

Ground Sea

VOLUME I

Photography and the Right to Be Reborn

Hilde Van Gelder



Leuven University Press

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In loving memory of Philomena Op de Beeck, who was born the child of a war refugee, Joanna Alpaerts, in Leyden on April 2, 1916. Whereas her surname should have been Dee, she was registered there as Filomeina Francisca Elisabeth Alpaerts—later to become Philomène Van Gelder, née Op de Beeck.

Table of Contents

Contents of Volume I

Preface: Water-Bound	15
Embarkation: <i>Bone Point</i>	33
Acknowledgments	55
Introduction: Sea-Stricken	63
PART I: Blade	97
1. Running on Water	99
2. Ground Sea	131
Plates	168
3. Ossuary	177
4. <i>Kairology</i>	215
5. Reliquiae	243
Notes	291
<i>Deep Six / Passer au bleu</i> (1996/1998) by Allan Sekula	319

Contents of Volume II

PART II: Shuttle	375
6. The Right to Reappear	377
7. Naming the <i>Person</i> without a Name	419
8. <i>Fools & Rights</i> : Leaves for an Illustrated Reader	457
Plates	512
9. This Precious Jewel	529
10. Plotting	577
<i>At Anchor: Pearl Diving</i>	631
Notes	673
Bibliography	701

And here, doing is more important than knowing.
— Walter Benjamin, “News about Flowers” (1928)

I could not help reflecting how much more pleasure it must give one to protect life than to take it away; and how much happier [the fisher] must be in catching the fish with no other intention than to feed them, than it can be with us, to first torture them with hooks and then throw them on the ground to expire in agonies.

Anon., "A Voyage to the World in the Centre of the Earth [1755],"
in *The Faber Book of Utopias*, ed. John Carey
(London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 140.

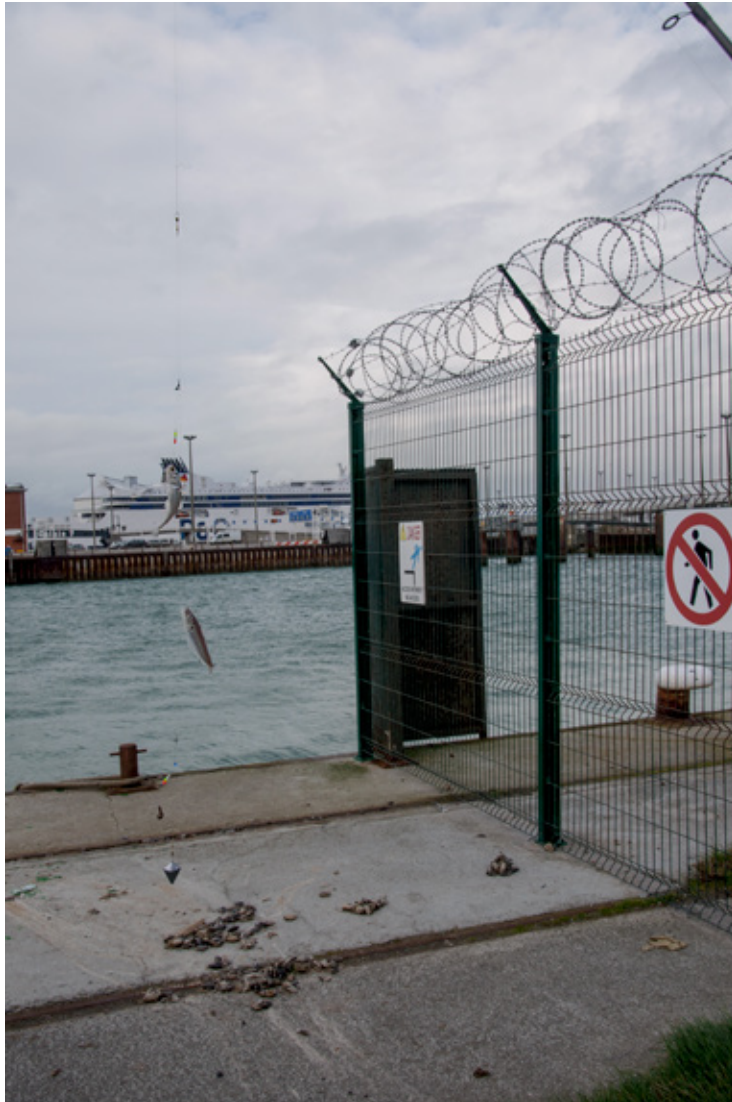
whiting¹ ► **noun** (pl. **same**) **1** a slender-bodied marine fish of the cod family, which lives in shallow European waters and is a commercially important food fish. ● *Merlangius merlangus*, family Gadidae.

2 [usu. with modifier] any of a number of similar marine fishes, in particular: ● a fish of the Indo-Pacific (family Sillaginidae), including the commercially important *Sillaginoides punctatus* of Australia. ● the northern kingfish of eastern North America.

–ORIGIN Middle English: from Middle Dutch *wijting*, from *wijt* 'white'.

whiting² ► **noun** [mass noun] ground chalk used for purposes such as whitewashing and cleaning metal plate.

Angus Stevenson, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed.
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2025. Original emphasis.



The Search Project (Kickoff)

Amateur angler posing with his vibrating line after successful catch of two unlucky whiting from the passenger #port channel @CalaisQuaidelaColonne

#♥lapaysannedesmersmyriampont

A "late bite" #endoftheday @CaféduMinck

#LastDayofWinter #fishes #smelledtheroses #proud #man #gate @SpiritofBritain

After “breakthrough,” the British witnessed *la difference*.^{*} The French section was generally swisher and better-lit, it contained a shrine to St Barbara, the patron saint of miners, a “cairn” of champagne bottles and the odd fag-end. The French tunneling machines had girls’ names: the British numbered theirs.

^{*}Note the unconventional spelling “*la difference*,” an apposite amalgam of French and English.

Martin Latham, “The Secret History of the Channel Tunnel (1802–2001),” in *Kent’s Strangest Tales* (London: Portico, 2016), 103.
Original emphasis.



Postcard auctioned online of the @Dover #bronzeage #boat
Photographed with three chalkstones collected on a beach nearby,
where the ancient navigators lived who buried this #WorldsOldestSeagoingBoat
#accidentaldiscovery #kent1992 #love

Preface: Water-Bound

In “Planetary Madness: Globalizing the Ship of Fools,” W.J.T. Mitchell sketches a dim perspective for the future. Humankind today has finally succeeded in making its habitat global. Through this achievement, however, life on our blue planet has become increasingly unpredictable. While allowing the world economy of deregulated capitalism to become dysfunctional, as Mitchell argues, human beings reconvered their spaceship Earth into one big ship of fools.¹ To reach this bleak conclusion, Mitchell acknowledges Allan Sekula (1951–2013), an acclaimed pioneer in problematizing late-twentieth-century society’s exaggerated focus on “cyberspace.”² Sekula’s influential photo-text *Fish Story* (1995) marked a decisive step toward orienting its readers’ attention to maritime space—a vast zone that he identified as our collectively forgotten space.



Fig. P.1.
Detail of invitation card to the exhibition *Allan Sekula. TITANIC's wake*, CCC Tours, Nov. 18, 2000–Mar. 4, 2001. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Photo by author. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

All his life, Sekula, who trained as an ocean swimmer during his youth, was inescapably attracted by the seas and their rhythmic waves. He was haunted by the black masseur, to refer to the metaphoric image that Charles Sprawson used to describe the depths of the seawaters.³ In the triptych *Dear Bill Gates* (1999), Sekula integrated a self-portrait made



Fig. P.2.

Allan Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999. One of three Cibachrome color photographs in single frame, accompanied by a type-written letter and a photo-copy of Winslow Homer's *Lost on the Grand Banks*. 73.8×270.8 cm (framed triptych). Letter 30×23 cm, 39.7×31 cm (framed). Homer-copy 29.7×42 cm.
© Allan Sekula Studio.

while swimming in open water. (fig. P.1) Wearing a red cap, but without a protective wet suit, he looks like a sea mammal, keeping his nose just above water. With translucent white goggles stuck to his slightly tilted forehead, he is winking at the camera—at us, the viewers. The artist's dilated left pupil suggests he is about to pull a boyish prank, trying to entice us along like a selkie. His blinded right eye, however, counterbalances this lightheartedness. From the abysmal darkness of his closed eyelid, a large tear appears to roll down his cheek. As if building the opening scene of a drama film, the meaning of this photograph suddenly shifts. Now, the courageous swimmer rather looks like a sea-knight who knows his opponent is about to defeat him in a duel.

At eventide on September 7, 1999—sometime between sunset and the blue hour—Allan Sekula made *Dear Bill Gates* in the cold northwest Pacific Ocean in front of the Microsoft tycoon's bunkered Seattle villa.⁴ Taken from within the water with a Nikonos 35mm underwater camera, the photograph completing this sequence shows two women in a Larson bowrider named *Sometime*. (fig. P.2) Its poop-deck light is on, marking the moment of transition to nautical twilight when the first stars become visible. Both crew members appear to be peering into the same direction as if searching for something in the water right before it gets dark. The woman standing up front is stretching out her two arms. She seems about to bend down, ready to pick out of the sea whatever it is they have been looking for—the identity of which we will never know but about which we could speculate while we observe the small speedboat from the artist's immersed perspective (as if he were a nix diving around, about to vanish back underwater again). In each picture

of Sekula's trio of disassembled images, the waterline rises higher, like an aquarium filling up.⁵ Or is it rather the ground under Gates's resort that subsides and sinks?

During a public lecture, entitled "Genitality and the Backyard Pool," Sekula projected this third picture on a screen for his audience, without, however, lifting the veil of mystery enveloping the image. Wittingly, he only told the audience that the two women were there to haul him out of the water if he would become hypothermic. But he also insisted that, for him, the sea was a key point of critical intervention.⁶ An open letter to Gates, dated November 30, 1999, accompanies the three photographs of *Dear Bill Gates*. This date refers to a historical day of anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) protests, now chronicled as N30, in Seattle.⁷ The work's poster version, as glued onto the construction fence of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, then undergoing renovation, contained an additional element: a small photocopy of Winslow Homer's painting *Lost on the Grand Banks* (1885). (fig. P.3) Back then, the work, representing two fishermen peering over the side of their rowboat into a rough sea, had just been sold to Bill Gates for a fabulous price: \$30 million. In his first letter to the magnate, Sekula expressed a feeling of shock by this (at the time) record price for an American painting.⁸ How could one possibly pay so much money for a painting representing the lamentable tableau of near drowning at sea?

The coincidence between the painter's name, Homer, and that of the author of one of the greatest epic poems ever written, *The Odyssey*, is striking. For his filmic works, such as, most prominently, *The Lottery of the Sea* (2006) and *The Forgotten Space* (2010, codirector Noël Burch),

Fig. P.3.

Allan Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999. Poster version as installed on the construction fence of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2000), then undergoing renovation works. Variable dimensions. © Photo: Frits Gierstberg. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.





Fig. P.4.

Stills from Allan Sekula, *The Lottery of the Sea*, 2006, 180 mins., color, sound. English, Spanish, Galician, with Spanish subtitles. Direction, camera, narration: Allan Sekula. Editing: Elizabeth Hesik. Projected dimensions 386x290 cm. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Sekula sailed the oceans extensively. He generously shared his rich knowledge of the sea with his audiences and readers. He encouraged them to follow in his wake, even if this involved getting soaked in dirty waters. (fig. P.4) In *The Lottery of the Sea*, we observe the artist emerging with a waterproof camera from a swimming zone in the Mediterranean, right after we also see feces floating nearby. During conversations that he and I held in his Los Angeles Echo Park work studio in late May and early June of 2013, Sekula pointed out that a vital element in his overall intellectual undertaking had been to criticize the construction of a swimming pool in the backyard of one's house. In his view, the underlying human drive for doing that was one possible way to sublimate the death instinct, Thanatos.⁹ He considered it of uttermost urgency to hinge Thanatos back to the sea—to Thalassa, as he said. Only in this way would humans eventually be capable of reestablishing a more harmonious connection to the salty liquidity of the sea. This, he believed, would help them overcome their fear of death and find a better life balance.

While discussing this subject, we found ourselves sitting in front of the studio's principal wall. (fig. P.5) Sekula described this wall, to which he had attached numerous pictures and clippings, as a platform allowing him to keep certain images on the top of his mind. He pointed out a small picture appending to a used envelope with a striking amount of postage

Fig. P.5.

Allan Sekula Work Studio, Echo Park, Los Angeles. Clipboard wall. March 2013. © Photo: Ina Steiner. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.





Fig. P.6.

Heritage Images,
Gertrude Ederle American Swimmer, 1926. © Hulton
Archive / Getty Images.

stamps. The image illustrates one of his key leitmotifs, the figure of the woman swimmer. It is a reproduction of the legendary photograph of twenty-year-old Gertrude Ederle emerging from the English Channel waters at Kingsdown (northeast of Dover) on August 6, 1926. (fig. P.6) Ederle had just become the first woman to swim across the natural moat between France and Britain, in a record time of 14 hours and 31 minutes. Aside from her exceptional swimming skills, acquired from a young age while spending summer holidays on the banks of the Shrewsbury River in New Jersey, she thanked her success to a revolutionary two-piece bathing suit cut up from a one-piece and to motorcycle goggles that she had also modified. A pink swimming cap and a thickly applied layer of grease (petroleum jelly) covering her entire body completed her outfit.

When Gertrude Ederle departed from the beach at Cap Gris-Nez, she entered a rough sea, caused by a strong southwesterly wind. After a thirty-five-mile crawl-stroke battle, she reached the vicinity of the Kingsdown lifeboat station, her body covered with bruises and painful jellyfish stings, her tongue badly swollen from the salt water. The next day, *The Guardian* reported on her heroic endeavor as follows:

As the swimmer got nearer the shore visitors and residents between Kingsdown and Deal collected all the dry material they could lay their hands on to build big bonfires, which they lighted on the beach to act as a beacon for the swimmer. When Miss

Ederle got to within some 500 yards of the beach the crowd had increased to thousands, and every man, woman, and child assembled became almost frantic in their excitement as it became apparent that the swimmer had succeeded. The shrill blasts from the sirens of the two attendant tugs were insignificant compared to the great volume of human sound which came from the vast concourse of people on the foreshore.¹⁰

In 2001, a reporter for *The New York Times* visited Ederle in a nursing home in Wyckoff, New Jersey. As she told him, she recalled the above-described moment, when she emerged from the water and her feet hit the sand again, as the most wonderful moment of her life.¹¹ When the steamship sailing her back to her native country approached New York, the crew invited her to join the upper deck. Airplanes soon flew over the ship to greet and honor her by swooping down and dropping bouquets of flowers. Back in New York City, a reported crowd of two million granted her a heroic homecoming as Queen of the Waves.¹²

During the abovementioned lecture delivered at the Palm Springs Art Museum, Sekula, while showing the Ederle portrait to his audience, referred to Elaine Morgan's contested aquatic ape hypothesis. Morgan is famous for having speculated about the aquatic origins of the human species, and for having praised women as more prolific long-distance swimmers than men, and as figures of underwater endurance in general—here referencing the Japanese Ama divers, who, since time immemorial, have dived for pearls and more recently played an essential role in the development of the cultured pearl industry.¹³ In the present book, this emblematic portrait of Ederle is the starting point for sketching a more contemporary metaphoric image of a figure that medieval culture identified as Melusine, a legendary water-serpent woman who emerged from the sea and who, for that matter, possessed not only the gift of aquatic knowledge but also divine powers.¹⁴ Sekula himself somewhat triggered that understanding of the figure of Ederle as blessed with a divine force since, on his studio wall, he positioned the small clipping right above a larger reproduction of the *Buddha Shakyamuni* from Si Thép, a tall sandstone sculpture from the ninth century AD.¹⁵ (see fig. P.5) Ederle's portrait is an ambivalent picture, representing both a seductive mermaid putting on a broad smile and an alarming siren lighting up from her covered-up Cyclopean eye.

To write this book, I accepted Sekula's—and Ederle's—call to put the goggles back on along with them and to engage in a transfigurative yearslong open-water swim. Inspired by Ederle's perseverance, it felt vital to overcome fear (or, rather, to see myself through it), and to respond in my own way to the lure of the sea, as Alain Corbin put it in his seminal study. Corbin traced this particular fascination for

the sea back to the early seventeenth century, when the French poet Saint-Amant settled on the wild coast of Belle-Île and lyrically described the sun rising out of the sea in the morning twilight as recalling the Resurrection.¹⁶ In line with these authors, *Ground Sea*—as I have come to call my undertaking—claims the urgent need to both observe and reinvent the world from an aquatic perspective. Corbin has recalled how the Great Flood runs as a common theme through the oral traditions of all ancient peoples. As this old belief had it, the sea is the site where life began.¹⁷ Today as well, it is on the coastline that the “archives of the earth” reveal some of their deepest and most important secrets.¹⁸ From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the “water-dwelling girl and woman” came to embody and personify this idea that the sea was the original womb, possessing the power to restore fertility.¹⁹ Strikingly, the country where these conclusions could best be drawn, it was argued, was Holland—a land that had risen out of the water and (for that matter) had been “blessed by God.”²⁰

Allan Sekula considered himself part of those water-dwellers who felt themselves drawn to the Netherlands and northern Belgium (Flanders), where he produced numerous artworks and publications, frequently exhibited or lectured, and had many friends. But he also described himself as someone busy with “dog paddling while Rome burns.”²¹ This metaphor of the paddling dog served to color further his desired transformation into a *wild man* at the end of a turbulent twentieth century replete with failed utopianisms. I derive this notion of wild man from medieval folklore, literature, and art. As explained by Paul Vandebroek with respect to *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1500), the painting by Hieronymus Bosch, “wild folk” refers to such beings as sirens, mermaids, mermen, and sea-knights, all of whom have been considered not ordinary mortals, but beings with special powers who, for that reason, bear atypical knowledge of human life.²² Take, as a preliminary example, the following verse that Sekula wrote as a “Prayer for the Americans and Their Allies 6/16/01.”

The sky will be our shield
The market will never fall
The icecaps will never melt
The sea will never be exhausted.²³

*

Ground Sea investigates life in those regions of our Earth where ground—the solid surface of the Earth—and sea—the expanse of salt water that covers most of the Earth’s surface and surrounds its land masses—meet in various constellations.²⁴ We are living in an era in

which the polar ice caps continue to melt at an alarming pace.²⁵ In certain zones, human beings need to start preparing for rising tides, which will involve, among many other things, learning how to live not only *with* the welling water but sometimes also *on* the water. In other parts of the planet, temperatures are likely to go up so much that these regions will no longer accommodate any form of life. Their inhabitants will have to go elsewhere, away from a loved birthplace where the well has dried up, to find water that will help them survive. *Ground Sea's* principal focus is on those individuals who in recent times grew convinced, for better or worse, that being water-bound is our inescapable destiny. There will be no way around this reality. Some among us will try to make the best of it. Others will continue to pursue their denial as long as possible.

In the view of Bruno Latour, humankind will have to reinvent itself radically to break away from its previous existential condition as “Earthbounds.”²⁶ Building on overwhelming evidence provided by geoscientific research, Latour claims that to continue to be Earthbound is to remain part of those who are, for him, the former humans. These are the people who first became “modern” and who afterward oriented their behavior toward Ground Global, as he calls it—globalizing the planet’s economy along the way. For Latour, it is crystal clear that the world toward which most people continue to aspire today, the Globe as boundlessly Global, has no terrestrial existence. The resources needed for the accumulated capitalist ambitions of each nation-state are simply not available. Consequently, as Latour concludes, a time may approach during which humans will collectively need to start looking more actively for a place where their enormous passenger plane running low on fuel can safely land.

However, where do we find such place? According to Latour, there is no realistic way of going back to seeking refuge in what he calls Ground Land—a concept hinting at reactionary populist nationalisms involving relatively small parts of territory as native soil to be claimed. The idea of a Shrunk Britain, as Latour calls it, that regains autonomous control over its land and sea territory embodies this worldview, among other examples. Ivan Krastev, for his part, connects this new dream with that of an imagined Nativia. Increasing amounts of natives in Europe seek to reinvent their territory as if it were an isolated island from which they can chase unwanted foreigners. What is most striking, Krastev argues, is that such persons pursue this goal “without the slightest pang of guilt.”²⁷ But unless we should interpret the expression of a Shrunk Britain literally, as a warning sign pointing at an island ever-shrinking in size due to the rising sea levels, I agree with Latour and Krastev that such conceptions of Ground Land or Nativia are problematic.

How are we to respond, then, to the fact that, as argued by Latour, “*the very notion of soil is changing*” today?²⁸ What are we supposed to do

now that we increasingly feel “the ground itself” of a cohesive society “slip away beneath our feet”?²⁹ The ordeal common to us all is not only that we are short of resources but also that we find ourselves “*deprived of land*” to accommodate all our wishes.³⁰ Latour, for his part, is very concerned with finding out, then, “what land” on Earth is still inhabitable.³¹ Here, in *Ground Sea*, I shift focus and put forward the resolute hypothesis that no *landing* will be viable as long as it is searched for in terms of a specific area or territory. Landing, today, involves what the word *land* means in its verbal tense: a specific action connected to the aspiration of arrival. I understand this idea of arrival is ambiguous. It can mean either the desire to encounter a welcoming refuge or the ambition of conquering a space. *Ground Sea* takes as its working tool the word’s hospitable meaning, eloquently defined by my colleague Nicoletta Grillo in conversation through the Italian word *approdare*, which literally means “coming to the margins [of land].” In time, the term has also acquired an additional metaphorical layer of meaning and is used to mark the moment of arriving at a haven, a warm home.

Undoubtedly, some readers of this book belong, just like me, to the crazy club of Wind Assisted Fucking Idiots (WAFIs). Usually after a couple of shameful experiences they prefer to silently repress, WAFIs conclude that berthing a boat figures among the more critical sailing maneuvers—even more so, and perhaps paradoxically at first sight, when wind and stream join forces in guiding your ship to the quay. Thus, the first rule for avoiding collision and finding viable points of encounter between ground and sea is to learn how to skillfully embrace the elements. The purpose of this book is not to explore the sea as an area available for accommodating the, in my view, unrealistic wish of further capitalist growth. Instead, I put forward rivers and seas as key places for restoring and reinventing life on this planet. I investigate the option of imagining a plane-converted-into-ship that will not foolishly go out of control but will instead be self-confidently seaworthy, and ultimately finds a fitting berth for arrival and then safe mooring.

In what follows, I investigate what *Ground Sea* provides us as a nurturing place from which to learn as well as grow and develop. Characterized as it is by broken and turbulent waters, I observe *Ground Sea* as a domain that, however elusively, informs us how to prepare for what is to come. With “us,” I mean all human beings—excluding no one—now bound together, according to Latour, in an awkward family resemblance through two feelings of loss. The first feeling is felt by those who experienced the actual loss of their land—through the history of colonization—and the second by their former colonizers, who are on the verge of losing their land to the sea.³² *Ground Sea* proves capable of providing a horizon where human beings can, and will likely have to, end up dwelling—at least for some time. They do

so already, often in tragic circumstances. How, then, as a photo-art historian, can one credibly contribute to developing a substantiated case for a non-imperialistically defined water-boundedness within today's predicament? How should this study, *Ground Sea*, contribute to seeing the water-bounds not as our planet's outcasts—or worse, as menacing omens—but instead as heralds of hope for a reimagined future on Earth?

This question has continued to haunt me ever since one evening in the fall of 2009, when an express-mail mystery package from the US Postal Service arrived at my home in Brussels. The parcel contained a first edition copy of Sekula's *Photography Against the Grain*, carefully wrapped and signed by its author. At the kind instigation of his wife, Sally Stein—to whom he dedicated this book when it first came out in 1984—Sekula had sent one of the few remaining copies he still owned to Belgium, using my fortieth birthday as a suitable pretext for such a weighty present. Long out of print and unfindable in any local library at that time, most scholars in Europe were only familiar with this landmark publication through barely readable photocopies, likely obtained via services such as Interlibrary Loan. *Photography Against the Grain* came accompanied by an email in which its author jokingly wrote that this gift was to be taken as an encouragement to continue expanding my “intellectual seriousness” as a photography researcher.³³

As an odd sign of my gratitude for such a precious gift, I readily confess that I held on to my habit of reverting to the, by now, erratically marked photocopies that I made as a student. For it was, and continues to be, inconceivable that I would smudge the book's naked integrity, as it is the conceptually most influential specimen in my entire collection. Over the years, I even grew fond of this very paradox. Within my research library, *Photography Against the Grain* figures among the volumes that I have returned to most. Yet, I have never touched the book without wearing gloves. Upon opening its pages, my sacred copy will still spread the smell of an old ink-printed publication. More recently, I concluded that my reticence to reading the book's pages must be the result of this rather heady odor. For, although I experience the need to open it from time to time, a brief instant usually suffices, as the scent simply prevents me from concentrating on the written lines. Significantly, however, it is that peculiar smell that has occasioned a particular type of photo-based research, one that I would like to describe provisionally with a title borrowed from one of Javier Marias's earliest novels: *Voyage along the Horizon* (1972 [2006]).

Photography Against the Grain's opening lines read as a programmatic statement, “this is a book *about* photography.”³⁴ At the same time, Sekula continued, it is also a book that speaks within and alongside and through photographs. John O'Brian aptly characterized Sekula's methodological

approach, saying that his writings have shown a systematic interest in those photographic images, both historical and contemporary, that display before our eyes both a predominant socioeconomic structure and its accompanying narrative. This narrative is so omnipresent in our global everyday reality that many people somehow tend to overlook the basic fact that reified social relations maintained and fortified by that very narrative are not a metaphysical necessity inescapably inherent to the contemporary world. Photography writers who do not take this acquired narrative for granted have but one task left when seeking to unmask it: they need to piece together the nature and ways of its very construction from the ready-made world of signs surrounding a particular situation.³⁵

O'Brian agreed with Sekula that only a sustained zooming in on a specific topic allows for a profoundly deconstructive reading of the hegemonic narrative, against the tensions and abstractions of the conditions of advanced capitalism that helped to promote it. The way to make real progress with such detailed investigations is to create “a book of photographs.”³⁶ Reading through and writing alongside a well-chosen selection of photographs makes it possible to build a reflexive “*social practice*” from which a renewed “political dialogue” will eventually emerge.³⁷ The photography writer who constructs arguments from “*within* concrete life situations”—in other words, situations not marked by a deliberate effort to circumvent an overt or active clash of interests and representations—will develop a realist practice that tends to go against what Sekula observed to be the all-encompassing and strangling grip of present-day advanced capitalism.³⁸

To brush photography against the grain, then, means that one researches, investigates, and develops a study of photographs that are as minimally complicit with global capitalism's systemic logic as possible. In its methodological selections, *Ground Sea* follows Allan Sekula's lead. The present book is the outcome of a prolonged focus on one aspect of our collective life situation today, which is best described by means of an old-fashioned term: the wandering of peoples to countries in Europe. As indicated, my entry points into the subject material are those spaces where the land touches the sea or where the sea, in various guises, nourishes the land. For it is there that one encounters those who find themselves, most inspiringly and powerfully, water-bound.

*

Traditional mussel farmers in south-Italian Taranto call the fertile plots where they grow mollusks *orti*. Its etymological source is the Latin word *hortus* (garden). *Hortus* is a concept that has made it into contemporary Dutch and German, contrary to French or English. Though it is not very colloquial, it indicates (in Dutch) a well-kept and pleasant

garden or (in German) a protected place.³⁹ I want to propose adding this inspiring word to the English language. Eventually, the challenge is to install a mesh of duckboards between the gardens of the sea and the gardens of the land. From this cross-fertilizing perspective, *Ground Sea* specifically turns its attention to immigration control in the border zone around the English Channel near Calais and Dover. With Marta Welander, I identify this contested area as profoundly marked by a politics of exhaustion.⁴⁰

From that angle of empirical observation, *Ground Sea* indeed makes a case for photography's capacity to brush contemporary hegemonic realities against the grain. "Now is the *nagori* of photography," Victor Burgin wrote.⁴¹ The etymology of *nagori*, as Burgin elaborated, is *nami-nokori*, meaning "remains of the waves": these remains are "ephemeral imprints — rivulets in the sand, shell fragments, and other detritus — left by the waves as they withdraw from the beach." In Japanese, *nagori* carries a sense of resignation, involving a course of destiny that seemingly cannot be changed. Photography as we once knew it, according to Burgin, now finds itself in such a state of resignation. It has irrevocably disintegrated into digital imaging—shattered and scattered as it is by the internet, social media, or cameras in mobile phones. But from that very position, photography can reinvent itself again. A *nagori* moon, or *nagori no tsuki*, is "the moon that remains visible at dawn."⁴² From that dimly visible position, photographs can contribute to reworking the relationship between image and dialogue today. This, according to Burgin, "may be the key to both psychic and political health."⁴³

As the argument develops, at times perhaps in rather unconventional ways, I weave photo-theoretical insights into a *travel narrative*—building on the sense given to this concept by Louis Marin. While referring to Michel de Certeau's chapter "Spatial Stories" in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), Marin—shortly before he died—shared his conviction that it is the "travel narrative" that "authorizes frontiers to be established *and* displaced, founded *and* trespassed over."⁴⁴ "All travel," he argued on the same occasion, "consists of going from a place to a no-place." In my case, I took this quite literally. It involved departures (embarkations), passages (narrower or larger), finding moorings but then losing them again, and numerous returns home. All through this speculative journey, I, rather idealistically, dreamed of reinventing contemporary citizenship.

For doing so, I gathered additional forces from Javier Marías's above-mentioned *Voyage along the Horizon*. What matters, according to Marías in a Q&A added to the English translation of his novel, is "the journey along the horizon—in other words the journey that never ends."⁴⁵ I speak about that very journey as if delivering a report or a long letter to the reader, developed in two constituent parts. Volume I tells the tale of an age-old chalice violently cut into pieces by a sharp blade. In Volume II,

this very knife in its turn aspires to become a spindle for yarn, to allow for its metamorphosis into a weaving shuttle. According to Riane Eisler, we are presently living in an era of *domination power* as symbolized by the Blade, and feel the need to reinvent a collective time of *actualization power* as symbolized by the female, matrixial force of the Chalice.⁴⁶

The journey itself has been quite a lengthy one indeed. No doubt, it will even continue beyond this book. Yet a book needs completion. *Ground Sea*, for its part, proposes a shift of mindsets on a very precise level of imagination, however without culminating in a concrete trajectory regarding how exactly to achieve that goal. Each of its ten chapters circles around the same topic from a different angle, taking a complementary perspective. The gradations in complexity grow exponentially with every chapter. The book's pages advance, at first sight, a rather abstract claim for every person's right to demand a rebirth. It is a right that, in its utopian aspiration, closely resembles the "radical right of ability to move around the planet" that Achille Mbembe claimed—a right, Mbembe added, that "would belong to everybody by virtue of each and every individual being a human being" and for this matter "a right that would be extended to poor members of the earth."⁴⁷

The ideal world, in my opinion, would possess a global constitution that proclaims and guarantees this universal right to be reborn for everyone in correlation to a relevant and reasonably defined set of duties. Even if I continue to hope that, one day, this idle dream might come true, I also feel that we are not likely to see it happen in our lifetime. Thus, although *Ground Sea* is marked by a plot that only appears to thicken as its pages proceed, it does engage in a discursive exercise that will amount to plotting some lines of potentiality for a provisional safe anchoring. At present, this right to be reborn into a welcoming democratic community of equals is an unmaterialized fundamental right that may best work when conceived as a transcendental idea.

The realist in me understands that it requires an empirical translation into a variety of more tangible, smaller non-derogable and inalienable rights that can possibly make it into concrete legislation. Mbembe, for his part, provided the example of the "right of abode," a fundamental right for now only part of the constitution of Ghana but that has the potential to grow further into a more generally applicable human right.⁴⁸ The sober fact that we, for now, can only philosophically postulate a right to be reborn, however, does by no means imply one should downplay or invalidate it from the start. It contains an immensely rich imaginative potential, and I ardently desired it throughout writing this study.⁴⁹ I even came to imagine what such a right could mean for those who are no longer with us, yet who have left their marks and traces, such as through their photographic portraits.

As a preliminary illustration of that very idea, I propose to call to mind a black-and-white photograph, made by the Polish American photographer Nat Farbman and reproduced in the June 2, 1947 issue of *LIFE* magazine. Although I had cleared the rights for publishing this photograph, I eventually decided not to reproduce it. After lengthy debate and consideration, I realized that doing so would merely involve repeating—if not multiplying—the violence to which this image and similar photographs continue to bear witness. *Pretty young Congolese native girl proudly wearing necklace of photographer's flashbulbs strung together on a string in the Belgian Congo*, as is the photograph's full title, is available for consultation online. It features on page 113 of the above-mentioned issue of *LIFE* magazine, as the closing illustration to an article headlined "Congo Mission."⁵⁰ This article's text ends with a concluding line, which describes the motto of missionary Robin Cobble, leader of the post where the photograph was made, taken from the Gospel according to Saint John (10:10): "I came that they might have life."⁵¹

A jocular, yet entirely paternalist, commentary accompanies *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* (as the abbreviated caption reads): "Despite their education the Congo natives still show childlike affection for trinkets. This girl wears [a] string of LIFE flashbulbs." The picture represents a brightly smiling teenager chastely holding her arms crossed before her bare chest.⁵² She playfully wears the photographer's light bulbs strung together on a string. The white lamps accentuate her perfectly shaped teeth. When Farbman took the image, the camera's flashlight lit up her forehead and nose. She, touchingly beautiful, seemed to have put trust in how the picture would make her look in any future circulations of her portrait. It made her illuminate and shine, like a remnant or a glimpse from an irreparable past.

It is not possible for me to observe this picture without a tight throat. The image saddles its viewer with a rather unforgiving feeling. Throughout the pages that follow I, both explicitly and implicitly, pay tribute to its continued state of being a telling photograph, as revealing the unspeakable amount of harm done to the Congolese people by their colonizers. Over time, *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* often reminded me of a remark by Sekula in an interview with Debra Risberg: "Where are those naive souls who still trust photographs?"⁵³ The photograph of this young person, displaying confidence in photography, reached me by accident during the research process. It turned out, if only after a while, that I had not been sourcing this photograph but another one instead. Nor is it a found photograph, because someone deliberately guided me to it believing that I was looking for it—as explained at greater length in Chapter Five.

This image, in other words, found me, or so at least that's how I interpreted it. Over time, I even came to think that the photograph had been

“sourcing” me.⁵⁴ I concluded that the picture wanted me to uncover something about it. I want to describe how this impression came about while referencing what W.G. Sebald had to say about photographs that resurface from oblivion, while shrouded in mystery. There is, he wrote, “something stirring in them, as if one caught small sighs of despair, *gémissements de désespoir*.”⁵⁵ It turned out impossible to abandon, neglect, or overlook this photograph, which bore witness to its incredible survival as a digital object and which appeared to demand rescue and salvaging. Thus, I came to “adopt” *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* as a “neglected orphan” in need of being granted “a second life.”⁵⁶ Or, to put it differently (and as Daniel Palmer has argued in the context of the photographic recycling activities of Joachim Schmid), I took up the role of playing the “midwife” for facilitating a “rebirth” of this picture that allows contemporary viewers to both read it “*against* the intentions” of its author and “in defense of the subject pictured.”⁵⁷

As it goes with successful cases of adoption, the photograph gave much in return for the maternal care granted. Palmer, building on the work of Karen Cross, has argued in the context of family photographs that we can conceptualize them as transitional objects.⁵⁸ Thus, the photograph also helped me to grow as a researcher on photography, and discover new possibilities for writing about and working with the medium. Like Palmer in relation to other photographs, I came to understand this photograph not only as an absent presence but also as an unconscious collaborator. *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* is proposed here as a veiled allegory. This ghostly picture puts forward a request to treat its subject matter differently as we continue to investigate it. This involves a shift in our preconditioned mindsets. It also requires a thorough recontextualizing. The purpose is twofold. First, we need to create a renewed critical discourse about it. Second, that updated discourse should influence and alter our collective future socioeconomic and political behavior. The underlying hope is that this process would contribute to preventing such disasters from happening again.

Sekula’s fascination with what he ironically called the *magic* of eBay has proven inspirational for finding such new ways to address this photograph’s content. In what follows, I treat this photograph as a key relic from the past with which we still need to come to terms. *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* will be one among other guiding forces for giving shape to meditations on photography’s capacity to imagine this, admittedly utopian, right to be reborn—against generalized claims that photographs are no longer to be trusted today. This right, I will argue, can inspire revitalization of an entire set of existing fundamental rights now largely marginalized or excluded from the global geopolitical game.⁵⁹ Somehow, these rights manage to survive, even if only in a dormant state of a lingering afterlife, where they await metamorphosis

and reactivation.⁶⁰ Ariella Aisha Azoulay has gone as far as identifying “rights that were put out of action with the destruction of the physical worlds in which they were effective.”⁶¹ If we follow her logic, the right to be reborn might be understood as a right that perhaps once existed but that is now disabled. Approached in this way, it would then bear within itself the potentiality to be re-enabled.⁶²

To start out on *Ground Sea*’s travelogue, then, let me turn once more to the rather pervasive smell of *Photography Against the Grain*’s original copy. In Susan Sontag’s moving adaptation of Ovid’s Pygmalion myth, a “pedagogue” (not an artist!) finds a lifeless statue of the goddess of hunting, Diana, standing in a garden.⁶³ Upon this discovery, this educator is seized by a didactic streak. He decides to inject the statue with just a tiny bit of life—which is to say that he grants her only one sense, if a primordial one. Like bees, bumblebees, and butterflies, she can now smell the honeyed fragrances of wildflowers, even when they are wintering. She is capable of detecting the odors of “the flower of the field, with its shy, natural, capricious perfume, a free gift, an infinitesimal ripple that taught the true value of the first stirring of the heart.”⁶⁴ Here is my quasi-fictitious version of what could have happened next to the statue in this tale. After that, *Ground Sea* will sail along its further course.

Embarkation
Bone Point





Still motionless, the statue absorbs the odors surrounding her in the garden in the dunes where she has been standing on a pedestal for decades now. She smells an overwhelming powdery scent of violet flowers mingled with a flavor of hibernating ground. Eyes closed, she feels an even more prominent smell blowing her way through a mild breeze. Diana recognizes it immediately, for she has sensed it uncountable times in her former life, before that cursed moment in a long-gone century. Way back then, on a tragic day in 1987, a violent act of repression came to freeze her. Thus, a fate befell her as wretched as that of the Theban women who wanted to follow their punished queen Ino in leaping into the sea. Before they could reach the overhanging cliff, the goddess Juno turned them into stone, to mark her cruelty.

What the statue now senses are the fishy sea and its salty waters mixed with the cloying scent of sand, algae, seaweed, shells, washed-up seafood, and rubble. Sniffing in the fresh air, which seems to announce an early spring, fills her with breathing. It warms her up from inside. She starts to blossom inwardly. Now that she feels her frozen limbs melting, Juno's spell—cast on her for being the adulterous daughter of Jupiter and Latona—is finally broken. She opens her eyes. Still restricted in her movement, she slowly lifts her frozen limbs. At the yard's edge, a flowering thicket of purplish beach asters (fleabane) greets her. Across the street, beyond the low protective wall, she observes the grayish waters rolling onto North Beach at the height of Heather Road. Nothing much appears to have changed since she last saw this place, except for the lamppost, which was replaced by a more blinding exemplar.

How long has she had her petrified face turned toward the sea now? She, as yet, does not have a clue. From the corner of her eye, she is watching two ships that have approached strikingly close to the coastline. The larger vessel rides at anchor. The tinier one appears busy, circling around it. It might be fishing for something, though it is hard to say from afar. Diana now discovers she can move her neck. She prudently looks around. The dewy

lawn makes her realize it is early morning. She softly lifts her gaze to peer at the further horizon. Turning her head slightly to the left, she is pleased to rediscover the beautiful sight of the Gunton Warren. At first glance, its dunes and patches of bush near the cliffs appear largely unchanged. This gives her a sense of calm. No longer does she feel overcome by sadness over the misfortune that broke her. She knows exactly in which direction to go.

*Magnetized, she starts to descend the slope. With every move, her body grows suppler. The ugly asphalted road soon disappears as she rushes toward that unforgettable sea that she, every evening while she was spending time in the area for her research, used to say good night to from the staircase window. As she approaches the shoreline, she hears the whooshing sound of the common ground. A fragile memory returns. Shortly before becoming petrified, she had watched the uncensored version of Alain Resnais and Chris Marker's *Statues Also Die* (1953). She remembers from it a hopeful voice (some twenty minutes into the film) saying humankind will create a new community from the bottom of the loneliness of our industrialized, technocratic society. She gathers courage. "Statues also live again!" she shouts aloud to the void of imperturbably floating seawaters. As she enjoys the resonance of her regained voice, she notices the smaller vessel crawling toward her, like a turtle or an elephant seal. Her water-dwelling journey has begun. Nothing can stop her from nosing the wet sands. Who knows who she may end up encountering there, or what she might discover?*

While she runs, she seeks the beach hut that her team had made from driftwood. With the help of a few local fishermen, they built it as a shelter for their extended observations of the shoreline near submerged Doggerland. She finds it affected by the elemental forces but otherwise relatively intact, thanks to a protective layer of overgrown bracken and scrub. Would some of her belongings still be there? Someone had unlocked the small entrance door. As she enters its twilit interior, she finds a collection of fishing equipment, a set of waterproof clothes, a picnic basket, and a couple of drinking

bottles. In a corner, between the warm blankets, lies the metal “bonbon” box from Maison Mary that she received as a welcome present upon her first arrival in Brussels. It looks a bit rusted, slightly dented as well, but otherwise in decent condition. In it, she used to preserve the spotted ray egg case that was her good luck charm—and that she had named Inne-Erin. She opens it. On top of the acid-free paper in which she used to wrap the pouch, she finds a handful of small photographic prints.

She sits down, and decides to take out a few of them, so she can observe them one by one. The first picture appears to have been taken during her teenage years in the late 1940s–early 1950s. She recognizes riveted dorade boxes like those of the ocean steamer she sailed on from Matadi to Antwerp in 1961. After her country’s independence, Belgium ceded to mounting international pressure to start a reparations program. The package of measures stipulated, among other things, that a representative quota of students



from the former colony be granted access to higher education. Since she had made herself noted as a trilingual student at Lovanium University, it happened that she pursued a further specialization in Marine Paleontology at the then undivided University of Louvain. The picture she holds in her hand portrays an attractive woman sitting on a mattress—clearly on the comfortable upper deck. As a third-class passenger, the crew had not allowed Diana to spend time there during the crossing. But she knew the first-class quarters from later ocean travels, when she had already obtained British citizenship. At first sight, Diana believes the unknown woman to look fabulously emancipated, in her modern bathing suit with a matching headband to tame her wild, curly ringlets. Her bare legs are so symmetrically “forked” that Diana imagines they could easily be folded back into the skin of a siren’s tail. Her broad smile and the Reflex-Korelle camera that she is holding in her hands remind Diana of that wonderful scene in her favorite movie, Never on Sunday, when Piraeus-born water woman Illia observes the American tourist-philosopher Homer Thrace (who is in search of the traces of ancient Greece’s supposed happiness) through the twin-lens of his Rolleiflex. Just like them, the woman and her photographer surely must have had great fun dwelling around in the strangest of places.

The second photo is a magnificent color picture of a burlap basket, no doubt handwoven and insulated, its two handles made of supple wooden twigs. How beautiful it is. It makes her fondly recollect the classes of one of her most inspiring teachers at Louvain, a rather savage middle-aged archaeologist who speculated on these baskets having been in use already by Neolithic tribes. His wild ideas always gave his students a good laugh! Next follows an eerie photograph of a winding serpent. Once again, she thinks back to another scene in Never on Sunday, when Illia and Homer sit together at a table talking, while Illia positions her wicker basket in between them. Homer tries to glide into her life like an amiable snake, but, luckily, he fails! As the wise captain knew, the only thing that might come to save the independent woman of the night Illia was love, not Homer’s

petty-bourgeois moral aspirations. This image makes her feel slightly nostalgic for the magical snake dances performed during celebrations in the jungle, where she grew up as a child. Hypnotized, they curled up from a basket as the musicians played their flutes. Later, she learned that ancient European culture understood the primeval serpent to be the associate of the Great Neolithic Goddess of Death, Life, and Regeneration.

The photographs of the snake and the basket seem a perfect fit. Shaking off her sudden pining for that long-lost home, she realizes this diptych reminds her of a verse from Charles Baudelaire’s “The Dancing Serpent” in his The Flowers of Evil. She walked, while holding her schoolbooks on her head, two miles upriver through the dense forest every morning to the US bush mission post in Monieka, where her teachers were extremely demanding. The spinster—the pupils secretly nicknamed her “Cancer” (pronouncing it in the French way: “Cancèrre”)—instructed her to learn some key verses by heart. It surprises her how easily she can still recollect the lines. In a whispering voice, she begins to recite.

Like a brave ship awakening
To winds at break of day,
My dreamy soul sets forth on course
For skies so far away.





5

She faintly smiles now. Later, in college, she discovered that Walter Benjamin, in his The Arcades Project (in convolute J, if she's not mistaken), used that same verse to quote from a critical commentary made by Jules Laforgue on Baudelaire's Romantic poetry. For Laforgue, such verses were preeminent examples of Baudelaire's crude capacity to put his foot in his mouth amidst a more harmonious passage. They were, he argued, exaggerated comparisons that seemed downright American: "purplish flash and dazzle." She cannot seem to recollect now whether Benjamin agreed with Laforgue's analysis. In any case, for her, Baudelaire's cheesy musings on the serpent's dance have lost none of their power. Still, she does not quite grasp why these little pictures appear to have been awaiting her here.

The next photograph brings her closer to where she finds herself at present. She turns it around and reads its backside.

May 17th, 1971.

LIGHT TOWER SET UP IN THE CHANNEL.

She vividly remembers the installment of the Royal Sovereign lighthouse, with its distinctive shape comprising a large platform supported by a single

pillar rising out of the water. Back then, she was a teacher at the University of Brighton. On a free afternoon, she had gone out with friends to the beach at Newhaven to observe the construction works of this technical bravura in concrete. The skills of the British naval engineers, who oversaw its building in two sections on the beach, impressed her. They worked under the supervision of Trinity House, a charity dedicated to safeguarding shipping and seafarers, and providing education, support, and welfare to the seafaring community. As a General Lighthouse Authority, Trinity House had the statutory duty to deliver reliable, efficient aids to navigation for the benefit and safety of all mariners. This Royal Sovereign lighthouse came to replace the light vessel that had marked the Royal Sovereign Shoal since 1875. With her friends, she mused about what it would be like to live in the cabin section with room for three full-time keepers who must have enjoyed incredible sea views. This fond memory makes her wonder: would it still be there? Would its flash still emerge every twenty seconds to provide protection and guidance for those who, nowadays, attempt to cross the treacherous, billowing English Channel?





7

The next set of pictures leaves her puzzled on that very subject. Someone appears to have marked a handwritten description on each backside, in French. She reads them out loud: La vague. Mur de terre enserrant le bidonville pour migrants, Calais, 26 janvier 2016 and Cerf-volant, « bidonville d'État » pour migrants, Calais, 26 mars 2016. Their author's name, whose handwriting she presumes it must be, is Bruno Serralongue. The inscription further informs the viewers of these small prints that the originals are large inkjet prints on Canson Baryta photo paper, glued on aluminum, and then framed in Altuglas. As a biology student, she had enrolled in a photography course, where she learned to develop negatives in the darkroom. The term inkjet print did not yet circulate. Given the reference to Baryta paper, however, she imagines it to be of similar effect to the silver prints that she is familiar with from her earlier life. She now knows with certainty that she regained her ability to breathe after the winter of 2016 ended.

*The picture representing a wall of earth eddying in the shape of a wave around what the photographer describes as a **Shantytown for Migrants in Calais** (she reads it out loud, as if to reassure herself she is translating this correctly), measures 157×126 cm. The other one, depicting two young men playing with a kite on a dune near what seems a ramshackle distribution point for provisioning, appears to be smaller: only 50×62 cm. The caption, shockingly, informs her that the French State itself has been maintaining this very “slum.” She cannot believe her eyes. On February 12, 1986, she—just having obtained imperial citizenship—figured among prominent intellectuals present in Canterbury Cathedral for the signing ceremony of the Channel Tunnel Treaty. The prime minister’s office had invited her for her involvement in the analysis of marine fossils excavated from the bottom of the sea during preliminary investigations of the chalk soil. What, she wonders, had happened in the meantime?*

She feels uncertain again. She decides to take out one more image. Its photographer took it while following in the wake of two men. Facing harsh winter conditions, they appear to have been carrying their belongings with them: the right one in his arms and the other one in a knapsack. She turns it around to find a typewritten note on the backside, saying: TWO REFUGEES TRUDGE OVER HAJ OMRAN PASS IN A BLIZZARD. Pencilled underneath, a marking informs her that this is in the Iraq mountains. Possibly, she thinks, this picture dates from the time of Operation Dawn-2. In the summer of 1983, the Iranians, with Kurdish support, captured the Iraqi town of Haj Omran. This had given way to a counteroffensive against the Kurds, during which Iraq used poison gas indiscriminately. Outrage from the international community had been huge after the media covered the tragedy. Of the following image, she gets to see the backside first, as it appears to lie upside down in the case. On a fragment from a newspaper clipping, she observes a couple of legs wading through water in which chunks of ice are floating. It is 1950. Fred Waters photographed North Korean refugees fleeing southward. In awe, she turns the image.



