate Showcase 2023. These writings represent a small cross-section of the work produced on the 'Theory and Philosophy' pathway. In its ambition to expand the definition of arts research, this is a course at the 'cutting edge.' What AT&P presents is a selection of experimental, short-form articles – a sample of our diverse interests and methodologies (at present).

AT+P



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Sumando Ausencias

Excerpt adapted from the Master's dissertation "The Easier to Die and the Unable to Die: On Judith Butler's Precarious Politics and Contemporary Art in Mourning" (2023)

"With my burnt hand, I write about fire."

Colombian artist Doris Salcedo channels absence, violence, and death into her poignant performance and installations. Drawing on real-life tragedies, Salcedo's work is a public act of mourning for countless brutalized lives, echoing the pathos of Antigone. This article explores her most politically significant participatory project, Sumando Ausencias (2016).

On October 2, 2016, Colombia's peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was narrowly rejected in a referendum. This abrupt turn disrupted the process of ending a 52-year conflict that had taken 220,000 lives. In this context, Salcedo launched Sumando Ausencias as a visceral response to the prevailing disappointment and frustration.

As a part of the preparation, an email was sent by Salcedo to the entire campus of the National University of Colombia (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), which contained the following message: "Doris Salcedo invites us to draw the names of victims of the decades-long conflict on seven kilometers of cloth and then put them together with needle and thread."

Responding to this, thousands gathered in La Plaza Bolívar on October 6, 2016. They etched the names of 2,300 victims on white cloths with ash. After five days, Salcedo and the participants stitched the cloths together, a task that took over 12 hours. After an extensive duration of collaborative endeavors by numerous individuals, Sumando Ausencias finally came to a completion by covering the entire plaza.

The use of ash for inscribing the victims' names bears significance, reflecting how these violent deaths are already fading from memory. This aligns with Salcedo's vision for her artwork, embodied in her words,

"if you think of yourself you are delicate. You are a delicate being. Everything might hurt you; or cold, or even a sip of hot tea might burn you. So you are delicate with yourself. I wanted to reach the same level of vulnerability, of delicacy, of love and care into the work, so that's why I'm looking for this most fragile materials, and these really absurd ways to communicate this vulnerability."

While discussing Sumando Ausencias, Salcedo recounted a moving incident where a participant found his father's name, who was murdered when he was a toddler, on a shroud. Stitching this piece together with his brother allowed them to share an experience with their lost father.

As can be learnt from the testimony above, the loss of a loved one is forever remembered by their family, and if the victim's fate remains unknown, the search for answers never ends. The questions "why" for deaths and "where" for disappearances eventually converge into one question: the demand for truth and accountability. The search for answers, which may be elusive on an individual level, takes on a more concrete form on a collective scale. It is for this reason that Salcedo's work is collectively singular.

As Astrid Suárez Álvarez observed,

"when legal avenues have been exhausted and have exhausted us, it is art that has brought the moment of reflection and dignified rage to point out the absence and excessive presence of the state, the normalization of violence, and the institutionalization of forgetting as a condition for sustaining the idea of nationhood."

The works of Salcedo confronts our willful ignorance, addresses the aftermath of violence, extending beyond the pain of victims to the suffering of families and the societal imperative of memory and accountability.

It's clear, upon examining her artwork, that life—particularly a human one—holds implications beyond the automatic premise that all living things are inherently granted the right to live. To live is to become a political animal, meaning to live as part of a social group and receive both the protection and constraints of the law. When asking what life as a grievable entity means, one of the possible answers provided by Judith Butler is that:

"People can be grieved or bear the attribute of grievability only to the extent that loss can be acknowledged; and loss can be acknowledged only when the conditions of acknowledgement are established within a language, a media, a cultural and intersubjective field of some kind."

To become unlivable lives, therefore, means to be stripped of linguistic, cultural, legal, and political recognition, being excluded from public discourse. We are now familiar with the names that, much like in Salcedo's work, would slip into oblivion if we fail to remember and honor them.

"When we neglect a person, when we decide not to see his face, not to recognize the totality of a life, not to hear and not to speak to a person, we do this in order to neglect and negate him. Partial

negation is the beginning of violence" and "each one of my works is an active mourning that gives us back the humanity we lose every time a violent act takes place."

If, as said by Salcedo, negation is the beginning of violence, could remembering and making visible be the start of nonviolence? If, as Butler argues using Douglas Crimp's words, grievability "can be acknowledged even when cultural forces are working to deny that acknowledgement," what would that condition be?

Butler answers, that "it requires a form of protest: one that can break apart the obligatory and melancholic norm of disavowal, activating the performative dimension of public grieving that seeks to expose the limits of the grievable and establish new terms of acknowledgement and resistance."

In pursuit of this form of protest, we must recount all the forgotten names, as expressed by the poet Sara Uribe:

"Count them all.

Name them all so as to say: this body could be mine.

The body of one of my own.

So as not to forget that all the bodies without names are our lost bodies.

My name is Antigona Gonzalez and I am searching among the dead for the corpse of my brother."

"Will you join me in taking up the body?"

Sun A Han

I-THE-IMPOSTER...

Hello,

Today I want to introduce you to an idea that is not new, but it's not that old either. An idea founded upon a weird acceptance of the autonomy of things, their inexhaustibility and irreducibility - a weird formalism. To do this I would like to propose we explore Mike Nelson's on-going installation series - "Extinction Beckons", specifically the work, "I, IMPOSTER."



Entering "I, IMPOSTER," is not your "typical" gallery experience, you are not stepping over a threshold into the austere white rooms we have become so acclimatised to in the "art world." Instead it gives you the impression that you're stepping into a subversive realm in which the human no longer has a dominant place. The apex predator of this world no longer survives through social ability or physical strength,

but through its sheer ability to continue. The stillness generated by this artwork, signifies to you, the viewer, that you are intruding upon their sacred realm of tranquility, cutting shadows and stirring dust in an otherwise inanimate realm. It feels appropriate to hold one's breath as you manoeuvre through this ambient scene. Treading lightly, moving quickly, speaking in hushed tones and murmured whispers, it just doesn't feel right to disrupt the doors, gates and cardboard boxes any more than is necessary. Walking on eggshells doesn't give credit to the sedative affect emanating from this space. It's hard to comprehend that you are merely meters away from the metropolis of London; cocooned in the shell of the Hayward Gallery, residing in a vacuum, shielded from the muffled sounds of the rendezvous and encounters occurring along this embankment to the Thames. In this inanimate realm it would appear that you, the viewer, are the catalytic element for change. This may or may not be true, with a spectral answer being of greater interest to an Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) than any form of binary consideration.