Above: 8
Below: 9

Recollecting these catastrophes, she starts to feel slightly distressed. Why are these images here? Did human beings not learn any lesson at all, perhaps? From afar, she hears the siren of a ship's horn resonate from over the water. It is time to emerge from the hideout. She peeps outside and spots the little ship landed on the beach. Its boatman is waving to her that he has come to fetch her. They will sail to the larger vessel in orange marine paint awaiting them off Gunton Cliff. She feels cured. She realizes that what she smelled in that very first instant of awakening was the future. With its expert crew, she will set straight course to the Dogger Bank—that fertile fishing ground slightly north from where they are now. There, she will join the water-bounds and gather the necessary energy for requisitioning her right

to be reborn. She intends not to rest before she can find a way to demand it for others as well—yes, to claim it for everyone.

Quickly, she wants to verify one last thing. She softly moves away the faded sheets underneath the set of photographs in the little container and is pleased to find Inne-Erin still there, well kept in her kinked paper cocoon. Reassured, Diana looks around the old cabin one last time. A cardboard shoebox raises her curiosity, for the tangle of handwritten inscriptions



scribbled on it, and the variety of labels glued to it. Picking it up, she reads on the white label in the upper-right corner: 7/3/18/Gressenhall/Horse Dental Gag. The one underneath, in the middle of the box's lid, mentions (in different handwriting) another date and contents: 21.07.2009/NEEDLES. Below is an even older year, 1993, written by even someone else. Back then, so it seems, it contained metal. On its side, possibly, one may discern another date: 2/83 (CONT). Right above, another person has marked SEWING ACCESSORIES. Finally, yet another mark reveals HARPOON. The person who added this word also appears to have decided to attach two strips of painter's tape, as if having wanted to create a double slash.

Diana feels dazzled. What is one to make of this? She takes off the lid. The case is empty. Somewhat disappointed, she spots a rather new-looking red waterproof photo camera from the brand OLYMPUS right next to it. She does not quite know how to use this prototype but decides to figure that out later. For now, she just puts it in the box. She will take it with her. As she cannot carry too much weight, she leaves behind her bow and arrows. But she keeps on the lightweight necklace threaded with minuscule coral beads that someone lovingly attached to her neck while she was still a lifeless statue. She selects some of the warm waterproof clothes and hides away the small box in one of her clothing's pockets. Maybe she will find time to discover the other pictures during the crossing. She tells herself she should try to do so, especially after having caught a glimpse of the next one awaiting her in the box: a splendid portrait of a young elephant near a waterline—halting its steps, as if to pose for the camera. It might have been taken in Kenya's Amboseli National Park—she knows it, the ground has that dusty color there. Striking, how its magnificent ivory teeth draw two clear, white lines through the image—just like the strips of painter's tape emblazoned with the word “harpoon.” It is signed R Denomme. What a strange name that is. It reminds her of someone she once knew, a Frenchman, whose name was Denhomme—“the man” in English. Would Denomme mean the same then? Or, should it rather translate as “the name”? Hard to say, but she is

fascinated. She concludes that the elephant must become her talisman. No doubt, at some point, this and all the other pictures will contribute to seeing herself through the dire endeavor that lies ahead of her.



1. Gullsway (Lowestoft), United Kingdom. February 4, 2020. Photo by author.
 2. Unidentified black-and-white photograph [Woman seated on the deck of a ship with camera], photographer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 6.1×6.8 cm. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. BESTONE photo. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown.
 3. Unusual handmade basket [as indicated on PayPal document], insulated and woven burlap, manufacturer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 28.2×35×35 cm. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on September 30, 2011. © Photo: Ina Steiner.
 4. 50’s/60’s Florida Snake at Reptile Farm Sarasota #2 [as indicated on PayPal document], black-and-white photograph, photographer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 15.8×19.6 cm. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on January 9, 2009.
 5. *May 17th 1971 LIGHT TOWER SET UP IN THE CHANNEL* [as indicated on backside of photograph], 1971, black-and-white photograph, photographer unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 20.2×25.7 cm. Recto and verso sides. Keystone photo. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown.
 6. Bruno Serralongue, *La vague. Mur de terre enserrant le bidonville pour migrants, Calais, 26 janvier 2016* [*The Wave. Wall of Earth Enclosing the Shantytown for Migrants, Calais, January 26, 2016*], 157×126 cm. Inkjet print on Canson Baryta photo paper mounted on aluminum, Altuglas frame. Part of the series *Calais*, 2006–. © Bruno Serralongue.
 7. Bruno Serralongue, *Cerf-volant, « bidonville d’État » pour migrants, Calais, 26 mars 2016* [*Kite, “State Shantytown” for Migrants, Calais, March 26, 2016*], 50×62 cm. Inkjet print on Canson Baryta photo paper mounted on aluminum, Altuglas frame. Part of the series *Calais*, 2006–. © Bruno Serralongue.
 8. *TWO REFUGEEES TRUDGE OVER HAJ OMRAN PASS IN A BLIZZARD, Iraq* [as indicated on backside of photograph], black-and-white photograph, photographer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 15.1×70.3 cm. Recto and verso sides. Keystone photo. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown.
 9. *BET:515180940 Koreans Fleeing P’yongyang*. © Getty Images. INP Staff Photo by Fred Waters, *REFUGEES fleeing from war-ridden North Korea wade an icy river* [as indicated on backside of photograph (caption)], black-and-white photograph, 1951, 18×22.9 cm. Verso and recto sides. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown.
 10. Storage box for Bronze Age spear. Collection Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Norfolk, United Kingdom. January 31, 2020. Photo by author.
 11. Rick Denomme, *Natural image* [as indicated on object]. Elephant and Young in Amboseli National Park, Kenya [as confirmed by the photographer via email]. Signed color photograph, framed, undated, 25.5×20.4 cm (framed), 17×12 cm (unframed). © Rick Denomme. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown.
- Bruno Serralongue’s photographs are courtesy of Air de Paris, Romainville and Baronian-Xippas, Brussels.
- All “objects of interest” from Allan Sekula’s *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum* are in the collection of M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

And Jesus was a sailor when he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching from his lonely wooden tower
And when he knew for certain only drowning men could see him
He said all men will be sailors then until the sea shall free them
But he himself was broken, long before the sky would open
Forsaken, almost human, he sank beneath your wisdom like a stone

Second stanza of Leonard Cohen's song *Suzanne*, 1967.



The Search Project (Continued)

#sunset over @MarinaCadzand

#EndofSummerHoliday #kite #danceoflife #np #StringReprise #Treaty

And I notice two days before the show opens that Balcerowicz of Poland and Becker of the University of Chicago continue to agree: the markets are reviving, back off from regulation. Maybe they should spend less time giving each other Nobel prizes.

And yet, *under our very noses*, [...] a group of immigrant workers in Chicago occupy the factory that is going to fire them, demanding severance pay. Apparently they hadn't received the Thatcherite news bulletin that "there is no alternative."

Allan Sekula, "**PRELIMINARY NOTES' (Or How Not To Get a Grant From the NEA)**," in *Polonia and Other Fables* (Chicago and Warsaw: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2009), 63. Original emphasis.



The Search Project (Provisional Discontinuation)

Entering @Ostend #harbor the day after the socialist burgomaster announced #zerotolerance regarding presence of transitory #migrants in the city, should a ferry line @Ramsgate become operative.

#WorldBeardDay #brexitferry

Acknowledgments

Nobody can write a book such as the present one without continuous encouragement. I thank Alexander Streitberger for his collegial friendship, and for vital comments to both the early and very last versions. Ton Brouwers expertly took care of the manuscript's editing before peer review. Throughout the years, he received first shorter and then increasingly longer fragments. At a certain point, he commented that it seemed as if all the bits and pieces were parts of a long, drawn-out letter. Perhaps readers will recognize in this book the hidden form of a letter awaiting a response. Some such replies have already reached me, as comments on drafts. Wendy Morris and Stéphane Symons provided specific input on key elements of, respectively, the image and the textual parts, which contributed to shaping the whole into a book. When, in March 2020, our team at the Lieven Gevaert Centre in Leuven unexpectedly spread out over the planet as the consequence of Belgium's imminent first lockdown, Nicoletta Grillo and Joeri Verbesselt, with Erien Withouck, Marta Wódz, and Maria Victoria Bas, set up an online reading group of the full text. Their productive exchanges resulted in a wealth of corrections and recommendations, which I have taken to heart.

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Veerle De Laet, assisted by her team, oversaw the entire publication process of the book. I thank her for her willingness to accompany me in this endeavor. To Carles Guerra and Daniel Palmer, I wish to express my gratitude for their pertinent blind reviews of the text, crucial for its completion. Danielle Carter meticulously edited the final manuscript. Ellen Van Driessche and Lotte Peers provided precious comments on the proofs. Theo van Beurden at DOGMA wonderfully took care of the book's design. Both Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and Mark Durden invited me to speak about selected parts of the unpublished book at conferences that they organized in Amsterdam (2019) and in Cardiff (2020). The responses generated by these lectures positively influenced the result. Marike Schipper urged me to start this project. James Elkins urged me to finish it, as did Ariella Aïsha Azoulay. Herman Asselberghs, Diarmuid Costello, Manthia Diawara, Rick Denomme, Maria Dompé, Kate Evans, Caroline Ghyselen, Tim Ingold, Liz James, Daniela Ortiz and Xóse Quiroga, Thomas Ruff, Jeff Scheible, and Kris Vervaeke kindly consented to freely reproducing their works, graphs, or images. Gilles Rousseau did so on behalf of his father, JER. I further thank Zoltán Dragon and Frits Gierstberg for their help with tracing documentation from their respective institutional collaborations with Allan Sekula. A few photographs remain unidentified. Even if for some I was able to find the author's name, unfortunately, I could not locate them to seek permission (most notably Arie Meiseles).

Nele Vandecasteele, the most expert woman sailor within my close circle of friends, taught me how to listen to Echo at night while out on the open sea. Paul Vanslambrouck and Jan Papy told me all I needed to know about flowers and gardens. Then there were the pleasant surprises offered by Gary Bush and Sydelle Herzberg, after a match-making operation by Suzanne Tanswell at the Thomas Paine Cottage in New Rochelle, New York. Jan Bollen, Jean-Paul Dorchain, Ambroos Laermans, and an anonymous employee at the Cinémathèque française as well as Sheila Leggs and Inne Withouck equally proved essential contributors. Patrick McNicholas and Paul Duthoit amply informed me about contemporary life in and near Deal and made my extended stays there enjoyable. At Gullsway, Angela and Hugh Taylor provided a perfect home away—as did Donatienne de Spirlet and Didier Hommelen in Coxyde. Always dedicated, my dog's veterinarian Guy Baert made sure that we could make our joint travels to the United Kingdom without headaches. Diane Haesaert and Hugo Van Reybrouck expressed sincere interest in the book's progress, and provided encouragement. Edimarle Linhares Dos Santos has been a silent presence in my writing environment throughout all these years. Her affable smile has kept me going more than she can imagine.

I thank my father, Lucas Van Gelder, for providing—at the eleventh hour—essential genealogical data that he alone had access to. I thank my mother, Marie Elisabeth Kestelijn, for her quiet resignation, knowing as she does that through writing this book, I would make myself into what I am. Gommaar and Vivian Van Reybrouck Van Gelder have both grown out of their childhood years now that *Ground Sea* sees the light of day. Aware as I am how relieved they are that the “Calais phase” is finally over, I am grateful for their patience, and for their tolerance. The initial, tentative attempts at what later became *Ground Sea* have found their very first reader in Pieter Van Reybrouck. I thank him for his unconditional love, and for his constant support. I hope that he will never stop bringing me flowers and taking me to the sea.

*

This book has been written within the framework of a research project entitled *Art Against the Grain of “Collective Sisyphus”: The Case of Allan Sekula’s Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum (2010–2013)*. Between 2014 and 2020, with support from the KU Leuven Research Fund and from the Research Foundation-Flanders (FWO), a team of researchers based at the Lieven Gevaert Centre in Leuven and at M HKA, Antwerp inventoried, analyzed, and investigated Allan Sekula’s intriguing collection of around 1250 “objects of interest,” as he would call them. At M HKA, I am grateful to Bart De Baere, Edwin Carels, Evi Bert, Jan De Vree, and Dieter Vankeirsbilck for their loyal partnership. Special thanks go to Anja Isabel Schneider, who successfully completed a pioneering PhD in Curatorial Research on *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum*, for having generously shared her insights with me.

While pursuing our speculative enterprise, we closely collaborated with Ina Steiner at the Allan Sekula Studio. Her input has proven key to the project’s endeavor. Sally Stein, the artist’s widow, gave her blessing, for which my sincere gratitude. Jürgen Bock equally saved no efforts to make sure that we would not let go of our ambition to make sense of Sekula’s swan song. Carles Guerra fought for having an exhibition with selected items from *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum* installed at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies. This public presentation midway through the research trajectory became a turning point in the overall process. Mieke Bleyen proved invaluable for starting the project and Nicola Setari joined us at a crucial stage. Early on Jeroen Verbeeck—who, too young, died in 2019—provided much-needed assistance on various levels, together with Adriaan Gonnissen, Katelijne Lindemans, Federica Mantoan, Tamara Beheydt, and Zeynep Kubat.

As for Allan Sekula, key protagonist in our team’s six-year-long study on *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum*, I wish to add on this occasion

that one of this book's purposes has been to pay tribute to his sharp mind and insights. It walks with the intellectual and artistic legacy that he has left to the present-day world and aims to transfer some of his ideas to a younger generation of scholars. The book may, possibly, be understood as an experiment with Sekula's proposal to create "a kind of political geography, a way of talking, with words and images about both the system and *our* lives within the system."⁶⁵ The following pages at times have succumbed to the pitfall of making "something with photographs, video, graphics and text that functions like a historical novel gone crazy or a fiction film with erratic scope, stopping once or twice too often to linger on the details."⁶⁶ I apologize to the reader; this has been a way to remain faithful to Sekula's understanding that there is no other way to write about the problems posed by the globalized economy today than by constantly moving back and forth from an anecdote to a more general message.

There exists a place described by W.G. Sebald as "the outermost limit of the earth, in expectation of the miracle longed for since time immemorial."⁶⁷ It is there, in what was once a thriving bathing resort town, Lowestoft, in the United Kingdom, that this book's body text came to provisional completion on February 2, 2020 (I continued to add updates on particular developments for another year). In the vicinity of its once glorious pier, which—Sebald reminded us—stretched out four hundred yards into the North Sea and had a promenade deck made of African mahogany planking, I came closest to grasping the meaning of a key passage from Javier Marías's novel *Berta Isla*. It starts with Tomás/Tom Nevinson, the protagonist, reading a line from T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" when he is about to meet his tormentor, Mr. Tupra (the blade-fighter), in a bookstore.

We die with the dying: see, they depart, and we go with them. We are born with the dead: see, they return, and bring us with them.⁶⁸

Tomás/Tom then goes on to muse that it seems indeed as if the dead leave us alone to continue along a dark path that they have abandoned as they have set off to another adventure. Since our time has not come yet, we have no other choice than to be "reborn as toddlers taking a few hesitant steps." Thus, the conclusion is that "we are born again each time we survive someone close to us, each time someone falls and tugs at us to follow, but without succeeding in dragging us into the sea's throat that has swallowed him or her." Therefore, I also need to acknowledge here a handful of books. I have carried them on my back in a waterproof bag all through my swim—in particular, Philippe Sands's *East West Street*, to which I could turn when in need of confirmation that I was not the only dreamer longing for new fundamental rights.



During the summer of 2017, a potentially lethal infection invaded my body. Antoon De Laat, Constantinus Politis, Stephan Claes, and Philippe David saved my life—I can never express my gratitude enough to them. I thank Sofie Cornille for her expert manual therapeutic care, and Leentje Marguillier for skillfully coaching me to be even-tempered under challenging circumstances. In W.J.T. Mitchell, I encountered a warm friend and a fellow *mental traveler*. It was moving to read his book of the same name during the final phase of revisions on *Ground Sea*.⁶⁹ The concluding line of Chapter Fifteen in Orhan Pamuk’s novel *The New Life* provides the most apt transition to what follows hereafter. As Pamuk explains at the beginning of Chapter Sixteen, the previous chapter’s closing sentence announces the “apologia section” of his book.⁷⁰ Actually, it is a citation from Dante’s *La Vita Nuova*, XIV.

I had set foot in that part of life beyond which one cannot go with any hope of returning.

De Blinkerd aan Zee, April 2, 2021

Left image
Gullsway (Lowestoft),
United Kingdom.
February 5, 2020.
Photo by author.

Right image
Calais, France.
February 15, 2020.
Photo by author.

I had the feeling the world was disintegrating around me
Everything became ugly, distorted, as if someone did it on purpose...
...to try to make me regret it less...
and now...
I can touch the table

Krzysztof Kieślowski, *Decalogue II*, 1988. Excerpt from the
closing scene (the so-called Resurrection Scene).



The Search Project (Completed)

@28°36'.011N-17°33'.536W (acceleration from NE)

#NamelessDayBeforeHolyInnocentsDay #roughsea #windy #joy #jump #dolphin
#wild #np #LalslaBonita

Introduction: Sea-Stricken

During the spring of 2009, the French artist Bruno Serralongue exhibited a selection of photographs from his ongoing series *Calais* (2006–) at WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels.⁷¹ (figs. I.1–2) Soberly hung on the wall, these prints, of variable dimensions yet all drenched in hazed colors, seemed to urge their viewers to not look away from the disquieting scenes on display. The pictures revealed seemingly lost people roaming around near trucks on the A16 and N216 highways in Calais. Serralongue also confronted his audience with a close-up of an abandoned sleeping bag in a bush bearing the disturbing title *Vestige 3 (sac de couchage), Calais, juillet 2007* [*Relic 3 (Sleeping Bag), Calais, July 2007*—herewith exposing the remnants of a makeshift shelter.

Another image, as indicated by its caption, portrayed two men in the “zone of the dunes.” It was accompanied by a purplish shot of a small walking path, entitled *Chemin à l’aube 1, Calais, juillet 2006* [*Path at Dawn 1, Calais, July 2006*], which adorns the cover of Volume I of this book. Next to it is a night shot of a prefab modular construction near a local center for medical analyses, bathed in a similarly mysterious twilight.⁷² A more recent installation view, made during the exhibition *Calais – témoigner de la «jungle»* [*Calais, Testimonies from the “Jungle”*] at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, shows how the Plexiglas frames encapsulating these photographs create an atmosphere of suffocation. (fig. I.3) Somehow, the men depicted in *Passer en Angleterre, Accès terminal transmanche, Calais, juillet 2007* [*Moving to England, Cross-Channel Terminal Access, Calais, July 2007*] appear to search for ways to breathe inside a claustrophobic glass case. They seek an escape route.

Until that first visit to Serralongue’s Brussels presentation of this vulnerable material, I had perceived the realities he addressed only as leading a virtual life, on the artist’s website. Writing this a decade later, I look back at my initial physical encounter with Serralongue’s images as a game changer. Observing the *Calais* photographs so silently installed in the comfortably warm space of a then brand-new WIELS gave rise to a sense of confusion, a sharp pain even, caused by the incompatibility of the two worlds—that of the polished white cube and that of the darkest margins of our contemporary society. As a result, it proved impossible



Fig. I.1.

Bruno Serralongue, *Calais*, 2006-. Ifochromes mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frames. Installation view at WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2009). From left to right: *Au bord de l'autoroute A16, Calais, juillet 2007* [*On the Edge of the A16 Motorway, Calais, July 2007*], 125×158 cm; *Passer en Angleterre, Accès terminal transmanche, Calais, juillet 2007* [*Moving to England, Cross-Channel Terminal Access, Calais, July 2007*], 125×158 cm; and *Vestige 3 (sac de couchage), Calais, juillet 2007* [*Relic 3 (Sleeping Bag), Calais, July 2007*], 62.5×50 cm. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre.



Fig. I.2.

Bruno Serralongue, *Calais*, 2006-. Ifochromes mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frames. Installation view at WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2009). From left to right: *Deux hommes, zone des dunes, Calais, juillet 2007* [*Two Men, Area of the Dunes, Calais, July 2007*], 125×158 cm; *Chemin à l'aube 1, Calais, juillet 2006* [*Path at Dawn 1, Calais, July 2006*], 125×158 cm; and *Algeco, quai de la Moselle, Calais, juillet 2006* [*Prefab Modular Construction, Quai de la Moselle, Calais, July 2006*], 125×158 cm. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre.



for me to disconnect myself from the pictures' subject matter, which, after all, pertained to a world only two hundred kilometers away from the exhibition space. Gradually, this experience of shock developed into a lengthy investigation of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in that part of western Europe, formerly known as the “Rust Belt.”⁷³

Troubled by heavy pollution, the area was subjected to a post-industrial transformation in the mid-1980s—in view of the imminent construction of the Channel Tunnel, which created an atmosphere of optimism in the wider region at the time. From 1991 on, a conglomerate of the French Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the Kent County Council, and the three Belgian regions of Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital Region proudly advertised themselves as closely collaborating partners. Stimulated by the European Union (EU) program INTERREG, this corporation developed cross-border cooperative initiatives while identifying itself as the Euroregion *Nord-Transmanche*. The corporation further promoted its efforts using its own logo, which took the form of what the campaign described as an “ephemeral stamp.”⁷⁴ (fig. I.4) Deliberately refraining from a more precise delimitation—in order to emphasize the Euroregion’s presumed openness toward the surrounding metropolitan areas (London, Paris, Randstad, Ruhr, Rhine)—this logo represented the total surface of the Euroregion’s domain in the form of one large, purple thumbprint on a yellow background.⁷⁵

Fig. I.3.

Bruno Serralongue, Agence France-Presse, Les Habitants [The Residents], *Calais, témoigner de la «jungle»* [Calais, Testimonies from the “Jungle”]. Installation view, at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2019) of *Passer en Angleterre, Accès terminal transmanche, Calais, juillet 2007* [Moving to England, Cross-Channel Terminal Access, Calais, July 2007]. Ilfochrome mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 125×158 cm. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Centre Georges Pompidou.



Fig. 1.4.
Logo of the Euro Region
Nord-Transmanche (1991–
2004). Source: Thomas
Perrin. “Euroregional
Cultural Policy.” *encatc-
SCHOLAR Magazine* 3
(2015): n.p. <http://site.transit.es/encatcscholar/?p=697>. Accessed
October 20, 2020.

A barely visible, oblique yellow zone subtly indicated the position of the English Channel—thus minimizing both the sea’s existence and its potential impact. Despite the logo’s emphasis on ephemerality, which in retrospect was predictive, official promotion for the Euroregion stressed the area’s intricate historical ties. At the same time, the exact nature of these long-lasting relations was presented rather vaguely. All communication seemed to be obtusely packaged in reference to the former “Low Countries,” as if this term was able to cast off all doubts about a guaranteed strong basis for the renewed alliance.⁷⁶ History knew better. Once more, this admittedly modest attempt at solidification, in view of greater stability and autonomy for the area, fell through. As early as 2001, Dover and Calais had already failed to develop into these promised binational cities, despite the removal of borders within the European Union and the construction of the nearby Tunnel.⁷⁷ Too many diverging economic interests undermined any serious attempt to develop a truly shared cultural identity. Any further collaboration was called off by 2004.⁷⁸

In the summer of 2015, the now infamously named “EU migrant crisis” reached a provisional culminating point.⁷⁹ Over one million persons crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach the shores of southern Europe. That year it became clear that both the scale and the impact of the frail topic I had been studying, rather quietly until then, was much larger than what could possibly have been predicted. Suddenly overwhelmed by a rapidly increasing flood of information and quickly concatenating events, it was necessary to get in gear. If I had to speed up the writing process, I also needed to maintain some anchors from then on. Geographically, I opted for Calais, the city toward which Serralongue’s pictures had so firmly oriented my attention, and which had gradually converted into a fortified bastion of steel, wire, and walls.⁸⁰ On my fieldtrips between 2015 and 2018, I orbited around Calais while simultaneously fanning out from there in all directions at ever-larger distances, exploring areas as far north as the Dutch Wadden Sea and all the way down south to the French Île d’Yeu. In Kent County in the southeast of England, the Brexit referendum of June 23, 2016, came up in every conversation I had with locals each time I visited.⁸¹

These reiterated investigative travels have been key to the construction of my argument below. Unaware of the imminent calamity that would follow one month later, COVID-19, I concluded my travels on February 15, 2020. These travels have made me realize how strong the idea of a “Deep England,” as Patrick Wright called it, eternally green and safely hidden behind the robust cliffs is still alive today.⁸² Following Homi Bhabha’s lead, I have attempted to grasp aspects of this shared feeling of a “deep” nation crafted in chalk and limestone.⁸³ The task has proven impossible. It certainly would have been necessary to dwell much longer in the cities and villages to understand how and why people in the United Kingdom shape a sense of community in the way they do. I therefore gladly, and warmly, return to the British people the words generously told to me by the artist Carey Young about her working experiences in my native Belgium: “I don’t understand this country. Can you please explain it to me?”

In late 2014–early 2015 I completed my editorial work on a preliminary study of Allan Sekula’s unfinished *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum* (2010–2013).⁸⁴ This investigation of his last work of art guided my attention to one of the artist’s lesser-known photographic sequences entitled *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* (1996/1998).⁸⁵ Sekula made his selections for the final sequence of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in 1998, from photographs taken in 1996. The complete work is reproduced within this book in a separate section at the end of the present volume. When referencing *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in the text, I always refer to the numbering of the photographs used there. Largely shot in the Nord–Pas-de-Calais and in Dover, this earlier, bilingual piece in his oeuvre contains thirty-three images and is divided into two constituent parts, the first entitled “The Rights of Man – Les Droits de l’homme” and the second “Ship of Fools – La Nef des fous.” (figs. I.5–I.6) As is common in his practice, the pictures are accompanied by captions and texts that shed light on the visual material and simultaneously add complexity to it.

As much as it is one of the artist’s more impalpable works, *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* soon turned out to provide the required central point of reference in a book-length study aimed at investigating how photography can relevantly contribute to coming to terms with the reality of the catastrophic situation in the larger Calais area. The same year that Allan Sekula composed the final sequence, 1998, the UK Home Office released its white paper *Fairer, Faster and Firmer*. This game-changing document sent an unambiguous message to the world that the days of lax immigration controls had come to an end. Chapter Eleven, entitled “Enforcements and Removals,” stipulated that “criminal law has a role to play in stamping out abuse of immigration control.”⁸⁶ As the body text unfolds, I use the microcosmic reality that is the Strait of Dover to develop a larger argument about what Sekula, however much he was fond of the Continent, called “manic-depressive European geography.”⁸⁷



Fig. I.5.

Upper floor: Allan Sekula, *Fish Story*, 1989–1995, Chapter Three: “Middle Passage,” 1993/1994. Twenty-two Cibachrome prints and four text panels, variable dimensions; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection, Vienna. Lower floor: Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 1, “The Rights of Man” – 1er volet, “Les Droits de l’homme,” 1996/1998. Thirteen Cibachrome photographs, two text panels, one chair, and two books, variable dimensions; Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

Fig. I.6.

Upper floor: Allan Sekula, *Fish Story*, 1989–1995, Chapter One: “Fish Story,” 1988–1993. Eighteen Cibachrome prints and two text panels, variable dimensions; Collection Fonds régional d’art contemporain Bretagne, Rennes. Lower floor: Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, “Ship of Fools” – 2e volet, “La Nef des fous,” 1996/1998. Twenty Cibachrome photographs, one text panel, one chair, and two books, variable dimensions; Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.



Fortress Europe is now a well-known term. Yet, before 2015, when it became impossible to deny the large-scale influx of people into continental Europe any longer, both European politicians and the media paid strikingly little attention to the issue. This unforgivable silence contrasted sharply, in the decade before, with the extensive attention for it within visual art practices, as reflected in socially committed works using moving images. The selection of artworks discussed in this book is not meant to be exhaustive. One key criterion for selecting the materials was their potential for engaging in a dialogue with *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*.⁸⁸ As a result, my principal case studies involve works created by male artists, most notably Sylvain George and Bruno Serralongue. If this called for decisions that were not taken lightly, I added my own female voice to act as a counterbalance. After having traveled around alone in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, pursuing field research there, I understood how difficult and dangerous a region it has become for women operating on their own.

Laura Waddington's short film *Border* premiered in 2004 at the 57th Locarno Film Festival, causing a shock wave within the audience at the time.⁸⁹ Shot over an extended range of nights in 2002, during a long stay in the fields around Sangatte Red Cross Camp, *Border* revealed the painful truth about the police violence ensuing from the closure of the refugee camp on December 24, 2002. Georges Didi-Huberman named Waddington's often blurred, abstracted images made with a small video camera *firefly-images*, confronting us with the furtive appearance and disappearance of *firefly-peoples*.⁹⁰ Powerfully, Didi-Huberman refused to speak of refugees, and instead proposed the term "fugitives."⁹¹ In an interview with Filippo Del Lucchese, Waddington confirmed that she had always felt safe being out during the night, and that the only time she had been threatened was when French soldiers with machine guns urged her to not to carry on with her undertaking.⁹²

It is impossible in the context of the present publication to do justice to Teresa Eng's artist book, *Speaking of Scars* (2012). This moving work of art addresses, in a superbly composed photographic sequence, Eng's personal experience of rape and the trauma that this criminal act of violence ensued while she was working on a project documenting the living conditions of wandering persons near Calais. The two images that accompany the acknowledgments section in this book are a silent tribute to her important endeavor.

*

Ground Sea was initially conceived as a study in photography theory only. Although this has been my principal field of research for twenty-five years now, photography has never been an obvious choice. As Linda Nochlin opens her foreword to Abigail Solomon-Godeau's *Photography*

at the Dock, “nothing, perhaps, is harder to write about intelligently than photography.”⁹³ This proved to be no different when I embarked on a serious study of Allan Sekula’s *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*. Luck was on my side, however, as I ran into a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to exhibit the totality of the work by Sekula at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona (2017), at the invitation of its then director Carles Guerra. This proved crucial for properly grasping the full spectrum of Sekula’s intentions. As a result, my efforts to capture the multiple layers of meaning underlying *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*—both on the ground in Calais–Dover and regarding the content of the photographs—generated some surprises in its wake. Call it an adventure.

Mainly, I am hinting here at the fact that, unexpectedly, a parallel photographic activity grew in the margins of my theoretical writing. The turning point for this came around midway into the accelerated stage of my research, in early 2017. Words fell short for capturing the dramatic realities in and near Calais. Later that same year, in the early summer of 2017, hundreds of persons started to find their way to a small urban park in Brussels, Belgium. The beating heart of the European Union, the capital city, finally joined the infamous list of major western European cities with informal refugee camps. Despite numerous attempts to close the encampment, it remains a magnetic junction. Maximiliaanpark–Parc Maximilien is located near the Brussels North Station, in the immediate vicinity of the historical town center. For decades I have regularly commuted to work from this train station, since it is close to where I live and where this book was written.⁹⁴

The rise of populist movements and growing groups of citizens who feel ever more comfortable to publicly express explicit aversion toward those who newly arrive on European soil is, in my opinion, no less than the expression of a collective social failure. Liz Fekete goes as far as to speak of “depraved indifference,” meaning “a conduct that is so wanton, so callous, so reckless, so morally lacking in concern and regard for the lives of others, and thus so blameworthy, as to warrant criminal liability.”⁹⁵ When I embarked on yearslong close observation of the incapacity of local, national, and EU policy-makers to jointly come up with a humane plan, I could not possibly presume how much of what I saw and experienced would come to affect me personally. A scientific report released by the NGO Médecins du Monde in late October 2018 revealed that one out of four persons who find themselves in transit through Belgium has been the victim of various forms of police violence.⁹⁶ In an attempt to understand the sheer brutality of these facts and how things could have come this far, I began to explore a variety of locations, including even New York (both the city and the state) because revisiting some of the places Sekula selected while developing *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* provided invaluable information.

The investigations for this study also brought me to several of the Canary Islands, the shores of which were among the first within the European Union to see pirogues with undocumented persons arrive from the coasts of western Africa. This gave rise to an early instance of popular contestation, in late 2000, when around eight hundred inhabitants of Arrecife on Lanzarote rose up against what they called “the foreign invasion.”⁹⁷ The overtly racist flyers distributed at the time included fake information such as holding the newly arrived responsible for the reappearance of diseases that used to be “eradicated”—according to the leaflets—from these territories. The Nobel Prize-winning author José Saramago, who lived and worked on the island, thereupon decided to mount a countermarch. At the turn of the new millennium, Saramago was deeply concerned about the situation and the lack of respect for human rights.⁹⁸ Human rights, he proclaimed, would become the great utopia of the twenty-first century, suggesting that the present neoliberal expansion of advanced forms of economic globalization is incompatible with universal respect for human rights.⁹⁹

Taking Saramago’s prophecy seriously, *Ground Sea* develops a stance against the predominant politics turning around a discourse of “*crisis globalization*.”¹⁰⁰ In an era of increasing economic inequality, flows of migration to the north will grow exponentially, as people seek to escape heat, droughts, conflict, and repression. A most disturbing example involved the “migrant caravan” that left the city of San Pedro Sula in Honduras on October 12, 2018, heading barefoot northward—and whose number rapidly surpassed five thousand persons.¹⁰¹ Their march was brought to a halt at the secured border between the United States and Mexico in Tijuana.¹⁰² This created such enormous lines—of thousands of candidates wishing to claim US asylum and move further north—that the city’s mayor declared a “humanitarian crisis” on November 22, 2018.¹⁰³

According to later reports, the Mexican police and immigration officials carried out raids on these refugees at earlier stages of their march, such as in Chiapas.¹⁰⁴ Similar situations exist at the border between India and Bangladesh, and on three tiny islands off the Australian coast, as well as near or *in* the Mediterranean Sea before people even manage to reach Europe’s southern shorelines.¹⁰⁵ In the midst of this horrendous confusion, China, as a new superpower, has been unrolling its Belt and Road Initiative. This is a project through which the country’s central authority wants to revive the old Silk Route across the Eurasian continent, on its own terms and conditions. This involves taking over majority stakes in strategic shipping ports, such as the port authority of Piraeus, Greece, by state-owned China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO).¹⁰⁶ Asked by the Chinese press office Xinhua whether the company was to be understood as an invader or an investor, Vasilis Korkidis, president of the Piraeus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, replied that

the partnership between COSCO and the Greek shipowners—running the world’s biggest shipping fleet while hardly paying any taxes in their homeland because of the open registry system—was “a great marriage.”¹⁰⁷

Consumer goods, in today’s world, are intended to circulate freely. For persons, by contrast, we have witnessed the rise of a complex global constellation of “parametric modulations,” as Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson call it: processes of filtering and selecting on the basis of multiple and shifting scales, ratings, and evaluations, which result in an unfair system of “differential inclusion.”¹⁰⁸ Some have been warmly welcomed, others cruelly rejected. An additional layer of complexity was added in 2020, as numerous countries in Europe faced lockdowns, including curfews. As persons became increasingly limited in their movements, the circulation of goods through container transport remained relatively unaffected by COVID-19. However, in October 2020 over four hundred thousand seafarers were reportedly stranded on vessels, many among them finding themselves deprived of their fundamental right to stop working, to leave the ship, and return home after their contract was finished (if they had one).¹⁰⁹ The human price paid is substantial, both for the physical and mental health of crew members stuck on board their ships much longer than may reasonably be demanded.

In 1998 Allan Sekula pointed out to Pascal Beausse in an interview that the border region between the United States and Mexico was the greatest proximate social divide in the world. It was therefore, in his opinion, “unique,” since it was “the only place on the planet where urban first and third worlds collide.”¹¹⁰ Rereading these lines twenty years later reveals how much the world has changed. Although the southern US border still appears to symbolize this divide, the influx of persons formerly from the third world—a term not used so comfortably today—has been so enormous that they are now numerous living inside the so-called first world, having become fully integrated in it in many ways. But in everyday conversations and within mainstream media, talk of a present-day crisis in this context is still common. There is even a Wikipedia page on the “European migrant crisis,” which, as a term, applies to,

a period beginning in 2015 when rising numbers of people arrived in the European Union (EU), travelling across the Mediterranean Sea or overland through Southeast Europe. It is part of a pattern of increased immigration to Europe from other continents which began in the late 20th century and which has encountered resistance in many European countries.¹¹¹

An alternative notion in this context is “Europe’s Border Crisis.”¹¹² Yet the very idea of a crisis presupposes that there is an underlying problem.¹¹³ What exactly would that problem be? People have been on the move since time immemorial, and they will likely continue to be.¹¹⁴ Migration, understood in its most basic definition of “to move from one place to another,” is an integral part of our social structure.¹¹⁵ As argued by Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr, human mobility and conditions of moving from one place to another is a common aspect of human existence, rather than an aberration of human life.¹¹⁶ From this perspective, it is rather pointless to speak of a crisis.¹¹⁷ A phenomenon so inherent to human existence is unlikely ever to disappear. If, in other words, as one of the Shadoks’ Buddhist mottos has it, there is no solution, well, there is no problem.¹¹⁸

What, then, is the origin of this problematizing of human wandering (toward Europe)? Norbert Elias has suggested that, within communities seeking to protect their established rights on a specific territory, irrational fears of overpopulation are enduring. The idea of overpopulation itself, however, does not assume some absolute standard. Within any given society, it is relative to particular social norms and a certain set of needs. Whenever the idea of overpopulation takes root as a problem in a society’s imagination, this appears to be tied to a fixed set of symptoms: increased (internal) tension and greater self-encapsulation by those who “have” over those who “have not.”¹¹⁹ Building on this insight, Zygmunt Bauman has argued that overpopulation is nothing more than “a fiction of actuaries.”¹²⁰ It is embedded in the logic of a globalized producer-consumer-oriented economy. From this angle, any type of imagined surplus population is understood to be nothing more than flawed consumers, to be dismissed as irksome and costly liabilities. Bauman referred to “refugees, the displaced, asylum seekers, migrants, the *sans papiers*” as those stigmatized as “the waste of globalization.”¹²¹

Along the same lines, Naomi Klein argued that, in the light of climate change, the group of those whose lives are affected by the disastrous side effects of the globalized “free-market” economy will only grow larger. As she wonders, “how will we treat the climate refugees who arrive on our shores in leaky boats?”¹²² The answer she provided is that “rather than recognizing that we owe a debt to migrants forced to flee their lands as a result of our actions (and inactions), our governments will build ever more high-tech fortresses and adopt even more draconian anti-immigration laws.” The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) planned to have a standing corps of ten thousand by 2021, to support the over one hundred thousand national border guards already working for it.¹²³ At the same time, there is overwhelming scientific evidence that between 1985 and 2015 the macroeconomic impact of asylum

seekers on western European economies has been positive.¹²⁴ This makes the entire Frontex operation seem rather superfluous indeed.¹²⁵

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“In the middle of the shipwreck, we’re called upon to repair the ship,” says Alexander Kluge.¹²⁶ Kluge and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, in a conversation that took place on New Year’s Day of 2017, reflected on what the visual arts can do when employed as a “navigational aid” or a “very respectfully used tool.”¹²⁷ Their fundamental hypothesis is that we are living in a wrongheaded world. In the absence of a right-minded world, the only path to follow is to navigate the wrongheaded one. By resisting the presumed inevitable course of events, despair can be turned into hope, and a sense of possibility may grow in its wake. To be sure, uprootedness is rather a permanent condition for increasing numbers of people all over the world. Ignoring, denying, or over-problematizing this very reality will not help. Instead, there is a dire need for an orderly and humane organization of the situation, in solidarity with those on the wrong side of fate.

As argued by Franco Bifo Berardi, it is from finding such a valuable horizon of possibility that “transformative potency can be unchained.”¹²⁸ To pursue “development work” for inventing a more equitable world, Kluge has suggested that we create production sites or laboratories.¹²⁹ Junctions and connections can thus be installed through dialogue, with the ambition to generate impact in the longer term. The thirty-three photographic illustrations, to which I refer in the body text as *doodles*, are the outcome of the lab work I pursued while *Ground Sea* was still a production site. These visual materials perform three roles: they engage in a dialogue with Sekula’s *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* twenty years after this work’s completion; they interact with the other photographic and video works discussed hereafter; and they open up a complementary visual and verbal perspective on today’s predicament. More than any other materials integrated within this book, the doodles bear witness to a stubborn faith in the empirical experience as required by the operational codes of photo-documentary practice.¹³⁰

Numerous of the self-made photographs integrated as doodles were made on location in the footsteps of artists, who had been there before me, discussed in this book’s pages. My photographic perceptions of these same places may be understood as notes on visits, or as a form of reporting about what the spots felt like when I eventually set foot there. While assessing my physical presence in this way, I could test both the limitations and usefulness of photo-documentary practices. Other doodles, first painted before being photographed, have now become signifiers for the extended time devoted to meditation on several topics

developed within the book. These doodles pay testimony to their functionality for the writing process: as transitional moments that contributed to shaping ideas. In this way, they reveal an alternative temporality: the time of self-reflection, the time necessary for elaborating thoughts, or the time before I was able to properly structure the writing of the manuscript. This strongly performative character of the doodling became an unexpected methodological tool, which eventually even proved fruitful for shedding a different light on the possibilities for writing theoretically about photography today.

Some of these images possess a rather poetic aspect. Yet, in line with Sekula's stance on how to use photographs, the doodles intend to resist the various strategies of "aesthetization" that could potentially undermine their objectivity as pictures of reality that have, by no means, been staged.¹³¹ Through their unspectacular aesthetics, the doodles—that I also define in terms of *weak* images—work themselves through their own vulnerability, and empower themselves.¹³² On the illustration pages, the doodles are identified by a number merged with a combining overline (e.g. $\bar{1}$). When referred to in the text, a hashtag is added (e.g. $\bar{1}\#$). This involved a calculated decision. In mathematics, an overline indicates that all the marked symbols belong together. The hashtag symbol heightens this closeness, and its inclusion in the caption that accompanies each doodle should make it sound like a whisper in your ear or something muttered into a handkerchief.¹³³ In everyday usage, the hashtag allows the author to add a more personal or intimate response to the more official language preceding the hashtagged parts of the text.¹³⁴ It has become commonplace on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to make use of wording condensation after a hashtag with the elimination of spacing. The provocative connection this brings with more ancient writing practices is fascinating. It introduces a certain textual neutrality, which encourages a substantial level of interpretation while reading such non-spaced script.¹³⁵ Besides, the imaginative idea of co-producing a hash (as hodgepodge, mishmash) is food for investigation. For making a hash, one first must cut, and then mingle the ingredients so they can make up a new creation or constellation.

Whereas for composing the doodles' text materials I have played with the particular type of humor generated by tweets or Instagram posts, I confess that, in the light of certain information provided in the body text, the inserted comments at times are sarcastic. Many of the situations that I either investigated or ended up in myself are, from a reasonable point of view, entirely inappropriate, blatantly deplorable, or even shocking. Humor was necessary as a strategy of survival. It prevented me from prematurely giving up pursuing fieldwork in an often resolutely depressing environment. For the sake of this exercise's coherence, I limited the text accompanying these doodles to 140

characters as much as possible—this still being the limit for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean tweets. Never do they exceed the 280-character limit set by Twitter as the absolute maximum for one tweet.¹³⁶ I also want to emphasize that I do not identify these text materials as captions but instead consider them “alt texts.” On Instagram, one can add so-called alt text to one’s photos posted on social media, which, according to the website *social media examiner*, helps describe these images in greater depth to people “with visual impairments.”¹³⁷ Responding to this with my own alternative alt texts expresses exactly the type of mild irony that I have been after with regard to complacent behavior on social media.

To identify certain dates, I picked names from social media calendars or simply invented a label that referred to the date in question. For determining the words that could receive a hashtag, I have made use of suggestions made through the RiteTag App. I followed its recommendations quite strictly and most of the time only hashtagged phrases that the app indicated as hashtaggable in order “to get seen now.” Here and there, I borrowed from the section “use these hashtags to get seen over time,” such as #submerged or #mutiny. Very rarely did I select an item that came with the advice “do not use these hashtags, very few people are following them.” This exercise taught me that hashtags recommended *to get seen now* are systematically situated within the predominant register of economic and social success: #superman #heroes #leadership #entrepreneur #happiness. For example, even when I asked the app to suggest hashtags to use for the term “failure,” the first hashtag that it suggested was #success; when I requested a hashtag for “people on the move” one of the suggestions was #crisis. I have held on to this logic, so we can ponder what we are using the hashtag for today. Most of the time, it is to boast and make other people envious of what we have (and they have not).

The doodles should flow gently throughout the pages of text, weaving themselves into the text in the form of a tidal, yet ultimately smooth, floating wave. I inserted most of them at the start and at the end of the chapters, and thus they contribute to framing each chapter’s contents. Almost all doodles link up with specific references within the body text. The few that float around the text more loosely should speak for themselves. Since they all are an integral part of development work, in Kluge’s sense, they do not aspire to any autonomous artistic pretension. They are edgy as only doodles can be.¹³⁸ This form of steady doodling alongside building my written argument has proven to be tremendously helpful. The doodles were a key factor in a process of “unlearning” what it means to be a photography theory specialist.¹³⁹ This process also involved working myself out of the exclusive label *historian of contemporary art* (actually, nothing but a paradox in itself).

Doodling furthermore shaped more profoundly my understanding of what photography *can* do when it aims to be a tool for an active resistance aimed ultimately at the transformation of society, as articulated by Sekula.¹⁴⁰ Over the years, I have come to perceive the photograph's potential for being an actor of counter-hegemonic resistance as intimately connected to a peculiar capacity that it possesses, which is to provide a glimpse of that what almost always remains entirely concealed.¹⁴¹ Javier Marías identified this hidden dimension of reality, which only reveals itself to us occasionally, making us briefly aware of its existence, as “the other side of time” or the “dark back of time.”¹⁴² It refers to a time that could have existed yet perhaps never did exist. It gives a name to a time that, at a certain point, appeared to have been awaiting us, and then for some reason did not happen. Or that did happen, but we have completely forgotten about it and merely think it never happened. Certain photographs, however, make you aware of that hidden temporality. Through them, a time might be felt that once existed in all its full potentiality, as if the photograph is somehow still pregnant with the unrealized possibilities of that temporality or, at least, bears its traces. According to Marías, feeling this dimension of time is an experience that, in real life, presents itself most strongly at astronomical dawn. At that hour, when the streetlamps start to compete with natural daylight, “the visible manifestation—the metaphor—of how time, respectful time, behaves and what it consists of [...] can be seen for what it is.”¹⁴³

Some photographs have the power to render the above-described experience tangible. Making or finding these pictures, and then attempting to grasp what they were trying to communicate, was part of a slow process of attentiveness to this respectful dimension of time. It did lead to unexpected insights that I can best introduce by paraphrasing what Marías has to say about it.¹⁴⁴ He claims that we too easily cast off the old times, as if what came before becomes antediluvian and might be forgotten. As this book progresses, I will indicate that, even if certain times are literally antediluvian, this does not imply that they have lost their topicality. On the contrary. As pointed out by Marías, all times gradually and deceptively overlap. That is why it is not difficult, as he observed as well, to come to understand the past as future, and the future as past.¹⁴⁵ In the past we can trace the future, it is often said. Therefore, we can come to see the future as already past, as a present that *will* come to repeat what is already past.

Building on that, I want to encourage an experience of photography that allows us to freely move through this other side of time, at least in our imaginations. This exercise is not to be taken lightly. To refer to Marías once more, indeed this dark side of time is the only dimension that the living and the dead have in common. The living and the dead speak to each other and communicate with one another through that

other side of time. Allowing this to happen involves being open to surprises. For Mariás, it is there and then that we encounter “the things that are both real and fictitious, that disappear or never appear and yet are known because they have been spoken of.”¹⁴⁶ Today, now that we experience an uncertain, extended moment during which we appear to have collectively *fallen out of time*—to paraphrase David Grossman—and have started mourning a time that was and may not return as it once used to be, we also recognize many of the illustrations within *Ground Sea* as announcing a time that was to come, imminently so. Perhaps, in retrospect, I have been under the spell of what Georges Didi-Huberman identified as the “desire to [...] *see coming*,” and was I searching for images that bear witness to “an art of clairvoyance or foresight.”¹⁴⁷

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Joanna Lowry described how Gabriel Orozco uses photographs to provide us with a “container.”¹⁴⁸ This container serves as an apparatus that first holds in place a series of events to later break through our entangled, taken-for-granted relationship with things. The body text of my study *will* make a case for the urgent importance of this operation of disentangling “things,” and photography will be its tool. As far as Allan Sekula is concerned, the principal ambition of his oeuvre was to disclose in an uncompromising way, as he wrote, monopoly capitalism’s inability to deliver the conditions of a fully human life. He feared the growing power and arrogance of globalized capitalism. It brought not only violence directed at the human body but also at the environment, and at working people’s ability to control their own lives.