What OOO would argue however, is that regardless of what constitutes the action entity, the relations between all things within this physically silent realm require equal ontological consideration. Within an OOO framework we could argue that "I, IMPOSTER" holds its own autonomy as an object that cannot be exhausted. Within this same perspective it can however only be considered an artwork in relation to a human* beholder, as it is through the theatrical allusion established between the real object (human) and sensual object (art) that the hybrid object of the "real"-artwork is created, with this differentiating artworks from every other entity in the universe. This is not to argue that only specific choice entities can be artworks, but that for any entity to be considered an artwork it must establish a theatrical relation with a beholder. In this case the beholder bewitches the entities within Mike Nelson's "I, IMPOSTER", converting their status from autonomous entity to autonomous artwork through an asymmetrical relation. This is not to re-centre the human within ontology, as OOO still holds that all entities are autonomous and remain directly inaccessible; it does however propose that the human has a special privilege in the fact that "we" are an essential ingredient for producing art. We alone consent to what is an artwork. Mike Nelson's "I, IMPOSTER" provides rather more difficulties than a singular sculpture might. This is not because it has complex abstract forms that are open to interpretation, but as it is made of a multiplicity of things. In this

vein, what is the process of deeming what entities constitute the artwork of "I, IMPOSTER"? All of them? Do we have to ask Mr Nelson himself? Or could we slowly start removing the doors, gates and boxes until people notice? This may seem like a prosaic statement; of course the entities that fall under the title of the artwork constitute the artwork in question. But how does this work, if every entity in an artwork is autonomous, become reducible to the position it holds within the composition of the art? Can an entity be 10 percent of an artwork? If we were to take Picasso's "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and (respectfully) cut this painting into 100 pieces, would each of these pieces constitute a work of art? Or works of art of equally artfulness as the original painting?

Having considered these questions, we can begin to explore the relationship between specific entities and their ability to affect us in such specific ways. Perhaps like Duchamp's "Urinal", Mike Nelson's "I, IMPOSTER", allows for such affect on the viewer due to the select choice of entities that make up the installation. The entities contain an aesthetic value that in some capacity "touches" the participant, allowing a porous exchange of emotion and meaning between viewer and the autonomous entity in question. Could it be the social construct of value, that is exchanged and imbued upon a given entity that constitutes its mutation into artwork? As of yet, I do not fully know. If so, would this imply that every entity is pregnant with the potential to bloom into an artwork? Or not? Does this give away the coveted status of art too readily? What would this mean for the position of the artist?

I appreciate that I have answered few, if any questions within this small text, but I don't think that was the point of this writing, or any writing I have done really. I guess what I am trying to say is that though few questions have been answered and many raised, is that not the point of thought? Of exploration? To encounter things that may or may not allow for explanation. I hope that this has been an enjoyable read for those that have made it this far, continuing, hoping for some closing remarks to conclude this address. I'm afraid to say that's not going to be the case here; if anything I shall continue this process further, exploring in greater depths the blurred contours essential to all things.

Joshua Bulman

Beware of Wisdom

You are probably familiar with the famous scene in The Matrix (1999) when Neo is presented with a choice between two pills, a blue and a red pill. Choosing the blue pill means staying in the Matrix (the world of illusion); on the contrary, choosing the red pill means breaking through the Matrix and entering the world of Truth. So, which is the right choice? Without a surprise, Neo goes for the red pill. After all, who wouldn't want to free oneself from being the slave of the Matrix, who would not want to 'wake up' and live in a neutral safe zone, to live a free life that we supposedly deserve, even if that means that we have to take a little risk. This is where Žižek, a Slovenian philosopher, interrupts the scene and presents us with the third pill. So what is the third pill? Žižek says that the third pill is the pill which allows one to realise that the choice between the Matrix and Truth is itself a false choice. What does that mean? Here, we need to know that Žižek is borrowing a concept from Lacan, a French psychoanalyst. For Lacan, we cannot 'wake up' and 'fight the Matrix.' Why? Because for Lacan, there is no such thing as a perfect 'real' world outside this world of appearance. The idea that as long as we can get rid of X or the facade of illusion, we can enter the real authentic world where we can live harmoniously is, for Lacan, a fundamental fantasy. If we agree with Lacan, this will mean that there cannot be a red pill. This leads us to why Žižek says that it is impossible to step outside of ideology and enter into a neutral safe zone. Žižek's insight is that you are always-already in the frame of ideology. For Žižek, ideology is that which provides order to the chaos of our desire. Ideology teaches us how to desire, not just what to desire. In short, ideology gives meaning to the way we experience the world. This is why for Žižek, to fight is never to fight against illusion from the perspective of neutral truth. The task is never to free oneself from ideology but to critique the manner in which ideology functions, to re-frame the way in which the fantasy is posited, to resist the manner in which it is presented to us as innate, to realise that the choice presented to us is in fact a predetermined choice. To choose the third pill, is to say 'I would prefer not to' choose between the two choices. To say 'I would prefer not to' is to undermine the false binary choice from within, is to get the agency to decide what we want. Here we can imagine Žižek as the gatekeeper in Kafka's Trial, whispering to our ear, "the gate is made only for you". And Žižek says, what if the wake awakens us precisely to enable us to go on sleeping?

Jing Ru Lim

17.04.2023 Essay

An installation that looks like it's just made for us to meet



I'm looking at the bathroom tiled wall, to a painting on a postcard of a woman looking at herself through a mirror, laying upside down. On the right side I've put a postcard with a painting of numerous people laying rather lost on the ground. They are similar; the two paintings. The girl is together with her own reflection, a reflection that points out the empty space around her, the solitude. The group looks like they are together, but rather lost together. Funny that now, after staring at this picture for as many times as I've chosen the downstairs toilet, I've come to realize that a self reflection is what I'm researching. A self reflection that reflects on the self reflective medium of the image. A reflection that is floating around in its surroundings, in its own space looking at where the light bounces back.

How I want to propose this self reflection of being lost in a place, is through an archive, an archive of the self. A scattered and rhizomatic archive, that sometimes makes sense and sometimes not. A collection of first hand pictures, the eye of the writer that is seeing and looking.

An archive is there to make sense, to create a timeline, a numerous collection of facts. But what are the facts? What are the parameters that we see here? And what do we base the worth (emotional worth) on?

There is so much unsaid, but translated for the person that sees the picture.

But what is not there? What is felt by the author that we don't see?

There are strangers in this archive. What do we record and what not? As it's clear to me that the archive is not representative of what's real. What really happened will always stay behind doors, however hard I try to capture it, I'll never be able to.

The archive is lacking.

We are obsessed with recording what is going around us. Sharing it with the world around us, and then probably forgetting about it. We hope that people see our archive, make a presumption, hopefully a positive one, so we can feel good about ourselves. And then they have an idea of you, based on this image that you've created, and they saw. But what is this image? It's not the truth. It is just an image produced by the author, how it wants to be seen. We have no control over how someone perceives us, but we still have the idea we have the authority over their perception because we've created this image. We are okay with showing this image, and this shows how we see ourselves, or at least how we want to show ourselves to the outside world. Our chosen outside world.

"No evidence of the lived life is unmediated. That is, archival materials are not transparent repositories of the truth of a life that can be simply reconstructed, rather materials exist in time, are at points opaque, and must be interpreted. They may reveal parts of a subject's story, in line with the collecting norms and purposes of particular archives, but they are constrained in certain ways because of contests over knowledge and power."

- Smith, S., & Watson, J. (2021). Alternative, Imaginary, and Affective Archives of the Self in Women's Life Writing. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 40(1), 15–43. doi:10.1353/tsw.2021.0007. Page 18

But what is this idea of myself?

"In other words, those who write themselves necessarily become readers, interpreters, and curators of many kinds of archival material, ranging from the intimate to the impersonal, and their acts of self-inscription generate an archival imaginary that produces some truth of the self"

- Smith, S., & Watson, J. (2021). Alternative, Imaginary, and Affective Archives of the Self in Women's Life Writing. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 40(1), 15-43. doi:10.1353/tsw.2021.0007. Page 19

Constructed over time there comes a scattered image. People that say to me, it feels like you are running for life, with a slight jealousy in their tone. I say I'm hiding from life because I don't know where to go. I, flowing around somewhere just above ground, sometimes tipping my toes and feeling a surface, until I'm being dragged away again. In a storm, and I just have to let go, and let the storm happen, and hope for the best that I will land somewhere safe.

I see a light blue hue around my hand, it's showing me where to go. It is my hand where I feel safe, if I just get a moment to see it.



Mees Bergshoeff

The Photographic as Methodology in Anne Imhof's Crystallisation of Persona

1.

Many (Caroline Busta and Lil Internet, 2021; Cat Kron, 2022; Eiel Jones, 2019; Tobias Madison, 2015; Lorena Munoz-Alonso, 2019) have noted the photographic character of Anne Imhof's work – concerning her performance pieces in particular – as a predominant quality. Although, they may not have thought of the photographic in Peter Osborne's terms, I think that they all pointed towards it, though from different angles. In this regard, Busta and Internet (2021) wrote:

It was this latter sense of 'reducing life to images' that most profoundly underpinned Imhof's 'Natures Mortes', particularly the exhibition's free-to-the-public, four-hour-long performance element, which, characteristic of her work, was wildly mediagenic.

While Eiel Jones (2019), in relation to the work *Sex*, pointed out:

Here the performers are nullified by their mutual representation, their actions akin to a surface: one that reaches them, and us, both physically and virtually, and that is mediated by the residue of a photographic lens.

Or, on a similar vein, Tobias Madison (2015), thinking about Imhof's early works, said:

I suppose that a placement of Anne Imhof's practice within a history of performance would miss its goal. Instead, I would like to try to conceive Imhof's scenarios as images in relation to which the viewer can adopt a range of perspectives.

As Osborne (2013, pp.124) concludes, there is a "direct ontological affinity [here] between photography and the conceptual aspect of art", and adopting this perspective as a starting point allows one to consider more seriously the methodological aspect of Imhof's aesthetic strategy in relation to the photographic formation of images.

The question is: *in what way are Imhof's pieces aesthetically closer to images than to performances?* The answer lies in the conceptual terrain that is inhabited simultaneously by photography, art and the world. This terrain corresponds to the status of technology, which mingles communication and information media with forms of identification. Deeply fast, interconnected, image-saturated, transnational, and globalized, the current shape of Western reality translates into art, conceptually, what it means for the subject to be experienced as a consequence of the technological and social character of a *contemporary* world. In the same manner that language, not strictly a technology, has been the predominant means by which identity and reality were united at the level of experience, ontologically (through mythology and narrative and latterly communication media), photography here is considered to be the fundamental constitutive technology of information. The emphasis in contemporary forms of identification shifts from language and narrative to image and figure. In Imhof's case, the dynamic shared by the tableaux vivant staged by the performers, then photographed and distributed online by the audience, constitute, at a methodological level, the social ground that unites art to identity formation. Imhof taps into the realm of the photographic, and her work becomes automatically an image, when, as Madison (2015) points out, "one can adopt a range of perspectives" in relation to such images. Or, when "the residue of a photographic lens" mediates between audience and performers "irrespective of whether we are looking or using our phones." Or when her performance *Natures Mortes* presented itself as ready for photographic consumption from every angle, formed as vignette. "For the photographic is not merely a particular art, or a particular kind of art. It is the currently dominant form of the image as such" (Osborne, 2013, pp. 125). Thence, the assertion here is this: *the conceptual unity of a contemporary Western identity is held together by the understanding of photography as an ontological experience.*

2.

Now, another poignant question concerns Camille Paglia's (1990) long view of history: how does the photographic ontology of the image – as constituent of the contemporary formation of identity – affect how Paglia thinks of personality in the West? Further, can the process of identification be considered at once immanent and projected into history? By immanent, I mean that the character of

the individual (and of cultural identity) is negotiated as a result of the current technological extent, an extent in which time and space are thwarted as malleable forms in favour of a specific and contemporary experience of subjectivity. And by projected, I mean that the works of culture on the human psyche have a long imaginative debt, to which the notion of the I is always held accountable. In other words, the spatial metaphor that the verb 'to project' assumes, in relation to the notions of past and of future, and considering the fictional character of the present moment, has ontological weight in so far as history is considered to be a level of experience. To unite these two explanations, it is useful to briefly elucidate Osborne's view of the contemporary as a critical concept.