Today, these words are still relevant. To resist those violent forces, Sekula relied on Karl Marx’s plea for a resolution, through practical means, of the theoretical contradictions that present themselves to humankind when it seeks to liberate itself from barbarism—a term Sekula borrowed from Walter Benjamin. Even when he was reproached or cornered for being a neo-Marxist, Sekula continued to put faith in cultural work, for which he urged recognition as the type of *praxis* that Marx could have had in mind.¹⁴⁹ Sekula was convinced that a didactic and critical artistic representation of structural advanced capitalism’s indifference to human and other forms of life would not be sufficient for arriving at a viable socialist alternative collectively. This is why the artist in Sekula shied away from presenting himself as a genius rising above the masses. Rather, he sought to be one of the masses, joining them in protest. He considered photography his overtly secret weapon, his privileged reflexive tool. With Marx he continued to believe that if photography theorists have anything to contribute to that process of socialist transformation, it is in creatively using their “*practical energy*.”¹⁵⁰

Admittedly, a book is only a book. Putting the best of one's available practical energy into a text during many long years may not make any immediately obvious difference in the lives of those who direly need better living conditions—right here and right now. How can I not be apologetic about this? In my defense, I can only say that this was what *I* had and came to do, in my time and for my generation. *Ground Sea* is the type of “marginal” space that Sekula had in mind when, as early as the late 1970s, he was on the lookout for environments through which dialogue can be elicited.¹⁵¹ A book can be a starting point for a plea to reevaluate the relationship between writers, the artworks they present and discuss, and their reading audiences. After the reflexive marginal space of the book, it goes without saying, real physical spaces for continuing the collective discussion need to be found and utilized. Sekula located such spaces in union halls, churches, high schools, community colleges, community centers, and—only reluctantly—in public museums as well. He defended the preservation and the expansion of true public space at all costs.

Ground Sea joins in this effort for a truly public dialogue. W.G. Sebald has argued that it is essential for authors who aspire to be modestly aware of their historical position to keep a “moral authenticity” in view at all times.¹⁵² During a lecture delivered at the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona, on April 11, 1986, Allan Sekula mentioned how, as a young artist in the early 1970s, he experienced qualms about the “intense complicity of the sciences in the Vietnam War.”¹⁵³ Whereas he initially thought of becoming a marine biologist, Sekula turned away from pursuing a career in science because he believed that making art could offer an alternative to certain ways of pursuing science that he esteemed unethical. Like Sekula, I changed my principal field of study as a young adult. That shift is relevant for this book, and I want to introduce it by addressing a personal geopolitical observation from the early 1990s.

When the Berlin Wall came down in November of 1989, I had just turned twenty and was enrolled as a graduate student in my first year of law school. The euphoria that followed in the wake of the Berlin Wall's collapse gave rise to a sense of my generation as the children of a new utopia, to which our law professors optimistically referred as “Social Europe.” Both in Leuven and in Göttingen, where I spent my last year (1991–1992) of law school as an Erasmus exchange student, eminent teachers convinced us that the future of a soon-to-be fully reunited Europe would be one not only of solid social security and labor protection for all but also of open borders. It all sounded like a nomadic dream come true. We were enthralled with this new cornerstone of “EU citizenship” involving the “freedom of movement for persons” as established by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, and we could not stop discussing its significance.

Were we naïve? For sure. We did not fully realize that EU citizenship was and would remain a contradiction in terms.¹⁵⁴ Yet this generation, which today consists of those roughly between ages forty-five and fifty-five, had plenty of reasons to eagerly believe in the great project of European unification. We traveled extensively in Europe, not by airplane but by bus or train (the Wagon-Lits Company was still operative in those days). The first time I boarded a flight was at the age of eighteen, for overseas travel to the United States. I was hardly an exception. Until then, I had spent all my summers on the coast in the west of Flanders near the French border—the native region of my maternal family (Zwevezele to Poperinge; and Abele to Aumale, in French Flanders). However, inspired by the opening of Central Europe we tremendously enjoyed the freedom that seemed to accompany the gradual phasing-out of the Continent's internal borders. (fig. I.7)

Fig. I.7.

A double page from Hilde Van Gelder's Göttinger photo album. Four color photographs, each 10×15 cm, of the former German border near Eschwege (Winter 1991). Photo by author.



Between fall 1993 and summer 1994, I traveled extensively through Poland and other Central European countries. I even spent two cold winter months homesick and living in a hotel in Łódź. (fig. I.8) It was a most eerie experience to observe closely how an aggressive variant of the capitalist economy quickly unrolled its tentacles across these countries. In Poland the construction of Western-style supermarkets, for example, was well underway. Some of these malls had already opened, but the merchandise had not yet followed. The only wares for sale inside were

the ones that could be cultivated and found locally, but during winter months these tended not to be fresh. Public alcoholism was extremely widespread. People were in desperate need of better living conditions, yet they often did not have realistic expectations. This uprooting year of traveling also brought me to the Czech Republic, to Slovakia, and to Hungary. The Hungarians, back then, had already advanced most, with their implementation of neoliberal mercantilism. In the summer, near Lake Balaton, I saw numerous people holding bizarre objects to their ears that were obviously meant to be status symbols. The black monsters resembled large brick stones, but were not Walkie Talkies—these were mobile telephones.¹⁵⁵

Fig. 1.8.
Poland, 1993–1994.
Four color photographs,
each 10×15 cm.
Photos by author.



I agree with Ivan Krastev that this “sublime dream” of a world without borders soon turned “nightmarish”—even if under the radar at first.¹⁵⁶ While the former Iron Curtain and its horrid watchtowers turned into exotic remnants of a rapidly disappearing past, new barriers were in the making elsewhere already. The fairy tale of a free and open Europe ended again the night of December 26, 1996, when a nameless wooden vessel, code name *F-174*, sank in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Sicily.¹⁵⁷ Knowledge about this tragedy was widespread within the closed local fishing community of Portopalo di Capo Passero. For several years, however, this dramatic event was largely ignored by the outside world, until research established that, during that night, around 280 individuals—mainly from India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan—drowned in the cold, stormy waters.¹⁵⁸

As reported by Maurizio Albahari, both the Italian and Greek authorities, which became involved in dealing with the aftermath of the disaster, actively aimed to manipulate public opinion. In the absence of any corpses, the involved authorities officially classified the case as a “presumed shipwreck” or even a “phantom shipwreck.”¹⁵⁹ Ever since this incident, the strategy of the EU authorities for dealing with shipwreck situations involving persons trying to reach Europe from across the Mediterranean continues to be marked by tentativeness and indeterminacy.¹⁶⁰ Prevention does not reach any imaginative level beyond the cynical development of what Albahari wryly described in terms of “a beautiful postcolonial friendship” with shadowy regimes, such as unstable Libya, autocratic Turkey, or dictatorial Egypt.¹⁶¹ Albahari identified this very mechanism put in place by the European Union in terms of committing crimes of peace. According to Albahari, the ambitious, resilient, political, and ideological work of maintaining a “system” has proven, despite all its laboriousness, only to be crumbling and volatile.¹⁶² What is more, it “*keeps proving*” to be unjust, violent, and unequal. This “delocalization of migrant processing,” Albahari added, should not be understood merely as an administrative outsourcing enterprise.¹⁶³ For it involves the “potential delocalization of human rights,” resulting in ill treatment and even death of fellow human beings.

As of 1948, the United Nations began to put a supposedly solid regime of human rights in place. But in 1955, the very year that *The Family of Man* exhibition was first shown at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), Bertolt Brecht sent out a warning sign. He cried out his anger by means of publishing a black-and-white photograph of a desperate Jewish mother holding a baby in her arms in *War Primer*. Thus, he drew renewed attention to the odyssey of numerous Jewish refugees trying to seek shelter in Palestine during World War II, which, for many, ended at sea—“drowning in sight of shore.”¹⁶⁴ Brecht lamented their fate with the following, short verse:

And many of us drowned just off the beaches.
The long night passed, the sky began to clear.
If they but knew, we said, they'd come and seek us.
That they did know, we still were unaware.

*

In the fall of 1992, right after obtaining my law degree, I went on to study art history, with the principal aim of turning my attention to photography theory. Intuition appeared to be the principal motor behind this shift, and therefore those around me judged my decision as rather irresponsible. Yet it was certainly true that I had also grown disappointed by the chronic impotence of human-rights law. Thanks to the eminent Mark Mazower, I now know what I perhaps did not fully understand back then, or at least did not want to realize: that human rights are a *construction* that, to a certain degree, surprisingly worked out for modern humanity in the aftermath of World War II.¹⁶⁵ Today it is clear that human rights, to save even a shred of them, are urgently in need of revived protection, guaranteed through a worldwide body that can enforce fundamental rights.

In the early 1990s, however, I wanted to move toward a reflective practice that allowed distance that is more critical and that would allow me to investigate the creation of the rule of law beyond law theory or law philosophy in a strict sense. In law school, the professors-lawyers prepare their students to become practitioners of their profession. Thus, even if I was trained to become a practitioner, it took many years before I found a way to engage in a type of intellectual activity that comes close to an artistic practice without ever growing into just that.¹⁶⁶ Mine is a practice of photography theory (I like the paradox in this definition), which involves self-made illustrations whenever the need to do so arises. It takes a young person to embark on such a rather grand and undefined enterprise, all the more so because the research method I wanted to make mine was the one Sebald aptly identified in an interview from 1993 with Sigrid Löffler as “wild work.”¹⁶⁷

As a teenager I became familiar with navigation, manual chartwork, pilotage, and passage making mainly with the help of the log and compass (GPS technology was not yet in use in the 1980s). This acquaintance with dead reckoning—determining the position of a vessel at sea by the courses steered and the distance run—has certainly been of influence on all my subsequent work.¹⁶⁸ It makes you aware that, at all times, you could possibly find yourself out of sync with your reckoning: either ahead of it or astern of it, as navigators say. Without losing sight of the need for precision or detail, such a relatively untamed but at the same time sobering way of proceeding has proven to be productive.¹⁶⁹

I can only agree with the French anthropologist Nicole Lapierre that this endeavor involved “an intellectual displacement” comparable to abandoning a familiar homeland.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps I identify most with the field of *critical iconology*, as defined by Christine Bischoff, Francesca Falk, and Sylvia Kafehsy, with regard to processes of illegalization of human beings. Critical iconology is a field of research that acknowledges that illegalization is produced by law, but at the same time further normalized or “naturalized through the everyday use of images.”¹⁷¹ Inversely, its methods further rely on the premise that the production of law, for its part, “is also driven by both mental and materialized images.” *Ground Sea’s* key question has been how to constructively cut across this spiraling, self-strengthening line.

Like Sekula, who should definitely be ranked prominently in the abovementioned unclassifiable category of *wild workers*, I decided to trust in the transformative potential of the photographic image when one does not merely use it for the sake of “didactic and critical representation” only.¹⁷² None of the photographs discussed in this publication have been put at the service of prescribing any immediate solution, since I do not pretend to know one. My approach in the body text will demonstrate a certain degree of disappointment with how the EU project has developed over the past thirty years, compared to the promises made and perspectives sketched after the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, I emphasize right away that the argument will continue to display a voluntarist belief in the integration process launched in the aftermath of World War II—if only for the rule of law that it installed through the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Throughout working on this book, I have constantly dreamed about a way out of the present geopolitical deadlock. Here and there, I included a couple of illustrations that I either made or asked others to produce for me beyond the doodles, when the photographs that I was looking for simply were not available. Thus, text and image followed a common trajectory, hand in hand. The hope is that somehow—like a phoenix rising from its ashes—this way of working can contribute to triggering a public arena for a larger debate on how to organize human solidarity in the twenty-first century. “The photograph,” according to Peter Osborne, “produces, if not thinking, then a distinctive condition of thinking, or a space for thinking.”¹⁷³ In this book, I want to use this space for thinking to go one step further. As Virginia Woolf put it: “there is another way of fighting for freedom without arms; we can fight with the mind.”¹⁷⁴

Photography, seen in this light, can move beyond the space of thinking only if it also becomes a space for fighting for freedom without arms. Today’s so-called globalized society finds itself in desperate need for such a physical agora—rather than merely a virtual one—for

intensified democratic dialogue. If we are to believe Hito Steyerl's observation that, today, humankind finds itself in a chronic state of "groundlessness" and collective "free fall," there really is no more time to lose.¹⁷⁵ For Steyerl, as for Latour, the place we are falling toward is no longer grounded *and* it is not "stable."¹⁷⁶ Steyerl's dark conclusion is that contemporary social life on this planet faces a "shifting formation" that "promises no community." Although I share Steyerl's sense of our world's profound instability today, I want to move away from her over-all pessimism.

At the same time, I do not want to create any false expectations. If *Ground Sea* does not provide a straight path toward this urgently needed renewed sense of community, its text reflects a relentless quest for clues that may contribute to such a trajectory. To do so, I will recall age-old stories, ideas, and visual motifs, interlinking them as nodal points that intersect and crystallize into a larger argument. Thus, reflecting an ardent desire for the creation of an operative community-to-come, my search integrated the remnants and relics of past efforts. On the occasion of the exhibition of his photographic work *Ship of Fools* (2010) at the São Paulo Biennale, Allan Sekula glued a short text on the wall, in sober black characters on a green background: "Elites are stupider than need be. Everyone else is smarter than allowed to be."¹⁷⁷ To this day, I have been able to trace only a hall-of-mirrors-like installation view of that green wall text. (Plate 1) For its particularly vertiginous character, which matches the essence of Sekula's *Ship of Fools* project, it is shared here as a further opening illustration.

Sekula expressed harsh criticism of present-day "rich people." Referring to Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (1870), he sketched them as leading a secluded life in private mansions constructed as a "villa-Nautilus" at a "proverbial *twelve mile limit*" remote from "the *polis*."¹⁷⁸ The latter term was an implicit reference to the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, to whom Sekula frequently referred in conversation.¹⁷⁹ Castoriadis described democracy as an inherently tragic regime.¹⁸⁰ The *dēmos kratein*—in other words, the people ruling as a group—needs to permanently self-limit by submitting itself to the rule of law and the separation of powers. As democracy will always be threatened from within by human hubris, it needs to organize itself institutionally and aim to safeguard the radical promise of a true *demos*—a shared community of equals. In Sekula's opinion, "the immortalist fantasies of contemporary elites" embody the destructive force of excessive boldness.¹⁸¹

Sekula did not choose this distance of twelve miles randomly. It sets up, among other things, a connection that he explicitly wished to draw with the paradoxical attitudes of these elites toward the sea. Financial elites, for him,

especially those investing in the intangibles of the “new economy,” imagine themselves in a special way to be venturing forth on stormy seas, lifted high by the *irrational exuberance* of the swells, only to risk being dashed down, disastrously, beneath the waves.¹⁸²

That *special* way of connectedness Sekula unmasked as an illusory, rather destructive psychic mechanism—one that he called “strangely disembodied.”¹⁸³ Among several examples, he provided the telling one of “the frightened leaders of the rich nations,” who, on the occasion of the twenty-seventh G8 summit in July 2001, retreated to a luxury cruise vessel anchored in the port of Genoa and hidden away from sight behind a hastily erected wall of cargo containers in order to escape the protesting masses.¹⁸⁴

Today, ports have become the perfect hiding places.¹⁸⁵ The opaqueness of the amassed containers on quays and docked ships has hermetically rendered impossible any sense of smell of the goods present there, as used to be the case.¹⁸⁶ (fig. I.9) The contemporary elites’ bunkered isolationism, for Sekula, in fact mirrors this state of affairs. He considered their fascination for the image of the solo sailor to be reckless idolatry. Veneering the spirit of the solo circumnavigator in such an idealized way encapsulates an individualist mentality, comparable to the underpinnings of the capitalist idea of adventure. This glorifying of “the drama of solitary endeavor and extreme self-sufficiency,” Sekula argued, obscures the industrial and social dimension without which that very myth of solo heroism would not be possible.¹⁸⁷ In addition, Sekula mourned the fact that the global elites impose their world on all others, while simultaneously claiming their status as the privileged few. “Market ideology demands that everyone sail alone.”¹⁸⁸

Providing the example of how increasing numbers of people are requested to switch from a public, tax-paid pension system to partake in the risks of privatized pension funds, Sekula arrived at a striking conclusion, which reads as a warning. In the end, “we are all [finding ourselves stuck] in the same boat.”¹⁸⁹ This boat, he added, is trying to save itself on ever-swelling waters as “the ice shelves crumble.” Instead of losing courage at that moment, Sekula gathered strength from this sobering insight. The elites’ strangely disembodied fascination for the sea, symptomatically visible as well in their fondness for oversized luxury yachts, is a sign of their “desperation,” he wrote.¹⁹⁰ With the advent of global warming, a sea depleted of resources is a sea that becomes sublimely threatening. A sea that is being killed will kill in its turn.

*



Fig. I.9.
Port of Valencia, Spain. Summer 2019. Four digital color photographs. Photos by author.

“In an age that denies the very existence of society,” Allan Sekula wrote, “to insist on the scandal of the world’s increasingly grotesque ‘connect- edness,’ the hidden merciless grinding away beneath the slick superfi- cial liquidity of markets, is akin to putting oneself in the position of the *ocean swimmer*.”¹⁹¹ That is a horizontal position, intimately close to and immersed in the surrounding waters. Ocean swimmers, Sekula claimed, time their strokes to the swell, turning their “submerged ear with every breath to the deep rumble of stones rolling on the bottom far below.” From there he shifted to a conclusion on his own commitment to the social, collective dimension of life: “to insist on the social is simply to practice purposeful immersion.” Here I want to briefly reconnect to the opening discussion in the Preface and revert to the concluding lines of Sekula’s letter to Bill Gates.

And as for you Bill, when you’re on the net,
are you lost? Or found?

And the rest of us—lost or found—are we on it,
or in it?¹⁹²

For Sekula, beyond doubt, the challenge was to avoid getting caught by the *net*. Even if it eventually turned out to be inevitable, he persistently sought ways to jump out of it, like a floundering fish. This methodolog- ical principle made him relentlessly pursue his committed activities as a photographer and writer, as thus demonstrated by the concluding lines of his essay “Swimming in the wake”: “A longshoreman, speaking to a photographer as the booming echo of concussion grenades heralds the approach of a column of armored riot police: ‘Go ahead, photograph. I’ll watch your back.’”¹⁹³

In *Portraits* (2015), a book published by John Berger toward the end of his life with the help of Tom Overton, the seventh out of seventy-four short essays on artists is entitled “Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525–69).” Bruegel’s paintings, according to Berger, condemn “indifference,” not of a single person but of society as a whole.¹⁹⁴ Like Bertolt Brecht, who considered Bruegel his favorite painter, Bruegel understood well how it comes about that people take refuge in their helplessness, in their not knowing what to do when confronted with systemic failure or injustice. Of course, “the peasant bent over his plough could not be held entirely responsible for failing to notice Icarus.” Yet Berger, aligning himself with both Bruegel and Brecht, emphasized, “not to resist is to be indif- erent [...] and [...] to be indifferent is to condone.”

How, exactly, are we to resist at a time when, as Sebald lamented, even the whole of nature indifferently turns away from Icarus’s mis- fortune?¹⁹⁵ When nature itself turns its back on the downfall of its own

offspring, where are we to find courage in trying to save nature? Sebald's conclusion was clear and simple. He conceived of our worldly reality as a huge network of pain. Since "everything coheres with everything else," he was convinced, "we are obliged to take care of things."¹⁹⁶ The intense sensation of music filled him with hope for speculating about a "possible future."¹⁹⁷ When thinking about the topic central to this book—which involves, to borrow Sekula's words, "refugee boats shuffl[ing] bodies"—it often felt like being swept up in a tornado of circular reasoning. At the same time, thinking has also been *my* way of fighting. While giving shape to the writing, I never let go of the conviction that a more successful planetary balance will *have* to be found between the three enlightened ideals of the Age of Reason: liberty, fraternity, and equality. Or, as Virginia Woolf concluded her controversial pamphlet *Three Guineas* (1938), the best way to help prevent war is to assert "the rights of all — all men and women — to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty."¹⁹⁸

Ground Sea has been written against the selfish conception of liberty in the mindsets of the present-day global elites.¹⁹⁹ According to Yascha Mounk and Roberto Stefan Foa, no less than the survival of democracy as we know it appears at stake. In 1990, only 12 percent of global income was provided by countries not governed by democratic rule. In 2018, the economic participation of authoritarian states had increased to 33 percent—which, frighteningly, matches the level of the 1930s. By 2023, it is expected, "the share of global income held by countries considered 'not free'—such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia—will surpass the share held by Western liberal democracies."²⁰⁰ In the United Kingdom, the ardent desire of the Conservative Party to align the country with an elitist logic revived both nostalgic specters of the past—the lost Empire—and dubious perspectives for the future, such as transforming the large island cum the Northern Irish annex (or, even without it, if need be) into a tax haven after Brexit.²⁰¹

Speaking of utopias. In the view of Dutch critic Joris Luyendijk, the "botchers, liars and fantasts" of the Brexit camp have performed a tasteless "*clown show*."²⁰² Still, they managed to motivate a small majority of the population to vote to leave the European Union. Even if numerous citizens were aware that this might imply a disaster, economically speaking, they preferred to vote in favor of an imagined national identity that, so they were told through nonstop propaganda, needed to be preserved and protected. Collective, irrational fears about increasing hordes of new people invading their territory fed these negative reflexes.²⁰³ While writing this book I have kept in view the sober idea that economic considerations in terms of mythic growth need to recede in the overall order of political priorities. In this respect, I follow Gideon Rachman, who argued that moral philosophy should steer economic decisions—meaning

that “it is also about justice.”²⁰⁴ The type of collective justice that we need is not to be found in splendid individualism—and this is all the more true now that humanity needs to join forces in fighting a virulent killer virus.

Accordingly, I have been on the lookout for reasonable ways to shape liberties that strike a balance between human life, animal life, and vegetal life on this Earth—equitably and democratically. When everyone finally forgets what nature once looked like and what it meant to us, as Sebald feared, dramatic inequalities and a pillaged planet will remain.²⁰⁵ Niki Giannari more recently wrote the following poetic line in a sad tone: “I wanted to find a stone to rest on, he said, and cry, but there was no stone.”²⁰⁶ How to both avoid and prevent such a deplorable prospect has been a key concern of this study. In June 2007, Allan Sekula had *Alle Menschen Werden Schwestern* [*All People Become Sisters*] installed in front of the Wilhelmshöhe train station in Kassel, Germany. (fig. I.10) He attached this large billboard—a photograph selected from his 1997 sequence *Dead Letter Office*—between two pillars at a bus stop, right where people need to wait and may take a bit of time to look around. The sailcloth was based on a poster designed by Sekula for the *Holy Damn It* campaign to protest the thirty-third G8 summit held at the Kempinski Grand Hotel in Heiligendamm from June 6 to 8, 2007. In its masculine variant “Alle Menschen werden Brüder” [All people become brothers] this phrase is iconic. It is part of the prelude to Ludwig von Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” from the ninth Symphony (1823). In 1985, the instrumental version of this short piece of music was adopted as the official “Anthem of Europe.”²⁰⁷



Fig. I.10.

Allan Sekula, *Alle Menschen werden Schwestern*. Large-format outdoor billboard (sailcloth) attached between two pillars at the bus stop in front of the Wilhelmshöhe train station in Kassel, Germany as part of Documenta 12 (2007). Based on a poster designed by Sekula for the *Holy Damn It* campaign to protest the 33rd G8 summit held at the Kempinski Grand Hotel in Heiligendamm, June 6–8, 2007. Present whereabouts unknown. © Allan Sekula Studio. Photo by author.

This photograph was originally part of Sekula's photo sequence *Dead Letter Office* (1997) with the caption *Shipyards Welder Cutting Steel for Hyundai Truck Chassis, Ensenada*. Sekula used the same image as an illustration for the invitation to the opening of his exhibition *Dead Letter Office* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (1998–1999). (fig. I.11) The show's title corresponded to a sequence of photographs realized by the artist on the border between Mexico and the United States. This title, as the artist explained in an interview with Frits Gierstberg, referenced the many letters that go undelivered between the United States and Mexico, "and souls that suffer as a result."²⁰⁸ Such a humorous way of making words interact with pictures is a fine example of a typical Sekulean trick to express regret and concern about the uncountable missed opportunities that are the result of cutting people off from one another by means of a hermetically sealed border. Sekula was a master of this type of language play. It is difficult to imagine that he would have endorsed the formulation of the bilingual Dutch-French short announcement for the Brussels show, and it is doubtful he read it in advance. The invitation makes a remarkable distinction between the Mexican "third world" and the American "world" (in the French version) or "lifeworld" (in the Dutch version).

Looking back, one wonders about the exact nature of the lifeworld destroyed by the imperialist US *world* to contribute to the genesis of the Mexican "third world." Arguably, all efforts should be joined today to save what is left of the fishing ground of the Mexican mussel raker. I am hinting here at the fact that, with *Dead Letter Office*, Sekula explicitly contested the devastating impact of a life-size replica representing a sea-stricken *RMS Titanic* on the fishing village of Popotla, a village that had no running water. Constructed in a freshwater filming tank whose efflux caused desalinization of the nearby coastal tide pools for mussel farming, it was used for the set of the blockbuster film *Titanic*.²⁰⁹ This event gave rise to vociferous protests by the local fishermen community and their families, which were all in vain. A portion of the film set has even been converted into a theme park devoted to the story of the making of *Titanic*.²¹⁰ "The lugubrious arrogance of *Titanic* intrigues me," Sekula wrote.²¹¹ He continued with a question: "Is it a symptom of something larger?"

The artist would use the same welder's image again on later occasions, as if he encouraged a continued collective reflection on the photograph.²¹² (Plate 2) Each time, he added a slogan to it, as if readers were to see in it a cryptic beginning of an answer to his demand. "Travailler plus pour gagner plus" [Work more to earn more], reads the ironic opening invitation, in French, to a 2008 show at Galerie Michel Rein, Paris. "Los ricos destruyen el planeta" [The rich destroy the planet] was the Spanish slogan used for the cardboard announcement



Allan Sekula

DEAD LETTER OFFICE

31.10.1998 - 03.01.1999

U wordt vriendelijk uitgenodigd voor de opening op vrijdag 30 oktober 1998, van 18 u tot 20 u, in het Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, Koningstraat 10, Brussel.

Vous êtes cordialement invités au vernissage le vendredi 30 octobre 1998, de 18 h à 20 h, au Palais des Beaux-Arts, rue Royale 10, Bruxelles.

Résumé de par et d'autre de la frontière entre le Belgique et les États-Unis. Dead Letter Office raconte à la fois l'histoire mondiale mondiale des lettres mortes, des châtiments ou des retards de livraison de messages et la mortelle certitude que l'écriture la sauvegarde grandeur nature du Témoin, les institutions militaires des Maritimes ou la Convention République pour l'élection présidentielle américaine.

VERBODING VOOR TOEGANGSTELLINGEN VAN HET PALAIS VOOR SCHONE KUNSTEN, BRUSSEL.

Verzoekt men niet te worden geciteerd in andere media. Het ontwerp van de uitnodiging is van de hand van de kunstenaar. De afbeelding is het werk van de kunstenaar. De afbeelding is het werk van de kunstenaar. De afbeelding is het werk van de kunstenaar.

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Fig. I.11.

Recto and Verso sides of cardboard invitation to Allan Sekula's exhibition *Dead Letter Office*, Brussels, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Oct. 31, 1998-Jan. 3, 1999. 29.5×21 cm. Author's collection. © Recto: Allan Sekula Studio. Courtesy Bozar, Brussels.

to his 2007 exhibition *Shipwreck and Workers* at Christopher Grimes Gallery in Los Angeles. That same year, of course, there was also the abovementioned *Alle Menschen Werden Schwestern*. In a feminist vein, Sekula here proposed to shift the attention away from the European anthem's exclusive focus on fraternity only. Building on his suggestion, the argument in this book puts emphasis on revitalizing the concept of fraternity in terms of what the Germans call *Geschwister*. Is it possible for us to reinvent a more solid basis for *all* people to become brothers *and* sisters, or, in one word, siblings?

Let us make room. Let us fill the holes. Or let us spread and open our
arms to let the newcomers into our circle.
No matter what we do, it will be a *Dance of Death*.
I have been living for too long already.
Yet I still want to experience the arrival of the contemporary, of the new
middle ages, and not miss the atomic era. I even held on to my seat on
the first train leaving for the moon!...

Blaise Cendrars, *Bourlinguer* [1948] (Paris: Folio, 2016), 337–338.
My translation. My emphasis.



#mother and teenage #son arriving by #statuecruises ferry
#ellisland #summer #dressup #MockLadyLiberty

blade ► **noun** **1** the flat cutting edge of a knife, saw, or other tool or weapon. ■ literary a sword. ■ (**blades**) Austral./NZ hand shears used in sheep shearing.
■ Archaeology a long, narrow flake.
2 the flat, wide section of an implement or device such as an oar or a propeller. ■ a thin, flat metal runner on an ice skate. ■ (also **blade bone**) a shoulder bone in a joint of meat, or the joint itself. ■ the flat part of the tongue behind the tip.
3 a long, narrow leaf of grass or another similar plant: *a blade of grass*. ■ Botany the broad, thin part of a leaf apart from the stalk.
4 informal, dated a dashing or energetic young man.
► **verb** [no obj.] US informal skate using Rollerblades.
– DERIVATIVES **bladed adjective** [in combination] *double-bladed paddles*, **blader noun**.
– ORIGIN Old English *blæd* ‘leaf of a plant’ (also in sense 2 of the noun), of Germanic origin; related to Dutch *blad* and German *Blatt*.

Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 175.

PART I

Blade

Chapter 1

Running on Water

In the Mainz cathedral
there had been three altar panels,
with facing fronts and reverse
sides painted, one of them
showing a blind hermit who, as he crosses
the frozen Rhine river with a boy
to guide him, is assaulted by two murderers
and beaten to death. *Anno* 1631 or '32,
in the wild war of that era this panel
had been taken away and sent off to Sweden,
but by shipwreck beside many other
such pieces of art had perished
in the depths of the sea.

W.G. Sebald, description of a lost work by Matthaeus Grünewald,
in *After Nature* [1988], trans. Michael Hamburger [2002]
(London: Penguin, 2003), 10. Original emphasis.



Pull the #rug from Under.
A page from my "kliederboek" @MessBook
#swim #lighthouse #deepblue

A *Temesghen Berhe*.²¹³ So ends *Les Éclats* (*ma queueule, ma révolte, mon nom*), the award-winning documentary released in 2011 by the French filmmaker Sylvain George. Three words projected for five seconds in white font on a screen otherwise completely bathed in black abstraction. This phrase is the artist's dedication to a dear Eritrean friend left to his fate in the place where the two first met: Calais. The closing scene of this black-and-white film—which also circulates under the English title *The Outbursts* (*my fucking face, my revolt, my name*)—shows a tall and slim man on an empty sand beach walking a straight trail toward the shoreline.²¹⁴ (fig. 1.1) When his feet touch the salty water, he stops and bends his knees. Sitting on his heels, he first notices the foaming bubbles playfully wetting his not very waterproof shoes. The daylight surrounding him is of a thin and tenuous clarity, as if wishing to suggest the nearness of the white cliffs on both sides of the English Channel.

Next, lifting his face and looking up toward the far horizon, he watches two SeaFrance ferries crossing each other surprisingly close to the beach. Surrounded only by the repetitive sound of the waves rolling gently ashore, the handsome young man continues to sit on his heels for a while. His gaze follows the ferry, which rapidly approaches the entrance to the port's channel. After the ship has entered the fairway, he slowly rises. For a short moment, he follows the ship's stinky wisp of black smoke rising above the port's west pier while the ship enters the dock. He then abruptly walks away, back in the direction of the city. The viewer understands: this yearning man finds himself stranded on a far edge of the European continent. After that, *Les Éclats* takes leave of its audience through its final shot of the outgoing ferry rapidly disappearing on the horizon—setting a straight course toward Dover harbor. Bright sunlight shimmers and trembles over the channel's only very slightly rippled, calm surface.

During this nearly windless moment of the day, a thick pack of dark cumulus clouds hangs just above the water—moving seaward in the direction of the disappearing ship. A heavy shadow spreads over the sea's enticing glitter. *Les Éclats* confronts its viewers for almost an hour and a half with nothing but waiting time—or, rather, *wasted* time in and near the Calais ferry terminal. At various instances of day and night, the camera follows several men whose sole ambition is to reach the United Kingdom by illegally accessing the secured infrastructure near the passenger port. Through lengthy conversations with some of them, Sylvain George provides a privileged look into their thoughts, aspirations, and hopes for the future. Having built a relationship of trust with them, he subtly manages to reveal to the viewers the desperate survival conditions of their present reality.

The sole mission of these men is to hitch an illegal ride on a freight truck waiting in line to board the ship—sometimes they try up to three



Fig. 1.1.

Sylvain George, *Les Éclats (ma gueule, ma révolte, mon nom)* [*The Outbursts (my fucking face, my revolt, my name)*], 2011. Video, black-and-white and color, 84 mins. Six stills. © Noir Production and Sylvain George.

times during the same night. As one man, whose face we don't get to see, explains, "The more you jump [over the gates] the more you get experienced." Once they find themselves inside the terminal, "It is just like a dead time. You are asking yourself what you can do. You look to the right and left. Then when you think it is the right moment: [...] one, two, three, [...]." Leaning against a balustrade while nervously picking with his nails at a shabbily bound bundle of papers entitled "Guide to prayer in Islam" he thus adds in a soft tone of voice: "I know that we will be happy one day."

When, exactly, this aspiration will become a reality, none of the men can predict. Meanwhile, they consider it their daily duty to build expertise on their target area. Right after extensively zooming in on the precision with which Temesghen Berhe—one of the film's main protagonists—is capable of pocketing various billiard balls, George stops the sequence at the symbolic moment when the cue ball is left alone on the cloth. The camera then shifts to a close-up of Berhe's face and George lets him speak, "[...] not at this moment because I'm thinking too much." In response, an unidentified companion's voice resounds from out of view, "You can't."

Berhe's face, which the camera continues to observe, so we can watch in full detail the big scars on his chin and forehead, replies firmly as follows: "I can do it. I know I have [the capacity]. But how? When? Nobody knows. [...] No, not now." Temesghen Berhe admits being tired after all the failed attempts at jumping over the port's meters-high fences—one time even breaking his leg, a recollection that causes his face abruptly to fill with deep emotion. He confesses to George that he is afraid to die. Although his friends readily reassure him in Tigrinya that he will not, he reconfirms his mortal fear once more, "because of the cold and the police." But this does not prevent Berhe from preparing himself for action immediately by putting on, as he says, "a lot of clothes." Resolutely, he ties his white cotton scarf around his neck and proclaims, "We have to go."

As the film continues, the spectator witnesses gripping testimonies from young individuals who have known much more than suffering, and who are likely to continue to suffer. Many of them appear sharp and intelligent analysts of reality, such as an Afghan man who overcomes his shame and generously invites the filmmaker to visit his self-built shelter home. While the camera zooms in on his face, we listen to him at length. The viewer learns from his fluent English that he understands the complex sociopolitical, geopolitical, and economic reasons why his pillaged country—a "rich" country with resources such as oil, uranium, gold, and silver but with nothing but "poor people"—is so deeply troubled. Afghanistan is a "jungle," he says, "From the day I was born I have seen blood."

Simultaneously, the Afghan man expresses his continued attachment to his place of birth. His compatriot friends, also present, express their agreement. “We would fix [our] country if we had the power: if we could, we would.” Back then, when they were born, war was raging against the Russians. From then on, to the best of their memory, war has been present in their lives all the time, up to this very day. In full detail, the men sum up a complete geopolitical picture of their country’s occupants and fighting parties over the past thirty years. While doing so, all present in the tent express both individual and collective pain. They testify to be unhappy both for themselves and for their people—for those living there today and those yet to be born. “It is not just me who lost my life, my childhood, my youth,” the principal spokesman says, full of emotion,

This generation has never tasted life. What is a life? [...] We didn’t come to Europe to have a better life. We came here to save our life. We had no choice. We came over here to count as a human.

Instead, his mate explains, they have all ended up in a dead-end situation with people pointing at them and saying, “Look: them, they are crazy.” “But,” he objects, “we are not crazy, we are humans, we want to be like others, but we can’t.” They confess to the painful realization that it will be extremely difficult for them to someday be and become “like others.” As a result, they consider themselves as “already dead, as finished.” This very resignation is what gives them courage. Having nothing to lose, they find the mental and physical drive to try their luck by attempting to hide in the chassis of a truck.

George decided to end the film with a sequence on the beach of Calais, with the man alone crouching on the fine sand doing not much more than observing the softly glimmering channel waters, their white wavelets rolling smoothly ashore. At first sight, the closing ambience sketched by the filmmaker appears to be one of acquiescence. George himself, however, confessed in an interview with José Sarmiento and Mónica Delgado that, on the contrary, the film ends on a “violent” note.²¹⁵ From the point of view of the man’s presumed psychological condition, there can be no doubt that this is the case. He is grounded there against his own will. But the viewer knows this lonesome man is likely suffering physical hardships as well. Just before the closing sequence on the town’s main beach, we witness an intimate medical examination of his close comrade Temesghen Berhe—now with shorter hair and much thinner than at the beginning of the documentary. During this very private conversation with an emphatic French doctor, the audience learns that Berhe has been suffering from tuberculosis for six months.

This bad news puts a much earlier moment in this documentary in a completely different perspective. After about twelve and a half minutes, there is a fixed camera shot lasting slightly less than ten seconds of the surface of the Calais–Saint-Omer Canal, its water artificially colored in a dim red. (Plate 3) Filmed during the winter, the leafless trees on its banks are reflected on the dark water surface as jagged black lines with thin bulges at their very ends: glowing treetops blending in the water as if uprooted after having been set on fire. In this dark-red sequence the atmosphere once again seems dead calm, as not a breath of wind is to be discerned on the water. Yet the canal plays a key role in the errant men’s daily lives. Food distribution is organized in an abandoned lot near its edges, for instance, and the men wash themselves by diving into the water for a swim. When, much later in the film, the viewer learns from the Afghan man about his childhood troubled by “bomb explosions, gun shootings, or dead bodies” and of Temesghen Berhe’s life-threatening lung disease, the stained water, artificially colored red instead of the more predictable blue—and the only colored shot in the entire documentary—takes on the allegorical meaning of a sea of blood.

The tragic episode toward the end of the film that zooms in on Berhe’s medical visit ends with him closing the zipper of his sweater. The next shot shows a group of little fishing boats all lying chained and run aground in a bay from which the tide has receded. Temesghen Berhe finds himself at rock bottom as well. In the penultimate sequence, he no longer participates in his friends’ soccer games. Instead, he watches from the sideline, supporting them with his gentle smile. Upon seeing this, the emphatic viewer is left with a feeling of hope that the tide will turn for him. In these final instances, the filmmaker indeed appears to suggest that a positive outcome is still possible. Slowly, the camera zooms in on the dock’s opening that provides access to the sea. It is about to be filled again by the rising tide. Yet, in the end, the viewer is left uncertain whether Berhe or his comrades ever met their good fortune and made it to the United Kingdom. A few moments earlier, the film silently showed a large Latin cross positioned near the canal, two seagulls resting on top of it. A line of trucks is parked along the water—waiting to board the ship. After the end credits disappear from the screen, a female voice emerges from the darkness, mourning these young lives gone astray, “What can we do, what can we do; Europa, Europa we are suffering.”

*

They are building churches so that people can pray for homes. Allan Sekula selected this “Joke circulating in Poland, 1990” as the second and final epilogue of *Fish Story* (1995). Page 187 of the richly illustrated book,



from which the citation is taken, is completely black with the exception of the above words, which appear as white characters—aligned to the right at about one third of the page—in one of Sekula’s favorite fonts: Times New Roman (Italic). Striking for its explicit identification by the artist as a joke, this short sentence also serves as the prologue to the ninth and final chapter of *Fish Story*—a vast ensemble of photographs and texts on which he worked during a period of seven years, from 1988 onward. Its first seven chapters consist of 105 framed color photographs, accompanied by twenty-six text panels. The latter are meant to be interspersed with the pictures following a logic predetermined by the artist: when installed over a range of walls and rooms, they need to be positioned at varying distances.²¹⁶ (fig. 1.2) Sekula completed the installation version of the work by adding two slide projections of eighty color transparencies each as Chapters Eight and Nine. He did not reproduce any of these images in the abovementioned catalogue. Moreover, the two sets were never published in their totality during the artist’s lifetime.

Fish Story’s concluding ninth chapter, entitled “Walking on Water (1990/1995),” contains, as its very last slide (no. 78), a close-up of the lower part of an overpainted plaster cast sculpture representing Christ’s

Fig. 1.2.
Allan Sekula, *Fish Story*, 1989–1995, Chapter Two: “Loaves and Fishes,” 1990–1992. Eight Cibachrome prints and two text panels, variable dimensions. Collection Michel Rein, Paris. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

ankles and feet, one slightly overlapping the other, shackled by one large treenail to the vertical bar of a cross.²¹⁷ (fig. 1.3) Sekula opted to frame the photographic composition of “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw” by choosing an angle with a limited view of the church’s softly illuminated interior. The focus is entirely on the lower part of the cross. To its right, attached to the wall, hangs a commemorative plaque with a list of names. Sekula’s camera lens further zoomed in on the holy-water font situated near Christ’s cruelly tortured limbs. A dried wildflower—possibly a *Helichrysum Italicum Immortelle*—and a pine branch are attached to that part of the nail closest to the vertical arm of the cross. This gives the viewer the awkward impression that, even when crucified, Christ’s bare feet still suffer from the stinging spines underneath them—as if to prevent them at all costs from finding minimal comfort when seeking a support on the cross.



Fig. 1.3.
Allan Sekula, “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw.” Final slide (no. 78) from “Walking on Water,” 1990/1995, Chapter Nine of *Fish Story* (1989–1995). Eighty slides, projection size 1.5×2.25 m. © Allan Sekula Studio.

The complete “Walking on Water” slide sequence is meant to be installed in a darkened projection room of five-by-five meters. In such a focused setting, the artist invites the viewer to look at this cruel picture rather slowly, for ten seconds.²¹⁸ Sekula designed the diapositives to introduce a “markedly different” temporal and pictorial experience from that elicited by the images and texts on the walls.²¹⁹ The artist here not only hinted at the more intimate viewing conditions of the black box but also referred to the relatively long time intervals between the projection of each slide and, last but not least, to the rather monumental impact of their projected size: 1.5×2.25 meters.²²⁰ When the viewer follows Sekula’s intention and indeed observes this image during a relatively extended period of time, one aspect of the picture stands out: it becomes

clear that the camera lens has captured the original three-dimensional reality of the church's selected corner in a rather distorted way. Its effect is reminiscent of Susan Sontag's powerful insight, "photographs depict realities that already exist, though only the camera can disclose them."²²¹

From a photographic point of view, the seemingly empty font or barrel—which in reality is positioned more to the left of the Crucifix—finds itself almost in front of Christ's suffering feet. Sekula decided to *amputate* them or, rather, separate them from the rest of Christ's body, which remains invisible and outside of the picture's frame. As a result, it is as if the edge of the barrel almost touches the longer toes of his right foot. The suggested effect is that the font catches the bloody moisture sliding down Christ's toes, resulting in its mingling with the holy water. The intimate connections that existed between blood and water in the imagination of the Middle Ages can help to explore further how this suggestion of commingling water and blood speaks as a visual motif today. In the Bible (John 19:34), it is stated that Christ poured himself out in two fluids, water and blood, when his side was pierced. A fine example of a creative interpretation of that biblical narrative is a small painting made by an anonymous artist from the Lower Rhineland around 1480, now preserved in the Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum (Kolumba) in Cologne. (Plate 4)

Man of sorrows in the Limbus purgatorii represents Christ bearing the characteristics of the Crucified, yet he has detached himself from his cross. He stands upright in front of it, his left foot resting on the board of a basin painted in purplish red-blue. This pool collects both blood and Eucharistic wafers erupting from his side wound. His right foot finds itself immersed within the mass of flown blood. Strikingly, this blood basin is surrounded by a larger pool filled with blue water, in which six persons (surrounded by flames) are bathing while the wafers fly around their heads as if they were thin slices of mother of pearl. The souls in purgatory, therefore, are not depicted in a red sea of fire—as would be the conventional iconographic choice—but instead in “an ocean of blue fire.”²²² Barbara Baert read this shift in meaning as an indication of the fact that the painter wanted to present purgatory itself as the site of the fountain of life.²²³ The iconography of the fount of mercy (*Fons pietatis*) within which Christ is standing implies that there needs to be a clear visual association between the blood of Christ and a spring, fountain, or basin—therewith granting a redemptive role to Christ's blood.²²⁴

In Roman-Catholic liturgy, the wafers typically represent Christ's flesh and the drinking of purplish wine symbolically replaces his blood. In this painting, all these components may be found. However, at the same time, a meaningful color chiasm is at play. Christ is standing on the threshold of a purgatory, where water, and water alone, proved capable

of quenching fire. In this way, blue has come to symbolize salvation as well. Yet, Christ pointed out—in concertation with God, who sits in the upper corner on his right-hand side, holding a globe in his left hand—that this has only been possible “by means of belief in the red blood” that flows from Christ’s side wound.²²⁵ This remarkable transformation of purgatory into the *Fons vitae* is both significant and inspirational. In the next chapters, I will explore this fascinating combination of the colors red and blue in greater depth, especially in relation to white. To do so, one of W.G. Sebald’s poems has also been a source of inspiration.

Blue

grass
seen
through
a wafer
thin layer
of frozen
water.²²⁶

For Sebald, there was an intimate connection between the colors blue and white. In conversation with Walther Krause, Sebald elaborated on the importance that he attached to white. White, he said, is the most difficult color.²²⁷ It opens up our perception of reality to a “metaphysical zone”: first we perceive a sort of “standstill of the world” (as in a village enveloped in snow in the winter), in which we become aware that there is “an alternative to the rush of everyday life”; then we gradually start to feel that there must exist a range of valuable potentialities previously unexplored.²²⁸ Although none of these three colors is present in it, Sekula’s “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw” implicitly suggests a similar commingling of water and blood or red and blue as a means for imagining a transition from death via purgatory to a new life. I want to argue that this photograph thus engages in a silent, pensive reflection on what Walter Benjamin has called, referencing Marcel Proust, “life’s supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening.”²²⁹

In a provocative reading of what the idea of Resurrection could have meant for Christ’s contemporaries, Shusako Endo has put forward the following hypothesis: faith in that time was based on the feeling that “the power of a dead man appeared to be operating in another man.”²³⁰ This, of course, as articulated by Endo, comes close to the idea of reincarnation, which is an extremely difficult concept to handle for the rational beings that contemporary humans pretend to have become.²³¹ Endo also shifted the attention to something more tangible,

which is the ritual of baptism. Symbolically, in Christianity, baptism bears the essential meaning of “being born to a new life.”²³² Through the Roman-Catholic sacrament of baptism, the baptized are blessed with holy water to make them be “freed from sin and reborn as sons of God.”²³³ Bearing this in mind, a sharp look at Sekula’s “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw” brings forward another element that stands out: a clearly legible list of names of deceased persons is visible next to Christ’s sacrificed feet. Given the rich contextual reading that the photograph allows, it is not difficult to imagine how the aspersorium could just as well transform itself into a baptismal font.

Sekula thus ended his seminal work *Fish Story* on a symbolic note: that of a cyclical or even cosmic dimension that, in his view, is inherent to reality, and which accounts for the possibility of a rebirth.²³⁴ “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw” was made during the Advent period of 1990.²³⁵ In private conversations, Sekula, from time to time, drew his interlocutor’s attention to this intriguing photograph, a peculiarly puzzling gathering of reality fragments. But he always made sure to mention the work only quickly, as if in passing. At the same time, he would systematically indicate that he did not seek to engage in a more in-depth conversation about it. I can only conclude, then, that however much Sekula considered the closing slide of his generally acclaimed masterpiece *Fish Story* to be a key point of reference within his oeuvre, he wanted it to bathe in forever unresolved enigma. It does not readily connect to any other image in the sequence, except perhaps for three slides showing Catholic priests and a few higher religious officials participating in a funeral procession for a deceased Cardinal on the grayish streets of Warsaw—of which one (no. 70) is included in fig. 1.4 (below right image).

*

From the larger perspective of *Fish Story*’s overall undertaking, which was to investigate the “imaginary and material geographies of the advanced capitalist world” at the end of the twentieth century, it makes perfect sense to find Sekula attracted to a focus on Poland for its concluding chapter.²³⁶ It is no more than logical that he wanted to visit the Gdańsk shipyard, generally understood to be the birthplace of democratic transformation in eastern Europe. But why conclude the last slide sequence on this worldly, material topic with an iconic, timeless depiction of universal suffering? Discussing the queues at the unemployment office in Gdańsk, photographed by the artist and addressed through one picture in *Fish Story*’s Chapter Two, “Loaves and Fishes,” Jonathan Stafford read Sekula’s journey to Poland as an attempt to come to terms with “Solidarity’s betrayal.”²³⁷ (see fig. 1.2; see also fig. 1.4 middle image left)

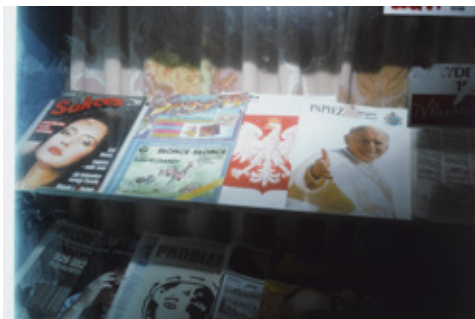
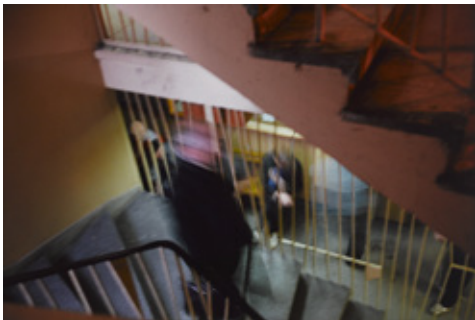


Fig. 1.4.