For Osborne, the term contemporary, particularly in art, does not merely refer to the present moment, temporally speaking, but rather contemporaneity refers to a simultaneous amalgam of different presents. This co-presentness moves along two axes which confer art its historical meaning: 1. The "coming together of different times" and 2. The coming together of coeval social spaces (Osborne, 2013, pp.27). Thenceforth, contemporaneity, in art, is construed by the mutual existence of different times in equivalent social spaces. The video work *Avatar*, in this regard, need not be viewed as a work capable of standing on the conceptual meaning it conveys, not in any singular sense. The persona interpreted by Douglas in the work is the closest crystallisation of a complex, transcendent, androgynous contemporary personality that Imhof and Douglas have been capable of representing. The computer environment is the most effective metaphor for the nihilism inherent in the objectification of youth as an aesthetic experience. And the apprehension of Douglas's persona, inserted as it is in such an environment, stands as an aestheticico-social model of the subjective (reproduced by means of art) particular to a form that culture has right now. It seems intricate, but this is how, in my opinion, Paglia's theory is at once historical and contemporary. The notion of avatarhood freezes at the temporary end of an artistic journey (the dynamic of a persona which has been breeding throughout Imhof's oeuvre and across her works) in the manner that Osborne's understanding of the photographic holds together the substance of a subject which is at once contemporary and historical.

Antonio De Santis

BEAUTY IS THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS

By SYLVANA BURNS

THE BIRTH OF VENUS

PROTO-INDO-EUROPEAN ROOT "WEN" WHICH MEANS "TO DESIRE" OR "TO LOVE"

"LOVE, CHARM"

"TO STRIVE FOR, WISH, DESIRE, LOVE" GODDESS OF LOVE, BEAUTY, DESIRE, SEX FERTILITY, PROSPERITY AND VICTORY THE IDEALIZED VERSION OF A WOMAN HER FACE WITH A HEAVENLY HALO. HER SMILE WAS LIKE THE SUN BREAKING THROUGH THE CLOUDS, WARMING THE HEARTS OF ALL WHO BEHELD HER. HER EVERY MOVEMENT WAS FILLED WITH GRACE

AS IF SHE DANCED UPON THE AIR ITSELF HER BEAUTY WAS UNPARALLELED, UNMATCHED, AND ALL WHO GAZED UPON HER WERE ENTHRALLED SHE WAS THE EMBODIMENT OF LOVE'S POWER A GODDESS TO BE WORSHIPPED AND ADORED"(ANION) THE GOD CRONUS (SON OF URANUS AND GAIA) SAWED OFF HIS FATHER'S GENTALS AS WAS HE WAS ABOUT TO PENETRATE GAIA. THE SEVERED TESTICLES WERE THROWN INTO THE SEA FERTILIZING IT FOAMING INTO A BEAUTY GROWN UP WOMAN, VENUS

HER BEAUTY SHINING WITH PERFECT FORM, ENCHANTING EVERY EYE

THE GODS THEMSELVES WERE AWESTRUCK BY HER SIGHT AND EACH ONE WISHED TO CLAIM HER AS HIS OWN AND WHILE THEY GAZED THE EARTH ITSELF WAS MOVED, AS FROM HER CHARIOT THE GODDESS STEPPED, AND ALL AROUND HER SPRANG FORTH FLOWERS AND GRASS, FOR NATURE, SMILING, WELCOMED HER TO EARTH" ("METAMORPHOSES", BOOK X)

VENUS PUDICA "MODEST VENUS"

"PUDICA" IS THE FEMININE FORM OF PUDICO AND "PUDENDA" WHICH REFERS TO THE FEMALE EXTERNAL GENITALIA, INCLUDING THE LABIA AND THE CLITORIS IS ALSO THE FEMININE PARTICIPLE MEANING "OF WHICH TO BE ASHAMED"

IT THEREFORE HAS SEVERAL CONNOTATIONS IN LATIN THE VULVA OR SHAME AND DISGUST OR BOTH SIMULTANEOUSLY THE IDEA OF VENUS PUDICA IS ASSOCIATED WITH A SPECIFIC POSE IN CLASSICAL SCULPTURE WHERE VENUS IS DEPICTED COVERING HER NUDITY WITH HER HANDS OR A GARMENT. THE IDEAL OF FEMININE MODESTY, PURITY, AND GRACE

IT IS A POSE NOT ASSUMED BY THE MALE BUT RATHER SERVES TO DRAW ATTENTION IN THE FEMALE TO THE VERY AREA OBTENSIALLY BEING HIDDEN EMPHASIZING THE RESTRAINED AND DEMURE NATURE OF WOMEN

DOUBLE STANDARDS OF SEXUAL CONDUCT

THE DEEP-SEATED AND ENDURING IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURES WHICH DETERMINE HER PLACE, HER NATURE, AND HER COMPORTMENT THE REGULATION OF WOMEN'S SEXUALITY SERVES TO MAINTAIN MALE CONTROL OVER WOMEN'S BODIES, REPRODUCTION, AND LINEAGE BY ENFORCING SEXUAL MORALITY AND FIDELITY, SOCIETIES AIM TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE BORN

WITHIN LEGITIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND MAINTAIN CLEAR INHERITANCE LINES REGULATING WOMEN'S SEXUALITY HAS ALSO BEEN LINKED TO MAINTAINING SOCIAL ORDER AND PRESERVING A FAMILY'S OR COMMUNITY'S REPUTATION ANY PERCEIVED DEVIATION MAY BRING

SHAME OR DISHONOR TO INDIVIDUALS OR THEIR FAMILIES
"A WOMAN WHO STRAYS FROM THE PATH OF VIRTUE BRINGS SHAME NOT ONLY UPON HERSELF UPON HER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY. HER IMPURITY TARNISHES THE SOCIAL FABRIC AND THREATENS THE MORAL ORDER"(SERMONS ON MORAL CONDUCT) THE MORAL STANDARD OF SEXUAL CONDUCT BOXES WOMEN INTO TWO BASIC CATEGORIES THOSE WHO ARE "PRESPECTABLE" (MARRIAGEABLE) AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT "A VIRTUOUS WOMAN IS LIKE A PEARL, HIDDEN IN A SHELL, VALUABLE AND RARE. BUT AN UNCHASTE WOMAN IS LIKE A PEARL THROWN INTO THE DIRT, TARNISHED AND WORTHLESS"