Allan Sekula, "On the train from Amsterdam to Warsaw. Article by Solidarity intellectual Adam Michnik, 'Why I Will Not Vote for Lech Walesa,' *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 21 November 1990"; "Professor Jerzy Doerffler of the Gdansk Technical University, Ship Research Institute. World-renowned expert on shipbuilding who designed the first vessels launched at the Lenin (now Gdansk) Shipyard after the second World War. Speaking of the Polish economy, he remarks, 'It's a circus, but the apes are not mine.' He believes nonetheless that 'Polish shipbuilding has enormous possibilities,' given the aging world fleet and the competitive

low wages earned by Polish workers. On the one hand, 'people have had quite enough of this slavery for forty-five years, now they want to be treated as citizens of Europe.' On the other, foreign investors want to continue to treat Polish workers as 'white slaves'; "Unemployment office. Gdansk"; "Crow tracks and footprints in the snow. Gdansk"; "News and tobacco stand. Warsaw"; "Funeral procession for a deceased Cardinal. Warsaw." Six slides (no. 1, 24, 33, 40, 53, and 70) from "Walking on Water," 1990/1995, Chapter Nine of *Fish Story* (1989–1995). Eighty slides, projection size, 1.5x2.25 m. © Allan Sekula Studio.

At a very early moment in time, *Fish Story's* Chapters Two and Nine thus already mourned “the lost opportunity of Solidarity’s ethos.” Sekula’s engagement with the Polish trade union *Solidarność*, according to Stafford, was an effort to redeem its legacy and to reclaim the meaning of a solidarity rooted in a shared history of struggle and hope.

In the caption of slide number twenty-four (see fig. 1.4), Sekula indeed indicated how the Polish workers’ shared history involved a collective, desperate effort to escape the precarious conditions of being treated as white slaves. “Walking on Water” thus emphasizes how the structural functioning of the Soviet system failed to provide an adequate remedy to that dire situation. At the same time, the slide sequence addresses the ambivalent role of the Catholic Church, omnipresent in Polish public space. When Sekula visited Poland soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this “Jesus Christ of Nations”—an expression Sekula borrowed from the nineteenth-century activist and poet Adam Mickiewicz—was a country proud to have delivered the first non-Italian Pope since the sixteenth century: John Paul II.²³⁸ Slide number fifty-three appropriately includes a portrait of Pope John Paul II on the cover of the religious magazine *Papież* in a newsstand. (see fig. 1.4 below left image)

Yet despite Poland’s being blessed with a Pope, Sekula discovered a deeply “sick country.”²³⁹ At that time, Poland was only at the beginning of its recovery from what has been called “the Legacy of Humiliation.”²⁴⁰ While the economy needed to open up to international trade and infrastructural investments, Sekula worried about how the influx of fresh foreign capital rather served to obtain quick financial returns instead of durable development. The eighty diapositives form the edited result of Sekula’s attempt to come to terms with that awkward reality. In this, Sekula comes off as compassionate with a Poland in the process of desperately trying to cure itself from that one pestiferous disease, named communism, only to replace it with another choleraic one: neo-liberal capitalism. As a working title for the sequence, Sekula first had “*The Polish Joke*” in mind.²⁴¹ Changing it into “Walking on Water,” referring more explicitly to Christ as a symbol of universal suffering, Sekula grasped more adequately the shared historical pain of the Polish people. Elsewhere in his body of work he would identify this very mechanism as that of the “collective Sisyphus.”²⁴²

The text that accompanies the “Walking on Water” slides as its epilogue further substantiates this impression. There, Sekula elaborated on President Lech Wałęsa’s complicated political position as the former activist Gdańsk shipyard worker who unexpectedly became post-communist Poland’s first democratically elected president (1990–1995).²⁴³ He sketched a weak portrait of Wałęsa and his Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz, who alternately put on the “mask of good and the mask of evil” to enforce questionable International Monetary

Fund—and World Bank—imposed measures meant to bring the country more socioeconomic prosperity in the long run.²⁴⁴ Sekula quoted Wałęsa from a 1992 interview with Stephen Engelberg.

[...] I am not a fool [...] I would prefer to fix someone's washing machine or TV set. An electrician can have a drink or beer. I come here and they almost count every glass. Don't be so clever and try to become president.

Wałęsa—the ultimate jack-of-all-trades—thus cherished a down-to-earth attitude about his extraordinary makeover. Sekula sympathetically expressed his respect for this continued modesty yet not without sharing doubtful feelings about it with his readers. “When Walesa visited America,” he wrote, “he came as both beggar and hero.”²⁴⁵ Lech Wałęsa traveled to the United States in mid-November 1989, when he had not yet been elected president. He came to seek financial aid for his bankrupt country. As the former leader of Solidarity, he was hailed by the Americans, who invited him to speak as a foreign private citizen at a joint session of Congress—an honor that, before him, only befell the French Marquis de Lafayette in 1824 as a tribute to his key role in the struggle for independence.²⁴⁶ For his text, Sekula decided to describe one instance during that trip when “Walesa turned to President Bush and uttered a grateful line in halting English: ‘God Bless America.’”²⁴⁷ Bush Senior, Sekula continued, “with the paternalistic ease of his own social class, responded: ‘Beautiful, thank you, so sweet,’ as if a child had just presented him with flowers.”

Seen in this light, Wałęsa's honorable invitation to the US Congress turned sour. It came with the high price of sacrificing the difficultly obtained liberty of his own country for the higher sake and glory of US hegemonic “independence.” In this epilogue of *Fish Story's* final chapter, Sekula did not shy away from an increasingly personal tone in his wording. The reader then learns that there was also an autobiographical reason at play in his decision to pay a visit to a Polish shipyard soon after the end of the Cold War. “Given Walesa's intractable working class mannerisms,” Sekula wrote, “his beggar role uncomfortably invokes that other figure in the complex American system of ethnicities: the moronic immigrant, butt of the ‘Polish Joke.’” For all the ambiguity Sekula displayed regarding Wałęsa's achievements on the international political stage, he was unconditional in condemning the degrading treatment the Polish leader received from the Texas oil magnate Bush.

Sekula was intimately familiar with US jocular culture regarding those considered foolish or, rather, stupid Polish immigrants. Intermingled with his tribute to the leading, inspiring example of Lech Wałęsa, the artist opened his writing praxis to a very private element: the life of his

paternal grandfather. Paweł Sekuła, an “illiterate but clever” blacksmith from Grybów (now in southern Polish Galicia, but then part of Austrian Galicia), sailed third class to New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the epilogue, Allan Sekula recalled how his grandfather “drank himself into comfortable oblivion” while “crossing the heaving Atlantic on the way to a new life.” He did so in “crowded steerage births” that did not provide much of a view but instead had plenty of “good first-class beer in ‘empty’ kegs at hand.”

Sekuła situated the emigration journey of his grandfather in the year 1909 “aboard the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, built by Poles at the German shipyard Vulkan in Stettin (now Szczecin).” He added that this ship was an “identical sister to the ‘fashionable ship of the North German Lloyd,’ the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, aboard which, two years earlier and traveling in the opposite direction, Alfred Stieglitz made his famous photograph, *The Steerage*.” An on-site passenger search in the database of the Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Foundation—today, such an overly commercialized place for touristic leisure that it is a key example of US society’s “will to ignorance,” about which Tony Judt worried so much (6#)—provides useful information about his arrival in New York.²⁴⁸ It turns out that the artist’s grandfather had already set foot on US soil on March 18, 1907, after having sailed aboard the *ss Chemnitz*, a steamship that departed from Bremen, Germany, on March 2, 1907.²⁴⁹ (fig. 1.5) From that day on, his name became Paweł Sekuła.

A further search reveals that Wiktoria Sekuła, Paweł’s wife, was reunited with him four years later. She sailed from Bremen aboard the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* to arrive safely in New York on May 24, 1911.²⁵⁰ It’s easy to imagine that she impatiently ran up and down the ship’s deck after four cold Polish winters without her husband. Wiktoria and Paweł Sekuła settled in DuBois, part of the “coal county of central Pennsylvania.”²⁵¹ Paweł changed professions and used his acquired skills to become a railroad worker.²⁵² As art historian Annika Marie has observed, this is a striking shift—she called it a “glitch.”²⁵³ Blacksmiths, although traditionally seen as heroic figures of the worker’s revolution because they forge the very tools of production, are nonetheless “closer to the category of the skilled craftsperson, more akin to the petty bourgeois” than industrial railroad workers. Wiktoria and Paweł Sekuła lie buried together where they made their home and had their children. Their grandson-artist rendered them the following moving tribute:

Two graves, side by side. Autumn or early winter, frost on the bare branches of trees, here in the former coal country of central Pennsylvania. Focus on the gravestones only, otherwise indefinite widening circles of confusion. Here lie Wiktoria and Paweł, the artist’s grandparents, with a small difference is the spelling

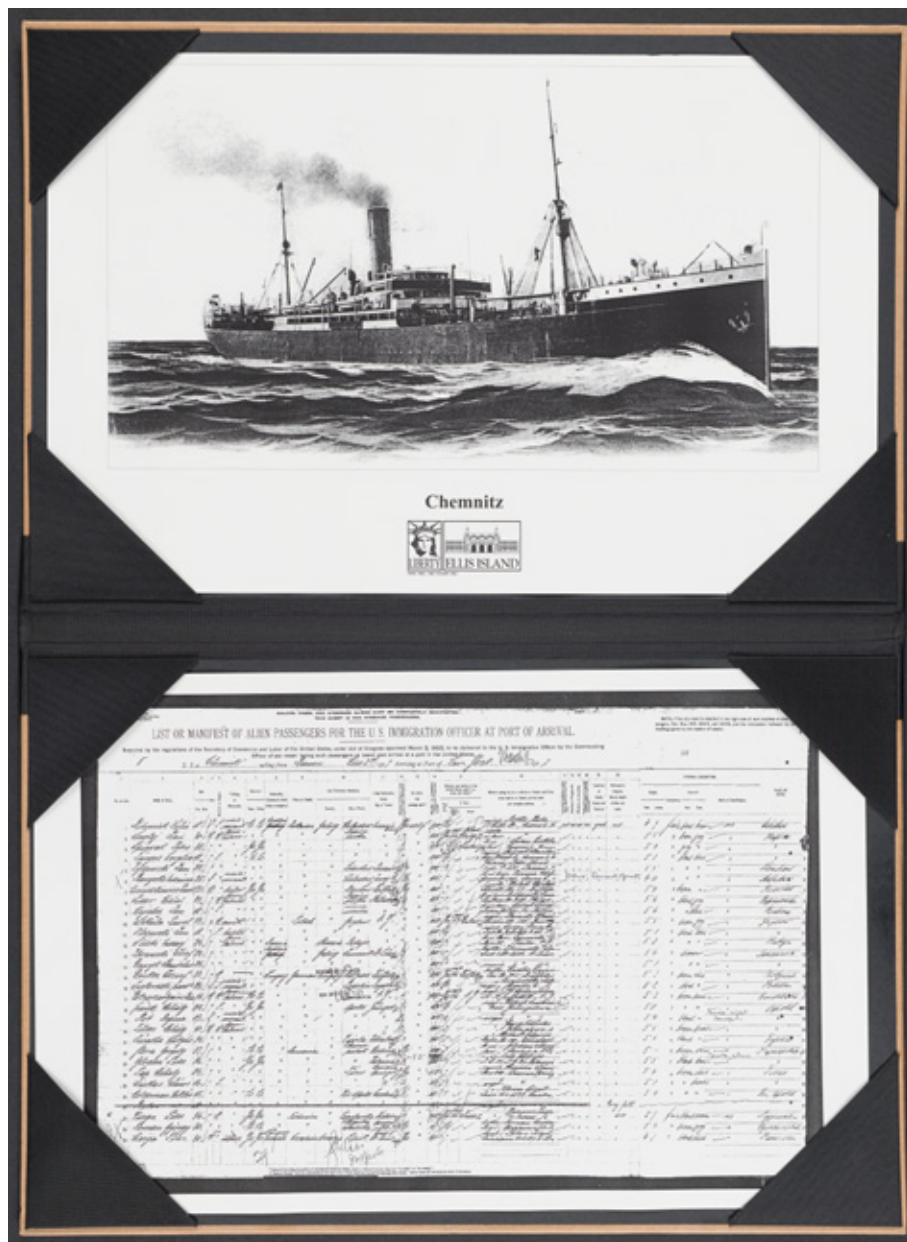


Fig. 1.5.

Graphic illustration of the SS *Chemnitz* and of the official ship manifest containing the names of disembarking passengers. Line no. 10 lists Pawet Sekuta. Classified in a matching folder, made in China, available for purchase at the Ellis Island Foundation, 46×31 cm. Author's collection.

of the shared surname cut into the modest granite slabs. A slash crosses the “l” for Pawel and then doesn’t for Wiktor. It is as if the second stonecutter was a typesetter in a language without diacritical marks. Die later, die elsewhere and the sound of your name changes forever.²⁵⁴

Allan Sekula’s decision to end his seminal *Fish Story* project with such a personal outpouring was hardly an innocent one. He thus concluded the work with an element of quasi-literary quality, almost as if he were writing a nonfictional novel. The very last word of the epilogue is *oblivion*, underscoring that he would never forget his own roots. Pawel Sekula, a “toolmaker” who did not know how to write, “signed his name with an x.”²⁵⁵ That Allan Sekula—who would make a “name” for himself—was born in Erie, Pennsylvania as a middle-class American child was the fortunate outcome of his ancestors’ courage. He thanked his life to their subaltern Atlantic ship travels as steerage passengers. Having become a prolific writer and artist, he paid tribute to their audacity. They “walked on water” in the dark spaces of the lowest decks of a steamer to safely survive the passage and cross the deep Atlantic. *Their* sacrifices made while building up a new life in the United States came to *his* benefit—and he was grateful for it.

In caption number twenty-four of “Walking on Water,” Allan Sekula explicitly expressed his solidarity with the Polish people, who had wanted to free themselves from “slavery for forty-five years” and who wanted to become “citizens of Europe.” It is in this light that I propose to understand “Crucified feet. Saint Anne’s Church. Warsaw.” To finish *Fish Story* with that slide implies ending on an ambivalent note. Positively, it provides a more universal extrapolation of Sekula’s personal feelings of gratitude about his solid education, which allowed him to develop both an artistic and a teaching career. At the same time, it expresses sincere concern about those persons who must see themselves through such sacrifices, such as his own ancestors. A common theme in his overall intellectual enterprise has been to always stand with those who had to invent strategies of survival to fight for better living conditions. In the summer of 2009, while preparing his exhibition *Polonia and Other Fables*, to be opened in September at The Renaissance Society in Chicago, he wrote the following entry in his personal notebook:

ferry sinkings
drowned migrants
migrant suffocated in sea containers [sic].²⁵⁶

*

The monumental staircase to the first floor of the ancient Palazzo del Popolo (Palace of the People) in Florence—now the Bargello Museum—leads to a room of marvels that, like a sleeping beauty, awaits its visitors. This *Sala degli Avori* contains an impressive ensemble of paintings, mosaics, and sculptures in a wide variety of materials, including such rare components as sculpted coral or animal bones. Equally called the *Sala Carrand*—after the French antiquarian who donated all these precious items to the museum in 1888—it displays a collection of 265 carved ivories providing an overview of the history of the medium from the fifth to the seventeenth centuries. To the regret of numerous scholars, no scientific publication has yet been dedicated to the Carrand collection. But this major lacuna has a positive side to it. The hordes of visitors who invade the city on a daily basis (at least until COVID-19 threw a spanner in their works) do not consider this room a possible highlight on their trip; therefore, it has maintained a reputation as a well-kept secret over the decades. Ever since my first visit to the Bargello as a student in early 1993, I have known the *Ivory Room* to be a quiet place for contemplation in the heart of Florence—fully amid yet completely away from the masses. (fig. 1.6).

In the far right corner of the room, close to a window that opens to the courtyard, stands a square-shaped and well-lit wooden vitrine. It rests on a handcrafted metal pedestal painted in a brownish red tint. In this outmoded piece of furniture, delicate ivories sit slightly obliquely against the inclined planes of a pyramidal structure. This background decor is covered with a voluptuous thick scarlet-red fabric, which facilitates visual focus and detailed observation of the works. Among the objects on display, I want to draw attention to the left side of the light box, facing the central part of the room. A book cover ligature plaque from early medieval times is installed on that triangular sloping side. A disturbingly ugly moisture regulator is positioned nearby. Attributed to the School of Lorraine or the Second School of Metz, it is dated ca. 860–870 AD. This small panel represents two instances from the life of Saint Peter, carved one above the other and each framed by lavishly ornamented friezes.

The scene below—which occupies the larger part of the plaque—depicts Christ’s baptism of the apostle Peter in the presence of all the other disciples, including Judas Iscariot, who turns his head away. The picture above it represents Jesus giving the keys of the heavenly kingdom to Peter—this time surrounded by a smaller group of peers but with Judas still present, looking away and out of the frame. In the Gospel of Matthew (16:18), the moment when Christ nominates Simon as the rock (σὺ εἶ Πέτρος), on which he will build his church, is decisive. Simon changes names from then on. He is reborn into a new, dynamic life in which he will be “regarded differently, irrespective of whether or not



Fig. 1.6.
The Ivory Room, Bargello,
Florence, 2018. Photo by
author.

he [...] has changed.”²⁵⁷ This episode follows rather shortly after the pericope in which Evangelist Matthew tells about how Jesus, in the late hours of the night (sometime between four and six a.m.), walked on the stormy, rough waters of the Sea of Galilee (14:22–33). As the story has it, the boat in which the disciples found themselves could hardly be steered, as it was going against the wind and the waves were high. In the light of a full moon, they saw Jesus stride toward them over the lake’s surface, which is thirteen miles long and eight miles wide at its widest point (and surrounded by hills).²⁵⁸

Upon first spotting Jesus coming toward them, the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost (*φάντάσμα*), and they cried out in fear. Only God, it is said in the book of Job, tramples the waves of the sea (9:8). At that point, the disciples did not yet perceive Jesus as God. But Jesus urged them to take heart (*θαρσεῖτε*), and not to be afraid. Peter, it is commonly known, was the one who was most doubtful about the appearance of Jesus as his Lord. However, through this instability of impressions, he was also the first to experience an epiphany. He set out to test Jesus by asking him to join in the walk. Jesus is known to have responded in the affirmative (*ἔλθέ, “Come”*). When reckless Peter, rather foolishly, stepped out of the boat onto the sea, he became overwhelmingly afraid of the howling winds and the raging waves. He began to sink. Yet Jesus reached out his hand and prevented him from drowning when Peter cried out, “Lord, save me!” The story then concludes by informing the reader that both men walked back safely over the water to the boat, which soon after reached the shore as the wind had ceased from the moment Jesus and Peter embarked. It is also mentioned that, from then on, all disciples truly believed that Jesus was the son of God.

Let us now raise our iconographic reading of the abovementioned ivory panel to a more elevated level of creative seeing and become aware of something peculiar in the upper scene of the panel. There, Christ as well as his apostles appear to be standing strong on gently rolling waves. The virtuoso artisan who made this work thus seems to have been willing to suggest that all of these men (except for Judas) have *jointly* found the force to fend off the destructive influence of an adverse storm tide. They appear to rise collectively above the water. In Peter's wake, while both encircling him and protecting him, *all* are in the process of receiving the keys to a higher life. This contraction of representational motifs from two distinct instances in the life of Saint Peter—"Walking on the Water" and "Christ Handing over the Heavenly Keys"—should not come as a surprise. For one thing, such iconographic condensation enriches the visual wealth of this devotional panel. Secondly, this specific thematic choice is also meant to deepen the content of the story represented.

What moral lesson, however, should be drawn from narration that can never be substantiated as historical fact? Rational explanations have tended to downplay the magic of this miraculous event. Some argued that it was ancient practice to navigate ships close to the shore, and Jesus must have been walking on the shoreline.²⁵⁹ Due to the dark of the night and the relatively low perspective from which the disciples were observing him, it must have seemed as if he was walking above the waterline. Peter, for his part, could simply have presumed that the water on which their boat was then struggling to stay afloat was sufficiently shoal for him to try to join Jesus by walking on the seabed. When a breaking wave swept over him, he must have swum for a moment (as he was known to be capable to from the Gospel of John, 21:7).²⁶⁰

For theologian Jeffrey Goh, the rather perplexing biblical passage of "Walking on the Water" speaks about how fear, in the face of persecution and danger, can be overcome by faith.²⁶¹ The Bargello panel, I argue, emphasizes something even stronger. It can be understood as an image of sharing a blessed life among equals, in *togetherness*. Saint Peter here is not (yet) represented as the man of power, as in numerous, mostly Western, studies and publications of later centuries.²⁶² More in line with the Eastern, Syriac tradition, he looks thoughtful, generous, and loving. Peter is surrounded by a group of confidants, friends whom he trusts and who in their turn trust in him. He holds his two hands in an open, receptive gesture. The keys of the kingdom look rather informal, resembling a set of domestic house keys. Thus, an *other-centered* story comes to the foreground: Jesus wants to convey the message that humans can rise above their individual capacity by sustaining solidarity. It is in collective oneness that humankind can achieve unexpected goals.

In her in-depth study of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of "Walking on the Water," Rachel Nicholls has provided a multitude of arguments

and examples that underline a less authoritarian interpretation of this pericope. One visual work of art deserves mention here, the so-called *Navicella* mosaic. (fig. 1.7) It is situated in a lunette on the east side of the Portico in Saint Peter's, Rome, high above the central doorway and thus greeting visitors as they leave the Basilica. This icon of faith is most fascinating, even though the original by Giotto (ca. 1298–1320) was substantially revised by Orazio Manenti (1674–1675) and, as argued by most art historians, accordingly ruined.²⁶³ It depicts the disciples packed together in a “little ship” (the literal meaning of the term *navicella*) while Saint Paul is represented as the steersman, firmly holding the tiller with his hands.²⁶⁴ Peter and Paul frame the group as a whole from both sides. Christ is shown next to a kneeling Peter as a heavenly figure, robed in gold. Four heavenly figures who bear witness to the scene from the clouds confirm that reading: “Walking on the Water” should be understood as a reminder that eternity is present within worldly time. In other words, human beings should not wait for Resurrection in the Afterlife; rather, they should aspire to overcome the vicissitudes of the world in the immanent here and now.



Fig. 1.7.
The Navicella (what's left of it), now in the center of the portico, new St Peter's, Rome. Monumental mosaic originally by Giotto and fourteenth century but totally remade and remounted. Reproduced by permission from Liz James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World. From Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 446. © Liz James.

This impression, Nicholls explained, is strengthened by the presence of swimming fishes in several traditional representations of “Walking on the Water.” For understanding their meaning, she referred to Saint Augustine’s *Expositions on the Book of the Psalms* (ca. 400 AD), in which he made a distinction between good and bad fishes. These, in his view, are metaphoric images of how human life usually functions. “This world is a sea,” Augustine wrote in his comment on Psalm 40:9.²⁶⁵ Some men, like fish, delight in their own ruin, and prey upon each other. Could it

be that the angler quietly sitting on the lake's bank and patiently holding his line is busy trying to fish out some evil fishes from the stormy waters in which the *navicella* desperately tries to hold strong? For Augustine, walking upon the sea means "trampling on the heads of all the proud in this life."²⁶⁶ The proud, in his view, are false men who envy the righteous people, whom he defined as the humble.²⁶⁷ They are liars who are to be actively rebuked.

Augustine thus suggested to understand Peter as a role model for how to engage in such resistance. Peter becomes an allegorical source for guidance and inspiration. Walking on the water in good faith will be like walking on solid rock. "For the Rock on, which thou must walk, is such an one, as is not sunk in the sea."²⁶⁸ You may be alarmed by the winds, wrote Augustine, and the waves may rage against you. You may feel frail. Yet if Peter can cross the sea because he could put faith in his comrades, all those who have similar faith will come to find the sea equally crossable and will be rescued. From the metaphorical point of view, walking on the water means leaving behind those that Augustine identified as the proud. Rising above the water thus becomes an action that is "archetypal to what it means to be human."²⁶⁹ Thus, rather than proving the "divine power" of these courageous men, Augustine's reading allows a focus on their humanity defined in terms of "innocence, simplicity, and oneness." The sea, in this respect, embraces people. It transforms from a hostile menace into a facilitating "medium," an operator releasing new energies and creative forces.²⁷⁰ Literally, however, this idea of a safe sea passage is, in today's world, out of reach for a vast number of persons in search of a better life.

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"Who walks on the water?"²⁷¹ This pressing question appears in the Coda to the main text of Elfriede Jelinek's *Charges (The Supplicants)*—an eerie essay in which the author tangibly described the plight of human persons packed on overcrowded, ramshackle little boats. Jelinek dryly responded to the question, as if she were talking to herself while writing these lines, "I spare myself the answer." Fair enough. Yet it is worthwhile to investigate slightly more why the idea of walking on water has fascinated humanity. The story about humans and gods walking, running, or riding on water predates Christianity. Buddhism has its version of it, and so does the Hellenistic tradition.²⁷² In ancient Lothringia, a region comprising the present-day Netherlands and Belgium, the "Walking on the Water" theme featured in people's imaginations. To this day, Saint Rumbold—who, according to tradition, walked on water where the river Scheldt flows into the North Sea (i.e. near Flushing on the island of Walcheren)—is actively worshiped in

Mechlin, whose cathedral continues to be devoted to him. No one less than the French realist writer Honoré de Balzac paid tribute to this long-standing oral legacy in a short story first published in 1831, entitled “Christ in Flanders.”²⁷³ In it, he raked up what he identified as an age-old tale: “told by every generation, handed down by granddames at the fireside, narrated night and day.”²⁷⁴

This tale, in the words of Balzac, has been retold so often to gatherings of workers on winter evenings that the details vary widely in poetic merit and in congruity of detail. But that, Balzac explained, is understandable, given its utmost importance as a story that bears “witness to the Saviour’s last visit to earth.” It goes as follows: one dark night, two distinct groups of passengers wait for immediate departure on a shallop that is to sail them across the North Sea from the “Island of Cadzand” to Ostend.²⁷⁵ In the back of the ferry, members of the elite have taken all the best seats: three nobles, a bishop on the way to visiting his concubine, a burgher from Bruges accompanied by his servant, and a doctor from the University of Louvain (who later turns out to be a nonbeliever).

The setting for Balzac’s magical account, then, is the Dutch and Belgian coastal region near the Western Scheldt, and, given the presence of the professor on board, it is likely to take place after 1425, when the nearby University of Louvain opened its doors. Those comfortably positioned at the stern look with disdain at the humble group of passengers, “all poor people,” sitting in the front of the boat and separated from them by the bench provided for the rowers. Although the boat is packed and “crimson-flushed brown” clouds announcing “a furious gale” are swiftly approaching through the sky, the skipper decides to blow his horn a few more times as it is his last journey that day. Suddenly, Balzac wrote, “a man appeared a few paces from the jetty.” This appearance came, he added,

to the surprise of the skipper, who had heard no sound of footsteps. The traveler seemed to have sprung up from the earth, like a peasant who had laid himself down on the ground to wait till the boat should start.

In response, the well-to-do passengers instinctively close ranks under the impulse of their “swift and instinctive working of the aristocratic spirit, an impulse of exclusiveness that comes from the rich man’s heart.” But since the belated traveler looks like a local burgomaster, the less fortunate travelers do not hesitate to respectfully make room for him in their midst at the bow of the ferry. Soon after the boat’s departure, the sea starts to swell violently. The great waves caused by the storm lift the boat up high onto the water’s crest, only to plunge it back again into the trough of the sea while “a moaning sound” resonates “from the depth.”

Every passenger except for the latecomer is terrified. Serenely, as if “radiant with divine love” and not fearing death, he sets out to reassure all of them. In response, the learned, skeptical intellectual from Louvain scoffs at his apparent stupidity. To the full group, he calls out that, with this calm and composed behavior, the burgomaster will probably die “like a dog, [...] without a struggle.”

At fewer than fifty paces from the shore of Ostend, the heavy sea capsizes the boat. When this occurs, the stranger—instead of falling into the water—stands upright and walks with firm steps across the rough sea, proclaiming that those who have faith shall be saved. The humble passengers who allowed him a seat follow in his wake. Yet one among them, an old rower named Thomas, doubts “the MAN”—Balzac from then on identifies the man who boarded last as Christ. At first, Thomas almost drowns, but in the end all “poor passengers” reach the beach at Ostend by walking on the water. The well-off people, who had only expressed sarcastic despire, perish one by one. The courageous steersman, having sailed in the most difficult circumstances to the Ostend coast but, in his distress, not able to let go of the wreckage of his boat, is personally saved by Christ, who carries him on his shoulders to a nearby fisherman’s house for further care. Balzac ends his tale by informing his readers that it is said that a convent was built on the very spot where “the footprints of Jesus Christ could be seen in the sand.” But “in 1793, at the time of the French invasion, the monks carried away this precious relic” to an unknown, likely forever-lost destination.

Although it is impossible to know where, exactly, Balzac imagined the group to have safely reached land, I admit to having ardently searched for this location while sailing at sea during the summer of 2018 (3# and 4#). The most likely candidate is situated along the eastern shoreline of Ostend, near the mudflat named Wenduinebank. Even today, it is only covered by three to four meters of water at LAT (Lowest Astronomical Tide). As the nautical charts indicate, particularly the coastal stretch between Ostend and Bredene aan Zee has been the site of shipwrecks and other obstructions. Balzac’s tall tale, then, does not come out of the blue altogether. It is, in his words, “a myth, the blossom of imaginative fancy; an allegory that the wise may interpret to suit themselves.” It is meant to convey a moral lesson.

The great author confessed that his story “savors strongly of the marvelous, the mysterious, and the vague.” Yet, he added that he as a “narrator believes in it, as all superstitious minds in Flanders likewise believe.” This comes down to saying that he is not quite convinced that the events took place so literally. Yet it also explains why he attached great value to the story’s “moral teachings approved by religion,” even if this implies a “bold disregard of historical truth.” In private conversations, Allan Sekula often mentioned Balzac, whose works he admitted were

an inspiration over the years.²⁷⁶ In his own time, Sekula was an unrivaled master in developing similar *low forms of telling*. To Sina Najafi and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, he explained the title of *Fish Story* as follows:

A fish story is a story told by a fisherman about a fish that got away: a low, hyperbolic narrative about a missing object. [...] I am interested in redeeming the complexity of everyday speech, its narrative complexity, its epistemological subtlety, and its fishy qualities. So the title [*Fish Story*] suggests my sympathies with low forms of telling which are more intelligent than allowed by elitist constructions of American culture.²⁷⁷

Fish Story's title, Sekula elaborated to Hal Foster, refers to the model of sly storytelling or the sub-Melvillian joke, to which he would decisively turn his artistic attention from this work on.²⁷⁸ The force of a fish story, Sekula argued, is that it is about elusive vitalism: a fish that got away—it is the story from below that threatens the credibility of official alibis. To substantiate this claim, he brought to mind the social historian E.P. Thompson, whose attempt to recover the “moral economy” of those displaced by progress he admired.²⁷⁹ What is striking about fish stories is that all or at least some parts of the tale seem unfounded and unlikely. Yet it is exactly because of their apparently fantastic nature that such stories bear close resemblance to certain occurrences in real life—which, in turn, can be explained or contextualized in part *through* these narrations. Although there is no reason to presume that Balzac's “Christ in Flanders” was a source Sekula consulted when he made the title selection of *Fish Story*'s concluding chapter, elements from Balzac's and Sekula's *fish stories* can be productively combined.

My initial motivation to do so was inspired by a dire need to shed light on a chain of disturbing events in the seaway providing access from the Port of Calais to the English Channel. On April 20, 2017, the local newspaper *La Voix du Nord*, in its section on “Faits divers Calais,” reported that two “migrants” were fished out of the harbor after they tried to board a ferry by swimming to it.²⁸⁰ Apparently the two men, both of Iranian origin, had proceeded to swim without any material means that could help keep them warm or afloat. While trying to cross the fairway that provides open sea access to passenger ferries—near the Risban fortress in the direction of Pier 5—they got exhausted. They were spotted and subsequently saved by the port's captaincy, however. Both suffered from hypothermia, but eventually they survived their perilous adventure. The same news item further mentioned that, in the week before, around mid-April, two Iranians had tried to find a passage in the outer harbor by means of an inflatable swimming pool turned into a dinghy. Local media reported attempts at crossing in the past as

well, such as, most notably, in February and June 2016; the former instance had fatal consequences for the Afghan man who took too high of a risk by diving into the ice-cold seawater.²⁸¹

These dramatic news reports about attempts made in April 2017 came almost six months after the closing of the so-called “Jungle”—the informal settlement in the immediate vicinity of the passenger port. The more than 6,500 inhabitants of this parallel ghost town were all forcefully evicted between October 24 and 27, 2016. However, the complete evacuation of “The Jungle” did not prevent people from desperately trying to reach the United Kingdom. Exactly one month before these news reports, on March 20, 2017, I paid a personal visit to the area around the Quai de la Colonne. This is the Calais fishermen’s quarter, from where the Risban riprap (*perré Risban*) can easily be observed, as it is just across the dock. It was an unpleasantly cold, misty, and rainy day. When I arrived in the late afternoon with our dog as my sole companion, all local fishing shops and even Café du Minck were closed. There was no one around, except for two local amateur anglers who were guarding their fishing lines cast in the fairway’s waters. While waiting for fish to bite their lines, they sought refuge in their strategically parked Dacia Sandero.

Just as I was wandering around with my camera, they proved to be lucky. While observing their skillful reeling maneuvers, I started to chat with them. They informed me that their wives were going to prepare those fish that evening. The strong fisherman holding the line posed proudly when I kindly asked him if I could photograph their catch of two beautiful grayish-white whiting (1#). A few days later, when I went through the pictures at home, I found out that I had pushed the button right when the fish were floundering on the hooks and the docked ferryboat (*Spirit of Britain*) was sitting in the background, its white chimney largely blocked from view by the uppermost whiting on the line. Back then, the grayish surface of the channel’s waters looked to me like an unevenly asphalted road. It felt as if it would only take a minor effort to locate the nearby spot where a pelican crossing was put in place, so one could safely run to the other side and embark on the P&O ship waiting for departure so tangibly close by on the other bank. As an outsider, I found it unbelievably inappropriate to go fishing in a channel where desperate persons find death, and then consider eating those very fish.

One month later, in late April 2017, the abovementioned news item on the failed attempts of the ill-fated Iranian men was illustrated by a relatively large press photograph of the fairway that looked even more tempting than in my recollection: like a turquoise blue skate rink—almost like a plushy carpet floor (7#).²⁸² It took me more than two weeks to make a gouache painting of this picture in what I call my *mess book* [*kliederboek*]. This time-consuming experiment proved useful

for somehow understanding where they had found the courage to try their luck by swimming—as if they had imagined themselves running. Possibly, some of them were excellent open-water swimmers. Maybe this was the case for an Iraqi man named Massoud, who attempted to cross the channel in the summer of 2017 with a gird of plastic bottles to help him stay afloat. All he was wearing to protect his body against attacks from aggressive conger eels or medusae were garbage bags.

After a full night adrift in the water, Massoud was saved by a French boater named Patrick, who, when interviewed by the local newspaper, confessed emotionally: “There’s something wrong: one cannot live in a world where some go out and have fun on the water and then others who have to say ‘well, I’m putting together a makeshift equipment and then I cross.’”²⁸³ Deeply impressed by the life-saving experience, Patrick praised the courage, strength, and determination of Massoud, who must have found faith in his capacities and surmounted his anxieties to wade into the water. However, the hoped-for fountain of life he readily jumped into turned out to be a whirlpool of sorrows. Reading such disturbing stories helps us to better understand why so many magical tales about “walking on water” are situated in that “arm of the Atlantic Ocean lying between the mainland of Europe and the coast of Britain,” which we commonly identify as the North Sea.²⁸⁴ At least it is remarkable to find Balzac so bluntly state that it is near Ostend that Christ was last seen on Earth after having walked on the waves.

- Sol. Now, what news on the Rialto?
- Sal. Why yet it lives there uncheck'd, that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrack'd on the narrow seas; the Goodwins I think they call the place, a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say,—if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.

William Shakespeare, Act III, Scene 1 ("Venice. A Street"), in *The Merchant of Venice* [1605], ed. John R. Brown (London: Methuen & Co. LTD and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 70.



@DealMaritimeMuseum @SheilaLeggs holding a presumably Roman amphora, a recent donation by a local diver who dug it up from the @GoodwinSands years ago, and who is now nearing the end of his life.
#ChecklistDay #antique #pottery #underwater #kent

Chapter 2

Ground Sea

It's nearly ten years since I left the shade of the coconut palms. Pounding the asphalt, my imprisoned feet recall their former liberty, the caress of warm sand, being nipped by crabs and the little thorn pricks that remind you there's life even in the body's forgotten extremities.

I tread European ground, my feet sculpted and marked by African earth. One step after another, it's the same movement all humans make, all over the planet. Yet I know my western walk has nothing in common with the one that took me through the alleys, over the beaches, paths and fields of my native land. People walk everywhere, but never towards the same horizon. In Africa, I followed in destiny's wake, between chance and infinite hopefulness. In Europe, I walk down the long tunnel of efficiency that leads to well-defined goals. ... So, under the grey European sky, or in unexpected sunlight, I walk on, counting my steps, each one bringing me closer to my dream. But how many kilometres, how many work-filled days and sleepless nights still separate me from that so-called success that my people ... took for granted from the moment I told them I was leaving for France? I walk on, my steps weighed down by their dreams, my head filled with my own. I walk on and have no idea where I'll end up. I don't know which mast the flag of victory is hoisted on, nor which waters could wash away the stain of failure.

Fatou Diomé, *The Belly of the Atlantic* [2003], trans. Lulu Norman and Ros Schwartz (London: Serpent's Tail, 2006), 2–3.



The Search Project (Resumed)

A #pot of #gold at the end of each #rainbow

Two #rainbows appeared over @DealPier when an aggressive #northeaster #autumn storm finally calmed down on #InternetDay

#battle #battlescars

Given its importance as a travel hub — it's the busiest ferry port in Europe — **DOVER** is surprisingly small. Badly bombed during World War II, the town centre is unprepossessing, with just a few low-key attractions; the seafront is equally unassuming. The main attractions are **Dover Castle**, looming proudly above town and clearly visible from the sea, and just a walk along the legendary **White Cliffs**.²⁸⁵

These are *The Rough Guide to Kent's* opening lines for introducing the item "Dover and around." They may help explain why tourists arriving at Dover by car ferry, upon exiting the terminal, have tended to avoid the descent toward Marine Parade and the lower parts of town. Instead, on the first roundabout after exiting the harbor area, it suffices simply to follow the string of vehicles and head left en masse for the climb up toward Castle Hill. Admittedly, this is quite helpful when driving a car with a steering wheel fixed on the car's left side. **KEEP LEFT!** Large road signs quicken the heartrate. Keep left. At all costs. The passenger, where the steering wheel should be for the driver to feel comfortable, experiences an outbreak of cold sweat. Keep left. Pretend to disregard the scar named A20, which guides traffic out of town and toward Folkestone. Completed in 1993, this road, put in at the service of the flourishing just-in-time transportation logistics business, ruined the historical heart of Dover. Walking on the Marina Promenade, partly rebuilt after having been severely bombed during World War II, feels like visiting a stain of shame vaguely reminiscent of a more glorious time now long extinguished. The only hotel in the area dryly announces that dogs are not welcome. A fatal letdown but, really, no big deal. A visitor would turn away for lesser reasons.

Dovorians are prouder of the city's underground network of man-made tunnels than of what is to be discovered in plain daylight. Accordingly, the guidebook recommends its readers to head first to Operation Dynamo, warning that long queues may accumulate as the day proceeds. Ever since the blockbuster *Dunkirk* (2017) paid wide attention to the so-called Miracle of Dunkirk, the evacuation of the beaches surrounding that town from May 26 to June 4, 1940 has reentered the collective memory of a younger generation. The heroic assistance of an impressive flotilla consisting of small fishing boats and pleasure yachts—the *little ships*—that sailed from the United Kingdom's southern beaches toward the Dunkirk shoreline, at that time encircled by enemy troops, saved some 330,000 stranded British, French, and Belgian soldiers. Operation Dynamo, its military code name, was coordinated from secret wartime quarters, dug in the early nineteenth century during the Napoleonic Wars.

Using this Hollywood Movie as a bait I convinced my then seven-year-old son to jointly sign up for a forty-minute guided tour in the dark of the claustrophobic bunkers. Dramatic effects and eerie staged experiences are part of the mandatory package. The supervised part of the *Dover Secret Wartime Tunnels Uncovered* tour-exhibition ends with a rather theatrical automatic closing of the principal bunker's steel door, after which visitors find themselves in a well-lit underground room with a set of photographs on one of its walls. Our guide made a sign that she was about to finish her talk in front of what, at first sight, appeared to be a photographic triptych. (fig. 2.1) In the upper left corner was a rather tendentious header, saying “the invasion to come?” Upon further observation, this monumental image actually turned out to be a large print in three parts of one single, and rather iconic, black-and-white photograph representing a group of commanders of the German armed forces who eagerly “consider Dover from the French cliffs,” as the caption at the bottom of the left picture specified.



Fig. 2.1.
Installation view of the photographic triptych in front of which ends the supervised part of the *Dover Secret Wartime Tunnels Uncovered* tour, 2018. Photo by author.

The day is July 1, 1940. It is easy to identify Hermann Göring, commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, as the—admittedly giant—fifth man on the right. We are slightly more than a week away from the start of the Battle of Britain. As the caption's concluding line put it: “With the fall of France Dover and the English Channel became the new front line.” All officers turn their backs to the anonymous photographer, who must have stood on a slightly higher dune when taking the picture. Except for Göring, they keep their gazes fixed on the other bank, which appears to lure them through its stretched-out horizontal line of white gloss. If these men could have walked over the smooth water carpet spread out

in front of them, they would have immediately stepped over the ridge of burnet and sea buckthorns in front of which the company had come to a standstill.

In retrospect, we know that the blitzkrieg was halted there and then. By the end of a disastrous war summer, it became clear that the British Royal Air Force had managed to deny the Luftwaffe any air superiority over the south of England, while the German navy turned out to be insufficiently prepared for an invasion by water. On September 17, 1940 Adolf Hitler postponed Operation Sea Lion—as was the code name for the planned attack.²⁸⁶ Standing in front of this triptych, the guide proudly came to the concluding remarks of her tour. She nodded her head and reassured the audience, “these twenty-one miles protected *us*.” Implied but unsaid—after all, you never know who is part of the public—is the rest of the sentence, which could have been “against these barbaric Continental invaders.” The date of our visit was October 29, 2018—five months before the United Kingdom was supposed to formally leave the European Union. The general Brexit mood was cheerful. Everyone I asked about it was convinced that “nothing will change.” To us, visitors from the mainland, this spirit of denial felt like hubris. For Continentals, the United Kingdom’s decision to leave seemed to have been inspired by a foolhardy turning against all this country’s most reliable allies, scapegoated as if they are one amalgamated technocratic Leviathan.²⁸⁷

How could all of this have come about? In their in-depth study of the Dover borderscape, Kathryn Cassidy, Nira Yuval-Davis, and Georgie Wymess included a revealing anecdote. During one of the numerous interviews they conducted with the borderlanders, a local tourism professional (identified as JD) told them, “We used to go for our team Christmas lunch in Boulogne. We can’t do that anymore; it is too expensive.”²⁸⁸ These few words reflect the immense sense of disconnectedness and of being “left behind” that strays through this coastal town. Although situated at a natural border, Dover no longer physically *owns* it, since numerous checks and controls have moved elsewhere—to faraway places such as London St. Pancras International or Eurotunnel Folkestone Terminal, but also even to Brussels Midi Station or Paris Gare du Nord. As social scientist Bastian Vollmer powerfully argued, the paradoxical effect of these displaced re-bordering operations is one of confusion among members of civil society, even of feeling more insecure than before 1998 (when the security-improving measures kicked off).²⁸⁹ A place to settle for no one except the ultra-marginalized of present-day UK society, Dover’s lost charm reveals itself through the hasty transience of both persons and (to be) shipped goods. Transformed by decades-long processes of de-bordering, post-borderland Dovorians society has fallen prey to nostalgia for a time when spatial imaginaries about the area

could be filled in more colorfully—that is, in terms of a special type of connectedness between local residents from both coastlines.

On the Kentish side of the shoreline, the white cliffs end and make space for beaches at Kingsdown (still part of Dover) and Walmer Beach (a sub-municipality of Deal). Six miles off the coast of Kent, near the small town of Deal, sailors may approach the Goodwin Sands. This ten-mile sandbank within the English Channel consists of approximately eighty-two feet of fine sand resting on an Upper Chalk platform belonging to the same geological formation that incorporates the White Cliffs of Dover.²⁹⁰ The banks lie between twenty-six and forty-nine feet beneath the surface, depending on the location, since tides and currents are constantly shifting the shoals. At low tide, surprisingly, they can easily stand seven feet above sea level. Some authors have argued that the Goodwin Sands consist not merely of an accumulation of sand but that they are a relic of a land mass that must have existed in prehistory but was lost to the sea by 400 AD.²⁹¹

Tradition has it that the island's name was Lomea. Situated lower than Thanet, it must have been about eleven miles long and five miles wide at its widest point.²⁹² It is known to have been mentioned in a sixteenth-century publication by John Twyne, who said that the very fruitful land drowned irrecoverably “in an unusual tempest of winds and rain, and in a very high rage of the sea.”²⁹³ After that catastrophe, a natural breakwater developed behind the banks. Close to the shoreline, the North Sea waters have spontaneously created a favorable roadstead at a depth of about twelve fathoms (twenty-two meters), called the Downs. Over the centuries, ships have used the area as a place to anchor, hoping to find shelter there from storms. This has always been treacherous because the shifting sands are never entirely to be trusted in rough weather. The Walmer lifeboat was—and still is—always on the lookout, especially during strong northerly winds. This may give rise to a heavy swell in the Downs, resulting in a tidal surge that can make seawater rise above prediction, to the point of even threatening to flood Deal Pier. I was able to observe this myself, as I was standing on King Henry VIII's defensive ditch late in October 2018, shortly before Niall Ferguson, inspired by the leading example of the “coppernose” king, recommended the United Kingdom start playing “the long game” of withdrawal from Europe (9#).²⁹⁴

It is no coincidence that the Downs' nickname is “The ship swallower.”²⁹⁵ Consider the case of the schooner *Lady Luvibond*. Loaded with a general cargo, it sailed down the Thames for Oporto during the evening of February 13, 1748. Late at night, the captain, Simon Reed, and his company decided to have a merry celebration in his cabin as he had brought his new wife aboard for the journey. The first mate, John Rivers, had been a rival for her love. Nursed by frustration, he killed the helmsman

and set a straight course toward the Goodwin Sands. As the party below deck was in full swing, no one heard or noticed anything of the murderous attack. The schooner soon after hit the sands with a grinding crash and all passengers perished. Since then, local belief has it that the *Lady Luvibond* makes a ghostly appearance in the area every fifty years on the exact anniversary of its doom. She comes to sail nearby other ships, reenacting it going aground in front of the occupants' bewildered eyes. Witnesses claimed to have heard female voices coming from the ship's lower deck, or the hideous noise of Rivers's revengeful laughter.²⁹⁶

Such tall tales have nourished the general belief within the local community of Deal that the howling winds on the waters are accompanied by more than the fierce cries of seagulls. The many strange sounds that continue to arise from the "yeasty smother" of the southward Goodwin Sands—as if they were "heartrending" and "forlorn" cries—are, as the "old folk" aver, to be understood as "the moans of the waking dead devoured by the Goodwins."²⁹⁷ Notwithstanding these real dangers and dreary stories, ships continued to sail to the Downs to stock up on food and other supplies. Repairs were possible with assistance from the town's dockyard. Local fisherwomen would make ends meet by nursing sick sailors. Over time, parallel business networks developed, both legal and illegal. Smuggling of all sorts became extremely lucrative, taking on "epidemic" dimensions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁹⁸ Today, as locals confirm, smuggling is still common, even if the trafficking on and near Walmer Beach has shifted to hard drugs and humans.

This remarkable operational shift provides much food for thought. Pawel and Wiktorja Sekula both sailed on ships legally registered by a German shipping company that, as their grandson subtly points out, "reaped enormous profits from the very lucrative immigrant trade."²⁹⁹ Today, this profitable business is entirely left in the hands of shadowy networks engaged in unlawful activities. Where, exactly, do profits from the human-smuggling circuit ultimately end up? Who are the persons now benefiting most from this new turn of circumstances? As Paolo Campana has demonstrated within the context of the trans-Saharan routes toward the North African coast, the social organization of human smuggling worldwide is a subject that needs to be researched in much greater depth. There are a handful of high-centrality actors within the—overall *flat*—networks, whom Campana identified as organizers (15 percent of the actors in the networks that he investigated).³⁰⁰ All others are aides or intermediaries.³⁰¹

No evidence has so far been found of a major, overarching hierarchical organization—as is the case in Mafia-like constellations. But, as Campana indicated, it cannot be ruled out. Nor does there appear to be a centralized accounting system for the human-trafficking industry. Payments are made largely through hawala transactions, a way to

transfer money through an informal network of brokers, making it unnecessary that any physical currency moves. This, if we are to follow Campana, appears to be the state of the art of what outsiders presently know. He himself admitted that his argument is all but solid. Most studies draw their conclusions from interviews with people who have made the journey, and they are in contact only with aides and never with organizers. There is hardly any research material available that sheds light on the exact interaction between the smugglers themselves.³⁰² Based on his research data, however, Campana provisionally concluded that they do not seem to form a close-knit group. Their business model seems largely based on opportunities, rivalries, and competition. There is no substantiation possible at this stage of the hypothesis that there exist kingpins who can exert monopolistic control over specific routes.³⁰³

In Deal, I met a retired Royal Navy Officer, who also formerly worked on the ferry line between Calais and Dover. PMN, who owns a pet supplies shop, swims every morning at sunrise in the North Sea in front of his house, year-round. From his front window near Wellington Parade in Walmer, he has witnessed the approach of small, easy-to-handle vessels from the Continental shores—as far back as the late summer of 2015. He observed them anchoring in the Downs during the later hours of the night. The procedure was to transfer tiny (over)loads of persons from the main ship into brand-new inflatable dinghies mounted with old, nearly discarded engines. Whereas the smugglers appeared to wear life vests, the passengers often embarked without. Sometimes, these enterprises were successful; on other occasions, they failed.³⁰⁴ Beach dwellers taking their dogs for a morning walk would stumble upon vacated speedboats. (fig. 2.2) Abandoned rubber boots were also occasionally



Fig. 2.2. Local pet shopkeeper displaying a snapshot made with his cell phone on September 25, 2018 at 7:29 a.m., Walmer Beach, Deal, United Kingdom. Photo by author.

part of the equipment left behind. Once such pair of boots was found sitting in a plastic bag from a shop with an address in Calais—as I was told on a Saturday morning at the local Starbucks in early November 2018.