(GUILLAUME DE LORRIS, 13TH-CENTURY, LADY REASON IN "**THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE**")
"MISOGYNY ALWAYS CONFRONTS WOMEN WITH THE SAME DILEMMA. WHETHER THEY ARE "GOOD" GIRLS OR "BAD" GIRLS, THEY ARE FORCED INTO THE SAME CONUNDRUM: THEY STILL AROUSE LUST IN MEN FOR WHICH THEY, NOT THOSE WHO DESIRE, ARE HELD RESPONSIBLE" ("**A BRIEF HISTORY OF MISOGYNY**)



Sylvana Burns

Contingency and Ethics

An Ontological Analysis of the Event

After *Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2006), suggests that "the laws of the world are, under the appearance of their necessity, in fact contingent." Considering this, we realise, indeed, that there are such moments when we are confronted with events that are beyond our will, not of our making, that comes to us from the outside, as an imposition, but also as an ethical demand towards the Other. In my thesis I analyse the Michael Haneke film *Caché* (Hidden) (2005) through the perspective of Judith Butler's theory of Ethics.

Film Synopsis

Haneke's film begins with a long shot of a narrow urban street, leading to a fairly nondescript house. People come in and out of the frame, but nothing significant, or conventionally so, seems to happen. As our eyes eagerly scan the shot, we notice certain details—the gated entrance to the house, the indigo street sign that reads Rue des Iris. Without any warning, the image on the screen begins to rewind. As it turns out, we have been watching a surveillance video that has just been deposited on the doorstep of the household and is now being examined, with an unmistakable sense of violation and amazement, by the couple it is intended to terrorize, Anne (Juliette Binoche) and Georges (Daniel Auteuil). Georges, the host of a prestigious literary talk show on television, begins to suspect that the perpetrator is not an out-of-control fan as originally surmised but a long-forgotten specter from his childhood. Severing the bonds of trust with his wife—who, in spite of her successful career in publishing and their supposedly equal marriage, remains exclusively responsible for all domestic tasks—Georges keeps his suspicions hidden. While Anne attempts to keep track of the whereabouts of their moody preteen son, Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky), Georges tries to track down an orphaned Algerian named Majid (Maurice Bénichou) who, many years before, was almost adopted by Georges's sympathetic parents. As more videos arrive, along with cryptic childish drawings that feature the slit, blood-red throats of humans and animals, the unknown code of terror becomes increasingly legible.

In my opinion, what sparks the interest is his choice to use childish drawings, and especially those depicting human faces, as a means of threatening and terrorizing. The very fact that they are not realistic paintings and do not actually portray any specific "face" could be read in accordance with the way that Judith Butler interprets the Levinasian notion of the "face". She points out that the ways that others act upon us, without our will, constitute the occasion of an ethical appeal or solicitation. This means that we are acted on, and solicited, ethically, prior to any clear sense of choice. To be impinged upon by another assumes a bodily proximity, and if it is the "face" that acts upon us, then we are to some extent affected and claimed by that "face" at the same time. On the other hand, our ethical obligations extend to those who are not proximate in any physical sense, and do not have to be part of a recognizable community to which we both belong.

For Butler, we are, despite ourselves, open to an imposition, and though it overrides our will, it shows us that the claims that others make upon us are part of our very sensibility, our receptivity, and our answerability. We are, in other words, called upon, and this is only possible because we are in some sense vulnerable to claims that we cannot anticipate in advance, and for which there is no adequate preparation. For Levinas, there is no other way to understand the ethical reality; ethical obligation not only depends upon our vulnerability to the claims of others, but establishes us as creatures that are fundamentally defined by that ethical relation.

This relation precedes individuation, and when I act ethically, I am undone as a bounded being. I come apart. I find that I am my relation to the "you" whose life I seek to preserve, and without that relation, this "I" makes no sense, and has lost its mooring in this ethics that is always prior to the ontology of the ego. Another way to put this point is that the "I" becomes undone in its ethical relation to the "you" which means that there is a very specific mode of being dispossessed that makes ethical relationality possible. If I possess myself too firmly or too rigidly, I cannot be in an ethical relation. The ethical relation means ceding a certain egological perspective for one which is structured fundamentally by a mode of address: you call upon me, and I answer. But if I answer, it was only because I was already answerable; that is, this susceptibility and vulnerability constitutes me at the most fundamental level, and is there, we might say, prior to any deliberate decision to answer the call. In other words, one has to be already capable of receiving the call before actually answering it. In this sense, ethical responsibility presupposes ethical responsiveness.

Sofia Noka

Gone with the Gazelle

Unravelling the Enigmatic Tale of a Disappearing Fountain

On Wednesday morning, 8th of November 2014, Tripoli residents in Libya woke up to the shocking news of the disappearance of the iconic 'The Gazelle and The Beauty' statue. It was probably ripped off its pedestal from the fountain base overlooking the corniche 'in mysterious circumstances' by a mechanical digger. The bronze nude statue dates back to the Italian colonial era of 1932 when sculptor Angiolo Vannetti was commissioned to create the work depicting a nude woman stroking a gazelle, supposedly representing the spirit of Tripoli. Often called the 'Bride of the Sea', the statue is also referred to simply as The Bride or the mermaid fountain.

Three months before the incident, the statue was damaged by a missile during the civil war, which led to many assuming the figure was taken away for repairs. However, the local council shut down these claims, as the incident happened during the middle of the night and the remains of the fountain showed that the culprit intrusively ripped it off its pedestal. There had also been some threats made by militias, concerning many artefacts, those who thought the statue immoral, and those who would eventually trade it with antiquity looters abroad for weapons. The Ministry of Culture has responded by condemning the vandalistic act, indicating it demonstrates the perpetrators' backward thinking, reactionary outlook, and absolute lack of culture. In addition, the Libyan government also reacted by calling for an investigation into the incident, assuring that they would apprehend the perpetrators. It has been almost a decade with no updates, and no repercussions, although a replica of the statue appeared in 2020 at the Giovanni Fattori Museum in Italy.

The statue's disappearance in Tripoli left many Libyans feeling a sense of loss and sorrow. This landmark represented the city, witnessed its progress throughout the years, and held a special significance to the locals. It was more than a mere work of art; it captured the essence of a moment in time and preserved it for generations to come. Great works of art have the power to transcend beyond their aesthetic value and remain appreciated and admired over time.