Later that month, newspapers started to cover the phenomenon. *The Guardian* posted a dramatic headline saying that it was now only “a matter of time before a migrant’s body washes up on British shores.”³⁰⁵ On December 29, 2018, Home Secretary Sajid Javid felt urged to cut short his holiday because human smuggling had taken on exponential proportions.³⁰⁶ On January 13, 2019, *The New York Times* released an article shedding light on the situation from the French side of the channel and focusing on a plague of thefts of fishing vessels by smugglers and their clients at Boulogne-sur-Mer.³⁰⁷ As reported by the newspaper, one group allegedly paid their smuggler around one hundred thousand euros. Because it is quite difficult to protect boats in harbors without putting in gates or other control mechanisms everywhere, the local communities find the issue hard to cope with psychologically.³⁰⁸ On October 14, 2019, the corpses of two young men from Iraq were found on the beach of Le Touquet.³⁰⁹ Newspapers did not shy away from using cynical headlines such as “Washed up on the chic beach” (as Le Touquet is also called *Paris-Plage* [*Paris-Beach*]).³¹⁰ As was also dryly reported, incidents like this one would spread like an inkblot as long as the political situation remained as hopelessly blocked as it was.

The year 2019 ended with an unusually mild Christmas, and seventy-one persons were intercepted during their attempt to cross the channel in small vessels.³¹¹ On February 7, 2020, more than one hundred were intercepted in a span of only ten hours.³¹² By the summer, the amount of dinghy crossings reached never-before-seen heights. Sky News even started to make television reportages of the phenomenon.³¹³ The UK military stepped in to prevent people from crossing. Numerous persons drowned throughout the fall of 2020, including a baby named Artin, who became the iconic face of this latest range of disasters. For those who *did* make it, the authorities had no warm welcome in mind: cold, wet people have been forced to spend hours in cramped containers at Tug Haven in Dover—despite the COVID-19 risks involved.³¹⁴ On the last day of November 2020, 121 persons aboard seven dinghies were rescued and brought back to France.³¹⁵

By the end of that same month, *The Guardian* reported on disturbing living conditions at Napier Barracks near Folkestone, Kent. This is an old army camp to which, since September 2020, four hundred men who crossed the channel have been transported and subsequently locked up. A private firm, Clearsprings Ready Homes, runs the repurposed site on behalf of the Home Office.³¹⁶ Volunteers have had to sign confidentiality agreements underpinned by the Official Secrets Act, which protects state secrets and national security. As violations to it are punishable

by prison, this is hugely intimidating. Eventually, on Monday, January 11, 2021, 350 of the 400 men went on hunger strike.³¹⁷ By the time 2020 neared closure, Britain and France had signed a bilateral agreement ensuing in doubling the number of French police patrolling a 150-kilometer stretch of coastline reaching all the way to the Belgian border. While Home Secretary Priti Patel proclaimed that this would significantly contribute to making the route unviable, Amnesty International UK expressed profound disappointment.³¹⁸ An estimated eight thousand people successfully crossed the channel by dinghy in 2020, four times the number of 2018 (which was a registered 1,835). A charity called the Home Secretary's initiative the next episode of rearranging the furniture on the deck of the *Titanic*.³¹⁹

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What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve. This was the general spirit for a long time. As far back as the early eighteenth century, smugglers from, in, and near Deal used wooden galleys, low rowing boats about eleven meters long, sometimes equipped with a small, removable mast. These vessels could accommodate about six to eight men, who made the journey daily to France in about five hours. They collected brandy, gin, tea, and tobacco. Today, something has changed. Present-day locals are facing a moral dilemma. Should they aid people approaching in dinghies in the Downs? The natives have always helped strangers because of their expert knowledge of the area, which was also a source of pride. It saddens them deeply that they must now deal with choosing between saving a human life and risking accountability, if not punishment, for assisting human-smuggling activities.

As a result, many, though ashamed, will turn their gaze and pretend not to have noticed anything—including the so-called “patriot patrols” on the beaches, organized by the far-right group Britain First under the xenophobic code name “Operation White Cliffs.”³²⁰ But this also leaves some inhabitants with a nagging feeling, and they will speak up and talk about it when pushed to do so. They surely would like to see the old days come back, when a rescue at sea counted as an absolute priority, regardless of the weather and dangers involved.³²¹ At the outbreak of World War II, many fishermen from Deal did not hesitate a single moment after the call to help rescue troops from the beaches at Dunkirk. Many among them made the round trip several times, and some were involved in heroic rescues, as evidenced by the documentary materials on display in the Maritime Museum on St. George's Road. That the British derived much courage from this collective gesture of solidarity by the fishermen was reflected by Winston Churchill. On June 4, 1940 the prime minister self-confidently proclaimed the following in the House of Commons:

We are told that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone: "There are bitter weeds in England."³²²

In that same legendary speech, Churchill tried to reassure the maritime inhabitants of southeastern Kent by adding that "there are certainly a great many more of them [bitter weeds] since the British Expeditionary Force returned [from Dunkirk]." Despite this bravura, the threat of an imminent German invasion remained very real during those early months of the war. Rapidly, the local population of Deal shrunk from twenty-three thousand to seven thousand. Those who courageously stayed in their homes helped build anti-invasion scaffolding along the seafront and mined the beach. They also put a network of pipes in the Downs' seabed that could be filled with oil and set on fire. The entrances to the Downs were sealed off by the Naval Contraband Control, and guarding ships were stationed at each end of the anchorage area. The entire zone became dangerous for navigation because storms regularly destabilized moored mines, both those of the enemy and of the British, and they might break adrift in the tide with the risk of hitting ships and exploding.

Despite the overwhelming hurdles and the additional dangers of being sunk by enemy German ships or U-boats before even having succeeded at crossing, neutral craft from the Continent continued to try to ply a trade with their cross-channel allies. Already in February of 1940, the steamship *Flandres*—a 107-meter-long cargo vessel built in 1914 by Akt.Ges. Weser in Bremen, Germany, and owned by the Compagnie Royale Belgo-Argentine—was busy up-anchoring after having received clearing papers from the Downs Control Base authorizing it to continue its voyage to Montevideo. As the 5,827-ton vessel was maneuvering its way out of the Downs, another ship sailing under Belgian flag, the *Kabalo*, collided with it. The *Kabalo* severely crippled the *Flandres*'s hull and the crew had to abandon the ship. As its hatches burst open, some of the cargo shot to the surface.³²³ One of the lifeboats that approached to check it out spotted a floundering swimmer encircling the wreck. Soon, the crew found out that this mystery swimmer was a bewildered pig, which they duly rescued. Survivors of the shipwreck told that the porker was a temporary pet aboard the *Flandres*, named Adolf.³²⁴

The strange connections made by Balzac in his fictitious tale "Christ in Flanders," then, find their rather amazing counterparts in tall talk on the other side of the English Channel. Any attempt to explain these age-old fascinations for ships running aground greatly benefits from turning our attention to yet another related *fish story* told by one no

less distinguished than Erasmus of Rotterdam. “Shipwreck,” a dialogue included in the *Colloquies* (published in its final version in 1522), is set off the coast of Friesland (10#). A mariner named Adolph tells his interlocutor Antony how he managed to save himself from the foundering Scottish ship on which he was sailing near that area. Although the captain had ordered the crew to cast away all unnecessary cargo, and had even gone as far as to cut the shrouds and then the entire mast with all its sails down, the ship was fatally making water. The crew had to abandon it to try to swim to the nearby shore.

While Adolph was holding on to one stump of the mast, an old priest shared with him the other part of the wooden shatter. At quite a distance from the beach, the priest—“a very tall Man”—suddenly called out that he felt “Ground” beneath his feet.³²⁵ Although Adolph did not believe him, saying that “perhaps it is some of the Chests that have been roll’d thither by the Sea,” the priest was so convinced that he could touch the sandy bottom with his scratching toes that he left the entire piece of wreckage to Adolph and decided to wade further afoot toward the beach. Adolph describes in full detail how exactly the priest managed to work his way to the shore.

He took his Opportunity, at the Ebbing of the Billows, he made what Haste he could on his Feet, and when the Billows came again, he took Hold of his Knees with his Hands, and bore up against the Billows, hiding himself under them as Sea Gulls and Ducks do, and at the Ebbing of the Wave, he would start up and run for it.

Upon watching this, Adolph gathered his courage and set out to do the same.

I seeing that this succeeded so well to him, followed his Example. There stood upon the Shoar Men, who had long Pikes handed from one to another, which kept them firm against the Force of the Waves, strong bodied Men, and accustom’d to the Waves, and he that was last of them held out a Pike to the Person swimming towards him. All that came to Shoar, and laying hold of that, were drawn safely to dry Land.

Erasmus thus substantially downplayed the less easily believable parts of the biblical “Walking on Water” episode to more colorable proportions. He allowed both men to find not only solid ground under their much-weakened feet but also welcoming hosts: the people of “Holland.” There is hardly another people that knows more about the Sisyphean effort it takes to fight the sea’s invasive powers than the Dutch. Michael Pye, for example, reminded us that, particularly between 1506 and 1509,

terrible storm surges severely damaged the Dutch coasts, “enough to break the soft, vulnerable edges of the mires and merge the waters into lakes.”³²⁶ In this respect, the chauvinist in Erasmus seized the occasion to praise the courage of his fellow countrymen through Adolph’s voice. Anthony approvingly agrees by concluding: “There’s no Nation more human, altho’ they are encompass’d with such fierce Nations.” Looking back from the contemporary point of view, it is striking that Erasmus felt comfortable writing these lines just a couple of decades after 1492, the year that marked the beginning of a long history of dispossession, expulsion, and colonization as the result of the so-called discovery by Europeans of the New World, in which the Dutch would soon come to play a key role.³²⁷



Fig. 2.3.

Façade of a house from 1638 named “In den IJngelsche Krayer” [“In the English Krayer” — *Krayer* could be a reference to rooster, ship, or tax collector] at Dam 71, Middelburg, Holland, 2019. It comes with stone ornaments with the coats of arms of Zeeland, Middelburg, and Flushing; as well as two mottos “Met Christo” – “Rijck in Als”. [“In Christ” – “Rich in All”]. Photo by author.

Although this part of Dutch history should not be brushed under the rug, here I want to keep the focus on the historical and heroic fights by the Dutch with the rising waters. The coat of arms of the Dutch province of Zeeland, of which the original versions date back at least to the first half of the fifteenth century, serves best to illustrate what Erasmus appears to have been alluding to.³²⁸ (fig. 2.3) It represents, against a golden background, a red lion with a blue tongue. The lion rises with its front legs (containing blue nails) above a range of six waves of alternating blue and white (silver) colors. The accompanying heraldic device is “Luctor et emergo,” meaning “I struggle and emerge.” The map of Zeeland included in Abraham Ortelius’s *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570) represents Neptune seated on a sea monster, holding a trident in his left arm and the Zeeland coat of arms in his right arm.³²⁹ He is found in the upper left corner of the chart, rising above the North Sea

waters and observing the archipelago of little islands in front of him, this “land rising out of the water and blessed by God.”³³⁰ I propose to bear in mind this allegorical figure as a “visual paratext” to the body text.³³¹ Chapter Ten will uncover how Neptune, from time to time, has given permission for other meaningful objects to emerge from the shallow depths of the North Sea.

Erasmus’s words turned out to be prophetic. In return for that precious gift by the gods of the sea, the Dutch specialized in salvaging sea-stricken vessels, no matter how difficult the task both physically and mentally.³³² When World War I was still raging in January 1918, the Dutch lifeboat *C.A. den Tex*—stationed in Rottumeroog under the direction of the legendary skipper Mees Toxopeus—did not hesitate to aid the Borkumer lifeboat when it was unable to save stranded German patrol vessels. This key anecdote was recalled by one of Toxopeus’s hands, who bluntly justified the life-saving action as follows: “the sea is international and when it concerns saving shipwrecked people we never asked about race, religion or nationality.”³³³ In World War II, when the Netherlands was no longer a neutral country (as it had been in World War I), Toxopeus—then captain of the lifeboat *Insulinde*—repeatedly came to the rescue of German ships again during several unusually severe winters. He knew the banks and waters near the eastern Dutch Wadden Islands better than anyone else, and he and his crew provided support to enemy ships in distress despite his profound personal aversion to the Nazis.

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During Erasmus’s lifetime, Calais found itself under English occupation. For more than two hundred years, from 1347 to 1558, the city and fortress of Calais were held by the English Crown. The town was the stronghold of what was then called the English Pale, which also included quite a number of surrounding villages as far west as Escalles, as far south as Guînes and Balinghem, and as far east as Oye.³³⁴ During all this time, the French actively plotted to reconquer Calais. In 1470, upon hearing that King Louis XI had a project ready to proclaim war against the English for this very reason, Philip Crèvecoeur is reported to have enthusiastically cried out that he “would have agreed upon spending two years in hell for having the pleasure to chase the English from Calais.”³³⁵ When, almost one century later, the Pale of Calais fell in French hands again, the Britons lost their colonial possession on the European continent. Queen “Bloody” Mary I died that same year, reportedly after having famously confessed to her court ladies that “the greatest wound that afflicted her oppressed mind” and “the cause of her most desperate grief” was the loss of Calais, which she felt to be “engraved on her heart.”³³⁶

The *Calaisis*, as the reconquered English Pale became called, has remained part of France ever since. Within the context of the European Union, the significance of its strategic location appears to have increased, and despairing news from this area continues to feed the media on a regular basis. The sober yet complex geopolitical reasons why such a strategic spot has once again turned into a disaster zone are not easy to summarize in a few lines. Given the still rather introductory stage of the analysis here I will dwell a little longer on more abstract concerns at issue, and start with some implications of the title of Sylvain George's already discussed documentary *Les Éclats*—a rich French noun which was formally translated into English as *The Outbursts*. In interview conversation, however, George has also mentioned *The Shards* as a possible English variant.³³⁷ Shards comes with the suggestion of broken glass or of fragments, sherds, and debris. The French plural form of the substantive *éclats* can indeed be translated this way. It then bears the more negative connotation of flakes, or of a loud blaze, or even of a painful flare. But the word *éclats* also comprises the more positive potential of a resolute *tilting* of sense—as it also means bringing clarity and luminosity or even magnificence.³³⁸ With the potential of this radical shift in meaning, *éclats* embodies the empowering force of marking a *break*: away from a shattered life and toward a likely more radiant future. In the time it takes for such a turn to materialize, a favorable opportunity needs to present itself—one that provides both nourishing strength and real hope.

The North Sea has a centuries-long reputation for its rich, almost endless variety of seascapes. On a beautiful windless day, its surface can have a glassy hue. On warm summer evenings, it may spread the reddish glow of a fire. Then, it isn't difficult to imagine that, at times, people dwelling on its shorelines nearby the Calais fairway feel almost bewitched by the magnetic power exerted by the gray-blue glittering water streaming over the chalk marl from which the local soil is composed—as if it could somehow *carry* swimmers. After all, the crossing to the other side is short. As early as in 55 BC, and once again a year later, Julius Caesar's troops sailed to invade Britain from, what the Romans called, Portus Itius. More or less, consensus reigns among researchers that Portus Itius is the former sea estuary behind the current shoreline between Calais and Dunkirk, which reached inland as far as Saint-Omer—presently located thirty-three kilometers from the coast.³³⁹ From there, the Roman army crossed the channel to Dover, whereupon they continued to the northeast.³⁴⁰ They landed on Walmer Beach after having traversed the same shallow waters of the Goodwin Sands, about which, centuries later, William Shakespeare wrote in his *The Merchant of Venice* (8#).

It may or may not be coincidental that, since Christian antiquity, numerous church floors have been designed to suggest a sea surface. As Fabio Barry argued, some such floors came with mosaic scenes of swimming fish that implied that the surface was only “a film of particularly clear water” that one could wade through.³⁴¹ Other floors gave the straightforward impression to be a *frozen sea*, whose surface could be crossed afoot. This reference specifically applies to the Proconnesian marble floor of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (completed in 537 AD). The petrified seafloor was meant to suggest that the visitor could fancy what *walking on water* felt like. Within this psycho-observational mechanism, as argued by Barry, the perceived substance of marble is instrumental. Authors from antiquity, through the theories of geology promulgated by Aristotle and Theophrastus, shared the conviction that marbles were deposits of purified earthy matter suspended in water that percolated down through the Earth’s crust to deep reservoirs. Belief prevailed that, somewhere deep down, the whole brew was frozen or fired solid by earthly humors.

This mythical consensus about the genesis of marble inspired the imaginations of many who visited the Hagia Sophia cathedral. Barry discussed one anecdote that is relevant in this context. The imperial marshal Paul the Silentiary—on the occasion of his visit to the Hagia Sophia in 563—recited a now famous ekphrasis that walking through the solea and ambo, the walled-in processional way and pulpit that pushed out into the nave, could be compared to walking on a wave-lashed isthmus in a stormy sea. Another well-known example is the story of a German visitor to the Crusader palace in Beirut in 1211. He admired a fine marble pavement that so well feigned water stirred by a light wind that, whoever stepped over it, seemed to be wading, since they left no footprints above the sand depicted there. As Barry informed us, it was the Arab physician Avicenna who, in his influential treatise on minerals *On the Congelation and Gonglutination of Stones* (1021–23), even put forward the hypothesis that marble was the result of “the actual metamorphosis of water itself into stone.”³⁴²

This idea that water is capable of stiffening or rigidifying under the influence of a mineral power was an extrapolation from an assumption that at first appeared to receive easy confirmation at the white travertine quarry in Hierapolis (now Pamukkale in Turkey). This unfounded belief that all stones retain a certain measure of water takes us back to the present-day situation near the fairway in Calais. For, as is well known, underneath the shallow waterline lies a grayish-white chalk soil supported by layers of chalk marl and glauconitic marl.³⁴³ Furthermore, the entire English Channel zone is connected on both of its banks by this intimate interaction between (sea) water and (chalk) stone. For those who live near the Strait of Dover, it is a mental habit to imagine these

various natural elements as a hinge between the two shores. On a clear day at Saint Margaret's Bay—where Cap Blanc Nez in France can be seen with the naked eye—the shimmering reflection of the North Sea, as if it were a grainy marble floor as found on the island of Marmara, is an unforgettable souvenir.

The noun *marble* descends from the Greek verb *marmairein*, meaning “to glisten” or “to glitter” like the surface of the water.³⁴⁴ Marl, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (OED), stems from “Old French *marle*, from medieval Latin *margila*, from Latin *marga*, of Celtic origin.”³⁴⁵ Though marble also comes from “Old French (variant of *marbre*),” it then indeed is further derived “from Latin *marmor*, from Greek *marmaros* ‘shining stone’, associated with *marmairein* ‘to shine.’”³⁴⁶ Although an etymological distinction needs to be made between marble and marl, strictly speaking at least, it is a fact that both words share the same Sanskrit root *mar*, meaning “motion” or even “connoting movement (as of waves).”³⁴⁷ Furthermore, *mar-mar* means “the more agitated stirring (or *murmuring*) of the sea.”³⁴⁸ Barbara Baert has traced the latter meaning to the *Iliad* (ca. 840 BC), in which Homer spoke of “the shimmering sea: ἄλα μαρμαρέην (*hala marmareèn*, 14.273).”³⁴⁹ Along this line of reasoning, then, *The Glitters* would be yet another plausible translation for *Les Éclats*. The OED explains the meaning of the noun *glitter* as “a bright, shimmering reflected light: *the blue glitter of the sea*.”³⁵⁰ The chalk soil of the sea bottom could then feasibly contribute to this glittering effect, which makes the sea surface look like hard stone. Indeed, as argued by Barry, Catullus, Valerius Flaccus, Lucan, Lucretius, Virgil, and many others, all used *marmor* as “a synonym for *mar* time and again to imagine the sea's hard surface and hidden weight.”³⁵¹

In her reading of the marble seafloor at the Hagia Sophia, Baert made a connection to the primordial waters.³⁵² In the Semitic tradition, it was God who could tame the chaos of the primeval ocean by means of his *ruach*—his breath. This godly sweeping over the waters, philologically connected to the concept of *le-rahef*, meaning floating, hovering, moving over or upon could also mean impregnating; in other words, a fertilization with light as its seed. In *Les Éclats*, Sylvain George left unanswered the question whether Temesghen Berhe—who is afraid to die—will eventually be cured. Jesus saved Peter from drowning. This marked a liminal moment in Peter's life—a threshold. Ultimately, Peter, later in his life, was even reborn into the founder of the Church—the first Pope. For Berhe and his comrades, who found themselves on the fringes of Calais on their own, encountering a savior who offers solid ground under their feet may seem a daunting task. Yet this should not stop us from collectively searching for solutions that *can* work for all human beings. For it may be noble that “churches are built so people can pray for houses.”³⁵³ But there can be no doubt it will take a more tangible

form of solidarity to help people such as Berhe to find the welcoming home they direly need.

What would such a home possibly look like? On May 26, 1976, the Belgian artist Christian Dotremont sent a postcard to the French novelist Michel Butor, in which he reported a recent experience at Ivalo (Avvil) in Finnish Lapland (Sápmi). He therewith came to figure among the few voices to describe in most poetic words the groundswell of the Nordic rivers—a sudden summer, which almost seems to skip springtime, accompanied by a long-awaited grating noise—as an overwhelming natural force bringing along renewed life. As Dotremont wrote to his friend, “you would surely have admired, a few days ago, the cortège of the thawing Ivalojoiki—the chunks of ice moving forward slowly on the turbulent waters, where they will melt. Crystallization and gush.”³⁵⁴ Fifteen years earlier, on a previous journey to the High North, Dotremont had a similarly profound experience when the ice of the Tana/Deatnu river broke after a seemingly endless winter. In a letter to Franz Hellens, mailed from Karasjok (Norwegian Sápmi), Dotremont thus described the feeling of exaltation generated by watching the drifting ice:

Days and days of silence, then a sudden conversation about summer, which now has arrived. One day, around noon, the ice of the river dislocated itself. Everyone was on the bridge [...] The “mayor,” the Lapps, the Norwegians, and I, all together, in silence, to salute the water. A magnificent blast, a pure emotion.³⁵⁵

This is reminiscent of Chris Marker’s impressive filming of the Siberian thaw in his *Lettre de Sibérie* (1967). Dotremont added a powerful human dimension to this natural phenomenon. The brusque dislocation of the river’s ice, which the Norwegians call the *isgang*, has the potential to gather people together.³⁵⁶ The breaking waters that announce a milder season exert a unifying power that helps to overcome differences—be it of nationalities or of political opinions. Dotremont had been looking for this spontaneous and natural potential of joining forces all his life as a poet and artist. (Plate 5) On May 20, 1976—only three days after he and his travel companion Caroline Ghyselen observed the drift of the Ivalo river, which colored the entire landscape in a purplish red-blue hue—he created a logogram that he titled *Rivière glacée tendue pour l’été* [*Frozen river extended for the summer*].³⁵⁷ (fig. 2.4)

Christian Dotremont suffered from a chronic health condition; he was diagnosed with tuberculosis in late 1951, following three exhausting years during which he served as the driving force behind the CoBrA movement (together with Asger Jorn). When, at age forty-six, he was living in Tervuren near Brussels, in a house for the elderly, he could



Fig. 2.4.
Christian Dotremont,
*Rivière glacée tendue
pour l'été* [Frozen river ex-
tended for the summer],
1976. © Photo: Caroline
Ghyselen.

barely walk anymore. But, as he wrote to his friend Paul Bourgoignie from Ivalo on April 4, 1964, in Lapland the air was pure and made him sleep. “The dry cold,” he explained, “is good for my condition.” And, he added, “I walk here, I walk for miles.”³⁵⁸ After the catastrophe of the illness, which caused both Dotremont and Jorn to be admitted to a sanatorium in Silkeborg, Denmark and which contributed to the conclusive breakdown of the CoBrA movement, Dotremont was forced to redirect his life completely.

Mourning the forever-lost collective artistic dynamic to which he dedicated his best years, Dotremont drastically reinvented his existential trajectory. *À force de mourir, amorce de vivre* [The more we die, the more we start living] is the epitaph inscribed on his tombstone in Maredret, Belgium.³⁵⁹ It is taken from one of his logograms in Chinese ink on white paper, which he developed from 1962 onward. If he had not suffered from this invalidating respiratory disorder, he might never have traveled to the High North. Most likely, Dotremont would not have found the same inspiration to create the logograms as well as the logo-snows and logo-ices that turned out so influential to other artists, writers, and poets.³⁶⁰ His letters to his intimate friends were a tribute to the life found there, in his home of choice.

I would as well live the rest of my life in this hostel, with the wood-fire, the dog, and these people who do not say hello but who are ready to go for hundreds of miles to help you. No useless gesture. No useless word. Solidarity does not waste itself, it being too precious.³⁶¹

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In her influential novel *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Shelley sketched a much more ambivalent picture of a ground sea's powers than Dotremont did. Early on in the story, before the author even started to narrate the unhappy life of Victor Frankenstein, she granted comparable liberating powers to the "ground sea" that could be heard by Captain Robert Walton and his crew.³⁶² In the fourth letter to his sister, sent on August 5, 17—, from somewhere in the most northern seawaters above Archangel (in modern-day Russia), Walton reports how his ship became closed in on all sides by ice, "scarcely leaving her the [necessary] searoom" to float in.³⁶³ As it was summer (July 31), the ice broke again, which freed the ship. Still, as Walton informs his sister, he decided to wait for morning and daylight to reassure himself he had the right opportunity to continue the ship's journey, fearing "to encounter in the dark those large masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice."³⁶⁴

This is how, in the early morning hours, Walton came to spot the exhausted Victor Frankenstein sitting in a sledge drifting toward his vessel "on a large fragment of ice." Only at the book's very end does the reader learn that this same ground sea exerted a destructive force on Frankenstein's intentions, since it ultimately prevented him from catching up with and then finally killing the monster he had been chasing for so long. As Frankenstein says,

A ground sea was heard; the thunder of its progress, as the waters rolled and swelled beneath me, became every moment more ominous and terrific. I pressed on, but in vain. The wind arose; the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split, and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work was soon finished: in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice, that was continually lessening, and thus preparing me for a hideous death.³⁶⁵

Underneath barren fields of ice, ground waves of fluid water seek their way toward eruptions that literally create openings. The powerful ground sea eventually saves Walton and his crew members from a sure death in the frozen polar ocean. For them, as Shelley concluded, the die

was cast favorably, thus creating the possibility to turn the ship's bow southward and sail home. Frankenstein, instead, had feared the thaw driving the deep waters up to the surface as he needed the frozen "paths of the sea to be secure for this sledge."³⁶⁶ Inevitably, the encounter with a ground sea therefore is an event that can be turned either way by fate. In the English language, a ground sea is also called a breaker. A breaker can engulf a ship, discharge itself, and swallow it up. But at the same time, it is also the groundswell that eventually *will* come to break the ice. Always associated with real danger, confronting a ground sea therefore may or may not be a life-saving experience.

On the northern coast of the Caribbean islands Jamaica, Hispaniola, and the Bahamas, as well as in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, heavy sea swells are known to occur regularly. In 1843, Rosina Maria Zomlin informed her readers that locals in the West Indies call this phenomenon "the ground sea" as it presents some remarkable features: whereas the sea itself rises and rages violently before eventually subsiding again, the air remains calm, and there has been no indication whatever of a previous gale.³⁶⁷ Such a ground sea, Zomlin reported, is characterized by waves that can reach a height of up to thirty meters. It approaches in undulating masses, which usually rise suddenly into large ridges, crested with foam. They form billows which burst upon the beach with the greatest impetuosity and loud roaring resembling thunder. Alex G. Findlay and John Purdy added to this description that the waves, which always come in groups of three, after which there is a brief interval, "subside into a rumbling noise, caused by the nodules and fragments of rock with which the breaker was charged when advancing."³⁶⁸ The sea then assumes a peculiar aspect that can be observed for many miles from shore: it is colored in "different tints of blue, from the lightest to the darkest, forming a strong contrast with the snowy foam of the breaking waves."

This natural occurrence happens when the wind turns to the northeast—a menacing northeaster. The ancient Greeks called the northeast wind *Kaikias*, identifying it as an evil, dark wind announcing "doom."³⁶⁹ On the *Horologion* of Andronikos from Kyrrhos, also known as the *Tower of Winds* on the Roman agora in Athens (second century or 50 BC), *Kaikias* is depicted as a bearded elderly man carrying in his arms a shield full of large hailstones, which he is on the verge of pouring over helpless mortals. In the Caribbean seas, it is the dangerous *Kaikias* that pushes the deep ocean waters toward the islands. Ground seas are understood to be caused by "distant gales in the Atlantic, which agitate and as it were push forward the water in this particular direction, but which do not themselves extend to this region."³⁷⁰ The movement of ground seas goes from the far northeast toward west or south, and they hit the northern shores of the islands. The season runs from October, the most intense

month, until April or May. Ground seas appear to be the most remarkable around the island of Tortola. There, on the southern side of the island, the sea may seem “as smooth as glass,” whereas, simultaneously on the northern shore, the water will be “tossing, foaming, and roaring, as if agitated by a severe gale.”³⁷¹ “The effect,” Findlay and Purdy reported, “is most curious, and if it were not for the warning that is heard long before the cause becomes visible, one might fancy the wand of a magician in action.”

In Jamaica, the term “North sea” is used as a synonym for ground sea.³⁷² This is a striking coincidence as, over the centuries, ground seas have been extensively reported in the North Sea and its immediately adjacent seas. On Friday February, 27, 1756, at 6 p.m. an “Unusual Agitation of the Sea” was seen at “Ildfracombe [*sic*]” in Devonshire by the Rev. Mr. Prince of Barnstable.³⁷³ The weather in Ilfracombe, a key harbor providing access to the Bristol Channel, had been “extremely fair” for some time before the incidence occurred—as it continued to be for some days afterward as well. That night, while the sea appeared “exceedingly calm, a rumbling noise was heard like that which usually precedes what the sailors call a ground sea, only it was much louder.” What then happened can be compared with what today we identify as a tsunami—“a long, high sea wave caused by an earthquake or other disturbance.”³⁷⁴ The Prince of Barnstable thus observed the waters running ashore from the Celtic Sea:

The tide, at that time, was above half ebbd, and retired as far as the head of the key, leaving the vessels within the pier on dry ground; when on a sudden the sea came on with a great run, filling the quay to the height of 6 feet perpendicular; and the water stayed at the same height near half an hour, but was all the time agitated as in a storm.³⁷⁵

On the opposite side of the water from Great Britain, on the Dutch coasts, ground seas continue to occur frequently to this day. This is particularly the case for vessels approaching the Haringvliet estuary providing further access to the Hollands Diep, which, after the disastrous flood of January 31, 1953, was closed off from the sea by means of a dam. But above all the so-called Grounds of Stortemelk are known for dangerous ground seas in the case of storms with gale winds coming from the northwest, in particular when they subsequently turn to the northeast.³⁷⁶ Situated just one mile north of the Wadden island of Vlieland, the Stortemelk grounds leave only 3.2 to 3.9 meters of seawater at LAT. The Stortemelk is the estuary that separates Vlieland from the island of Terschelling. Especially its southernmost part, the Zuider Stortemelk, which is the tidal inlet that provides access to the Vliesloot and the sail

toward Vlieland harbor, is notoriously reputed for its many dangerous ground seas, swells, and breakers toward the lee shore.

This dangerous quality of the area also accounts for the name *Stortemelk*, which can be translated into English as “spilling milk.” In the immediate vicinity of Vlieland’s northern *Kaap Bol*, the seawater can get so agitated that the foaming waves appear to produce a huge stir of milk. In retrospect, it is not so far-fetched to imagine Erasmus’s “Shipwreck” tale as taking place somewhere near there. As in the Caribbean Sea, a prototypical Dutch ground sea often appears suddenly and rather unexpectedly.³⁷⁷ It is created by waves running at open sea that become increasingly higher and steeper due to descending depths of the water right underneath them. As a result, the bottom of each wave is much slowed down in speed while its top continues running. The wave’s height remaining more or less stable, it is then outpaced by waves approaching in its wake. Eventually, these increasingly merged wave tops trip over their own feet and finally jointly break. A ground sea, it is said in Friesland, is an *old sea* [*oude zee*], formed by a swelling heave that has often traveled across quite a long distance.³⁷⁸

Seamen sometimes describe this mechanism in terms of a butterfly effect. It is as if all the wings of a kaleidoscope intermingle and become inseparable—seemingly glued together. Since the North Sea waters are saturated with shells and fine sand, the waves formed in a ground sea tend to pull up the substances from the sea bottom and absorb them within their own mass. Consequently, in the North Sea, ground-sea waves are brownish and tend to be much heavier than normal waves. Given their density, ground seas are extremely dangerous, as they will swallow up every element that crosses their path. A ground sea can cause much more damage to a ship than when it is gobbled up by a more ordinary large wave. After a ground sea wave has rolled over a ship, the deck and the cockpit fill with sand and shells.

All sailors can do in such conditions (besides gathering courage) is to keep calm and stay patient. It will take full concentration and focus to steer the ship’s bow right into the wave when it approaches from up front, or to try to keep the stern perpendicular to the wave when it viciously hits from behind like a closed accordion. Any decision to position the boat parallel with the precipitating wave is most certainly to be fatal as it will make the ship capsize from the side. After the wave has passed, two options are likely to happen: either the vessel will hit the ground, or it will land on whatever few waters that remain there. In case it falls uncovered by water, it may either briefly stand clear of the water—when it has a twin keel or is a flatboat—before it sails again, or it may break apart. Whether the ship perishes depends on a wide range of elements and circumstances. In the worst cases, passengers may try to swim to the shore or hope that helping hands will come to

their rescue. As Erasmus teaches us, a good dose of luck is of vital importance as well.

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“Red-earth-red, blacker underneath than the black chalk of our dreams.” Édouard Glissant wrote this line in the concluding chapter of his *Poetics of Relation* (1990).³⁷⁹ “The Burning Beach,” as the chapter is titled, reads as an emotional tribute to the shore at Le Diamant on the southern coast of Martinique, near to where the author spent most of his childhood. In this text, Glissant described how he imagined intricate connections within the arc of islands that are the Lesser Antilles as follows:

I have always imagined that [the] depths [of the volcano *Mont Pelée*] navigate a path beneath the sea in the west and the ocean in the east and that, though we are separated, each in our own Plantation, the now green balls and chains have rolled beneath from one island to the next, weaving shared rivers that we shall open up when it is our time and where we shall take our boats.³⁸⁰

For Glissant, the reality of archipelagos such as in the Caribbean or the Pacific provided “a natural illustration of the thought of Relation.”³⁸¹ This key concept within his thinking suggests we need to conceive of the entire world in terms of *Relation*, a word Glissant spelled with uppercase R and which he rather cryptically defined as an idea that “informs not simply what is relayed but also the relative and the related.”³⁸² The *creolization* of people in the Caribbean concretizes further how Glissant understood Relation: basically, it consists in feeling both “rooted and open.”³⁸³ Through this very attitude, he believed, each person is capable of developing a new and original dimension of being-in-the-world. Glissant—who also spoke of *antillanité*³⁸⁴—suggested that a human exercise in personal development should focus on a *relation identity*, which for him implied that one should move away from an identity that exclusively depends on one’s birth roots—which he called a *root identity*.³⁸⁵

From his *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009) one may grasp better how Glissant hoped that, on a more collective scale, his relational social project could possibly come about. In this book, Glissant elaborated on his concept of Relation’s usefulness for political theory. He made a distinction between *archipelagic thinking* and continental modes of thought.³⁸⁶ Archipelagic thinking is connected to tentative intuition and to trying out [*l’essai*]. Continental mentality, on the contrary, implies a systemic approach that sees the world as one block, as “a kind of imposing synthesis.” For Glissant, it is archipelagic thinking that will show us the path to follow toward the future. Only in this way can we become familiar with

“the rocks and the rivers” and with the “shadow holes that they open and re-cover.” Therefore, the continents and the archipelagos jointly need to *make archipelago* instead of pretending to be an unwavering massive or eminence, with shredded edges.³⁸⁷

This positive *making archipelagos* is helpful to imagine a collective abandoning of divisive aspirations. Archipelagic thinking, as defined by Glissant, is the key for finding the basis of a renewed solidarity that embraces realistic forms of egalitarianism.³⁸⁸ Building on Glissant’s observations, *Ground Sea* studies the vast zone of land that encircles the North Sea, and in which ground seas so frequently occur on all of its shores, in terms of an intimately interconnected archipelago. I propose to call it, not without a certain reservation, the North Atlantic archipelago.³⁸⁹ This idea of an Atlantic Archipelago is not entirely new. Robert and Isabelle Tombs mentioned it in their work from 2007 on the historical relationship between France and Britain.³⁹⁰ It has also been put forward by Michael Morris who, among others, has proposed to start using it to replace the predominant conception of Britain in terms of an isolated island nation.³⁹¹

My slight hesitation to adopt the term North Atlantic archipelago has to do with the fact that I do not want to suggest it is somehow an entity we need to see as separate from the rest of the world. What happens presently in the North Atlantic archipelago is intimately connected to disturbing events taking place in the southern zones of the European continent, bordering on the Mediterranean. Glissant—strikingly—held the Mediterranean, “an inner sea surrounded by lands,” largely responsible for having introduced and imposed this “thought of the One” that he sought to abandon, these continental ways of thinking that he so pressingly wanted us to free ourselves from.³⁹² To make progress with archipelagic thinking in relation to Europe, it is therefore essential to conceive of the present-day territory that forms the European Union in terms of a sickle-shaped archipelago bordering, on its northwestern side, a vast arc of Atlantic seawater that starts up north in Finnish Sápmi and extends all the way down southeastward to the Greek islands.

For Glissant, the Caribbean Sea was a “sea that explodes the scattered lands into an arc,” and that therewith “diffracts.” Precisely such thinking is needed to shift away from conceptions rooted in prejudices or fantasies that there is a European continent on the one hand and the island of Great Britain on the other. Furthermore, the archipelagic mode of thought helps to perceive the Russian ambitions for “an Eurasian space” for what they really are: an imperialist undertaking in which Europe will be supposed to behave itself according to Russian standards rather than EU ones.³⁹³ *Ground Sea* seeks to contribute to inventing renewed common social ground for cross-fertilization and cultural interplay. On the

horizon, I imagine a restrengthened, resolutely democratic European civil society that confidently opens up to the rest of the world.

This dream contrasts sharply with the present-day state of the human condition that so shockingly manifests itself in and nearby the Calais–Dover axis. In Glissant’s view, “a border that cuts through an archipelago has few chances to maintain itself seriously.”³⁹⁴ Stronger even, for him, “borders that suppress immigrations are the most iniquitous.”³⁹⁵ That we are facing exactly such a situation today around Calais has become crystal clear from Sylvain George’s still topical *Les Éclats*. In Glissant’s vocabulary, the border between Calais and Dover figures among the most iniquitous in the entire world, which George’s film overwhelmingly revealed from the already-mentioned “shadow holes” of collectively repressed reality.³⁹⁶ But how can the tides be changed? How can the “burning on the grounds” in the vicinity of Calais—which is what seamen typically say when they describe a sea bottom on which a ground sea strikes—be stopped?³⁹⁷

In order to survive at all, sailors, so to speak, need to symbiotically embrace the wave, as if asking it to guide them through the adventurous journey together with it, feeling its movements within their pores. In his feature film *An Opera of the World* (2017), Manthia Diawara thus referred to Glissant:

I remember the poet Edouard Glissant’s plea for porous borders. He said that he’d rather be the one attempting to cross the border than the other guarding it, or building walls. Those who are trying to cross the borders represent the future. They are full of hope and they dream of making a better world for themselves. Those guarding the borders belong to the past. They have no imagination for the future.³⁹⁸

The viewer hears Diawara speak these lines immediately after having listened to Nicole Lapierre, who recalled the circumstances of Walter Benjamin’s tragic suicide in Portbou, Spain, in September 1940. Slightly later in the film, Agnès Barad-Matrahji, a refugee crisis activist on Lesbos, added to Diawara’s remarks that, for her, “the person who guards the border is a criminal.”³⁹⁹

In a moving written tribute to Glissant, the friend of whom he made a filmic portrait, *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation* (2009), Diawara urged his readers “not to surrender to the partitioning of the world, nor to irreconcilable differences, binary divisions, opposition of species, and genres.”⁴⁰⁰ The “sparkle of truth and reality,” which will reveal to all people that they need to embrace difference positively as that which unites them in solidarity instead of in conquest, can only emerge from “darkness and opacity,” from which it must not become isolated. According to

Diawara, Glissant's poems, songs, and myths were all about this claim that he put forward for a universal "right to opacity," which for Glissant would not only come to guarantee survival of human and nonhuman diversity but also finally allow for the establishment of "the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms."⁴⁰¹ This opacity, Diawara specified, is the "opacity of the sea," and I return to this connection in Chapter Ten.⁴⁰²

If we wish to embrace the opacity of the Strait of Dover, both as a real and as an allegorical element, we need to start by admitting what Gilles Deleuze has brought to mind: that "islands are either from before or for after humankind."⁴⁰³ Deleuze outlined an important distinction between two types of islands. *Oceanic* islands, for him, are "originary, essential islands." They may, among other possible scenarios, consist of mountain peaks that rise directly from a deep ocean floor, such as in the case of the Canary Islands. *Continental* islands, by contrast, are islands separated accidentally from a continent as the result of disarticulation, erosion, or fracture. They are places that have managed to survive the absorption of what once contained them, such as, for example, is the case with the islands of (Great) Britain and of Ireland. These islands remain geographically intimately connected to the continental plate that the sea has succeeded to partly fill with water.⁴⁰⁴ For Deleuze, people who live on such islands must have somehow convinced themselves that the struggle between the elements accounting for the island's initial creation does not exist—or, at least, they have collectively decided to believe that these very causes and reasons for the island's genesis have somehow come to an end. "Humans can live on an island," he argued, "only by forgetting what an island represents." Phlegmatically, he concluded: "That England is populated will always come as a surprise."⁴⁰⁵

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In early April 1914, the British-built and Japanese-owned steamship *ss Komagata Maru* departed from the Hong Kong harbor to transport 376 Punjabi immigrants across the Pacific to Vancouver. After six weeks at sea, the ship reached the Port of Vancouver in late May. Upon arrival, the Canadian authorities quickly made its commander, Baba Gurdit Singh (a native of Punjab and thus a British subject), understand that the passengers would not be allowed to disembark. Singh, however, claimed nothing less for himself and his passengers than their "legal right to travel throughout the British Empire."⁴⁰⁶ The ship was eventually sent back to India after two months at dock in Vancouver harbor in the most terrible living conditions. According to Renisa Mawani, it is indeed the British Empire that has laid the foundations of the complex paradox that we are still struggling with today. The British Empire, much like the globalized world of today, was imagined to be a vast and interconnected

space. However, it was racially and politically unequal. The *Komagata Maru's* 1914 voyage thus has come to symbolize the expansion of global circuits of colonial and racial dispossession, which had their predecessors in the longer maritime history of transatlantic slavery.⁴⁰⁷

In a militant vein, Mawani took the tragic failure of the *Komagatu Maru's* journey as a point of departure to indeed feel inspired by Singh and his passengers' courage. The Pacific is the earthly zone that is easiest to imagine as a "Sea of Islands," as Epeli Hau'ofa had it: "a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers."⁴⁰⁸ In this essay, Hau'ofa has powerfully argued that nineteenth-century imperialism erected the boundaries that led to the contraction of Oceania, transforming it into the Pacific island states and territories of today.⁴⁰⁹ More and more voices are in fact promoting a return to the area's original denomination, Oceania, to imagine anew the boundless and borderless world that it once was. Contrary to the landlocked divisions of the world, then, the oceans and their currents will come to guide the way forward.

These currents, according to Mawani, are always plural as well as heterogeneous. They move in multiple directions (horizontal, vertical, and circuitous), with varying velocities and intensities depending on the seasons, and will always and inevitably come to join the nations that they divide. And, finally, the currents mark the surface of the sea *and* decide what happens in its subterranean depths, including what may eventually resurface from these darkest depths. *Ground Sea*, for that matter, is a book that has paid much attention to the rhythms and cycles not only of maritime space but also of nautical time, a temporality entirely different from how life has become organized on land. Seagoers must rapidly adjust to the fact that sleep does not necessarily only occur during the night. Seafarers need to be on guard. They take turns in doing quarters and come to live a state of temporality that is much more in tune with the elements and forces.

Without a doubt, seafarers who are gorged by a ground sea traverse a *kairotic* moment. It is a temporal dimension that I want to introduce in reference to the writings of Cornelius Castoriadis. According to him, and following the Hippocratic writings, "time [*chronos*] is that in which there is *kairos* (propitious instant and critical interval, the opportunity to take a decision) and *kairos* is that in which there is not much time."⁴¹⁰ For Castoriadis, the essence of time can be found there: it is "that in which there is occasion and opportunity for acting," including acting politically. Sailors must use all of their senses and full focus to see themselves through it safely. They will have to be receptive to the wave's sensorial signals: its roaring, its smell, its orientation. When a ground wave cuts a ship like a knife, it may get stuck or strike upon a rock. Not coincidentally, the French use the term *lame de fond* for groundswell, which literally

translates as “blade from the bottom.” Yet, at the same time, a ground sea may create room for somehow finding solid ground underfoot again. With patience, nature may end up giving a helping hand—as is the case for Captain Walton in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

A ground sea announces itself through the murmuring (mar-mar) noise that precedes it, which is the voice of the unknown, of what is not yet visible. The challenge is to try and seize that echo coming from afar or from great depths. Surviving a ground sea does not always have an expected or hoped-for outcome. After all, a ground sea is known to churn everything up from unfathomable depths, turning the marl—or shell earth [*scheltpaarde*, in Dutch]—all over, while rooting and digging it up. As marl primarily consists of shells and chalk, it is also known as chalk earth [*kalkaarde*], which is an extremely fertile kind of soil.⁴¹¹ As the present text develops, I will take, in the final chapters, both this glimpse and echo of chalk- and shell-containing churn earth [*woelaarde*] of the sea bottom of the English Channel as symbolically embodying a possibility for fertile change. Essentially, it will all come down to knowing what to do with the metaphoric message brought by the blade that resurfaced along with the moor log released by the sea’s swells.

As a further preliminary triggering of thoughts, it is useful to recall what Walter Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, had to say about swell. He discussed the concept of *schwellen* [to swell] in the context of convolute *O*, which addresses the themes of prostitution and gambling.⁴¹² In an analysis of the goings-on between bourgeois men and “impure Sirens” at night under the peristyles of the Palais-Royal gallery in Paris, the term obviously obtains a less nautical, sexually charged meaning.⁴¹³ Yet Benjamin here also used the noun *Schwelle* to elaborate on the importance of threshold experiences—or “rites de passage,” as he called them. He expressed regret that modern society had grown so poor in transitional experiences, such as death and birth, because humans need them. The *Schwelle* [threshold], understood as “wave action,” provides human beings a “zone” for “transformation, passage.” The *Schwelle*, according to Benjamin, is a “Dream House.” As noted by the translators of Benjamin’s *Passagen-Werk*, the English word bearing the same root sense as *Schwelle* is “sill.” We may therefore see this dream zone of the threshold as one that provides “structural support,” a “foundation beam,” or a “board.”⁴¹⁴

The *Schwelle*, for that matter, has to be distinguished from the boundary [*Grenze*].⁴¹⁵ As of the following chapter, I further explore the possibilities for a rehabilitation of such threshold zones, against firmly closed borders capable of closing off “the gates of dream.”⁴¹⁶ The first photographic sequence that Allan Sekula composed after having completed *Fish Story* (or, in the chronology of his oeuvre, immediately following “Walking on Water”), *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, will serve to put the

everyday reality around the Strait of Dover into the historical perspective of the two decades that have now passed since the work's creation. When choosing titles for his works, Sekula was fond of suggesting that he liked them to possess "the virtue of being a verb phrase."⁴¹⁷ *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* falls into this category. So does *Fish Story*: with this title, Sekula suggested that the work is in the process of "fishing" or on the lookout for a story. *Ground Sea* also has the advantage of suggesting a transitive verb. It embodies a performative and processual dimension. Along with the idea of "grounding yourself at sea," which may be considered a wound, comes a potential for finding new "solid ground," and thus for a tilted, more hopeful perspective.