Philosopher Walter Benjamin's interest in the worth of physical objects as they move through time, where objects serve as auratic markers, feels appropriate to connect to the anecdote of The Gazelle and The Beauty. This notion situates works of art inside a continuum of experience in which significance is accumulated from previous eras and realities, imbuing them with a near-magical character. The statue has lived through and been imprinted by transformative moments to gain a charge: objects have participated in and been touched by history in ways that are subtly visible and, in this particular case, is shown in the rusted change of colour, and a hole in the belly of The Beauty caused by a missile shot. These markings provide information about an object's journey from its creation to the present day, as well as cultural developments that impacted how it was positioned and perceived.

On the surface, the history of how an object has been understood, what it was used for, and if it was loved, is not instantly apparent to the spectator, necessitating explanation of context, and an unwavering determination to unearth the often differing narrative truths of its historical and socio-political condition. For example, the fountain statue went through phases of identity: from a reminder of colonial times, a shocking display of nudity in the form of sculpture, or conversely a cherished picturesque spot where, every holiday, a family photo was a must for local families, to a prostitution meeting point, a refuge for intellectuals and artists, a feminist symbol to the Libyan woman, and a forgotten shameful, sinful statue. Benjamin explains that such indicators, with their representation throughout decades, situate the sculpture at different temporal intervals, substantiating its provenance - essentially a recounting of where it has been and when.

The disappearance of the Tripoli monument is not only a loss for the present generation but also for those to come. Without this iconic landmark, the younger generations won't be able to experience the same connection with their city as the previous generations once did. The disappearance of this landmark serves as a reminder to us all to take action and protect our cultural legacy for the coming generations.

Ruaa Elmansuri

"BOOK FROM THE SKY"

The Book From the Sky [Tiānshū 天書] (ca. 1978-91) is an installation that comprised four volumes of books with 604 pages in total, reproduced into 126 copies. In this mysterious treatise, Xu deliberately created more than four thousand characters so as to resemble the existing Chinese characters in an exquisite and traditional way. However, all these characters are indecipherable and devoid of any meaning.

Xu was very assiduous in the character-making process to make sure none of his invented characters were identical with any existed Chinese characters. The title of the installation was initially named "An Analysed Reflection of the World – The Final Volume of the Century" (Xī Shì Jiàn – Shǐjiè Mò Juǎn). The "Analysed Reflection" indicates a 'mirror effect' of the world, with mirror indicating three instinctive characteristics: 1. The surface is highly reflective; 2. It captures a reflective image in reality; 3. The image captured is horizontally reversed compared to reality. Xu Bing explained the meaning of the title as a "book that analyses the world" (Fēnxī Shǐjiè de Shù); the nonsense writing in the Book From the Sky reverses the logic of the world by deconstructing existed Chinese characters and fragmenting the strokes to rebuild 'faux' characters. The old Chinese Square-word characters association of the conceivable, legible and meaningful world no longer exist, it replaced by Xu's 'new logic' that plays within the Square-word structure. Thus, the reversible thinking destroys the content (i.e., signified,) but not the form (i.e., signifier).

The typeface of the invented characters 'Sòngtǐ' [Song-style script; 'ti': form] is a product of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) when the artisans reincorporated elements of the early Song Dynasty (960-1279) across several generations. Song-style Script is characterised by squared stroke with angular accents. The straight and horizontal strokes of Song-style script allow engravers to reproduce woodblocks for printmaking effectively. It contrasts with the round edges of the Standard script in the Ming Dynasty that requires a longer engraving time.

The Song-style script was not invented by an individual engraver, but instead it was a creation of printers and engravers. It was devoid of the idea of individuality, this style of script was created by the decisions of collectivity. In Persistence, Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing (2006), Xu has asserted that his choice of font was because "the [Sòngtǐ] characters are devoid of personality and have no concrete implications or emotional importance". The lack of personal sentiment in Sòngtǐ underlines the

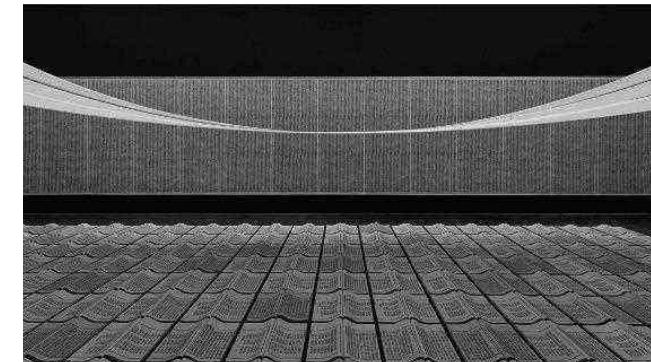
anonymity of the language, emphasising the meaningless fact of the Book From the Sky (1991). Xu's reason for creating the Book From the Sky (1991) with the official script Sòngt was to elevate his work, so that it gained a certain sense of seriousness and gravity. The structure of faux words was composed carefully by dissecting the fundamental strokes [—, | , J , L] or radicals from the Chinese classics writing system, then rebuilding the fragments in a diverse method under an inherent Chinese calligraphic square word structure creatively.

The Book From the Sky (1991) was printed and exhibited in three forms – books, wall panels, and handscrolls. The books were hand printed and bound by Xu Bing; each character was carved on a pearwood movable square, and all characters were eventually composed within the gridded pearwood frames according to the typesetting of different pages.

Three paper handscrolls loosely draped down from one edge of the ceiling across another borrowing the original method of display from the Spring and Autumn period (770 B.C. to 481 B.C.) when the scripts were vertically written on bamboo and bundled into rolls. Chinese handscrolls entail the building of script in "shoulder-width section by section, retooling a section before proceeding to the next one". Historically, the viewer will stretch the handscrolls depending on which section they would like to view; the stretch length of the roll is physically limited to their arm's length. The non-stretched section remains rolled up. The faux words are printed according to the traditional Chinese writing manner from left to right vertically. The wall panels of the Book From the Sky (1991) allude to the hanging scrolls of Chinese ancient calligraphy, as well as the ubiquitous wall posters in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Big-Character-Posters were handwritten that were a crucial tool of everyday propaganda in the Mao's era, working effectively in three main ways: 1. By targeting the agricultural working class and the grassroots, a straightforward communication was transmitted through the use of eye-catching slogans, and accessible language in bold characters; 2. The easy writing production of posters are conducive to reproduce; 3. The posters are transportable, mounting from one public space to another, usually mounting on walls such as factories, university, and government departments. The above characteristics allowed Big-Character-Posters to function as a new mode of expression and spread political ideology (communism) rapidly. As the creation of a new political language, it worked to spread communistic political discourse on class struggle, and the ideas of Mao's.