*

How can we avoid that people have the impression that their lives have somehow come to an irreversible halt—be it frozen or stuck in drift sand? An extreme example is the situation when young refugee children feel so blocked that they start to suffer from an illness that the Swedish have called the *Uppgivenessyndrom*. Also known as "resignation syndrome," it is characterized by the fact that the children appear to "fall away from the world" due to the stress conditions caused by their family's imminent deportation back to their home country.⁴¹⁸ Under the influence of this medical condition, these children gradually retreat into an apathetic coma during which they need to be artificially fed. They seem, a doctor told the journalist Rachel Aviv who investigated the matter for *The New Yorker*, to be sleeping "like Snow White."

Aviv has told us the life story of Georgi, a teenager refugee from Russia. Recovered from the syndrome, he described how his life came to a halt when his parents received a deportation letter in December 2015. He reported that "his body began to feel as if it were entirely liquid" and that his "limbs felt soft and porous." Experiencing "a deep pressure in his brain and in his ears," all he wanted to do was to stay in bed. He stopped eating and gradually fell into a state in which all solid ground seemed to have slid away from under his feet. During his months in bed, he said,

he had felt as if he were in a glass box with fragile walls, deep in the ocean. If he spoke or moved, he thought, it would create a vibration, which would cause the glass to shatter.

Georgi explained to Aviv that it felt as if "the water would pour in and kill me." When Georgi told Aviv that his "whole body was like water," his situation comes comparably close to that of Temesghen Berhe, who may have felt that his entire body was reduced to stains of

blood—given his diagnosis. And when Georgi said that his experience of psychic retreat “felt like I was deep under water,” he came close to describing a state of finding himself in a bubble beneath a frozen sea.

The question is how safe ways out of this condition can be found again, and how to locate the spot where the ice has melted, so as to rise above the water. Few have expressed the complex feeling of not belonging, of falling between two stools, better than the French-Senegalese writer Fatou Diomé: “Home? Over there? As I am a hybrid, Africa and Europe ask themselves confusedly which bit of me belongs to them. [...] A permanent exile, I spend my nights soldering the rails that lead to identity.”⁴¹⁹ In her autobiographical novel *The Belly of the Atlantic* (2003), she paid a moving tribute to a young man from her village named Moussa. Having traveled to France with the intention to become a successful soccer player, Moussa returned home after having been betrayed by a “coach” who turned out to be a crook. Unable to carry the weight of the shame that he brought to his family, who nearly ruined themselves by borrowing money to pay for his trip to Europe, Moussa threw himself into the ocean surf.⁴²⁰ His body was found by local fishermen “at the place where the island [Niodior] dips its tongue into the sea.”⁴²¹ In a mournful tone, Diomé added that “[t]he sand on the beach exuded mercy. Flat, white, fine and porous, it let the waves come timidly to suck its soul. [...] the sea gives back to the earth what belongs to it.”⁴²²

For Rachel Aviv, the global “refugee” question is “arguably the moral crisis of our era.” “No country,” she wrote, “has responded [to this question] with greater diligence and conscientiousness than Sweden.” And yet, for reasons that are unclear to this day, Sweden is the country where the resignation syndrome has manifested itself on the most alarming scale. If Sweden, and, for that matter, the EU countries, “abandon [their] values,” the most vulnerable in society are delivered to a nightmare unworthy of a region in the world that proclaims strong protection of human rights. Facing issues that touch the very heart of the European Union’s moral and political identity requires a joint response. Therefore, *Ground Sea* is written from the perspective that we should never “give up”—that we should not retreat in selfish isolation for lack of apparent alternatives. It is our collective responsibility to stand in solidarity with those “displaced by progress,” to recall Allan Sekula—quoting E.P. Thompson—once more.

Nicole Lapierre powerfully warned us that “at the borders as in these non-places that mark them off, where identities are controlled, we repress a population missing everything and who, for that matter, will get back like a swell.”⁴²³ Failure to see the tidal wave of a dangerous social ground sea gradually building up everywhere around us is not an option. Lapierre shared her conviction that collective blindness will create a disruptive social undercurrent or an unmanageable underflow. Such



Fig. 2.5.

Still from Roman Polanski, *Knife in the Water*, 1962, 4×3 film, 90 mins.
© Wytwórnia Filmów Documentary and Feature Film Studios, Warsaw.

an outburst of accumulated negative energy is to be avoided at all costs. In the end, Sylvain George did make the right choice when he decided to opt for *The Outbursts* as the best English translation of *Les Éclats*. Besides the self-evident meaning of an eruption or explosion, its geological sense is that of an outcropped layer of the earth, a stratum. These veins can become unstable and may begin to tremble, causing outcrop motions, if not an earthquake in the worst-case scenario. But an outburst does not have to be a disaster. The OED provides as the physics-related definition of the noun *outburst* “a sudden emission of energy or particles.”⁴²⁴

All through the writing process, I have been on the lookout for such positive “emission of energy,” for a thaw or snow break that can contribute to a change of circumstances. “Walking on water and running on water,” Allan Sekula wrote, as if bringing to mind a predictive dream he may have had at some point.⁴²⁵ Just “as in *Knife in the Water*,” he added. This reference is to Roman Polanski’s film from 1962, in which a bourgeois couple decides to cheer up the ennui of their marriage by inviting a student-hitchhiker on a sailing tour on their boat. (fig. 2.5) During the ride, the three personalities soon come to clash: the husband, a self-made man, cannot prevent himself from showing off to the younger man in an overly patronizing way. The boy in turn irritates the general mood further by his unstoppable habit of playing with a switchblade. Eventually, the two men end up in an argument, during which the opened knife irretrievably falls in the water.

In the ensuing fight, the husband knocks the boy off the boat. The couple believes he has drowned. This results in a violent discussion that gives the fatal blow to their dismantling union. They do not even know the young man’s name, and the husband decides to swim to shore for help. As soon as he is out of sight, the student—who had been hiding behind a nearby buoy—quickly reappears and seduces the wife, who had stayed behind on the sailing boat. The viewer is thus made to understand that the student’s wild, reckless waving with the blade knife triggered a chain of acceleration that made an end to what irrevocably had to come to an end. The suggestion, at the same time, is that this breakup allows for a new beginning. Eventually, the woman, who not only turns out to be an excellent swimmer but also a skilled helmsman, helps the drifter to escape unseen from the yacht in a rather spectacular way. He jumps overboard in a zone where he can skip and balance over a coincidental plank bridge made up of floating logs.

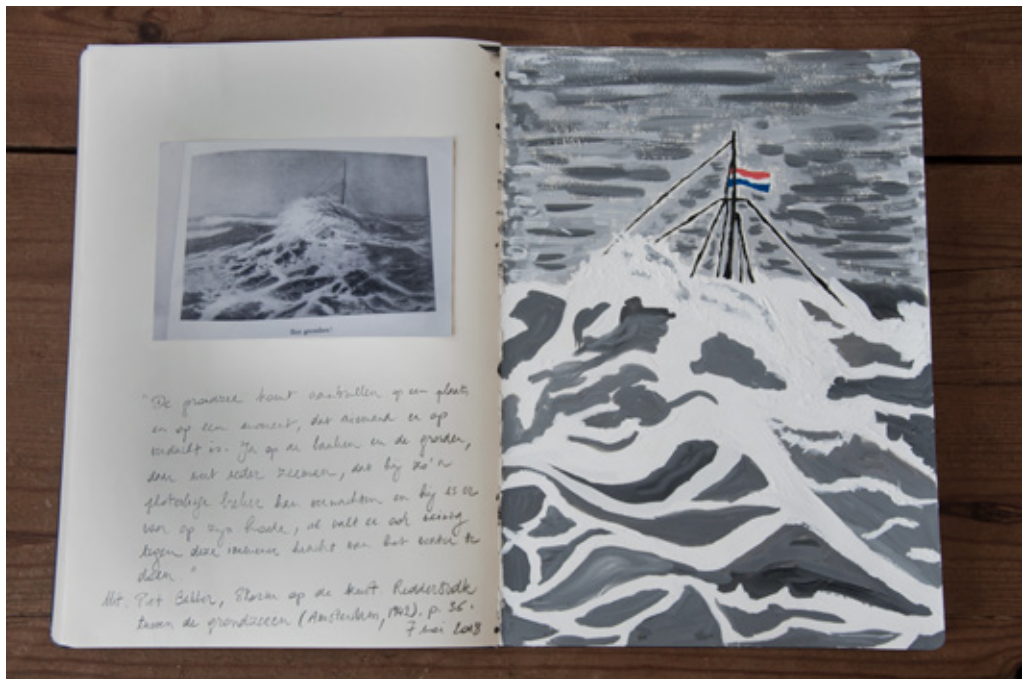
The ancient Greek word “*kairios* (καίριος)” refers “to a precise point that provides an opening; it is the ‘right place’, the ‘mark’, where the knife can penetrate.”⁴²⁶ *Kairos*, then, means “boundary, threshold, limit,” but also “transition, passage and progress.” It refers to the one emerging from the remotest of pasts who has access to unconscious dynamics in the present. This capacity endows *kairos* with “revolutionary

power.”⁴²⁷ The metaphoric potential of the knife sunken to the deepest depths is tremendous. Contrary to the book version, the online edition of the OED offers the following as the first meaning of the word “blade”: “the leaf of a herb or plant.”⁴²⁸ This includes flat lanceolate leaves of grass and cereals, or basically any shoot of a plant that appears first above ground when it springs from the root (and before the spike or ear appears). Only as the sixth meaning does the online entry mention that a blade is “the thin cutting part of an edged tool or weapon, as distinguished from the handle.”

The term “blade” thus contains a double meaning: not only of cutting and slicing but also of growing and new (botanical) life. This connotation is also present in nautical language. The blade (or wrist) of an anchor is that part of the anchor’s arms on which the fluke (or palm) is fixed, a broad and flat triangular plate of iron that serves to expose a broad surface to the soil so the anchor can take greater hold of the ground.⁴²⁹ Finally, as the online version of the OED mentions, in Old English it also appears to have meant “a spindle for winding yarn upon.” How the blade as spindle can metaphorically come to the aid of those, discussed above, who consider themselves on the verge of being “perished in the depths of the sea,” is food for further investigation.⁴³⁰ Here, I quote W.G. Sebald who, in writing such lines, seemed to suggest a mysterious acquaintance with all that lies buried beneath the full fathom five. Photography can play a key role in creating a shift in perspective that, if not literally then at least symbolically, generates access to a new barrel for the water of life.

“The ‘Insulinde’ barely had taken a southerly course when an enormous, entirely unexpected ground sea rose up from the depths. It broke with thunderous violence over the ship and seemed to engulf everything. Not much of the ‘Insulinde,’ listing some 70 degrees at least, remained above water...” This single short sentence from a rescue report presents us with the main danger of the Dutch coast: a ground sea. A ground sea comes on howling at a place and a time that no one suspects it. Every seaman there knows that on the banks and grounds he may well expect such a deadly breaker, and he is on the alert for it, even though there is little he can do against the immense power of the water.

Piet Bakker, *Storm op de kust. Reddersvolk tussen de grondzeeën* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1942), 36. My translation.



De groene kant van de boot op een plaats
en op een moment, dat niemand er op
merkelt is. In op de leuken en de groen,
een kant later zweven, die bij de
plotselinge lichte een vanden en by es er
van op zijn hede, de valt er ook eenig
zijn dat manne kerkt een dat weder te
dalen.

Mt. Pot Bitter, Storm op de boot Kiedertidek
van de grondceen (Amsterdam, 1912), p. 36.
7 mei 2013

#groundswell !
A page from my "kliederboek" @MessBook
#waves #boat #deephthroat #dutchflag #funnel

Plates



Plate 1.

Allan Sekula: Ship of Fools, installation view, São Paulo Biennale, 2010, variable dimensions. © Photo: Eduardo Gonçalves Azevedo/ Duas Águas and Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo/Fundação Bienal de São Paulo. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

Plate 2.

Above image: Recto of cardboard invitation to the exhibition *Allan Sekula* at Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, Mar. 8–Apr. 5, 2008, 21×15 cm. Author's collection. © Allan Sekula Studio. *Below image*: Recto of cardboard invitation to the exhibition *Allan Sekula: Shipwreck and Workers* at Christopher Grimes Gallery, Los Angeles, July 14–Sept. 1, 2007, 21.5×14 cm. Author's collection. © Allan Sekula Studio.



Plate 3.

Sylvain George, *Les Éclats (ma gueule, ma révolte, mon nom)* [*The Outbursts (my fucking face, my revolt, my name)*], 2011. Video, black-and-white and color, 84 mins. One still. © Noir Production and Sylvain George.



Plate 4.

Anonymous, *Schmerzensmann und Hostienspende (Fons Pietatis) [Man of Sorrows in the Limbus purgatorii]*, Lower Rhine, ca. 1480, oil on wood, mixed technique, Cologne, Kolumba, Kunstmuseum des Erzbistums Köln.
© Kolumba, Cologne/Photo: Lothar Schnepf.



Plate 5.

Caroline Ghyselen, *Thaw and drift of the Ivalo River*, 1976.

© Caroline Ghyselen.



Plate 6.

Four stills from Krzysztof Kieślowski, *Trois Couleurs: Rouge* (*Three Colors: Red*), 1994, 35 mm – 16/9 film, 96 mins.
© 1994 MK2 Productions/France 3 cinema/CAB Productions/Film Studio Tor.

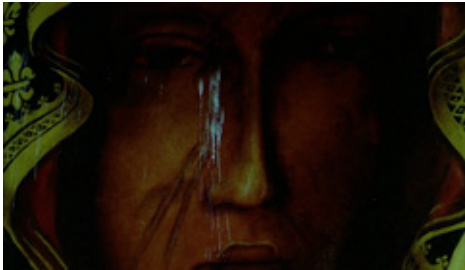


Plate 7.

Four stills from Krzysztof Kieślowski, *Decalogue I*, 1988, 35 mm – 16/9 film, 54 mins.
© Telewizja Polska S.A.



Plate 8.

Bruno Serralongue, *N°14*, Wednesday 2 March 1994, 107×83 cm. From the series *Faits divers* [News Items], 1993–1995.

Framed inkjet print mounted on aluminum. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville and Baronian-Xippas, Brussels.



Plate 9.

Shah Marai, Afghan residents inspect the site of a suicide bombing outside a voter registration centre in Kabul on April 22, 2018. — A suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd outside a voter registration centre in the Afghan capital Kabul on April 22, killing four people and wounding at least 15 in the latest attack on the centres. The assaults underscore growing concerns about security in the lead-up to legislative elections scheduled for October 20. © SHAH MARAI/AFP/Getty Images.

Chapter 3

Ossuary

But ... who is to know the fate of his bones ... ?

W.G. Sebald, quoting from Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial* [1658],
in *The Rings of Saturn* [1995], trans. Michael Hulse [1998] (London:
Vintage, 2002), 11.



Optimal panoramic observation deck (unsuspected location). A freight #train approaches the #security #control #room just before it enters the @ChannelTunnel #AllSaintsDay @VieuxCoquelles #cemetery #view #graydays #bonespurs #SebaldDoodle #mobilisinmobile

During the summer of 1995, while Allan Sekula's *Fish Story* (1989–95) was on its inaugural exhibition tour through western Europe, the artist made arrangements with the Calais Fine Arts and Lace Museum to enrich its collection with an entirely new sequence of pictures. Mediated by Marie-Thérèse Champesme—at that time directing the visual arts program of contemporary art space Le Channel—this generous commission from the museum's director, Annette Haudiquet, was quite open regarding its outcome. For Sekula, the invitation came as a blessing. During the many years of in-depth research and extensive travel that preceded the completion of *Fish Story*, the artist developed visionary ideas on the world's direction in the post-Cold War era. He wished to construct his subsequent oeuvre around these prescient socio-economic and political intuitions, capitalizing on almost three decades of sustained study and field research.

Calais turned out to be the closing venue for the initial presentation tour of *Fish Story*. Spread out over two locations—Le Channel and the museum—the work was on view in the city from December 16, 1995 to February 25, 1996. Almost a decade later—on January 9, 2005—I conducted an interview with Sekula to explore possibilities for an upcoming collaboration on the legacy of the Belgian nineteenth-century social-realist artist Constantin Meunier.⁴³¹ Sekula immediately drew attention to his experiences at Calais as a key point of reference in his larger thinking about the topic of critical realism in contemporary art.⁴³² I scribbled “Calais 96” in my handwritten notes, which I keep in my personal archive.⁴³³ Sekula as well informed me that the time he spent there during the cold, humid winter days of late 1995 made him realize that Calais was perhaps an iconic place for expanding his intellectual interests after *Fish Story*.⁴³⁴ It took him three years to complete the commissioned work, which he recommended I give closer attention.

The panel that gave a unanimous green light for the purchase of the complete work for the Calais Museum of Fine Arts praised the artist's “total investment,” which was clear from the “excellence of particular connections established between him and the city of Calais.”⁴³⁵ Regarding the importance of this acquisition for the museum's collection, the purchase report indicates the following about Sekula's photo-textual observations:

[They] examine a littoral landscape in mutation (rampant industrialization, “deserts,” etc.). In a humane fashion, he also focuses on both a resident population and those who are in transit. The photographic work is intimately connected to a text written by the artist. In this text he puts into perspective the “state of affairs” that he sketches of a contemporary reality, in combination with

History (the American Thomas Payne [sic] was representative of Pas-de-Calais in 1792) and a literature that has enriched an entire imaginary of the world of the sea.

Deep Six | Passer au bleu, the artistic result of Sekula's engagement with the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, indeed is a multilayered work of art. (figs. 3.1–3.2) Aside from the principal photographic sequences, it integrates text materials and objects: two chairs and a variable set of books, on which I elaborate further in Chapter Eight. I first came across *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in passing—in the year 2000—by reading an interview between Allan Sekula and Pascal Beause, published in 1998.⁴³⁶ Although, in 2005, Sekula had awakened my interest in *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, at that time the focus was entirely on the Meunier-Sekula project, as our research team at the Lieven Gevaert Centre came to call it. Several years passed before my attention finally turned to that brief



Fig. 3.1.

Allan Sekula, *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme," 1996/1998. Thirteen Cibachrome photographs, two text panels, one chair, and two books, variable dimensions. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017;

where it was combined with a display of selected "objects of interest" from Sekula's *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.



Fig. 3.2.

Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, “Ship of Fools” – 2e volet, “La Nef des fous,” 1996/1998. Twenty Cibachrome photographs, one text panel, one chair, and two books, variable dimensions. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017;

where it was combined with a display of selected “objects of interest” from Sekula’s *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

memo, “Calais 96,” doodled in the margins. In fact, it was not until the fall of 2013—shortly after Sekula’s untimely death in the midst of an exceptionally hot summer—that I fully became aware of the special importance of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* for the artist, a work about which he published a book in 2001.⁴³⁷

At that time, I was working my way through the numerous documentary materials made available by Sekula concerning his last, incomplete project *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum* (2010–2013).⁴³⁸ It dawned on me that he exhibited elements from *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* along with *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum* on the two occasions when he presented selections from the latter work on the North-American continent—in San Francisco (2011) and in Vancouver (2012).⁴³⁹ (figs. 3.3–3.4) That Sekula presented his unfinished magnum opus *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum* to a US and Canadian audience by reverting to combining it with this rather obscure piece seemed quite a far stretch. Apart from the notable exception of one shot from



Fig. 3.3.

Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," 1996/1998. Partial view: thirteen Cibachrome photographs, framed measures 28×36 cm, combined with Sekula's *Sugar Gang (Santos)*, 2010, a sequence of six framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 76,2×76,2 cm, part of *Ship of Fools*, 2010; as installed during the exhibition *Oceans and Campfires: Allan Sekula and Bruno Serralongue*, San Francisco Art Institute, 2011–2012. © Photo: Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Bruno Serralongue and Allan Sekula Studio.



Fig. 3.4.

Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," 1996/1998. Partial view: nineteen Cibachrome photographs, framed measures 28×36 cm, as part of the exhibition *Lured*, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Fall 2012–Winter 2013. © Photo: Scott Massey. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

downtown New York City (12), *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* exclusively comprises images taken in France and the United Kingdom.

To grasp the reasons behind this combined presentation, a study of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* thrust itself upon me. When this finally materialized after having completed the *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* book in early 2015, I expected perhaps to devote a rather concise essay to this work. As the months progressed, however, and the influx of people into the European Union seemed to be exploding in the summer, I began to see that the political realities invoked seemed to have changed dramatically. All photographs used in this work date from between January and May of 1996.⁴⁴⁰ With the Brexit vote twenty years later, in 2016, I realized that the relevancy, if not urgency, of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* had meanwhile increased even more. I was in it for the longer haul, so much was sure.

From then on, Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* took on a significance that I want to describe in more detail in reference to Eduardo Cadava's influential book *Words of Light*. Relying on Walter Benjamin's insights, Cadava reminded his readers that images only come to legibility at a specific time.⁴⁴¹ This process tends to culminate in "a specific critical point." Cadava understood this critical point in terms of a moment of danger—a moment when historical meaning finds itself in crisis. "In the Now of recognizability [of such images]," he concluded while quoting Benjamin, we become capable of seeing them as bearing "to the highest degree the stamp of [a] critical, dangerous movement that is the ground of all reading."

By the time I first copied these lines in 2018, twenty years after Sekula initially exhibited *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, I had gained much more confidence with regard to what the artist had wanted to leave behind, through this work, for an interested audience to come.⁴⁴² Meanwhile, I had stumbled upon a letter, in which Sekula himself identified *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* as a new "local" work "in the context of the larger work [*Fish Story*]."⁴⁴³ *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, created right after the completion of *Fish Story*, is an incomparably more personal statement—as if Sekula felt the need to downscale the all-encompassing macro perspective on the state of the globe at the end of a millennium to a very precise and detailed microanalysis. In that same letter to Sheryl Conkelton, with whom he pondered doing a project for the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, he specified that *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* was a work that

deals with the trans-Channel ferry economy in the wake of the tunnel, with French popular resistance to the Reagan-Thatcher free market model, and with Tom Paine (who represented Calais in the post-1789 assembly).

Sekula indeed managed to integrate all these various elements into the work's contents, and I will unpack them one by one as this text proceeds. As indicated, the initial assignment by Annette Haudiquet, which basically left him free to do as he pleased, only came with the kind request to turn his focus to the littoral of the so-called Côte d'Opale of northwest France. Starting at the Belgian border, this east side of the funnel-shaped *La Manche* unfolds as a beautiful coastline stretching some 120 kilometers southward. Nowhere on the European mainland are the shores of England within closer reach. During the swimming season, when water temperatures vary between fourteen and eighteen degrees Celsius, it only takes about eighteen nautical miles, or thirty-three kilometers, to tackle the "Everest" of swimming from the beaches near Shakespeare Cliff just west of Dover Harbor to the legendary Cap Gris-Nez.⁴⁴⁴

Today, the United Kingdom still allows open-water crossings to the mainland. However, the reverse swimming tour is only possible as part of a return trajectory back to Dover. As of 1999, much to the regret of the *Calaisiens*, the French authorities prohibited departures from the Continent. Locals explain this decision as an attempt to prevent a clandestine swimming passage to Great Britain—which, on a clear day, is easily visible to the naked eye from Sangatte or Wissant.⁴⁴⁵ When the sun is out, Dover's cliffs, situated just across the strait, produce their legendary white reflections to solar light. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, numerous French artists—among whom most famously Eugène Boudin (1824–1898) (12#)—settled there for a while after having encountered an ideal subject for romanticizing marine paintings.

As the first in a range of five sequels to *Fish Story*, Allan Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* profoundly engaged with both the region's ample natural resources and its rich artistic legacy.⁴⁴⁶ Sekula's work also addressed the incessant struggles in which the Nord-Pas-de-Calais has historically been involved, and that have left deep scars on the local population's collective soul. The city of Calais—the beating heart of the area—carries the weight of this burdensome, painful past. In 1856, the French historian Charles Demotier could still fondly write that this pretty town, then situated 50° 57' 36" latitude north and 0° 29' 16" longitude west of the Paris meridian, was "one of the most pleasant and well-constructed within the country."⁴⁴⁷

Similarly, Alain Corbin sketched the exoticism that Calais breathed for nineteenth-century English tourists landing there as follows: "the harbor was simultaneously a text that abruptly portrayed the picturesque of another people and a stage on which the traveler made his entrance into this strange picture."⁴⁴⁸ Alas, the turn of a new century brought calamities that reopened age-old wounds and substantially

deepened them. From January 1, 1914 on, Calais's longitudinal astronomical coordinates shifted to 1° 51' 22.86" east. In retrospect, it is tempting to interpret such a seemingly banal event as portend to the impending "catastrophe" of that year's summer.⁴⁴⁹ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt identified the outbreak of World War I on August 4, 1914 as the catalyst causing a chain reaction of explosions "in which we have been caught ever since and which nobody seems to be able to stop."

These prophetic lines were written in the aftermath of World War II, and today they seem to have gained a renewed relevancy. But let us not run ahead of the argument and start where Arendt began her influential chapter on "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man"—at the very onset of the twentieth century, an era of unprecedented technological revolution. In the tense geopolitical atmosphere of pre-World War I Europe, France proved extremely reluctant to adopt the Greenwich line as the prime meridian, despite this having been agreed upon already during the 1884 International Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C.⁴⁵⁰ However, after the tragic sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912, France ceded to massive international pressure and made its nautical legislation conform to predominant international standards. In the wake of the disaster, it was painfully revealed that the French vessel *La Touraine* had sent a telegram to the *Titanic* giving the various locations of nearby ice fields and icebergs in Paris-meridian longitudes. It was established that France's stubbornness on this matter substantially contributed to the fatal confusion on board of the *Titanic* during its final hours.⁴⁵¹

What was the underlying tension with the Anglo-Saxon part of the world that caused the French government's admittedly irresponsible reluctance to implement the agreement in its national legislation and maritime practice? By the time Europe reached the fatal stage of the outbreak of World War I, France and Britain had roughly eight centuries of "an intense and troubled relationship" behind them.⁴⁵² Historians conventionally take the Norman conquest of 1066 as a key point of departure for grasping the "close but fraught connection" between the British Isles and France. The geographical Gordian nodal point called Calais is a key element for framing this situation in more depth. In front of its imposing town hall—one of the rare buildings to have survived the numerous bomb raids the city center suffered during World War II—Auguste Rodin's sculpture *Les Bourgeois de Calais* [*Burghers of Calais*], first installed in 1895, pays tribute to the city's sacrifices since time immemorial. Concretely, the monument refers to the hardships suffered during the Siege of Calais, initiated by Edward III of England (1346–47). The King offered clemency to the town's inhabitants and promised to spare them with the condition that six prominent citizens—principal leaders of resistance to the siege—surrender

themselves. He ordered them to wear halters around their necks while holding the keys to access the fortified castle in their hands.⁴⁵³ In a notebook entry scribbled on Epiphany Day 2007, Allan Sekula commented that Rodin's monumental ensemble of the "*Bourgeois de Calais*," which depicts the above-described scene, reminded him of a "*totentanz* [*sic*] of the individuated bourgeois."⁴⁵⁴

*

What was it about his experience at Calais that continued to haunt Allan Sekula almost a decade after he first exhibited *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in its local museum? How did he relate what he saw there with an imminent death dance of the individuated bourgeoisie, and what did he mean by that? These key questions warrant closer attention. A preliminary, helpful line of thought is Walter Benjamin's conception of historical materialism as articulated in his *The Arcades Project*. Like Benjamin, Sekula investigated political, economic, and social realities not as unconnected entities but as elements of a complex dialectical relationship shaping and determining history. This worldview takes a critical stance toward established beliefs that grand human ideals—such as, for example, the myth of the nuclear family and other bourgeois mystifications—suffice, on their own, to control and steer the course of history. In addition, historical materialism, according to Benjamin, involves overcoming the idea that progress is the goal of a society. Instead of aspiring for progress, each new generation needs to strive for "actualization" of what has historically proven to be favorable to the common good.⁴⁵⁵

My reading of Sekula's *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* needs to be seen in this light. Let me now first better describe the work itself. Part 1, "The Rights of Man"—1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme" contains thirteen dye destruction prints of variable dimensions. (see fig. 3.1) Part 2, "Ship of Fools"—2e volet, "La Nef des fous" is composed of twenty comparably small Cibachromes (each 28×36 cm).⁴⁵⁶ (see figs. 3.2–3.4) Contrary to *Fish Story*, this set of thirty-three photographs—a number that indeed matches the shortest distance in kilometers between the English and French shores—is framed without overmat. As is typical for the Cibachrome, each picture is printed on paper together with four black borders surrounding it. This provides the color images with an edgy sort of darkness, which adds to their overall pictorial aura.

Part Two, "Ship of Fools," which Sekula intended to be more narrative in character than Part One, "The Rights of Man," serves as a predella to the larger pictures forming the first group.⁴⁵⁷ The large majority of Part Two, "Ship of Fools" was produced during three shooting campaigns aboard the ferry *Renoir*, dismantled in India in 2011 but back then belonging to the fleet of the—today also liquidated—shipping company



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FAV TO: Jeanne Bouniort
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FROM: Allan Sekula

Dear Jeanne Bouniort:

Thank you for your careful (and rapid) translation.

- ① Regarding the Paine quotation: Both editions I've consulted give this as "began carver." It is possible that it should have been "began as carver," or as you suggest, "became carver." In any event, your rendering in French is a very good translation of the idea.

* perhaps a strange 18th century locution, perhaps a manuscript error never corrected

- ② In the last line of my text, you translated "intimacy" as "promiscuité". I had in mind both crowdedness, as your translation suggests, and private, personal, and sexual/romantic relations, perhaps better rendered as intimité. (I wanted to suggest Porter's early feminism) Perhaps this double meaning is only possible in English.

- ③ Regarding the title: Overall, I think I prefer "Passer au bleu", which is more allusive and even coloristic. (Am I right to think that this is roughly equivalent to the English expression: "to vanish into thin air"? The idea of disappearance is good. Losing the sense of burial at sea is not so good.

Things are even more complicated by the fact that, in maritime slang "deepsix" is a verb, often uttered in the imperative, as a command, as in: "Deep Six that!"

Best regards and thank you again,

Allan Sekula

Fig. 3.5.

Allan Sekula, Fax letter to Jeanne Bouniort (translator, Paris) from Toronto, May 1998. Part of the Allan Sekula Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © Allan Sekula Studio.

SeaFrance. Entirely state-owned, SeaFrance operated in those days between the passenger ports of Calais and Dover with ships proudly named after some of the country's greatest modern artists, including *Rodin*, *Cézanne*, *Manet*, and *Monet*.⁴⁵⁸ (see also fig. 1.1 middle right) The thirteen photographs that make up the cluster called Part One, "The Rights of Man," for their part, rather take the viewers on an excursion to selected locations on or near land: the ugly industrial area situated just next to Petit-Fort-Philippe in the once idyllic and later fortified village of Gravelines, the smeary surroundings of Dunkirk's seaport, an abandoned marine station across the channel in Dover, and the vibrant cargo docks of Calais.

When exhibited, the photographs are preceded by three wall-text panels, two of which accompany Part One, "The Rights of Man," and one Part Two, "Ship of Fools." (see figs. 3.1–3.2) The first panel includes a bilingual statement from the artist bearing the title "Deep Six" in English and "Passer au bleu" in French. The second and third panels contain French-English bilingual captions to the pictures.⁴⁵⁹ In an introductory essay to the only monograph on this much-overlooked work in Sekula's oeuvre, Pascal Beausse clarified that the verbs "deep six" and "passer au bleu" are synonymous expressions meaning—in both languages—to "make something disappear, take away all trace."⁴⁶⁰ As the OED indicates, this meaning possibly originates from a nautical expression used to refer to a water depth of six fathoms as measured by a lead line. Thirty-six feet, corresponding to around eleven meters, is the depth of "burial at sea."⁴⁶¹ Among sailors, it is commonly accepted that, from this depth on, any item tossed overboard would be irretrievably lost—or become unfathomable.

From an unpublished letter written in early May of 1998 to Jeanne Bouniort, who translated the wall-text materials from English into French, we know that it was this element of "burial at sea" together with the "idea of disappearance" that Sekula was most attached to in relation to the title *Deep Six*.⁴⁶² (fig. 3.5) We do not know where Sekula found inspiration for titling his work. Chapter Seven of a pioneering study by oceanographers Bruce Heezen and Charles Hollister, *The Face of the Deep* (1971), is in fact named "The Deep Six."⁴⁶³ Its motto is a quotation from Rudyard Kipling, who described the ocean bottoms as "great grey level plains of ooze where the shell-burred cables creep. / [...] the womb of the world."⁴⁶⁴ "In addition to a gentle, voluminous, and unrelenting snowfall of clay and ooze," as they opened their chapter,

the ocean floor intermittently receives consignments of a large size: rocks plucked from the land and later dropped from melting icebergs; stomach stones disgorged by sea lions; rocks borne to sea by rotting giant algae; garbage, paper, radioactively contaminated

tools and waste; junk, wrecks from peace and war; artillery projectiles; clinkers from coal-burning steamships; ballast; telephone and telegraph cables; beer bottles, tin cans [...], and much more, [...] imaginable, virtually unimaginable, and sometimes, unmentionable.

Certainly, Sekula wanted to guide the imagination of the audiences of his photo-textual sequence to this very zone of the virtually unimaginable, and sometimes, unmentionable—which, as argued in the later chapters of this book, has also proven fruitful for *Ground Sea*.

The French “passer au bleu,” for its part, refers to the practice of cleaning and laundering objects (such as sheets and floors) by means of methylene blue: an antiseptic substance that permits a thorough, complete washing away. In a figurative sense, this expression also implies that something is forgotten, is made to disappear, or is stolen.⁴⁶⁵ The work’s double caption thus readily signals a rather dramatic absence, or even a lack. *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, in other words, recalls a film noir title. Sekula appears to have played with this effect through one image in Part Two, “Ship of Fools”: a magnificent picture he made of an equally splendid glass-framed photograph of the legendary French actress Jeanne Moreau (21).

One of Moreau’s most iconic cinematographic renditions is her magnetic role as Lidia in Michelangelo Antonioni’s *La Notte* (1961). The discontented wife of a celebrated novelist, Giovanni Pontano (Marcello Mastroianni), Lidia is the driving force behind the couple’s rapidly disintegrating marriage. She is also its silent observer. In one scene, for instance, she is filmed in a voyeuristic pose standing behind a large floor-to-ceiling window watching her husband embracing Valentina (Monica Vitti), an irresistible woman he just met at a fancy party in a rich industrialist’s villa. Lidia and Giovanni are portrayed as trapped in the ennui of modern bourgeois comfort that, until then, had so generously nourished their lives as young adults. The construction cranes that pop up everywhere in the surrounding cityscape add to the film’s overall melancholic atmosphere. Their unhappy story unfolds before our eyes in less than twenty-four hours. Death itself comes to join Lidia’s awareness that she no longer loves Giovanni, since, during that same crucial night, their best friend Tommaso (Bernhard Wicki) passes away.

Antonioni masterfully uses the tensions in this sad couple’s life as a metaphor for a larger comment on European society of the early 1960s. This becomes tangible when they visit a nightclub slightly earlier on in the evening. When they watch, with “both tenderness and strain,” a Black contortionist perform a private dance, the filmmaker’s subtle but sharp commentary on Europe’s long-lasting fraught “colonial relationship” with Africa is evident.⁴⁶⁶ While zooming in on Jeanne Moreau as

the clichéd French ideal of female beauty par excellence, Sekula joined this search for *fishing out* a more diversified beauty ideal. How not to look at the contortionist's troubling appearance in a terribly uncomfortable scene as this death dance of the individuated bourgeois being performed emblematically before Lidia and Giovanni's eyes?

Upon further observation, Sekula's *Sea France Renoir* [Photo decor, portrait of Jeanne Moreau] subtly reflects the rectangular marine windows of the *Renoir*. In this way—as in a filmic mise en abyme—Sekula's photograph opens our view to the outside, to the characteristically gray-blue waters of the English Channel. By situating the viewer so deliberately at the liminal space of inside and outside, several questions regarding the image's meaning present themselves. What else appears to have gone missing in this vertiginous hall of mirrors? What is it that seems to have been disposed of with the inclusion of all this evidence? Even more worrisome: *who* might have irretrievably vanished in the underworld of the sea? *What* should we be on the lookout for? What should we imagine that has become virtually unimaginable? What should we mention that has become unmentionable? Should we search in the seawater? Or has it already resurfaced? Has its message been misunderstood and was it rapidly forgotten thereafter once again?

*

Deep Six / Passer au bleu thus appears to be a suspenseful riddle. But given the abovementioned photograph's persistent emphasis on the sea's surface, the work's author will surely have sought to reestablish a connection to aquatic life. Consider one possible further point of entry: a diptych from Part One, "The Rights of Man." It consists of a portrait taken on a rainy day of a cod angler measuring his line on a pier in Dover, almost ready to throw his rod into the channel (13). This image forms a diptych with the already-mentioned picture that Sekula made of a metal garbage can, rather oddly positioned on a walking path in New York City's Thomas Paine Park (12). Shown side by side, they suggest that something could be *fished* from a trash can. (fig. 3.6) The visually most prominent candidate for such a recovery operation is a paper shopping bag shaped as an American flag, tossed in the can. As explained by Beausse, this flag is part of "a logo promoting a French brand of clothes inspired by leather US Navy pilots' jackets."⁴⁶⁷ By exposing us as viewers to a Stars and Stripes most likely trashed by a consumer in a city park named after a hero of the American Revolution, Sekula was hardly making a neutral gesture. Furthermore, we realize that, by placing the anonymous cod fisher right next to it, the artist sought to reconnect the information provided by the picture taken in New York with the channel's waters.





Fig. 3.6.

Allan Sekula, *Thomas Paine Park*, New York City, and *Cod Fisher, Dover*, two Cibachrome photographs, framed measures 75×103,3 cm and 75,3×104 cm; and *Dockers loading sugar ship, Calais*, framed triptych, three Cibachrome photographs 51,8×200 cm, part of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme," 1996/1998. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view of the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017, as presented with selected "objects of interest" from Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

Sekula in fact confirmed this in a letter to Marie-Thérèse Champesme, dated June 29, 1995. He expressed his interest in four elements related to the Calais area.

1) The fisheries crisis. 2) The anti-maritime character of the channel tunnel. 3) The fact that Tom Paine, the author of *The Rights of Man* and the important pamphlet of the American Revolution, *Common Sense*, represented Calais in the French National Assembly during the French Revolution. 4) The fact that the British naval mutineers of 1797 considered sailing the fleet to France to join the French Revolution.⁴⁶⁸

As discussed, Calais has long served as a major node in the complex historical ties between Great Britain and France. For Sekula, Thomas Paine embodied this intricate connection, and he developed a profound fascination for him. In another letter faxed to Champesme (dated March 15, 1996), Sekula informed her that he went to visit Paine's former home in New Rochelle. On that occasion, he photographed "the only monument to [Paine] in America."⁴⁶⁹

Of English descent, Paine—as Sekula pointed out in his June 29, 1995 letter to Champesme—was quite provocatively elected to represent the Pas-de-Calais in the French National Convention on September 6, 1792 (after having obtained honorary French citizenship).⁴⁷⁰ Paine thus embodies a revolutionary figure establishing an intricate connection between three countries of which he became an official citizen: France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The national flag of each country has identical colors.⁴⁷¹ It seems no coincidence, then, that Sekula made sure to integrate blue, white, and red accents, if subtly at times, in every photograph of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*. In an interview with Sekula, Pascal Beausse referred to this play with the colors of the American and French flags, suggesting the presence of the American flag "amidst the garbage in New York," which is echoed in another image of "the military medal of a member of the National Front during a demonstration in Paris" (29). Sekula replied as follows:

Don't forget the Union Jack, the flag under which Paine was born and the only one of the three not to stand for a republic. The flag of Burke, Paine's great conservative antagonist, and a hero to the Right even today. I structured the work around this triple trichromy.⁴⁷²

For Sekula, this strategic use of trichromatic elements went far beyond the simple frivolity of a formal exercise. Often, the coincidental presence of the tricolor motif is so striking that it is tempting to suspect the

artist of deliberately having searched for its effects. For example, the female supporter of the National Front Party, to whom Beausse referred, wears a light summer skirt with a flower motif in white, red, and blue.⁴⁷³ In *Cod Fisher, Dover* the color accents are on the level of tiny details: the white fishing wire rolling out of the reel seat made of red and blue components, while the rod's sections for the angler to place both hands are of the same light blue and entwined with a solid red tape (13). Moreover, as it obviously just stopped raining, the overall atmosphere on the pier appears pregnant with a purplish hue, highlighting the dirty white rag loosely tied on the railing in the foreground of the picture.

In a short review of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu's* first exhibition in the Calais museum, the anonymous author provided another explanation for Sekula's flagrant use of trichromatic elements. Under the header "Trois couleurs et un lien" [Three colors and a link] and a photograph of the artist pondering how to install the work in the museum space, he did not focus on the question of the three national flags. The review begins as follows:

Blue, white, red: three colors. One immediately thinks of Krzysztof Kieszlowski [*sic*]. The great Polish filmmaker made this trilogy before dying, leaving a last trace of his Slavic vision of human relationships.⁴⁷⁴

Sekula, according to the reviewer, "preserved the Slavic soul inside of him, even if he doesn't talk about it," which is "obvious to those who perceive and fathom it." Thus, this reviewer, who was apparently capable of inferring Sekula's Slavic soul, established a striking connection to his personality and identity.

Following the cliché, this Slavic vision of reality is usually characterized as melancholic. Slavic vision, so it is said, assumes, and accepts, that life is intimately linked to suffering and to evil. As a result, those equipped with the Slavic soul are considered to have collectively drawn the conclusion that, even if caught by a certain weariness about the state of the world, one should at all times try to make the best of it—of life in it. This may also involve making painful decisions, such as to gather the courage to leave one's native soil behind. Although Slavic nomads remain loyal to their roots, they are said to move to where the chances of a better life will take them. Even if melancholy might eventually catch up with them, they are often praised for never giving up. In the context of the present study, there is no room for comparing the biographies of Krzysztof Kieszlowski and Sekula, nor for tracing the similarities and differences between them. However, I do want to focus on shared affinities as expressed by color in their artworks—an arguably Slavic approach of the enigma of everyday reality.

According to Joseph Kickasola, Kieślowski's rich employment of colors serves as a "visual thread" that, while holding his films together, never stands out as an easily discerned, direct metaphor.⁴⁷⁵ Through this peculiar use of color, Kieślowski's films access the plane of painting, as color becomes an active construct within each film's diegesis. Colors in his films evoke moods or take on a symbolic meaning, which often remains multivalent. Kieślowski's chromatism, furthermore, is marked by an abstracted use of colors. The viewer, in turn, projects a variety of emotions and wider connotative meanings upon these colors. The opening image of *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991), for example, is an abstract image full of rich blues and deep violets, within which slashes of light and subtle movement can be discerned. After a few seconds of silence, the voice-over reveals that this mystery image represents a winter sky, a revelation that both reassures and disturbs the spectator as the shot at first made such an otherworldly impression. In *Blue* (1993), the main protagonist Julie is often seen swimming in a pool, in positions reminiscent of a fetus in a watery womb. In this film, blue appears at regular intervals as a tool that helps to construct Julie's healing process (she is recovering from a car accident).

At a certain moment in *Blue*, Kieślowski filmed Julie as she emerges on an escalator from the subway and enters the Rue Mouffetard in Paris, firmly determined to start her life over. This will eventually lead to her rebirth as a publicly acknowledged composer of music (an aspiration she had been hiding in her married life before the accident). In *A Short Film About Love* (1988), Kieślowski went so far as to visualize in slow motion the flow of blood rolling into a water basin, suggesting the wounds of Christ and religious symbolism. As in the painterly tradition, as argued by Kickasola, red for Kieślowski may refer to blood as well as to love, to trauma as well as to tenderness. Kieślowski's *Red* (1994), a film about the impossible love story of an older man and a younger woman, succeeds in conflating the two aspects: love as sacrifice. (Plate 6) In several of his films, finally, white took on the sense of this one special color comprising a "surplus of meaning" within itself.⁴⁷⁶ This becomes perhaps most clear in *Decalogue I* (1988), in which a cheerful ten-year-old named Paweł drowns in a small lake near his house, after having fatally fallen through breaking ice while first testing out the new ice skates that his father gave him as an early Christmas present. (Plate 7)

The film reveals this tragedy indirectly. While Paweł is out of the house, his father, Krzysztof, is working at home. Suddenly, a bottle of ink breaks rather inexplicably, and purplish dark blue ink gushes over his papers. (see Plate 7 above left) When Krzysztof washes the ink off his hands in the bathroom, he stares into the mirror and senses something beyond his comprehension. (see Plate 7 above right) Later, after hearing the dire news, Krzysztof, unable to control his grief, runs into

a nearby church and topples the altar. White wax from the ruptured candles splashes on the face of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa Icon, who thus appears to be bursting out in tears. (see Plate 7 below left) Right after, the inconsolable father—consumed by feelings of guilt—desperately tries to cool his feverish face with a chunk of frozen holy water (in the shape of the host) that he pulls from the baptismal vessel. (see Plate 7 below right) The viewer sharply becomes aware that the uncontrollable beauty of this glistening piece of ice is utterly unbearable. In this way, Kieślowski's films continue to encourage viewers to understand the connections revealed, connections he considered as always part of our everyday reality but that we never tend to notice in that way. For Kickasola, the cinematographer thus manages to demonstrate that “there is a unity in the world—a beautiful structure that is noticed when the camera distills it to a celluloid image.” This ideal beauty, however, can only be found through the “brokenness of reality,” and afterward by succeeding to move beyond the suffering and sacrifice caused by this brokenness.⁴⁷⁷

Accordingly, critics suggest, Kieślowski's aesthetics reflects a “desire for redemption.” Associating this same desire with the thirty-three photographs forming *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* will make it easier to see how Allan Sekula, trained as a painter, felt inspired by the *Three Colors* trilogy. As a matter of fact, this trilogy also utilized the three themes symbolized in the French flag (liberty, equality, and fraternity)—the foundational themes underlying any democratic society—as structuring principle.⁴⁷⁸ In *Blue*, it is liberty that is given the central position, and the color blue symbolizes this subject matter in a polysemous way. It suggests sorrow (cf. having “the blues”) and the desire to be freed from that pain.⁴⁷⁹ At the same time, the film contains various references to blue as a “cold” color, as the very desire to be free may also give rise to selfishness, if not greed or a lack of willingness to share.

Liberty therefore needs to be balanced with other values. First, equality with others must be postulated in a mandatory way, because, as argued by Kieślowski in a rather pessimistic vein, no one spontaneously wants to be equal. “Equality understood as a contradiction” became the central theme of *White* (1994), a film that provides a profound reflection on economic materialism, greed, exploitation, power, and revenge.⁴⁸⁰ According to Kieślowski,

we understand the concept of “equality,” that we all want to be equal. But I think this is absolutely not true. I don't think anybody really wants to be equal. Everybody wants to be more equal. There's a saying in Polish: There are those who are equal and those who are more equal.

In *White*, the use of the color white, as a result, is often ironic, such as when Kieślowski showed his viewers the white of bird droppings on clothes, or of a toilet seat. Eventually, the two protagonists of the film, Karol and Dominique, lose everything they own. It is only through that very loss that they become equals, as well as discover their true love, which makes them see “light at the end of the tunnel”—as Dominique’s lawyer says. Finally, *Red* is a film about love, the necessary precondition or bedrock for installing “fraternity.” It is not a film about just any type of ordinary love. From a profound reflection on the complex intercommunication between an old retired judge named Joseph Kern and a model, Valentine, the film muses on what it means to be “born at the wrong time,” as claimed by Kieślowski.⁴⁸¹

A recurrent visual motif throughout the film is a huge public advertisement for chewing gum representing Valentine in profile, appearing fearful. It hangs at an important intersection, occasionally crossed by all key protagonists in their cars. The poster’s background is red, and the caption mysteriously says “en toute circonstance, fraîcheur de vivre” [freshness of living, in all situations]—translated by Kickasola as “The Breath of Life.”⁴⁸² (see Plate 6 above left image) Eventually, both the picture and the slogan take on an eerie meaning, as Valentine will figure among the few survivors of a shipwreck in the English Channel while on her way by ferry to London via Dover. In the disaster, almost all its estimated 1,435 passengers perish. Valentine miraculously manages to escape the tragedy. So does Auguste, a young law student who is her immediate neighbor in Geneva (but whom she never met, though we see them crossing paths repeatedly in the film without knowing each other, including while boarding the fatal ferry *King Eduard*).⁴⁸³ (see Plate 6 above right and below right images)

Auguste, it is finally suggested, might possibly be a reincarnation of the judge, and perhaps eventually become Valentine’s lover—as is, among other elements, implied from the awkward coincidence that Julie and her new lover Olivier (from *Blue*) and reconciled Karol and Dominique (from *White*) also figure among the only seven survivors. *Red*, according to Kickasola, therewith ends by revealing that, to truly live in fraternity, one must accept the possibility of a far-reaching love, which stretches beyond ordinary temporal friendship and opens to the vast expanse of cosmological possibility. The *Three Colors* trilogy intimates that there must be a metaphysical order of things. For Kieślowski, it is cosmic fraternity that will finally come to counter isolation, and the positive connotations of red (love, affection) may thus potentially prevail over the negative ones (blood, devouring flames). For this imaginative possibility to open up, Kieślowski allowed the lives of his six protagonists to finally intersect at the end of the film.⁴⁸⁴ The spectators, together with the judge who turned on the television, watch all of

them embarking together on a little lifeboat in the middle of the English Channel. *Red* ends with a moving image of the judge looking out through a broken window. He can no longer hold back his tears after having seen Valentine safe and well on the television screen. (see Plate 6 below left image) As the survivors managed to keep their breath of life, he finally finds peace of mind, as well as redemption.