The 'final treatise' enforced a feeling of the ritualistic church, swooping down over the viewers' heads in an acquiescent sense of authorial power. Preaching the earthling of their silent prompt from the sky, the Book From the Sky (1991)

situates the audience in a contemplative 'dead end' which means the normal ways of thinking are rendered dysfunctional, entering a language game that encompasses disappointment and suspension of meaningful information, accompanied by a perpetual promise that the work might have a mass appeal by recalling the function of Big-Character-Posters. The Book From the Sky (1991) is a monumental corpus that critiques, deconstructs, distorts, adapts, and undermines the prior authoritative rules of Chinese writing structure. It overrides the audience with feelings of oppression, helplessness, and wonder, provoking a question of what remains of language – its exterior form of morphemics.

**Sally Shao**

UMBRELLA

THE IRREPLACEABILITY ISSUE

Striding through the rain towards the Serpentine South Gallery, I seek a lost state of interconnection. I am to view an exhibition of Kamal Ibrahim Ishag's paintings titled, 'States of Oneness,' alone. Given my friends' cancellation, the theme of 'Oneness', and my recent reading on affect and ecological theories, I reflect on why humans, in their various ways, resist, disregard, or struggle to rationally justify their intimate intertwining and emotional vulnerability with others. I attempt to capture my thoughts on this through writing affective 'bloom spaces' in which 'vital forces insisting beyond emotion' arise 'in the midst of *in-between-ness*'.

Stepping into the foyer, I am surprised to observe multiple visitors scrambling about the far corner in a commotion. They circle a wicker basket in strange ritual, exchanging items from the vessel. It becomes evident that visitors are searching for previously discarded umbrellas. Reuniting owner with umbrella is proving a farce. I overhear one man's sharp comments to the receptionist. He had initially refused to abandon his umbrella of solid maple handle and 'Morris & Co.' fabric at the entrance and, after finally submitting, it had been taken – no, stolen. He will not accept a free umbrella from the gift shop as an adequate apology. He sternly mutters that he 'loved that umbrella'. Another two visitors are confused as to whose compactible black nylon umbrella is whose. Both had ventured to the park without foresight or adequate attire and had hastily bought a corner shop alternative *en route*. The items are identical in style, size, and condition – their tags still intact. The pair exchange stories of their respective mornings, settle on their indifferences, and, umbrellas flicking open, walk out into the rain.

Observing the relation between subject and object in these exchanges prompts thought on Jose A. Díez and Andrea Iacona's understanding of the 'property view' and its implications on the subject's ability to rationalise attachments in their paper, 'Love, Reasons, and Replaceability'. On the paradoxes involved in justifying love between humans, Díez and Iacona address 'two' conflicting 'thoughts about their beloveds' that 'lovers typically entertain'. Described as the

'property view', lovers firstly 'think that the qualities of their beloveds provide reasons for loving them'. Whilst secondly, lovers also 'regard their beloveds as irreplaceable'. This issue is named the 'irreplaceability intuition'. The stern man's attachment to his umbrella enacts both contradictory strands of Díez and Iacona's theory of love, as follows.

Following Díez and Iacona's first line of enquiry, being the 'property view', I can assume the stern man's 'attitude towards an object', the umbrella, is 'based on' the 'properties' particular to that object. On a basic level, the umbrella's canopy-like structure and water repellent fabric satisfies the 'preferences and inclinations' of the subject. The stern man 'prefers', is 'inclined', and desires to be dry; and 'properties' of the umbrella shelter its user from becoming wet by the rain. Therefore, the object's 'properties' justify the subject's positive 'attitude' towards the object. There are two subsequent 'remarks' that 'clarify' Díez and Iacona's 'property view' but complicate the potential reasons our stern man is attached to his umbrella. Firstly, Díez and Iacona argue that a lover's 'justification of love' does not depend on 'objectively valuable or generally appreciated properties of the beloved', although 'it may actually happen that some properties of the beloved are objectively valuable or generally appreciated'. Perhaps I have assumed the stern man values functional over aesthetic qualities. Despite the general view that a 'good' umbrella keeps its user dry, perhaps the man's love of his umbrella is due to its William Morris print that might not be deemed beautiful or 'generally appreciated' by other owners. Or, in line with Díez and Iacona's second 'remark', the man's attachment could be justified beyond what is understandable 'from a third-person perspective' as love cannot 'be judged according to' an external 'third person's standards'. In terms of interhuman love, Díez and Iacona state that 'even though generosity is generally appreciated as a moral quality, nothing prevents one from valuing selfishness instead, and thus appropriately loving a selfish person'. Perhaps I am going to find an umbrella discarded in the park this afternoon, after the thief opens it up, and realises the stern man's umbrella has a myriad of perforations, exactly to the stern man's taste.

Enacting Díez and Iacona's second strand of enquiry, being the 'irreplaceability intuition', our stern man refuses the receptionist's attempt at replacing his umbrella despite their similar qualities, posing a contradiction to the claim that love of a person is based solely on the latter's qualities. 'The problem', according to Díez and Iacona,

'may be phrased in terms of *fungibility*', or the 'interchangeability' of a commodity. They explain their theory in the following formula: 'If x's love for y is justified by certain properties of y, it seems to follow that any other person with those properties would be equally lovable for x. But it is very unlikely that x is willing to regard y as fungible in this way.' Our stern man does not accept the gift shop umbrella as interchangeable with his own, despite their resemblances. Both objects contain the essential structural property that makes an umbrella an umbrella, being their collapsible, concave shape and water-resistant exterior. Both objects contain similar aesthetic qualities, as they feature printed reproduction of artwork. But, as Jollimore acknowledges, 'love does not seem to be transferable in this sense, and we do not want it to be.' Thus, both beloved or umbrella have qualities that justify love, whilst imitation of or superiority over these qualities in another person or object does not guarantee a transference of affection.

Jollimore's statement that 'love is in some important respects irrational and yet involves reason in a fundamental way' has held true. The stern man brushes past me to the glass doors, braving the weather without his beloved.