*

Krzysztof Kieślowski's *aesthetics of intersection*, creating a “mosaic of characters,” is revelatory for a more profound understanding of Sekula's *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*.⁴⁸⁵ I want to argue that, in this sequence, Sekula also created “liminal images”—“images that trace the threshold of mystery in our human experience.”⁴⁸⁶ As I was writing this book, my fascination for such intersections and that very liminality of photographic images only continued to grow, and I want to illustrate this by calling to mind a few further examples from *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*. In this work, Sekula implicitly referred to the irony of certain of Kieślowski's intersectional aesthetic games. He made a blue 2CV car pop up mysteriously on a desolate sandy beach in Dunkirk (5). A French woman, Marie-Thérèse Champesme, with a warm red coat smiled from afar at the camera in an abandoned ferry terminal in Dover (8).



Fig. 3.7.
Admiralty Chart 1406
North Sea, Dover and
Calais to Orford Ness and
Scheveningen (partial
reproduction). Not to
be used for Navigation.
© Crown Copyright
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sion of The Keeper of
Public Records and the
UK Hydrographic Office
(www.GOV.uk/UKHO).

Imagine the chart of the Strait of Dover. (fig. 3.7) If we take the established order of blue-white-red that characterizes the French flag as a point of departure, then blue corresponds to the United Kingdom, white to the channel water, and red to France. Seen from this perspective, the

woman in red comes to import a certain Frenchness to England, and the blue car on a French beach suggests a reverse operation. If we take the connotations given to these colors by Kieślowski's *Three Colors* trilogy, Sekula may possibly have suggested that, to establish equality, a certain amount of liberty should be exported from the United Kingdom to France in exchange for bringing a degree of fraternity to Britain.⁴⁸⁷ Even if this reading may seem far-fetched, what Sekula surely meant to hint at is his desire for a productive cross-pollination of cultures. In the Dunkirk triptych, the white semaphore may be seen as a warning sign for this—as if to remind viewers that, from up there, it is not difficult to observe the presence of white cliffs on both sides of the English Channel, which are connected by means of the sea bottom composed of the same material (6).

In *Decalogue I*, the little frozen lake in which the boy Paweł drowns forms a crucial connection between all the protagonists in the film. For Kieślowski, all narrative lines intersect in one way or another in the white, empty space.⁴⁸⁸ In *Red*, it is suggested that Valentine and August rise up from the seawater surrounded by a tiny bit of foam caused by the waves surrounding the capsized ferry.⁴⁸⁹ It is as if Kieślowski appeared to indicate that, as the thin layer of foam crystallizes further, it will turn into symbolic *ice*. Finally, this ice may grow larger and take on the deep white color of the chalk marl. In this imagined white zone, the young couple finally meets—even if finding themselves amid a catastrophe. From this precarious state of solidity, they will need to construct their future together. Kieślowski appears to have wanted his audience to fully realize this by displaying the disaster itself, with the inclusion of real corpses. Sekula, in turn, took his spectators on a more pleasurable ferry crossing with the *Renoir*. But, no doubt, he also desired his viewers to be aware of the potential dangers underlying the journey, as suggested by *Sea France Renoir* [Closing the gate] and *Sea France Renoir* [Electrical hazard] (16 and 26). The slightest incident could turn the pleasurable passage into a disastrous “shipwreck with spectators”—as W.G. Sebald had it.⁴⁹⁰

What, then, may be of a revolutionary nature that can still be *fished for* in the depths of the channel waters? There is plenty indeed, Sekula suggested—at least on an imaginary level. A popular, if probably unfounded, legend has it that Paine's bones “washed overboard” from a ship repatriating them back to his home country of England in 1819.⁴⁹¹ As such, they were absorbed by the Atlantic Ocean depths and have been missing ever since.⁴⁹² “So,” Sekula wrote,

Paine in the end becomes the man whose bones have no resting place, the republican of no nation, because he believed very much in some larger republican ideal that would transcend nationality. It's perhaps

*obvious but interesting to set Paine against the idea of the nation. He in so many ways was someone who understood that nationality was fluid. The career of the radical is by definition international.*⁴⁹³

Reobserving *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* with this knowledge in mind, it is possible to interpret Sekula's sequence as being on the lookout, metaphorically, for a resurfacing of Paine's bones. One of the work's underlying messages, in my view, is Sekula's expression of regret that Thomas Paine's radically democratic ambitions have been erased from our collective memory. The main compositional lines at play within the New York–Dover diptych seem to confirm this. It is striking that its overall dynamic is triangular. Looking at the two photographs in this way, the cod fisher appears to be about to throw his rod into the garbage can and pick out Paine's trashed ideals to save them from oblivion.

Yet the stakes addressed in *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* are not merely of a historical nature. Aside from paying tribute to “the most radical, democratic and now-neglected [among] the leaders of the American struggle for colonial independence,” Sekula also used the figure of Thomas Paine as a trope to develop a larger discussion of the late-twentieth-century realities in and around Calais.⁴⁹⁴ In the above-quoted letter to Marie-Thérèse Champesme, he emphasized that his work was meant to prompt debate around contemporary socioeconomic sore points, such as the problematic decline of traditional fishing culture. More surprising, perhaps, is to find Sekula so critical of the Channel Tunnel, which he described to be of “anti-maritime” nature. Long debated on both sides of the strait, the construction project was officially inaugurated via the pompous signing of a bilateral treaty by Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand in Canterbury Cathedral on February 12, 1986. The ceremony took place under a wave of local protest, with people shouting slogans such as “Froggy, Froggy, Froggy, Out, Out, Out” and reproaching Thatcher for her “tunnel vision.”⁴⁹⁵

The Tunnel has been operative since 1994.⁴⁹⁶ That Sekula turned his attention to the fixed link between Great Britain and France should not come as a surprise because these are “interests,” he explained in the same letter to Champesme, that “follow from themes already touched upon in *Fish Story*.” *Fish Story*'s Chapter Five bears the intangible title “Message in a Bottle.” The full sequence consists of seven photographs made in Vigo, Galicia, Spain, in May 1992.⁴⁹⁷ (fig. 3.8) When exhibited, the images are accompanied by a white text panel in which Sekula, using black fonts, established a concrete connection to Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. One of the book's main protagonists—Pierre Aronnax—repeatedly compares his forced underwater experience on Captain Nemo's submarine *Nautilus* with that of traveling in an “express train,” as if it could “slid[e] along the tracks of a railway.”⁴⁹⁸



Fig. 3.8.

Allan Sekula, *Fish Story*, 1989–1995, Chapter 5: “Message in a Bottle,” 1992/1994. 7 Cibachrome prints and 2 text panels, variable dimensions. Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection, Vienna. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

But shortly after Aronnax uttered these admiring words, the *Nautilus* dramatically runs into an iceberg. In this passage from Chapter Fifteen of the novel, Verne, who usually extolled the wonders of submarine life, came closest to in fact warning his readers of the dangers related to underwater travel.

In “Message in a Bottle,” Sekula indirectly elaborated on this concern by emphasizing the admirable sense of materialistic, commonsensical realism displayed by “those who work the surface of the sea”: they nurture a spontaneous “distrust borne toward submarines.”⁴⁹⁹ Moreover, in his text “Dismal Science: Part 2,” an essay published in the *Fish Story* book, Sekula—building on the work of Roland Barthes—heavily criticized the unrealistic, “egg-like fullness” of Verne’s encyclopedic world.⁵⁰⁰ On the occasion of the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus* at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona (2017), Anja Isabel Schneider, Carles Guerra, and I—who jointly curated the show—decided to install the small model of Verne’s *Nautilus* designed by Ron Miller, which is part of Sekula’s *The Dockers’ Museum*, in combination with the above-discussed diptych from *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*. (see fig. 3.6) The prow of the *Nautilus Submarine Model* pointed right at the line of the cod fisher, as if about to ram and cut it through as soon as it was thrown. (fig. 3.9)



Our curatorial gesture was meant as a tribute to Sekula’s sharp remark that, from the perspective of still photography—a medium that, in his view, “slows things down”—Captain Nemo’s “restless slogan ‘mobilis in mobili [sic]’” becomes a suspect motto.⁵⁰¹ Just as sailors and fishermen distrust submarines, the artist encouraged us, viewers of his photographs, to use our common sense to evaluate what, after all, we accomplished by building the “submarine” Eurostar train to speed up our mobility and raise the efficiency of our transportation system (as I observed with my own eyes on November 1, 2017). (11#) What, exactly, is the progress we thus achieve? In a letter dated March 13, 1998 and addressed to Annette Haudiquet, Sekula repeated that, in his view, the “maritime slang” expression “deep six”—before anything else—meant “sending something or someone to the bottom.”⁵⁰² He thus implicitly referred to the decision, as indicated in the previously quoted letter to Marie-Thérèse Champesme, to organize—or should one say to *trash*—transport of persons on the seafloor through an “anti-maritime” channel tunnel.

In Sekula’s view, the Channel Tunnel represents a reckless denial of the panoramic aspects of sea travel.⁵⁰³ Dazzled by the permanent darkness of the train ride, as if buried at sea, the passengers are completely at a loss and incapable of conceiving of any potentially larger take on the

Fig. 3.9. *Nautilus* Jules Verne Ron Miller Submarine Model [as indicated on PayPal document]. Mixed media, manufacturer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 12.5×28.5×4 cm. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on July 21, 2010. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Collection Flemish Community. Installation view from the exhibition Allan Sekula. *Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers’ Museum*).

reality that surrounds them. Sekula's suggestion is that, by eliminating or obscuring from view the sublime moment of land turning into sea or sea turning into land, a human level of temporality is lost—even if some would argue that they would rather cross the channel without being exposed to the sometimes powerful natural forces at sea or suffering from the occasional seasickness.

What happens when transported humans are sent, or deep sixed, in trains “to the bottom”? What does it mean to make goods disappear in shipping containers, so they can be transported over sea out of view of almost everything and everyone—only to arrive in ports to which hardly anyone has access? What if the next step is to, shamelessly, put people in shipping containers, as was the case in Calais in 2016?⁵⁰⁴ What is it that, subsequently, rises to the surface? Such reflections triggered by *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* saddle us with an uncanny feeling. How to respond today to the urgent need felt by Sekula—as the old millennium came to an end—to document a landscape, people, or their habits for later generations? From our retrospective angle, twenty-five years later, this work offers a precious analysis of a culture that was about to be extinguished. Sekula deliberately chose to pursue this creative act via a medium that was in full transition from analog to digital photography—a medium that was too slow, not technological enough, and too materialist to still be considered “contemporary.”⁵⁰⁵

*

Bringing in the realm of the *contemporary* allows us to fast forward in time and turn to the everyday realities in and near Calais at the present. Situated in the very central part of western Europe, it is difficult to find a city where—to recall Sekula's wordings once more—the approaching decline or even end of at least a set of key components of the (French) postwar individuated bourgeois society model appears more tangible. In a breathtaking open letter from 2018 to the French president Emmanuel Macron, Yann Moix accused France of having become “the Libya of England.”⁵⁰⁶ About the city of Calais, he reported that, as a whole, it had become “a Jungle.”⁵⁰⁷ By this, he meant that the present restructuring of the town, with fences and gates firmly installed within its historical heart, shows us the breakdown of a myth. That dismantled myth, according to Moix, is the following. Visiting Calais today no longer allows you to believe in a Europe that is supposed to embody what its founding fathers imagined it to become in the aftermath of World War II: a “beautiful” and “strong” unifying project.⁵⁰⁸ As François Guennoc, director of the nonprofit association l'Auberge des Migrants, deplored in early 2019, “little by little Calais surrounds itself by wire racks, disfiguring itself.”⁵⁰⁹

A society concerned with building gates and fences only proves its weakness and helplessness. “Europe,” in the opinion of Moix, has become a “boneless word.”⁵¹⁰ In Calais today, all but beauty and strength can be found. Instead, Calais represents a “Europe” that is “ugly” and “sly.” Calais, Moix concluded, is “the scabby capital” of France, as well as its “hidden” and “inverted” capital—its “unworthy” and “shameful” capital.⁵¹¹ Calais should also be regarded as the unworthy, inverted capital of the European Union as a whole. The town’s vicinities are overpopulated with wandering individuals who do not have a decent roof over their heads. Worse even, the same applies to various other European cities, including the formal EU capital, Brussels—as already indicated. Local authorities, unwilling or incapable of dealing with the situation, act with ever-greater effrontery. On the evening of June 29, 2019, policemen, accompanied by dogs, arrived at Maximiliaanpark–Parc Maximilien: they laconically announced that the park had to be vacated for the next eight days. One police officer provided the following reason: “Pour le Tour de France” [For the Tour de France].⁵¹² Asked for an explanation by the French public television channel RTBF, the mayor of Brussels was not available for commentary.⁵¹³

From the perspective of the established vocabulary used within the modern nation-state for appropriately identifying fellow human beings, the errant men, women, and children who have set up camp at places such as Maximiliaanpark–Parc Maximilien appear extremely difficult to label. The most common term circulating is “migrant,” which the OED defines as “a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions.”⁵¹⁴ On its website, the European Commission provides a similar description: “A broader term of an immigrant and emigrant, referring to a person who leaves one country or region to settle in another, often in search of a better life.”⁵¹⁵ In many ways, this seems to be a useful concept. If there would be universal consensus on the notion that all forms of human migration are worthy of some basic level of societal esteem and respect, the terminological discussion could stop here indeed. In that case, we could even qualify some of the persons Sylvain George interviewed for *Les Éclats* under the more narrowly defined category of “refugee”: “a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.”⁵¹⁶ Anyone not falling within this specific group could then comfortably be called a migrant.

From the point of view of internationally accepted legislation shaped in the aftermath of World War II, however, there is a difference between each of these groups. Refugees can apply for asylum.⁵¹⁷ Migrants need to follow another trajectory for obtaining the necessary papers allowing them to take residence in their new country. Migrants may potentially have more difficulties in obtaining the appropriate documents giving

them access to work, health insurance, or other social security benefits, but the reverse is also true (basically, it depends on the passport that one holds). In the ideal world, there can be no doubt that all newcomers—also those who travel for economic purposes—have a right not only to receive protective, humane treatment, but also to get a fair chance.

The realities in Europe no longer correspond to this dream scenario. Both national and EU policy-makers increasingly seek to distinguish between “‘voluntary’ (economic) migrants” and “forced migrants.”⁵¹⁸ Forced migrants are those who flee war or persecution, and who have to be accepted by law—often to the remarkable discontent of those in power. Voluntary migration, largely involving persons from poor countries traveling to the European Union hoping to find a place to study, work, or simply live a better life, is actively discouraged at present. The term *migrant* has become a dirty word. Yann Moix has gone as far as to propose simply no longer using it. After all, as a verb, “migrating” is also intensively employed in the various physical sciences: “animal species as well as plants know migration, just as body cells.”⁵¹⁹ In his view, then, the term “migrant” has obtained a dehumanizing meaning.

From here on, and following Moix, I only employ the term sporadically, putting it between quotation marks to substantiate my disagreement with its present systematically denigrating use.⁵²⁰ Moix provided ample examples of the negative connotation of the word at all levels of discourse—from everyday language to presidential addresses. In polemical terms, he also loathed the fatality we have come to associate with the concept, as if becoming a “migrant” subjects one to the “natural necessity” of “zoological passivity, of instinctive obedience that denies human history.”⁵²¹ Being identified as a “migrant” today comes down to receiving the stigma of an abasing term. Worse even, being *called* a “migrant” has grown into a dangerously pejorative label. Whereas earlier generations could still take pride in it, today this is a status people need to fear being associated with during their lifetime. The existing social fabric around certain types of migration is weakening at a frightening rate. In line with a proposal from Amnesty International, I speak, wherever possible, of “people on the move,” which refers to “migrants, regardless of their legal status, asylum-seekers and refugees.”⁵²²

As of late 2017, another term, “transitory migrant,” has also rapidly spread.⁵²³ “Transitory migrants”—in French abbreviated as *transmigrants*—are individuals or groups of people who find themselves in an EU member state while on their way to another one. In almost all cases, their favorite destination appears to be the United Kingdom. The city of Calais, logically, continues to serve as a magnet. But many will never make it to Calais, let alone the United Kingdom. Often, their journey already comes to a halt—against their will—near where they enter the European Union, and many subsequently end up living on the streets

or in squats, causing local public opinion to react in dismissive terms. The frightful consequence is that, also in Belgium, “transitory migrant” is now established pejoratively in much televised and written media reporting. The most used notion in Dutch is also “transmigrant,” even though, in this language, there is a perfect (older) word: “landverhuizer,” literally meaning someone who is in transit from their homeland to another land.

One early example of how “transitory migrant” is used in the Belgian media may suffice as an illustration. A news item from February 2018 bears the seemingly neutral heading “Woman needs to compensate costs after accident with transitory migrant herself.”⁵²⁴ A woman referred to as B.V., from De Haan on the Belgian coast, collided with a thirty-nine-year-old man from Ethiopia, who died on the spot. The man tried to escape being checked by the police by running away along the E40 highway near Jabbeke (which is on the way from Brussels to Calais). The newspaper focused its report on the fact that the mini-omnium insurance of B.V.’s car does not cover all repair expenses, adding that this would have been the case should she have accidentally knocked down a wild boar. The name of the man was not mentioned, not even in the days following the tragic incident. Neither did the authorities announce that they were actively searching to further identify this man. Interviewed on the disaster the then Belgian Minister of Interior Affairs, Jan Jambon, immediately claimed on public Flemish television (*VRT NWS*) that the police was not to be blamed, as “this type of accidents cannot be avoided” and “everyone knows that walking on the highway is dangerous.”⁵²⁵ This basically came down to saying that the case was closed, and that the person we were supposed to feel sorry for was the woman from De Haan. No one, it seemed, felt like standing up for the poor man. No one took any political responsibility for what happened. The underlying message from the man endowed with power seemed to be that, after all, the powerless man was just an irksome liability to Belgian society, to recall Zygmunt Bauman’s words from *Wasted Lives*—a surplus person, one that is disposable.

*

In “Reflections on Exile,” an essay originally published in 1984, Edward Saïd wrote,

Exiles look at non-exiles with resentment. *They* belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place. What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?⁵²⁶

Rereading Saïd today confronts us once more with the fact that terms and labels are so rapidly shifting that there is an urgent need to revise them all into renewed adequacy. Whereas some “transitory migrants” may absolutely feel like an exile, they do not readily fit Saïd’s description of the exile as “anyone prevented from returning home.”⁵²⁷ In many EU member states, political parties are now making it a point of honor in their program that public authorities should be allowed far more elbow room to *force* “transitory migrants” to return to their home countries, even if this means handing them over to dubious political regimes (such as, for example, in Sudan).⁵²⁸

In some EU countries, such as Hungary, Austria, or Italy, but also in Belgium or France, the adherents of these ideas score well in polls and elections. The Hungarian parliament has even gone as far as to vote on a range of laws that incriminate persons and organizations aiding “migrants.” As argued by Yann Moix, the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, has had a head-in-the-sand response. Because of his persistent insensitivity to “the announcement of an impending disaster,” he is a “mediocre” hypocrite.⁵²⁹ When writing these lines, Moix quoted the French writer George Bernanos, who, in his own works, was critical of the defeatism that often comes with the established bourgeois way of thinking that still characterizes much of European thought today. Moix proposes holding on to the concept of “exiled person” as a replacement term for “migrant.”⁵³⁰ Indeed, this notion can work in the larger sense of the term, meaning “a person who lives away from their native country, either from choice or compulsion.”⁵³¹

Yet, since the OED principally defines an exiled person as someone who is in “the state of being barred from one’s native country, typically for political or punitive reasons,” I hesitate to follow Moix’s radical choice of terms. However, his suggestion is tempting, especially when reading him along with Saïd’s impressive lines on exile. “Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past,” he wrote.⁵³² “Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives.” The problem in today’s global realities, Saïd concluded, is that this reconstruction process cannot be achieved through the ideological path of creating a newly restored people (such as the Palestinians and the Kurds). This leaves numerous individuals finding themselves on their own, feeling largely abandoned when they are on the lookout for tools to reinvent their shattered lives. Saïd was mournful when he wrote about exile as marked by an “unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place.”⁵³³ This should fill us with both modesty and altruism. No one wants to be “in a condition of terminal loss,” feeling compelled to leave behind “true home.” That personal choice may have been a factor in the decision to leave should not be used to blame another person.

It is necessary to ask why some people are defined as *expatriates*, while this label is not seen as fit for others. Technically speaking, an “expatriate” is “a person who lives outside their native country.”⁵³⁴ Saïd added, however, that an expatriate is a person who “voluntarily” lives in an alien country, “usually for personal or social reasons.”⁵³⁵ No “transitory migrant” dwelling in Calais while trying to travel on to the United Kingdom seems to be there on a voluntary basis, even if they keep coming back after having been transported elsewhere in France. Therefore, they cannot be called expatriates. “Expatriate,” or the more frequently used *expat*, is a category that appears exclusively reserved for those who would return on a voluntary basis to find similar wealth in their country of origin. Yann Moix put it most boldly: “Migrants, ‘immigrants’ are always and systematically the nonwhites; white persons are more commonly, more willingly tidied under the more noble and less dirty word ‘expatriates,’ especially when they come from the United States, Europe or the West.”⁵³⁶

The only term that appears to bind “immigrants” and “expatriates” together, as pointed out by Victor Burgin, is Julia Kristeva’s concept of the “foreigner,” by which she meant “the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality.”⁵³⁷ In modern, cosmopolitan times, *foreignness* has become a widespread human condition. There is hardly a country left where no foreigners come from time to time. Many persons have experienced what it means to feel like a foreigner in another country. For Burgin, Kristeva’s concept of the foreigner thus installed a mirror mechanism. He thus wrote: “to encounter the other in one’s own space is to confront one’s own alterity to that other space.”⁵³⁸ While that certainly sheds light on this complicated matter from a psychoanalytical point of view, Kristeva’s notion of the foreigner sweeps preexistent social inequalities under the rug. I agree with Fiona Barclay that “by directly comparing the situations of ‘a Maghrebian streetsweeper riveted to his broom [and] an Asiatic princess writing her memoirs in a borrowed tongue,’” Kristeva elided “the economic differences which historians of immigration have argued are a major factor in the violence experienced by migrant workers.”⁵³⁹

Whereas Moix has arguably exaggerated the racial approach for the sake of making his point—by “whites,” he likely means all those who are *seen as white*—there resides an uncomfortable social truth within this terminological confusion. What is more, the slightly overly romantic concept of “émigré,” which Saïd still fondly used, seems rather outdated.⁵⁴⁰ In a different way, as argued by Ariella Azoulay, the notion of “refugee” comes with problems of applicability as well. In her view, the idea of the refugee has now become so intimately connected with “regime-made” disaster situations that a reflection on the opportunity of its continued employment is necessary.⁵⁴¹ Disasters forcing citizens to

leave their home countries nowadays can also take place “as a structural part of democratic regimes.”⁵⁴²

Azoulay referred to the present situation in Israel/Palestine, where the constituent violence of a regime-made disaster *produces* persons as refugees.⁵⁴³ Yet, the logic of the regime is thus that perpetrators of the disaster are incapable of recognizing themselves *as being* perpetrators. After all, the disaster-struck persons (i.e. Palestinians) are considered outsiders to the body politic. Language and gestures are used, according to Azoulay, that appear to demonstrate a universal moral intention. But this is a contradiction, for the supposedly noble intention is directed at the persons who have been harmed by those who appear to express moral concern. “The term ‘refugees’ [therefore] is a political category at the heart of the regime that imposes it upon those people.”⁵⁴⁴ Azoulay shared her conviction that, by gazing at the photographs taken of persons undergoing such disaster situations, the spectator can “refuse to contribute to the ongoing transformation of this violence into supposedly respected law” by subsequently engaging in acts of resistance.

What does this leave us, as spectators, to do? How can we talk about persons whose lives have gone astray, and about the photographs that we study in relation to them, in a respectful, fair, and constructive way? In looking for an answer to this question, there is one more term that needs our attention: that of the “displaced person.” In the technical sense of the term, a displaced person is someone “who is forced to leave their home country because of war or persecution; a refugee.”⁵⁴⁵ In the above-mentioned chapter from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt wrote the following lines regarding the situation of displaced persons:

No paradox of contemporary politics is filled with a more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as “inalienable” those human rights which are enjoyed only by citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves.⁵⁴⁶

Arendt’s notion of the rightless refers to the numerous citizens of European countries made stateless through mass denaturalization before and during World War II and subsequently re-qualified as displaced persons. For Arendt, who, as a German Jew experienced this situation herself, the idea of the displaced person was therefore a charged term. It served to relabel those struck by the disaster of being forced to lose their citizenship, which also took away much of their legal protection. Stateless individuals, as a rule, cannot be repatriated or deported back to their country of origin—since they have lost their citizenship status.

International laws provide legal protection to the stateless in a host country. For displaced persons, the rules of the game—in other words, what legal protection they will eventually receive under which national legislation—are much more unpredictable. As claimed by Arendt, “The internment camp—prior to the second World War the exception rather than the rule for the stateless—has become the routine solution for the problem of domicile of the ‘displaced persons.’”

Numerous individuals traveling today from the global south to the global north find themselves in the position of being a displaced person. If many of them are not strictly stateless, as they have citizenship in their country of birth, they no longer wish to live in that country and often throw away their passports to avoid being obliged to return home. Young adults who can still count as minors are interested in doing this. The standard X-ray procedure to determine their “bone age” has a margin of error of up to two years.⁵⁴⁷ The very fact that such imprecise methods are used by countries to determine who is allowed to stay or not has created uncertainty as well as unjust situations.⁵⁴⁸ For Yann Moix, the conclusion is clear: France has now turned into a “Republic of bones.”⁵⁴⁹ “The bone denounces, the bone excludes, the bone betrays: out.” Many of the teenagers who eventually are not irrefutably identified as children qualifying for legal protection end up in the horrible condition defined by Giorgio Agamben as that of the “homo sacer”: “the sacred man,” who, under archaic Roman law, one was “permitted to kill” without being “condemned for homicide.”⁵⁵⁰

In an admirable attempt to counter that dismal fate, Charles Lee proposed the use of the concept of “ingenious citizenship.” In his view, citizenship is a “*cultural script*” rather than a basic condition for obtaining institutional rights and political participation.⁵⁵¹ According to Lee, subjects that a given society considers abject nonetheless make use of that very script, reinserting themselves in it in creative and original ways and eventually making themselves *count* as relevant for the script. This claim for the right to construct a personality of one’s own choice does not imply the need to create a form of *amnesia* toward or negation of one’s former life (before rebirth). What is of essential importance is the possibility to develop and grow from the person one was into the individual one wants to become in the new homeland. Such an “ingenious” subject possesses a particular capacity for “*being like water*.”⁵⁵² It is through this liquid-like agency that different people, who essentially may seem to be rivals or opponents, can eventually come to flow together and creatively intermingle.⁵⁵³ Before continuing the exercise of how to name those outlawed by a bourgeois society performing its death dance (Sekula’s *totentanz*) to the abject sphere of what Agamben—following Walter Benjamin—called “bare life,” let us first turn to observe how it is that they perform their dance for life.

The trip under the Channel was a bit of an anti-climax. We descended into blackness for half an hour and could see nothing. I had hoped for something to happen, but my ears did not even pop.

Eve Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides. The Channel Tunnel and English Legal Identity in the New Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xi.



Our #real #fake E. Boudin.
#painting #landscape #beachlife #KingoftheSkies

Chapter 4

Kairology

This land is you, no, that's a bit too much, the land allows you to introduce your ideas any time, but only you, well, not quite the only one, but you as well, and especially you, the land allows us nothing, we are nothing and it allows us nothing, even though we would like to participate, it's better than watching, no?, so that the law also comes from us, so that the law also goes for the people, which we will be then too, but the law does not come and go, and when it goes out, it dresses up, it gets all decked out, but we may not come along, we can't even get into the restaurant, that's not justice, even though justice would also come to us, at least it would if it could get some time off for once, and our dream act, unfortunately, passed far away, no, it's been shot here, the dream pass, by a soccer hero, local off-shoot of foreign parentage, he passed with flying colors, but now its [*sic*] no longer here, I mean the dream pass, it's been shot, and the hero does his dream act in Munich now with his passport of our dreams, but justice, which could also come to us, if we belonged to this dream-*Volk*, the people who shoot dream passes and have the passports we want so much, but don't get.

Elfriede Jelinek, *Charges (The Supplicants)* [2013], trans. Gitta Honegger (London: Seagull, 2016), 41–42. Original emphasis.



#SaintLaurent resting area @Steenvoorde seen from the opposite side of the highway.
#weddinganniversary #dogbirthday #twilight #thanks #rockdoodle

On Sunday, April 30, 2017, we were on our way from Brussels to Calais. That winter and spring, I had been making quite a few short trips back and forth to the city, both for research purposes and to plan with staff members at the Calais Fine Arts Museum—the only institution to own the full sequence of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*—the impending shipment of the complete set to Barcelona for Allan Sekula. *Collective Sisyphus*, which required meticulous preparations. Now everything was in full swing for *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* to leave its safe home for the very first time—after having spent almost two decades sleeping as a rather unexplored cosmos in the museum’s subterranean storage room. Although this was an extremely stressful undertaking for all parties involved, that Sunday in April was quite a relaxed day. Our dog was sleeping in between my two children in the backseat. The exhausted teenagers seemed to have lapsed into a kind of pseudo-comatic state from partying with friends the previous night.

Around 3:30 p.m., we were driving on the highway in the vicinity of the “Aire de service de Saint-Laurent,” part of rural Steenvoorde, France near “De Schreve” (the local name for the southern border of Belgian West Flanders). This is the last resting area before reaching Dunkirk. The weekend traffic to the beaches was dense, which is why I was driving attentively and not very fast. Suddenly, around twenty young men—all similarly dressed in loose pants, hoodies, and sports shoes—appeared from behind the gas station’s bungalow shop. By the way they *looked*, I could instantly detect they were part of that group of fellow human beings qualified by French national law as “étrangers en situation irrégulière” or *sans-papiers*—or, in English, illegal aliens. They were sprinting straight across the strikingly empty lot, toward a white freight truck parked under a large tree near the highway. The right-hand part of the double door at its rear was already wide open.

Three men athletically hung on the—still locked—left-hand door. While they were firmly holding its movable vertical steel grip with both arms, their feet were either up in the air or found support against the door. Stacked one on top of the other, they appeared like a messy pyramid of acrobats in an open-air circus. Seemingly oblivious—or, rather, completely disregarding the blunt fact—that they potentially had a large audience of coincidental passersby, they were entirely focused on their performative action: collectively entering the container as quickly as they could. Others were queuing behind the sprint champions, impatiently waiting in a line. Driving by, no more than twenty meters away from them, I saw this all happening in a flash from the corner of my eye, catching but a short glimpse of this overpowering event.

Did they just enter a smuggler’s vehicle waiting for them? Or were they instead breaking into a truck whose exhausted driver was taking a nap before continuing his journey toward Dunkirk harbor? It was

difficult to say what exactly was going on around that parking lot. In retrospect, I can hardly understand how unprepared I was for what I saw. Although it is not that long ago at all, at the time Belgians somehow lazily presumed that all the things happening in France had nothing to do with their own country. From Brussels, the shorter and easier route to Calais is to take the E40 via Ghent and Bruges straight to the Belgian coast, and then to head southward after the Jabbeke turnpike. In early 2017, there wasn't public awareness yet of any comparable incidents along the E40. It was only a coincidental traffic jam on the E40 that made me avoid this habitual trajectory and opt for the longer ride along the French border. Even though I had never witnessed anything like this before, I must admit that I was barely surprised. At the same time, I was also profoundly shocked. It was no less than a blow—a wake-up call.

What struck me most at first was the resolve with which *the job* was executed. Running with their arms spread wide open—as if it would somehow help them to move faster or even fly—these athletic young men reminded me of a graceful swarm of feathery swallows. Pushed forward by a somehow collectively unconscious choreography, they almost danced as a triangular passel toward the funnel hole of this cargo container, which—hopefully for them—would bring them to their imagined promised land, Great Britain. Seizing that rare occasion provided by good opportunity is the very target, the *kairotic* moment, around which fortune-seekers on their way to the United Kingdom organize their entire lives. The remainder of the time is determined by the *longue durée* of *chronos*—the despondent waiting.⁵⁵⁴ The lesson I, as a coincidental witness, took from observing this circumstance is that fortune indeed favors the bold. Many of the men running toward the truck did so with their mouths wide open, seemingly shouting to each other. But since it was an unusually chilly day for the time of the year, my car windows were closed. As drivers on the highway that afternoon, we only got to observe them as in a muted movie.

For my part, I was too baffled and agitated to say a word. As my kids in the back slept through the entire scene, for them it was as if nothing had happened, and this gave me even more the impression of suddenly having found myself in a strange, dreamlike reality. Trying to hold the steering wheel and keep my eyes on the road, I was overwhelmed by a range of dilemmas that urged for some rapid mental calculations. The easier ones were of a merely practical nature. Should I take the next exit and return? Could I be of any help to these airy young men with winged feet? Certainly not. They would, for sure, see me as an intruder. It would also take too much time to drive to the next highway exit and make a U-turn. The pragmatic conclusion, therefore, was that I had to resign to storing the scene's fierce imagery in my personal memory—a memory

that was shared by no other witness. Who among my friends was ever going to believe me when I told them what happened?

It felt like a completely missed encounter, at least as far as I was concerned. All there was left to do was to hope that *their* opportunity had been the right one for granting them a safe passage and that, in that dire process, no one—including the possibly unsuspecting truck driver—got hurt. Helplessness caused my frustrated thoughts to wander to a familiar framework of thinking: photography. As I irreversibly drove on, I thought of Bruno Serralongue's *Faits divers* [News Items], an early influential series entirely built up around photographing the wrong moment. (Plate 8) Between 1993 and 1995, Serralongue—then still a student in Nice—initiated this photographic project. Early in the morning, he would buy a copy of the local gazette, *Nice-Matin*, to find out where accidents or crimes had occurred the day before. Serralongue would then go to some of these sites and take a picture of the surroundings, where all was calm again.

The aesthetic outcome of such an approach is an utterly banal image, in terms of its represented subject matter. Yet, in Serralongue's work, the apparent neutrality of his pictures takes on an extremely precise meaning if we acknowledge the additional text added by the artist in the white margin at the bottom of each image. By means of silk screen reproduction, Serralongue included summaries of the articles published in *Nice-Matin* below the image. Within the frame of *No. 14, Wednesday 2 March 1994*, the text thus informs us:

Who killed the little white poodle? This is not the title of a poor-quality noir detective novel but the enigma that has arisen from the discovery early Monday evening of a lifeless dog at the foot of a tower in Vieil Ariane [...]. Sead, a 37-year-old Yugoslavian refugee, had found a companion in this docile dog, and though he could not make him forget the drama of his native Bosnia-Herzegovina or erase the horrifying images of a wife and two children killed in the bombings, he did provide consolation. [...] The dog had escaped on the evening of 16 February while he was taking a walk through the Ariane district. But the Bosnian refugee's searches had proved fruitless. [...] Curiously, the dog reappeared [...] beneath the refugee's windows—dead. There did not seem to be signs of injury. Did they strangle or poison him? And who did this? We will probably never know.⁵⁵⁵

This intriguing strategy of interaction between the text and the image, a characteristic feature in Serralongue's approach, recalls the traditional processes pertaining to photojournalism. The predominant photojournalistic protocols demand, through a precise articulation between

an image and the text accompanying it, the transmission of the most information possible in a minimal amount of time. Confronted with the abovementioned example, one can only conclude that the proposed relation between the picture and its text is a mistake: the represented image is a nonevent. It absolutely does not correspond to the terrible circumstances described in the text. In a subversive artistic gesture, Serralongue here played the role of the incompetent photojournalist, who appears not to understand the rules of his profession well, and who irrevocably turns up too late at a potential crime scene.⁵⁵⁶

Months later (on November 4, 2017), I returned to Steenvoorde—this time determined to make a proper stop there, with my camera at the ready. Going back was not so much inspired by an attempt to reenact Serralongue’s counter-photojournalistic gestures. I rather wanted to make sense of what somehow turned out to be quite a traumatic experience. It was important to come to terms with a scene that continued to haunt me after witnessing it some six months prior. The result of that visit, which almost felt like a small pilgrimage, is the photograph identified as doodle 13#. There was an uncontrollable need for me to take this deadpan picture and this also made me decide that this book was to include a selection from the doodles that I had meanwhile started to make.

Soon after I integrated study of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* as a practical priority in my daily work organization, I began to suspect that seriously engaging with this material would prove to be quite confrontational. Although Sekula’s thirty-three photographs are intriguing, they generally do not induce cheer in their viewers. The reflection triggered by the images in my case resulted in the need not only to write down some of the ideas that they provoked but also to visualize them. Doodling facilitated the canalization not only of doubts or puzzlement in a creative fashion but also of pain, sadness, frustration, and anxiety. It proved both liberating and inspiring. The doodles helped to structure the writing process and provided direction to the argument’s further development. The photographs came first. To my surprise, a small set of gouache paintings followed naturally after a time.

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The practice of doodling has many illustrious predecessors. One became a guiding force: Erasmus, who was “a habitual doodler.”⁵⁵⁷ The visual effect of Erasmus’s drollery, according to Jessica Stevenson Stewart, is striking at times, and sometimes even comedic. But his doodles always possess qualities that can typically be associated with memory images. The rough subject matter of this book necessitated the cooling down of emotions that doodling can typically provide. Thus, the doodles took on the role of gentle reminders—of *pense-bêtes*, as the French say—that my

brain and body needed to cope with the brutality of the book's topic. The doodles serve to both frame the discussion and shed additional light on the material from a visual point of view.

In contrast to those who feel that the para-textual layers created by Erasmus's doodles provoke hermeneutical procedures gone awry, I agree with Stevenson Stewart that their application, instead of leading to distraction, facilitates concentration in its own separate and peculiar way. The intention behind the inclusion of the thirty-three doodles is therefore the invitation to observe all of them as *images that want to be read*.⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, readers are encouraged to conceive of the present book as a single image-text structure—a concept borrowed from W.J.T. Mitchell's influential *Picture Theory*.⁵⁵⁹ For Mitchell, image-text (with a hyphen) designates “relations” of the visual and the verbal.⁵⁶⁰ Contrary to the *imagetext* (without hyphen), as he argued, the image-text does not designate a composite or synthetic work. In an image-text, the relation between text and image is conjunctive but not stifling.

As further clarified in the doodles' captions, all are either photographs I made or images I hand-painted after photographs. Two principal decisions guided my taking of photographs from the beginning of the process in early 2017. First, I promised myself I would finish the job by March 29, 2019. I began painting the last doodle on March 10, 2019 (30#). Those were days full of uncertainty, as if we were living in a state of historical limbo. The so-called Brexit endgame had already started.⁵⁶¹ March 10 was a Sunday. I was pleased with the idea of finishing the cycle as the Sunday painter I had meanwhile turned into, and I kept my promise: I completed this last doodle on March 29 in the afternoon by adding in the spiraling gold chain, which vertically traverses the middle of the painting from top to bottom. Secondly, I wanted the doodles to be blunt documents or impressions of a given reality at a certain moment in time. To identify what I was after, I found inspiration in Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*, first published in 2003. Sontag wrote about photographs that are “flying low, artistically speaking.”⁵⁶² “Such pictures,” she added, “are thought to be less manipulative.” After almost twenty-five years of photography research, I no longer believe that there ever existed a non-manipulative photograph. Yet, I want to hold on to a certain aspiration of non-manipulation, as well as postulate it. Although they have already started to lead their own life beyond this book, the doodles were made for it.⁵⁶³ The overall aim has been to let the images interact with the text they accompany in a relatively open way, and to allow them to become meaningful in that process.

When taking the photographs, I followed this basic idea of the photograph as an indexical image—the image that is both a trace of and a pointer toward the reality depicted.⁵⁶⁴ Most of the time, I systematically used the camera's Auto Mode (flash off)—though sometimes the

camera was still fixed in another mode from a previous (non-doodling) session, which resulted in errors I gladly embraced. The trained eye of a sharp photo connoisseur may rightly conclude that, every now and then, the quality of the images suffered from this approach (e.g. a slightly tilted horizon line in 5#—bear in mind that we were on a sailboat trying to keep pace with the dolphins!). Technical perfection was never part of the goal. Nor was there any ambition to convey an authoritative statement of truth. The purpose was instead to “construct a practice with modest aspirations,” as photo theoretician Liam Devlin proposed while quoting from the work of the anthropologist Jay Ruby.⁵⁶⁵ The photograph then “neither pretends it has the power to change the world nor a desire to pity but instead aids in our attempt to comprehend and critique a world grown increasingly incomprehensible.”

What really mattered was to let the photographs that ended up being used as doodles come about somehow by themselves—using no intervention from some of the camera’s more sophisticated options. We mildly retouched some of the images yet only with respect to color grading. We refrained from any other major intervention by means of Photoshop or any other software. This approach was partly inspired by an urge to respond to whistleblowing practices in the biomedical sciences. In 2010, an individual or collective using the pseudonym Clare Francis started criticizing the use of improperly altered images as evidence in scientific publications.⁵⁶⁶ Furthermore, I combined the doodles included in this book with a quotation—text fragments gathered over years of reading on photography or novels in relation to imagining or reinventing fundamental rights.

My purpose was mainly to make them function in the sense thus indicated by Susan Sontag in her first study on photography:

A photograph is only a fragment, and with the passage of time its moorings come unstuck. It drifts away into a soft abstract pastness, open to any kind of reading (or matching to other photographs). A photograph could also be described as a quotation, which makes a book of photographs like a book of quotations. And an increasingly common way of presenting photographs in book form is to match photographs themselves with quotes.⁵⁶⁷

In *On Photography*, Sontag included a final part entitled “A Brief Anthology of Quotations,” with as subtitle “[Homage to W.B.]”⁵⁶⁸ As argued by Walter Benjamin, the quotations in his works “are like robbers by the roadside who make an armed attack and relieve an idler of his convictions.”⁵⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt used this citation to explain how quotations functioned in Benjamin’s works. He gave them the “destructive power” of *thought fragments* that express the hope that something from

the wisdom contained within them will survive in the present. Likewise, in *Ground Sea*, the quotations are intended to “interrupt the flow” of the argumentation. At the same time, these brief interruptions serve to deepen the lines of thought developed by means of concise statements, made in relation to the images that they accompany. Or, as Arendt wrote about Benjamin, the quotations have the purpose of “concentrating within themselves that which is presented.”

Seen in this light, the quotation from Elfriede Jelinek’s *Charges (The Supplicants)* that accompanies doodle 13# is meant to be read as a disruptive tribute to the “dream pass”(-age) these people on the move hope to make. Not knowing whether the winged men spotted in April 2017 had missed their opportunity to enter the United Kingdom without the right passport, I felt urged to find a way to photographically register, after the fact, the experience of having witnessed their attempt. From a methodological point of view, I found solid ground in an approach that John Roberts once described as that of “the lateness of those who choose to work outside of the temporal constraints of arriving on time.”⁵⁷⁰ For Roberts, this method allows, “at a significant level, [to] work [...] through a process of mourning for the lost event.” Doodle 13# became the visual expression of that mourning process. Only then, in November, was I able to move a giant step forward in seeing more clearly into the life situation of the persons I spotted from afar. I found some peace in the fact that, to quote Roberts once more, my “arriving on time” back then had not been “congruent with arriving on time at all.”

The November photograph was “free from the fetishization of immediacy.” Its belatedness became even more meaningful since having arrived *on time* in April turned out to have been “the most inauspicious of times”—“the most premature” too. For, it would have been the time of the *decisive moment*, the presumed time of “directness” and “clarity” and “truth” (as Roberts argued). However, I follow Roberts when he wrote that such a photograph would have “conspire[d] with preformatting and the generic and, therefore, with what is already known, with ‘dead time’, with politics-as-spectacle, with the non-symbolic.” Roberts seems to have presaged the experience I went through. Furthermore, I completely agree with him when he warned his readers that one should not conclude from there to “always be content with arriving late.” As a researcher-photographer, it is key to continue to take “the risk of ‘getting close’, and ‘getting close, by getting lost’ so to speak.”

For my purposes, this has proven very true. It was liberating to use a creative genre identified by Donna West Brett—following Roberts and David Company—as “*aftermath* or *late* photography.”⁵⁷¹ In Company’s view, “the static photograph taken after an event, rather than the frozen image made of it, is the radically open image par excellence. It is

‘pre-frozen’, the stillness of the image complementing the stillness of the aftermath.”⁵⁷² The aftermath photograph depicts a physical place in which an event previously occurred that is of significance to both the photographer and to those who were part of the event. It communicates this initial impact to the audience in a way that generates thought and reflection. The photographed place, in the aftermath of the past event, becomes a silent yet powerful testimony to what once happened there. The aftermath photograph therefore has the capacity to mark the importance of the initial event, which was visually undocumented when it happened.

The aftermath photograph is also an instrument that establishes the significance of the original, often fraught, moment by allowing spectators to contribute to giving further meaning to it. Since the aftermath photograph “fail[s] to deliver” the original event itself before our eyes, “space for interpretation” becomes possible.⁵⁷³ The aftermath photograph thus invites us to closely inspect a visual representation that holds within it an invisible message. Although invisible, this message is not unreadable. It evades the photographic frame as we encounter it, but we know of it either from having been there at the time or by means of a narrated text that accompanies the image. Reminiscent of the distinction made by philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy between two types of absence in the history of representation—“the absence of the thing” and the “the *absence within* the thing”—Ali Shobeiri has situated the lack felt by observing aftermath photographs as pertaining to the second type of absence.⁵⁷⁴ The memory of the past event stays encapsulated as a dormant absence within the photograph. Yet the photograph shies away from providing the possibility to precisely relocate or resituate it. Consequently, failing to make visible what is absent, aftermath photographs situate “the viewer at the edge of an absence.”⁵⁷⁵

Ulrich Baer, in his influential research on photographs of traumatic landscapes, has brought to mind that such images confront us with a feeling of *non-belonging*, with the fact that we are forever “excluded, that we have arrived *après coup*, too late and perhaps in vain.”⁵⁷⁶ The paradoxical result of this ambivalent feeling of having arrived at the scene when nothing more is to be done, or when facts have irrevocably happened and can no longer be undone, is that the site depicted within the image starts to operate as a “pointer back to our own position.”⁵⁷⁷ Aftermath photographs displaying vacant landscapes that bear the traces of a past traumatic event, therefore, “reverse the act of looking at the photograph and create a sense of being addressed by the absence within the landscape.”⁵⁷⁸ With the danger of overgeneralizing, Baer argued that, for him, such a picture points back at all potential viewers in the same way. In other words, it places them “in the same line of sight.”⁵⁷⁹ Insisting on the “collective *we*” addressed by the aftermath photograph,

Baer emphasized that such images turn our attention to “*our position in reference to the site.*”⁵⁸⁰

For Shobeiri, this is what Jacques Derrida identified as the “visor effect” of photography, in which a photographic image is capable of creating the feeling that it stares at the spectator as a ghostly presence.⁵⁸¹ The invisible presence in the picture can have the helmet’s visor up or down—this doesn’t really matter, as Derrida said in conversation with Bernd Stiegler. It is important that the visor presence within the image sees the viewer, but the viewer cannot picture the visor presence. The consequence of this lack of reciprocity is that the visor therefore makes the law for us, who are “blind by the situation.”⁵⁸² The visor puts us “before the law” in a context of asymmetry, without indicating what exactly this law consists of.⁵⁸³

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Doodle 13# can thus be understood as a coming to terms with a (traumatic) memory image of an event experienced as an eyewitness. As a photograph, it is the outcome of a process of working through or of deciphering a memory image through photography. For me, as the author of the photograph, the *law* is not so much inherent to the doodle 13# but to the memory image that haunts me. Doodle 13# offered me a way to work through that. But possibly, it will come to embody this abstract law, as described by Derrida, to some spectators of this photograph. Doodle 13# might *reenact* that effect of an undecipherable law inherent to the image upon the spectator. Although this effect of the law is inevitably flawed and disappointing compared to my memory image, it does not grant the spectator the possibility to escape its spell.