Alice G Watters

To Be Honest, Tracey The Problem of 'The Wet'

Excerpt adapted from the Master's dissertation, 'To Be Honest, Tracey: A (re)Search for Love in Art Theory.'

I began this project by listening to recordings of the artist – Tracey Emin – speaking about her life, her art, and the music that has influenced her. I listened to these interviews, stored on the BBC Sounds website, over and over again. Sometimes very slowly; absorbed in the process of transcription. Sometimes missing minutes of dialogue by letting myself think about something different.

The project centres around Emin's guest appearance on the nostalgic, 'Desert Island Discs' (2004), and also her more recent feature for 'This Cultural Life' (2021). Listening to the artist's reminiscences often meant traversing my own memories, especially those marked by an encounter with her art. When the transcripts were complete, I began to sit without Emin's voice in the background and consider these encounters in more depth.

I tried to start at the beginning: *what was the first artwork by Tracey Emin that I ever found myself faced with? What could I remember about the experience?* I tried to be honest, but putting memory into text was difficult. Something I had initially considered a balanced account, could appear the next day as self-critical, guarded, or simply a lie. This made me think of Joan Didion.

As a teenager, I fell in love with Didion's writing for its detached quality, her ability to look at herself 'as if through glass' (I found this in one of my notebooks). It is the separation that gives her work its cool, clear, lucidity. A 'New Journalist,' in the 60's and 70's, the act of saying 'I' was integral to Didion's reportage. In her essay, 'On Keeping a Notebook,' she suggests that, although it may make us feel guilty to indulge our perspective, we can never escape it.

'The common denominator of all we see is always, transparently, shamelessly, the implacable "I".'

The paradox is that to recognise the 'I feel/I felt,' the writer must get far

enough away from these sensations to focus them accurately. Didion's capacity as a camera-like recorder of her own experience strikes me as an almost superhuman, spiritual, achievement – like astral projection.

In Moyra Davey's 'Index Cards,' the tensions between personal narrative and detached observation are explored in terms of Wet and dry. Neither is explicitly defined; Davey builds up meaning gradually, via a scattered series of impressions.

An opening section titled 'Fifty Minutes' follows an essay by Vivian Gornick. Here, the post-war writings of Natalia Ginzburg, Elizabeth Bowen, and Anna Akhmatova, are offered as radiant examples of the dry:

'A remarkable stillness suffuses the prose in each; a stillness beyond pain, fear or agitation. It is as though, in each case, the writer feels herself standing at the end of history—eyes dry, sentences cold and pure—staring hard, without longing or fantasy or regret, into the is-ness of what is.'

In my view, Joan Didion's 'I' exhibits a particularly miraculous dryness. For a person to look hard at themselves, 'without longing or fantasy or regret,' is a modern feat of asceticism.

Fundamentally, Gornick believes that these texts lack *nostalgia*. Davey offers us a selection of possible meanings for this 'lovely and piercing word,' but again resists any attempt to be explicit.

'To do so would be to kill off the memory and all the generative power it holds in my imagination. I keep it perpetually in reserve, with the fantasy that someday I may land there, in what is by now a fictional mirage of time and place.'

Nostalgia is fantasy, nostalgia is fiction. Nostalgia creates memory and nourishes imagination. Nostalgia is before fear of collapse, nostalgia is faith in continuity. Nostalgia is guilty pleasure, nostalgia is unconsummated desire. Nostalgia is not, 'standing at the end of history – eyes dry'; nostalgia is a return to our beginnings. Nostalgia is the Wet. The Wet is nostalgia:

'The insistent preoccupation with narrating certain aspects of the discredited past'

But it is more generally a self-involved instance; 'I feel/I felt.' The Wet

is physical desire – appetite – and is evoked in correlation with tears, broken-heartedness, grief, love, sickness, and guilt. The Wet is something that 'wells-up' and leaks into a text. The Wet is without pretence, the Wet is a problem.

Immediately following 'Fifty Minutes,' a section titled 'Transit of Venus' begins:

*'7/27/10
Begin to doubt the Wet.
Why would I want this stuff made public?
An old stumble: exposing the abject.
This temptation goes way back.'*

The *problem* of the Wet is a major theme of 'Index Cards.' Whilst weaving reference with tangled notebook entries, correspondence, and memoir, Davey constantly questions what it is that these memories and feelings are doing in her writing. The Wet, according to Davey, is not a cleverly thought through literary device, but has a life of its own. If the dry is temperate, just, and truthful; the Wet is impulsive, out of control, and honest to a point of fault.

The Wet is the extent to which you expose yourself, '*live and naked*,' to the audience. Davey wonders if this kind of honesty is always exploitative – a 'cannibalism' of self. She doubts the usefulness of her experiences in raw form, and feels guilt about what (she suspects) is an attempt to '*activate [them] in a strategic way*'

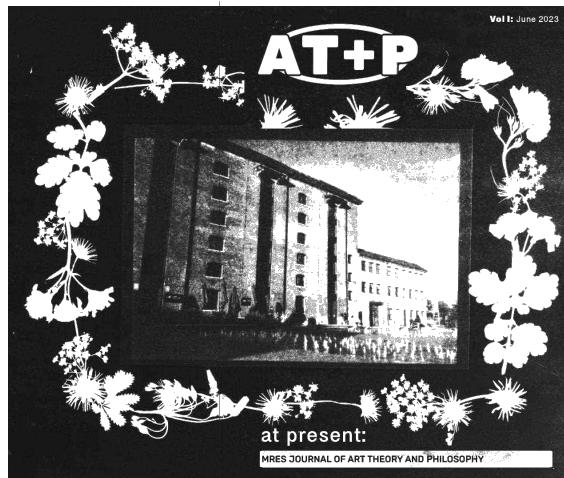
Although for Didion the Wet is always, '*something private*', she maintains that to be honest – in the sense of giving an accurate account – is not, or cannot be, the motivation for recording fragments of her life.

'I have abandoned altogether that kind of pointless entry; instead I tell what some would call lies.'

'not only have I always had trouble distinguishing between what happened and what merely might have happened, but I remain unconvinced that the distinction, for my purposes, matters'

'Remember what it was to be me: that is always the point.'

Helena Beese



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HELENA BEESE

MEES BERGSHOEFF

JOSHUA BULMAN

SYLVANA BURNS

ANTONIO DE SANTIS

RUAA ELMANSURI

SUN A HAN

JING RU LIM

SOFIA NOKA

SALLY SHAO

ALICE G WATTERS

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