This visor effect actually triggered a desire in me to come to terms with the mechanisms of the circulation of images today, and put them under greater critical scrutiny. The information spread via newspapers and on television worldwide will quickly teach the reader looking for more precise data that Nord–Pas-de-Calais has been subjected to a continuous influx of persons who intend to move on—across the English Channel. Often, these people traveled extremely long distances, having a dangerous journey over land and sea behind them already.⁵⁸⁴ They do not have an EU identity card or even an international passport with a visa that grants them the right to move around freely within this part of the world. Since 2015, when the so-called “European migrant crisis” dramatically deepened and the afflux of persons increased exponentially, local public officials responsible for order in Calais—endorsed by some politicians—have been very actively engaged in discouraging most of the newcomers.⁵⁸⁵

In a report published on October 6, 2015, the French independent state institution *Le Défenseur des Droits* [*The Defender of Rights*] firmly denounced the term “Migration Crisis,” considering it “totally inappropriate” because terms such as “crisis” and “migrants” introduce “prejudicial biases in the collective imaginary.” They make the local population think that the phenomenon (the presumed “crisis”) to which they are exposed results from an inevitable “calamity” rather than “political choices.” As argued in this report, the notion of “migrant” is imprecise because it consists of “an amalgam of various categories of persons who differ both in law and in fact.” Yet, in early spring 2017, when it was obvious that undocumented (or, according to local laws, inappropriately documented) persons were returning in greater numbers to the area after a relatively calm winter season, the Calais mayor announced her personal opposition to putting back in place basic humanitarian measures to help “migrants,” such as providing free showers and meals.⁵⁸⁶ By the end of March 2017, a local court suspended the decision in a ruling that was motivated by the fact that this attitude by a public official constituted an “inhuman and degrading treatment.”⁵⁸⁷ In late July 2017, the Conseil d’État confirmed the ruling, obliging the state’s central authorities to take the necessary measures. Failing to do so would go against Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits the subjection of persons to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.⁵⁸⁸

In a subsequent report dated December 2018, however, *Le Défenseur des Droits* observed with regret that municipal authorities persisted in their refusal to comply with the ruling. Initially, the mayor allowed the delivery of one meal a day, albeit reluctantly and only after the administrative court of Lille canceled the city’s order to prohibit the distribution of meals, which contributed to a grim atmosphere, as raids sometimes took place, even by the police.⁵⁸⁹ In late September 2018, against the city council’s will, 1,450 meals were distributed by the state services on a daily basis, twice a day, in a secured but mobile environment.⁵⁹⁰ How can a *maire* (mayor)—a word that, in the French language, is pronounced in exactly the same way as *mère* (mother), and actually also *mer* (sea)—be in favor of such an “unmotherly,” unwelcoming social environment? From 2019 on, the situation has only continued to deteriorate. In a report from June 5, 2019, Amnesty International accused the French authorities and, specifically, the ministries of justice and the interior, of not adequately preventing—or even of being partially complicit in—the harassment of and attacks on human-rights defenders who continue to express solidarity and seek to provide humanitarian aid.⁵⁹¹ On March 16, 2020 twenty-four alarmed NGOs sent an open letter to the prefects and mayors of Calais and Grande-Synthe (near Dunkirk) to demand urgent

sanitary measures to protect the people stuck there in informal camps against the COVID-19 outbreak in France.⁵⁹²

Before I embarked on solo field trips to the region, my friends or acquaintances familiar with the local situation gently recommended me to stay away from direct exposure to any such circumstances. Aside from the fact that it could be dangerous to enter the terrain unaccompanied by those familiar with it, they warned, engaging in such fieldwork might expose me to thorny dilemmas. Bad girls go everywhere, however, so I ended up running into plenty of such dilemmas. I admit that I did not live through—nor am I living with—all of them equally well. But before describing some of them in more detail, let me sum up a few facts. In Nord-Pas-de-Calais, President Emmanuel Macron won the 2017 election with only a very small majority of the votes.⁵⁹³ Several local politicians continue to boast extreme right, racist convictions, and they are never at a loss for hard words making crystal clear that undocumented “outsiders” are not part of their desired “imagined community.”⁵⁹⁴

Only days before my above-described experience on the highway watching the young men seizing their moment of opportunity, the Refugee Rights Data Project, a nongovernmental human-rights organization, released a report on the basis of field research conducted in the Calais area during the first week of April 2017. In it, almost half (49 percent) of the respondent minors reported that they did not want to seek asylum on French territory for “lack of safety.”⁵⁹⁵ The report further informed this included violence exerted by police officials, which was qualified as “endemic in the area.”⁵⁹⁶ When “The Jungle” was gravely overpopulated in early fall 2016, living conditions had become so dire that some of its desperate inhabitants deliberately hurled logs at cars driving in the direction of the port’s gates or created an ambush causing them to crash on the expressway so that traffic would come to a halt (and they would be able to climb on or inside the waiting trucks).⁵⁹⁷

Violence was responded to with even more violence, from both sides. By summer 2017, newly arriving persons were in the process of pursuing efforts to build a new camp a mere 750 meters from the former site.⁵⁹⁸ But police forces had meanwhile received orders to expel and disperse as much as possible groups of people trying to settle with tents anywhere near or on the terrain of the former “camp de la Lande,” which translates into English as Camp of the Heathland, or the moorland.⁵⁹⁹ This is how French government officials used to refer to the area to avoid employing the less neutral “La Jungle.” In its International Report 2016/17, Amnesty International noted the complete eviction in late October 2016: “The authorities failed to genuinely consult migrants and asylum-seekers or provide them with adequate information prior to the eviction.”⁶⁰⁰ Revisiting the site on the occasion of the first anniversary of its evacuation, a team of *BBC TWO* journalists filmed exhausted persons sitting in the very same

moor desperately exhorting, “we sleep on the ground.”⁶⁰¹ “Distribution of tasks and support are important,” according to Elfriede Jelinek,

not only in the family, which we don’t have anymore, no wonder you call us irresponsible, parasites on your body that’s ready any time to report freeloaders smearing their snot across this beautiful land, yes, us, they’ll still report us when we’re already down on the ground, they’ll still report us just for being here, although we’d have responsibilities to our families, but all we have in terms of family is here, here with us, which is nothing, no one, nada and all we got is also nothing.⁶⁰²

Human Rights Watch released an alarming report on July 26, 2017. It stated that police officers quite systematically woke individuals sleeping in the open air by means of pepper spray, while also destroying or confiscating blankets, sleeping bags, and other personal property of “migrants.”⁶⁰³ A report by the French Interior Ministry, dated October 24, 2017, conceded to confirming “disproportionate” or “unjustified” use of force.⁶⁰⁴ But it rejected the most serious allegations; for example, that any pepper or tear gas was sprayed by members of the riot police. As of this writing, however, no fixed places for taking a break during the journey have been put in place. The distribution of clothes has become extremely complicated—even more since donations have decreased drastically. In that same report, both French and British volunteers working for organizations such as Utopia 56 and L’Auberge des Migrants expressed deep concern about the mounting difficulties for them to protect these persons from the autumn rains and winter cold. Correspondents for *Le Monde* defined the living conditions of those who stayed in the Pale, an estimated number ranging from seven hundred to two thousand persons back in late 2017, as “inhuman,” both regarding basic sanitary and health conditions.⁶⁰⁵

But the influx of people did not stop, and the sanitary conditions in the area continue to be unbearable, with only minimum access to toilets, water, or food. Yann Moix’s controversial documentary *Re-Calais* (2018), which can be viewed online, contains footage that in fact confirms several of the allegations.⁶⁰⁶ Leilana Farha, a special rapporteur for the United Nations sent on mission to France, urged the Republic on April 12, 2019 to stop systematically evicting people from their tents every forty-eight hours—destroying their camping material and confiscating their belongings, all in violation of the right to adequate housing, and of the right to health, food, and physical integrity.⁶⁰⁷ All such efforts have proven to be in vain, and on July 10, 2020, a police raid resulted in the forceful eviction of more than five hundred persons from an informal camp in Calais.⁶⁰⁸ Tents, sleeping bags, clothes, and food were taken

away. Tear gas was fired. The next day, the police returned to set the remaining tents on fire. The operation was repeated on September 29, but the week after, the French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that many evicted persons had returned.⁶⁰⁹ The raids continue, and it is increasingly difficult for journalists to cover these events.⁶¹⁰

The Independent, for its part, released an article on April 21, 2019. It zoomed in on the dire situation of unaccompanied minors (some as young as twelve years old) sleeping on the street, somewhere in the “margins of society,” estimating their number to be at least 281 (as they keep hiding, it is likely that there are more).⁶¹¹ The newspaper’s investigation was provoked by a suicide attempt of one among them and a hunger strike of fifteen others.⁶¹² This deliberate creation of an inhospitable environment, entailing cruel and degrading treatment of human beings, is all the more striking because the right to housing is part of French national law.⁶¹³ One last example further illustrates the desperate nature of the situation. In early March 2019, a group of around one hundred “migrants”—as Reuters called them—collectively assailed the gates surrounding the port of Calais.⁶¹⁴ Some fifty among them ran straight toward the waterfront, using ladders to climb aboard the DFDS *Calais Seaways* that had just arrived from Dover, with all its 211 passengers still on board. A smaller number of them embarked on a perilous climb all the way up to the upper deck, and then onto its ten-meter chimney, hoping to hide near the rusty chimney pipes on top, amid howling seagulls. It took the police hours to get them down, and all were subsequently arrested without pardon. Communication by the port authority mainly focused on the aid these desperate people supposedly received from human smugglers. That closed the incident, which was reported without any empathy for the nameless “migrants” involved.⁶¹⁵

*

How can the perfidious vicious circle called Calais be stopped? This brings me to some of the moral dilemmas I experienced when driving past the “Aire de service de Saint-Laurent” in the spring of 2017. As a Belgian citizen raised to have deep respect for the law, I imagined several good reasons for calling the French police after I witnessed the men enter the truck. After all, several people might well be in a situation of imminent danger, be it the young men themselves or the truck driver. Childishly naïve, I imagined the latter to have been drinking a coffee in the shop, unaware of what was going on. While driving, I even reached for my cell phone. But where was I to seek assistance? This absence of options rapidly transforming into a lethargic state of not knowing what to do stuck with me most after watching the incident—and it persists to this day. Saint Lawrence, the hero after whom the resting area was

named, was martyred for redistributing wealth to the poor and for calling them the Church's treasure. Compared to his heroism, it was painful for me to realize that the best I could do was to persevere in my planned efforts to write a book about it.

Arguably, this sobering insight has had more effect on *Ground Sea's* writing than any other. Yet, in his essay on *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, Pascal Beausse put his finger on what motivated my decision when he identified Sekula's art in terms of a "work [that] produces the kind of counter-information which affirms itself as an act of resistance."⁶¹⁶ This is an articulation of the clear path that I followed as well, in my own way. If we want to undertake serious efforts to transform "counter-information" that circulates within society into "an act of resistance," as defined by Gilles Deleuze, we need to find our own medium and voice.⁶¹⁷ "Only the act of resistance resists death," Deleuze wrote, "either as a work of art or as human struggle." To step back into the wings of writing was the performative act of resistance I was most capable of between 2015 and 2020.

So, what do we use our smartphones for these days? Even if I would have had—or deliberately sought for—a better opportunity to take a picture, never would I have even considered to take a photograph that could possibly help identify those who were likely in the process of breaching the law. But, in our present era of global visual culture, almost any type of digital image—especially those made on smartphones—may circulate within seconds on worldwide social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and so on), and this is ample food for thought. Today, everyone, including most of the persons seeking a better life around Calais, is subjected to a permanent flow of images, feeding the culture of—often real-time—online photographic data. Within a mere handful of years, we seem to have grown collectively addicted to this continuous flow. We are also made to believe that such instant access can make our lives somehow more interesting, or at least more fun—such as when, as an involuntary invitee to a WhatsApp group, we are supposed to find holiday snaps cheerful or jolly to watch.

Social media permanently manipulate many of us to engage in this poisonous addiction, a phenomenon urgently in need of adequate answers. For "addiction and free will are opposites," as Jaron Lanier has put it.⁶¹⁸ Stronger even, "addiction gradually turns you into a zombie." And "zombies don't have free will." According to Lanier, any smartphone user active on social media has now developed into a "well-trained dog" in a "cage that goes everywhere with you."⁶¹⁹ The free movement of what can be labeled the fun type of image contrasts sharply with the inhumane and often almost insurmountable difficulties encountered by most of those who embark on a journey to try to improve their basic living conditions. Under the influence of permanent social and other media impulses, we have developed a tendency to identify these persons

as the “living dead” (as Jelinek wrote).⁶²⁰ However, couldn’t we instead initiate a reflection about how those who *do* have their papers sorted out can meaningfully contribute to make these various processes of zombification stop?

Numerous contemporary visual artists have reflected on this paradox of free movement in their works, with mixed success. One example—arguably a counterproductive one—is Artur Żmijewski’s black-and-white silent digital video *Glimpse* (2016–2017), originally filmed on 16 mm pellicle. In twenty breathtaking minutes, it provides a provocative interrogation of “the ethics of art’s engagement with social issues.”⁶²¹ Replicating the propaganda aesthetics of Nazi footage that documented people living in concentration and deportation camps, Żmijewski let his camera shift from a shelter home for immigrants in Berlin Tempelhof to deplorable encampments either under railway bridges on the streets in Paris or in the cramped shacks of Calais’s marshlands.⁶²² To that, he added shots from the evacuation in late October 2016 of the so-called Calais *bidonville d’État*—the “State Shantytown or the State Ghetto,” as members of local community associations tended to name the former “Jungle.”⁶²³

Next, *Glimpse* continues with displaying footage shot in a predominantly Kurdish camp of three hundred wooden chalets in Dunkirk’s industrial outskirts of Grande-Synthe. Żmijewski’s work invites the viewer to observe how he distributed shoes and warm coats to people that he met. We watch the artist mark the backs of some of these coats with a cross in white zinc paint as soon as they have been tried on (14#).⁶²⁴ Żmijewski also proceeded to provocatively whiten a black man’s face and to closely inspect faces of persons of color with his own, white hands. *Glimpse* premiered at Documenta 14 in Athens on April 8, 2017—coincidentally only two days before fire was set to Dunkirk’s very same “La Linière” camp, destroying it for the most part. The fact that such disturbing footage circulates within the safe, harmless temple of the art exhibition is cause for much troubled contemplation. How can this type of visual art, sold to collectors via a private gallery, be evaluated as capable of making a meaningful contribution to altering anything substantial about the miserable reality that it documents?⁶²⁵

Let us frame the question differently. How can Artur Żmijewski’s rather spectacular interventions in the European shantytowns be understood as moving beyond mere cynicism? *Glimpse* is only accessible to an in-group—that is, to those who paid an entry fee to see it in the Athens show, to visitors of film festivals where it is shown or of his commercial gallery, to collectors or institutions who will purchase the work, and later to museum visitors who (usually) will have paid to view it. Under such premises, it is difficult for an artist to avoid giving the impression to his audience that he is but creating a grandiose yet shockingly grotesque

gesture. What speaks to its merit is that *Glimpse* contributes to giving the numerous pitfalls related to European migration policy the critically reflexive attention they direly need. What is more, Źmijewski has stated that, in the movie, he performed “a specific persona” and not himself.⁶²⁶ This “abstract persona,” he said, “follows the general permission [in the EU today] to treat strangers badly.”

As stressed by Źmijewski, his images should be read from a specific angle, which is one of a “conscious replica” of the form and style of propaganda images “made by soldiers or political functionaries” in Nazi Europe. With this, then, Źmijewski expects his viewers to have substantial visual knowledge of the history of propaganda film. The risk is always there that such works may be misunderstood due to lack of visual skills on the part of the viewer. A “glimpse,” moreover, is but a momentary and partial view of a situation or subject. In general, upon noticing a glimpse, it is always possible that an observer’s field of view may be limited, for example because of darkness outside or because of shadows. As the present book develops, further images of “charged” subject matter—whose main protagonists are “supplicants,” as Jelinek wrote—*will* need to be brought out of such darkness. Although I will continue to argue that glimpses are key tools for that purpose indeed, the challenge is to make sure that their subject matter enters our thoughts in the sparkling light of clarity. When that happens, they can continue to glow, as some sort of an afterimage in our minds that generates hope. The path to be taken is curvy and bumpy. As Jelinek makes her supplicants assess: “We do have names, but what are they good for?”⁶²⁷ It will take a sustained collective effort to acquire a social constellation within which any—every—name is *good*.

The challenge therefore is to find photographs that provide glimpses of information about their contents, and that subsequently do not plunge so easily back into confusion, oblivion, or denial—as threatens to be the case with Źmijewski’s *Glimpse*. Before turning to the study of some such photographs in later chapters, I would like to conceptualize further our complex relation to the present global “traffic in photographs,” to recall Sekula’s term.⁶²⁸ First, I want to bring in W.J.T. Mitchell, who polemically argued we should understand photographs by means of a striking analogy: in terms of “*something like* living things.”⁶²⁹ In his view, photographs lead a life of their own, which is best understood by a comparison with human migratory movements. When they eventually end up traveling across different environments and contexts, photographs sometimes take root or sometimes “infect” the collective minds of entire groups of people; at other times, they move on as nomads, perhaps settling elsewhere at some point. The comparison with human migration further allowed Mitchell to explain the “negative” relationship that “the law” entertains both with “migration” and with “the image.”

Lawmakers and policy-makers increasingly wish to control the circulation of photographic images—at times to the point of turning into iconoclasts of photography when it suits them for safeguarding the established state power. In this respect, it is striking to read that police officers in France have made it difficult for humanitarian workers to set up food distributions on an industrial site at the rue des Verrotières in Calais, while also requesting volunteers who try to film these interventions not to film at all or to delete the footage from their cell phones.⁶³⁰ Filming police in public places is not prohibited under French law—although this may change in the near future. The movement *#StopLoiSécuritéGlobale* protests a new law in the making, which it qualifies as imposing “liberticide” measures.⁶³¹ More and more, lawmakers and politicians, helped by the police force or military staff who execute their orders, claim exclusivity on using the photographic image as *their* preferred tool for enforcing restrictions on fundamental freedoms. This is a rather astonishing situation, to which I return in Chapter Nine, when addressing my adventure near the actual entrance of the Channel Tunnel on French soil in early 2017.

*

Another example of how photography has become a “tainted, instrumentalized medium,” to quote Sekula once more from “The Traffic in Photographs,” is the fact that we have collectively accepted delivering our portrait photographs to the authorities, so they can be integrated into a solid plastic, hard-to-fake identity card.⁶³² In doing so, we have put far too much confidence in our national authorities. Giving away so much private information may eventually prevent us from moving around freely at all. In my country, Belgium, the federal government has been in the process of putting measures in place, so officials in charge of renewing identity cards can digitally compare a newly provided passport photograph with previous ones.⁶³³ On top of that, the authorities do not want citizens to provide printed passport pictures themselves any longer. The plan is to make it mandatory for passport photographers to email the image that they make directly to the local authorities.

Such measures are communicated by the federal government to heighten our sense of comfort and safety. As if this weren’t enough, a new law has been adopted that, as of April 2019, obliges each Belgian citizen to switch to a biometric identity card, which includes the citizen’s scanned fingerprints. The law passed despite the claim by the League for Human Rights that it was in violation of the right to privacy.⁶³⁴ A case has been filed before the Belgian Constitutional Court, in which the applicants argued that the law is disproportional and intrusive and does not conform to the privacy laws in place, while the technology

also does not provide the hoped-for safety guarantees. On January 14, 2021, the Court ruled that, in this case, the citizens' privacy is violated for legitimate purposes (i.e. the state's battle against identity fraud).⁶³⁵ Two fingerprints (of both index fingers) will continue to be added on the identity cards. The general tendency is clear. Passport photographs are now required to resemble mug shots: glasses must be removed, and hair must be swept away from the face for both eyebrows to be visible. Such procedures do not put people at ease. On the contrary, they give citizens the impression that they live in a police state within which the authorities consider anyone to be potentially suspect.⁶³⁶

The question we could ask ourselves is the following: have we become so disconnected from our past, from European history? Shouldn't all EU citizens keep reminding themselves of the opening frame of Alexander Kluge's *Abschied von Gestern* [*Yesterday Girl*] (1966), which reads: "What separates us from yesterday is not a rift but a changed position." Aren't, as Fatou Diomé wrote, our "passports, permits, visas, / and endless red tape, / the new chains of slavery?"⁶³⁷ What if I, as a Belgian citizen, with a supposedly safe EU passport, would ever need to flee my country? What if such a person needed to resort to a fake travel document to escape arrest by the same authorities that had previously seemed so trustworthy? And a fortiori, what should people do when fate has it that they are born in the wrong, war-torn country? I propose here that we need to proceed to shift perspective. What can we learn from how *they*, fellow humans all too lightly put out on the curb nowadays as "migrants," obtained "talent for life"—to employ the title of Rodaan Al Galidi's appealing novel (2016)? What do *we* need to adopt from those who find themselves grounded in Calais, near the sea?

This *we* refers to the western European generation to which I belong, as well as to those in this same generation in other prosperous countries. Many of us, with the inclusion of women, were given the opportunity of an inexpensive yet excellent education. At the same time, this solid training prepared students to become active in any chosen area of the "individuated bourgeois" society—to recall Allan Sekula's note. Comfort and individualism have expanded worldwide, to an extent that has proven unsustainable in relation to the current way of life within advanced societies.⁶³⁸ Now could be the time for the individuated bourgeois to retrieve empirical knowledge from the skills that life obliged these errant persons to acquire on a daily basis. *Theirs* is a strong sense of survival, a sharp ability for precise atmospheric observation, and for perfect timing. There is much to learn from the field of specialization around which they have been forced to organize their lives—against their will. Their dance for life, I argue, confronts the individuated bourgeois—in Sekula's view, practicing a death dance—with a reverse mirror image.

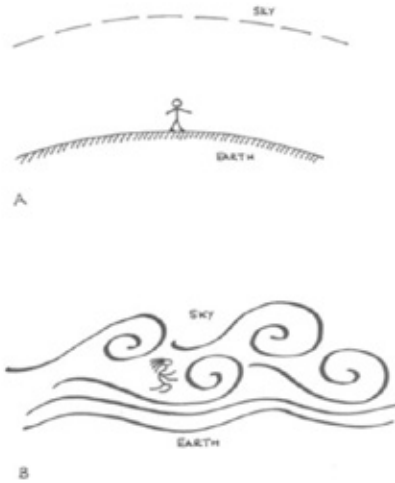


Figure 4. A: The exhibitant of the earth. B: The inhabitant of the weather-world.

Fig. 4.1.
Reproduced by permission from Tim Ingold, "Earth, sky, wind, and weather," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2007), fig. 4. © Tim Ingold.

At this point, I want to bring in Tim Ingold's concept of "kinspersons."⁶³⁹ "We all know what it feels like to be out in the open air on a windy day," Ingold wrote.⁶⁴⁰ But do we really? Ingold profoundly researched what it means to be in the open. As an anthropologist, Ingold first understood this concept literally. But he also attached a metaphorical meaning to it. With the help of an insightful drawing of his own, he elucidated the distinction between an *exhibitant* (as he calls it) of the Earth and an inhabitant of the weather-world. (fig. 4.1) Exhibitants believe that they live *on* the Earth, conceived of as a furnished ground surface. The sky, from this point of view, is imagined to be a "vacant space without limit."⁶⁴¹ It hovers somewhere high above the ground surface's objects and appears somehow detached from it. Objects, such as birds, seem to find themselves in the sky conceived of as this separate entity. In that conception, their relationship to humans *on* the ground is unclear. Both the clouds in the sky and all that is underneath the soil will then run the risk of becoming closed off from life on the ground, as they will be considered irrelevant for life on the ground.

Ingold rejected this worldview as one that disregards intrinsic, fundamental connections between earth and sky. In his atmospheric conception of the weather-world, its inhabitants understand the earth and the sky to belong to one and the same "interface"—each of them is one of two hemispheres that, together, comprise the inhabitants' life-world.⁶⁴² In that open world, there are no well-defined, static objects as such. The weather-world, after all, is always in a state of flux, subject to comings and goings that "may generate formations, swellings, growths,

protuberances and occurrences, but not objects.”⁶⁴³ The medium that sets this flux into motion is “*wind*.” Ingold therewith has suggested that, to feel fully alive, human beings need to mingle with the fluxes of wind and weather. Only then will they be capable of inhabiting a truly open world. As they breathe, humans-as-inhabitants realize that the wind, light, and moisture of the sky bind with the substances of the earth. The open world of earth and sky, then, is not the object but instead the “*homeland*” of their thoughts.⁶⁴⁴ The winds, in that case, do not “*have* agency; they *are* agency.”⁶⁴⁵ Through respiration, we can feel the wind and breathe the air. That, in his view, is essential to a life in which “we ride on the wave of the world’s ongoing formation—to be forever present at the ‘continued birth’, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty called it, of both persons and things.”⁶⁴⁶

When the human body is “*enwinded*” in this way, so Ingold says, “the world is about to disclose itself for what it is.” At one point at the very end of 2018, while pursuing fieldwork on the Atlantic Ocean’s waters surrounding the Canary Islands, a jolly school of dolphins—a classic example of exemplary community—came to salute our vessel. As we were sailing at full speed, they must have enjoyed the pleasant sound of our boat cutting through the waves. As swift as an arrow, they continued to swim along with us for several minutes. While cleaving the waters, they proudly displayed their agility to move faster than our boat, meanwhile even finding the time to jump! (5#) As the big fish readied themselves for springing out of the water, the energy of the gurgling water mass released an overpowering sound. Here, no doubt, our party met the true water-bounds—inhabitants of the weather-world. Observing these animals’ joy in life proved to be one of the more fulfilling moments in the entire writing process of this book. In the ancient holistic traditions preceding modern scientific vision, the world was viewed as one cosmic, breathing organism. Allie Barb brought to mind that Homer’s “great Ocean River” represented nothing other than the “Womb of the Sea.”⁶⁴⁷ People would associate the spiral body of the dolphin, seen as the most preeminent “womb-fish” (δολφός and δελφύς meaning womb in ancient Greek), with “fertility, vital force, and protection.”⁶⁴⁸

But the experience also cut its mark as only a knife’s blade can, in a way that can best be described by recalling the skipper Patrick, who had rescued Massoud. Indeed, it is heartbreaking to realize that some can go out on the water and have fun, while others sail a similar trajectory on shaky piraguas in a kamikaze action that may very well take their lives.⁶⁴⁹ Out on the water I understood, first of all, what Allan Sekula meant when he said during a public conversation at HEAD in Geneva (on February 23, 2011) that it is time we restore “our organic connection to the creatures of the sea,” and therewith “our connection in deep history to aquatic life.”⁶⁵⁰ Secondly, this extended play with the dolphins

swimming through the fresh-smelling ocean waves made me realize what Ingold meant to say when he wrote that “the ‘ground’ is [...] a more or less impenetrable mass of tangled undergrowth.”⁶⁵¹ Human beings make the fundamental mistake of exclusively conceiving of the ground in terms of a “stage,” a “floor,” a “baseboard,” or a “platform” that needs to be covered with “hard surfacing.”⁶⁵² Take, for example, the engineering of the ground surface by coating it with a layer of concrete or asphalt, such as in road construction works or foundations for urban development. The objective of such infrastructural interventions, according to Ingold, is to make sure that the superstructure of the city can be easily erected. The ground is then converted “into the kind of surface that theorists of modernity always thought it was—level, homogeneous, pre-existent and inert.”

However, as Ingold warns, “nothing can grow there.” Worse even, hard surfacing, unless constantly maintained and reinforced, is incapable of withstanding “the elemental forces of the sky and earth that erode it from above and subvert it from below.” In other words, the mountain is not above the ground—it is (part of) the ground itself, which elsewhere “turns out to be none other than the fluid ocean.”⁶⁵³ Even those seas, “as every mariner knows,” should never be considered as providing a solid base. Real seas “heave and swell.” It is at sea that one realizes that the ground never comprises a “featureless and perfectly level plane” but instead is “a field of difference.”⁶⁵⁴ “*Infinitely variegated*” in contour, substance, coloration, and texture, the ground is always “fractal” in quality, and “*composite*.” It undergoes “*continuous generation*.”

“Somewhere beneath it all,” according to Ingold, “is solid rock, and somewhere above the clear sky.”⁶⁵⁵ It is in this “intermediate” or “*interstitial*” zone that “life is lived, at depths depending upon the scale of the creature and its capacity to penetrate an environment that is ever more tightly packed.”⁶⁵⁶ The ground, conceived in this way, “comprises a domain in which humans and non-human inhabitants are comprehensively knotted with one another.”⁶⁵⁷ It is a truly common ground, in the sense that “the knowledge that runs in [it] is that of all knowledges”—a “*social*” knowledge. The key question is, then, how to find ways to meaningfully live *in* this weather-world, within which everything connects to everything else, caring for it—and not just *on* it, as if it can be furnished according to our own delusions of the day. When we live in the world conceived in this way, sensitive to the weather elements, we can experience time “*kairologically*,” Ingold concluded.⁶⁵⁸ It is then, according to him, that the blade of *kairos* can create opportunity, and contribute to shaping harmonious relations of “kinship.”⁶⁵⁹

Building on the work of Richard Broxton Onians, Barbara Baert has brought to mind that, “since *kairos* refers to cuts and short-lived possibilities it provides a better understanding of the Latin word *opportunus*,

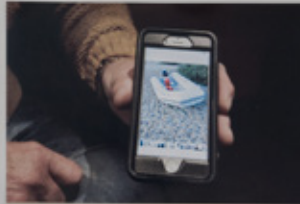
opportunitas.”⁶⁶⁰ These words contain as their roots *porta* [door], *portus* [harbor], and *angiportus* [entry or way through]. When *kairos* thus succeeds in using the knife opportunely, we can break through the paralyzing routine of chronological experience. This I learned by witnessing the *kairological* dancers near the Aire de service de Saint-Laurent, who were literally grounded quite near to the sea and with whom I now so much empathize. Ingold’s writings gave words to those feelings. As a result, I propose to define—building on his influential writing—their area of research as *kairology*. How to bridge *kairology* and photography theory is a matter up for further investigation in the next chapters.

Calais, Mister President, does no longer belong to the Calaisiens, nor does it belong to the exiles; Calais belongs to the smugglers. Afghan smugglers, but also Egyptians, Pakistani, Albanese, Eritrean, Iraqi, Iranians, Vietnamese. These smugglers, Mister President, rule the town. They regulate transactions. Deliver themselves to diabolic rivalries. Collect and cash money, exact reimbursements, fabricate debts, do not shirk from sentencing — from settling accounts.

Yann Moix, *Dehors* (Paris: Grasset, 2018), 338. My translation.



Jean Moix, *DEHORS*, 2018, p. 339:
CALAIS, mordus de l'État,
n'appartient plus aux Calaisiens et
il n'appartient pas aux exilés ;
Calais appartient aux passeurs.
Passeurs afghans, mais aussi égyptiens,
pakistais, albanais, érythréens, indiens,
iranais — néerlandais. Ces passeurs,
monsieur le Président, régissent la ville.
Ils régulent le trafic. Si livrent à des
consciences endormies. Perçoivent des
sommes, exigent des remboursements,
fabriquent des dettes, prodigent des
condamnations — régissent des comptes.



CAL, 2 NOVEMBER
2018

Glimpses.
#resist

Chapter 5

Reliquiae

Now that I know that the quotation comes from *Macbeth*, I can't help but realize (or perhaps remember) that also behind us, at our backs, is the person urging us on, the person who whispers in our ear, perhaps without our even seeing him ... like the drop of rain that falls from the eaves after the storm, always on to the same spot so that the earth becomes softer and softer until the drop penetrates and makes a hole, perhaps a channel.

Javier Marías, *A Heart So White* [1992], trans. Margaret Jull Costa (New York: Vintage International, 2013), 68.



#heart of #stone #broken

Two pieces of #white chalk as found uncovered in the #wet sand at receding tide
@BotanyBay #beach #kent #brokenheart

On April 30, 2018, the news agency AFP published on the home page of its website a short text bearing the dramatic title “When hope is gone.”⁶⁶¹ Its chief photographer in Kabul, Shah Marai, had first posted it two years earlier on the agency’s blog. That last Monday of April, the essay was re-shared in a more prominent location to pay tribute to Marai, who was killed in a suicide blast in the Afghan capital the same day. The document, richly illustrated by Marai with his own images, reads as a moving testimony to the author’s passionate love for photography. His open-hearted confession confronts readers with the permanent hardships he was forced to endure merely to *take* his pictures. Notwithstanding these major obstacles, Marai expressed his belief in the camera’s powerful possibilities to tell the world about the horrors going on in his home country. He closed with a somber conclusion, as he confirmed to have lost the most precious of all human prospects: hope. His final words read, “I don’t see a way out. It’s a time of anxiety.”

Shah Marai continued his important work as a war photo-reporter until the very end. One of his last pictures shows two men with worried expressions on their faces. (Plate 9) They direct their gazes to a point outside the image’s frame. From the description given by *BBC NEWS* on its website (as well as from the accompanying caption), the two men are inspecting the site of a suicide bombing that took place outside a voter registration center that same day.⁶⁶² The viewer observes the looks in their eyes through shards of glass in a broken window. The site of the drama is only vaguely reflected in the splinters, from behind—as in a fake mirror. A teenage boy has averted his eyes, as if trying to somehow disconnect himself from the scene and therewith protect himself. Marai enhanced this fragmented impression as the photograph separates the young man from the two adults through what appears to be part of a lilac-colored window frame. *They* are stuck in the uncertainty of the turbulent present. *He*, still blessed with a youthful mind, instead orients his thoughts elsewhere.

Marai’s life came to an end in a similar way just one week later. Retrospectively, as the result of this tragic coincidence, *Afghan residents inspect the site of a suicide bombing outside a voter registration centre in Kabul on April 22, 2018* becomes an even more eerie image. It brings to mind what Susan Sontag, in *On Photography*, called photography’s power to confront its viewers with an epiphany—a moment of sudden insight connected to a great, overwhelming realization.⁶⁶³ Sontag defined this instant of understanding in negative terms—as a shock resulting in trauma: next time it may be my turn, as proved the case for Shah Marai.⁶⁶⁴ But Sontag also argued that it is necessary to continue our observation of photographs, as photography is a modality of experience that can contribute to altered forms of collective conscience. In her view, a positive change in people’s mindsets can be triggered by photography’s capacity

to generate a fundamental revelation of “something novel.”⁶⁶⁵ As is well known, she subsequently confessed that, for her, the primordial negative epiphany was her first encounter—in July 1945 at the precocious age of twelve—with photographs of extreme horror taken in the concentration camps of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau, liberated shortly before.

This experience, Sontag wrote, cut her sharply and instantaneously.⁶⁶⁶ It both “broke” and deeply “wounded” her. The impact of what she saw represented in those photographs was so profound that Sontag claimed it even divided her life into two parts—a *before* and an *after* having seen them. Although “something went dead” and “something is still crying,” she also admitted it shaped her lifelong determination to come to terms with the powerful impact of photographs. Only a few years later, Roland Barthes, for his part, insisted, in a similar vein, that we should take the profound injury that a photographic image can cause as earnestly as possible. Moreover, as he specified, the observation of *any* type of photograph cannot be anything but painful. For him, any subject matter shown in a photograph inevitably shocks its viewers to a certain degree, if only because the picture is “a witness of something that is no more.”

In the same interview, conducted by Angelo Schwarz and Guy Mandery, Barthes indicated the central point of departure for any study of the medium: the fact that photography is “a fascinating and funereal enigma.” “If photography is to be discussed on a serious level,” he said to his interlocutors, “it must be described in relation to death.”⁶⁶⁷ In these heart-to-heart conversations, Barthes, at the same time, created a radical opening toward the future. It is as if he suggested that photography’s intimate knowledge about death and times past endows it with a capacity to point forward, toward a fundamental renewal. Photography, he told Schwarz and Mandery, operates in “an intermediate zone”: it “displaces, shifts the notion of art, and that is why it takes part in a certain progress in the world.”⁶⁶⁸ The final, concluding lines of the very last class he taught—on February 23, 1980—similarly reveal his passion for the idea of a “rebirth.”⁶⁶⁹

Barthes conceived of such a possibility while referring to Friedrich Nietzsche, who claimed to have been able to imagine *Zarathustra* soon after he experienced a “*sudden and radical modification of his taste in music.*” Barthes, similarly, speculated on the hypothesis of a personal rebirth by means of “the art of hearing.” What could possibly engender such a “*new ear* for things” is “a trigger, a chance event, a mutation.” In this final lecture, Barthes thus presumed music to be a central player for bringing about the fundamental metamorphosis that he was after. However, on repeated occasions during these later years of his life, he turned to the study of a very personal selection of photographs—as if he intuited a key role for this medium in the transformation of what he identified not only as his hearing but also as “the real dialectical becoming” that

he wanted to bring about. Somehow, Barthes, while musing about the possible importance of music for triggering the change in his life he so ardently desired, overlooked what he was already doing at that very moment: studying photographs.

Sharply aware of the great difficulty of proceeding to that operation of dialectical becoming, Barthes internalized this transformation process and investigated what it could mean for himself, that is, on the level of personal metamorphosis. He quoted both Nietzsche (from *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*) and Kafka (from his *Diaries*) when he specified, to “become what you are” may involve the need to “destroy yourself” first. In the previous lecture (given on February 16, 1980), Barthes used the following quote from Chateaubriand’s *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave* to explain what he meant by this destruction of the self:

like at the confluence of two rivers, I found myself between the two centuries; I plunged into their troubled waters, regretfully distancing myself from the old shore of my birth, and swimming, full of hope, towards the unknown bank upon which new generations will land.⁶⁷⁰

What counts then, Barthes continued his commentary, is “a *mutation in sensibility*.”⁶⁷¹ Through this mutation in sensibility, as Barthes believed, it would be possible to reach the type of “immortality” that he was after.⁶⁷² It is not the immortality of someone who stays still, who is always in the same place, immobile, like a statue, awaiting events to happen. For such is an “unpleasant kind of immortality, which the *Vita Nova* protests against.”

The immortality Barthes was to engage with is that of someone who changes places, who is not where you expect that person to be, who wants “to be completely reborn.”⁶⁷³ In his lecture course on *The Preparation of the Novel* (taught in 1978–1979 and 1979–1980), Barthes spoke and wrote beautifully, yet also cryptically and rather vaguely about rebirth. “In the course of life,” Barthes already wrote in his lecture course on *The Neutral* (taught in 1978), “one must little by little replace the mortal body by an immortal body and give birth in oneself to immortal organs that are substituted for the mortal ones. However, immediate rebuttal by the facts: it’s obvious that everyone dies.”⁶⁷⁴ Immediately thereafter, Barthes explained what he meant: in life, one must be able “to take on the appearance of being dead so as not to shock, hurt, disconcert those who die.”⁶⁷⁵ This, he added, should be understood as an operation of “pure tact.”

Here, I want to recall once again the nameless Afghan man in *Les Éclats*, first mentioned in Chapter One, who told Sylvain George that he

and his companions felt as though they were *already dead, as finished*. It may, at first, not seem to be a matter of great tact on my side to make this connection between the words of Barthes and the dire, unacceptable situation of these men who cannot be identified further. However, in doing so, I want to make a distinction between who they are in real life and how they function as a filmic image. As an image, they express hope. They tell the filmmaker about their knowledge and wisdom of how to take on the *appearance* of being dead so as not to shock those who do not want to be their host. Chiara Brambilla and Holger Pötzsch have argued in the context of similar documentaries and videos made of/by persons on the move that *as images*, these persons mark their agency—or, that they “reconstitute themselves as publicly visible subjects in spite of their institutionalized invisibility.”⁶⁷⁶

Arguably, the inhospitable citizens of France (and the European Union) find themselves on a roller coaster. They are *those who die*, in the sense that Barthes described. Potentially, the Afghan men rather already find themselves in this aspirational state of transition toward *immortality*, understood as a renewed and peaceful life elsewhere—beyond the threshold that is the English Channel. A message sent by Sylvain George appears to nourish this very suggestion.

They have names but I do not know them. It is a very important scene in *Les Éclats*, but I met the individuals portrayed only once, for three hours, and I never saw them again. I encountered them through another person whom I had helped in Paris, found by chance that same afternoon in the Jungle of Calais, and who wanted to help me. He introduced me to several people, explaining them what I had done for him [...] The next day I tried to find them back by returning to their shacks, but these young men had *disappeared* already.⁶⁷⁷

When musing about rebirth, Roland Barthes—in my view—understood death metaphorically: as a transitional phase toward a differently conceived life in the here and now. While conducting the abovementioned interviews with Schwarz and Mandery, he found himself in the process of experimenting with starting to write a novel, which he provisionally entitled *Vita Nova*. From his concept notes for the book, written between August and December 1979, it is clear that the novel was to begin with a prologue dedicated to mourning—mourning his mother, who had died on October 25, 1977.⁶⁷⁸ In *Mourning Diary*, which Barthes kept in the immediate aftermath of the loss of his mother, an entry reads: “*Vita nova*, as a radical gesture: (discontinuous—necessity of discontinuing what previously continued on its own momentum).”⁶⁷⁹ Éric Marty, who edited and wrote commentary for the transcription of Barthes’s schematic

notes for *The Preparation of the Novel*, feels it is fair to conclude that Barthes desired “a mythical conversion—in the manner of Pascal—to a ‘new life’ wherein existence would be entirely taken up by ‘literature.’”⁶⁸⁰

A laundry van hit Roland Barthes in the Parisian rue des Écoles on February 25, 1980 (two days after he completed his second series of classes at the Collège de France on “The Preparation of the Novel”), with fatal consequences. What he would have come to create in the new life that he so vividly wanted to step into will forever be concealed in mystery. Yet the desire for a mutation, however utopian or mythical, is one to build on further. In a challenging analysis of Barthes’s motifs and hesitations related to novel writing, Manet van Montfrans put forward a hypothesis on why he did not put his desires into practice. For her, Barthes’s profound suspicion with regard to language was what forever kept him on the threshold and prevented him from recreating reality in the form of a novel.⁶⁸¹ This, according to her, may at first sight seem paradoxical for an author almost unrivaled in free association. Yet Barthes somehow must have felt torn between his deep longing for a sea change in his creative work and the sharp, realistic insight that, from a practical point of view, he possibly had no other choice than to stay within the operative realm of what he identified as that of “the Neutral.”⁶⁸²

Barthes conceived of the Neutral in terms of a *mental word*.⁶⁸³ To explain its basic meaning, it is useful to draw an analogy with what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari identified as a philosophical concept. For them, philosophy was the preeminent field of conceptual creation and vitalism of concepts.⁶⁸⁴ Because philosophers are capable of imagining concepts for human thinking, they can invent *lines of flight*, which Deleuze and Guattari saw as openings enabling thought to escape from any possible constraint that aims to narrow down or enclose human creativity.⁶⁸⁵ The Neutral, for Barthes, was the pensive concept that allowed *him* to follow certain lines of flight in his thoughts. It made it possible for him to find the words for articulating in words a profound philosophical suspicion toward paradigmatic thinking.

Using a specific example, Barthes juxtaposed French-Western thinking and Japanese thought. In Japanese, there is “no opposition between *l* and *r*,” only “an indecision of pronunciation.”⁶⁸⁶ As a result, there is no paradigm. In French, by contrast, the distinction “*l/r*” creates meaning: “‘je *lis*’ [I read] ≠ ‘je *ris*’ [I laugh].” Barthes referred to Ferdinand de Saussure when concluding that the paradigm is therefore “the well-spring of meaning” in Western linguistic thought. Paradigm and meaning, from this point of view, postulate each other in terms of a “law”: the “yes/no (+/-) model.”⁶⁸⁷ Another telling example is that of “*s/z*, for it is not the same thing to eat *poisson* [fish] or *poison* [poison].”⁶⁸⁸ Where there is meaning, according to Barthes, there is paradigm, and vice versa; where there is paradigm there is meaning: “meaning rests on conflict

(the choice of one term against another), and all conflict is generative of meaning.”

Barthes regretted that it was necessary “to choose *one* and refuse the *other*,” which, for him, was “always a sacrifice made to meaning, to produce meaning, to offer it to be consumed.” In a footnote added to further explain the abovementioned example of s/z, he specified that it is “the slash (/)” [*la barre*] that forms “the line of caesura” [*la barre de césure*] and “is [...] the index of the paradigm, hence of meaning.”⁶⁸⁹ “Whence [I had] the idea,” as he added, for something very different. Barthes was explicitly on the lookout for “a structural creation that would defeat, annul, or contradict the implacable binarism of the paradigm.”⁶⁹⁰ To that extent, he introduced this rebellious element of the Neutral as central to his way of thinking of reality. He conceived of this Neutral not so much in terms of just a word but rather as a *thing* that contains the performative power to both baffle and outplay the binarism of the paradigm.⁶⁹¹ Through the Neutral, Barthes introduced “a third term → the *tertium*.”⁶⁹² He injected into paradigmatic thinking a floating, fugitive element that has no fixed identity and that one needs not only postulate, but also desire, or even hallucinate about.⁶⁹³

I therefore want to put forward the hypothesis that, instead of a profound suspicion about language, an irrational, quasi-undefinable attraction to this Neutral may have also contributed to preventing from Barthes eventually starting to write his novel. As this chapter proceeds, I will further substantiate that his *positive* desire for the Neutral was possibly what forever kept him on the threshold. For, he confessed, the Neutral was always present, insofar as its referent inside of him took the form of a “stubborn affect” that he developed over the years.⁶⁹⁴ He described it as operating within his mind and body with a violence that created a certain passion for it.⁶⁹⁵ Perhaps it is here that his reference to music becomes most pertinent. In musical acoustics, the combination tone or “third tone” is a faint, fleeting, tone produced in the inner ear by two simultaneously sounded musical tones.⁶⁹⁶

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The Neutral saddled Barthes with a paradox. As an object of one’s thoughts, it allows for both imagining and speaking of the temporary suspension of both violence and conflicts inherent to paradigmatic thinking.⁶⁹⁷ Yet because of its inherently impermanent state, the Neutral is what can only be glimpsed: its figures are “twinklings,” said Barthes.⁶⁹⁸ These twinklings appear and disappear again, in ways comparable to what Walter Benjamin has described in terms of an awakening generated by the dialectical image, which provides a vision of a temporality within which past and present meet.⁶⁹⁹ For Barthes, those twinklings of

the Neutral in fact allow for un-thinking of the paradigm as the great principle that, by necessity, would need to underlie every conceivable form of organization and of meaning—even that of organizing the writing of a novel. The Neutral does not cancel out or annul the paradigm altogether, however. It “substitutes for the idea of opposition that of the slight difference, of the onset, of the effort toward difference.”⁷⁰⁰

The Neutral, according to Barthes, also manifests itself through other figures, all of which will become meaningful as this book proceeds: the smooth and the seamless or drifting.⁷⁰¹ The Neutral is what adds *nuance* to the paradigm, and its operative space is that of the “shimmer: that whose aspect, perhaps whose meaning, is subtly modified according to the angle of the subject’s gaze.”⁷⁰² This is probably the zone within which Barthes, eventually, felt most comfortable. Nuance is a keyword in Barthes’s overall thinking, which he assimilated to the Nietzschean concept of *diaphora*.⁷⁰³ As pointed out by Thomas Clerc, *diaphorology* or “the science of the nuances, shimmer, or mottled effects” is something Barthes was trying to conceive of throughout his oeuvre.⁷⁰⁴ Generating knowledge of this “science of the shimmers” or of the *moirés*, which is a more literal translation of the French transcript, is essential to Barthes (the word has also been translated into English as “watered silk”).⁷⁰⁵

The overall pattern he introduced here as a figure of the Neutral is that of the *moiré*—the shimmer. A *moiré* is usually a silk, cotton, linen, or wool fabric with a lustrous finish and a rippled appearance, caused by an irregular pattern of wavy lines. In a commentary of 1977 on a set of twelve photographs by Daniel Boudinet, Barthes described a picture of what seems to be the entrance of a forest on a summer day as a *moiré* of intensities.⁷⁰⁶ About the next image of a rural landscape, part of the same group, he stated: “photography [...] is a subtle cameo.”⁷⁰⁷ In yet another one, Barthes encountered “something austere and neutral.”⁷⁰⁸ Slightly further on, he mused that “the photographs of D.B. are very musical.”⁷⁰⁹ And in the concluding analysis of the two final images, he expressed his admiration for the structure and existential being of the tree, which is a “light, tight, luminous, *moirée* substance.”⁷¹⁰

When nuance thus succeeds in becoming a principle of allover organization, it is capable of *skipping* the paradigm altogether, even if for a moment. Nuance may at first manifest itself for a brief shimmer of time only. Yet in those intervals of temporary paradigmatic suspension, new forms of possible organization and meaning outside of the predominant paradigm might present themselves, even if, once again, merely embryonically at first—as a glimpse or a twinkling. Perhaps this is also where Barthes became impatient: whereas he was hoping for a mutation that would set into motion his writing of a novel, he should have probably continued to proceed step by step, from shimmer to nuance, building up a tissue of *neutral* elements that could eventually lead to a wider sea

change. In writing *Ground Sea*, I took Barthes's desire for the Neutral as a methodological premise. I attempted to stay within that zone—thereby also abandoning his idea of the novel as the goal. Predictably, it led me to an investigation of Benjamin's dialectical image, but not with the purpose of looking out for a Messianic time or a time of the world's complete redemption. What interested me was Theodor Adorno's description of Benjamin's dialectical image as an "antediluvian fossil"—and, as I discuss at the end of Volume II, I ended up finding one such fossil.⁷¹¹

Barthes did believe that the *quality* of nuance would eventually arise from an "intensity (thus entering a game, a dialectic of intensities, a shimmer of forces)."⁷¹² The Neutral, first of all, is able to reveal itself through a shimmer that is colorless, such as the *grisaille*, which is the "color of the colorless."⁷¹³ Building on this insight, Barthes wrote that he objected to semantic oppositions, paradigmatic for him as well, such as "*white* versus *black*."⁷¹⁴ It is interesting to find Barthes switch to a discussion of patterns and colors to clarify his point. As he indicated, there exists a *monochrome* capable of inserting a slight difference, a nuance into the paradigm. The original French term for what is translated into English as *grisaille* identifies this monochrome as *camaïeu*.⁷¹⁵ Barthes referred to the structure of a cameo, an engraved object or jewelry made from either nacre or semiprecious gemstones such as onyx or agate—but cornelian, ivory, bone, or coral can be used as well. Cameo materials consist of two fine layers of the same color but provide, when subtly carved, a slight difference in tone—a *ton sur ton*, in French.

Elsewhere in the course, Barthes mentioned that there is also a color that exists in the gamma of Sennelier inks called Neutral.⁷¹⁶ This color tone, a "dull gray-black," greatly disappointed him.⁷¹⁷ It "spatters and stains," he added. But I have tested it with increasing fascination while doodling (14#, 30#) and have come to find it absolutely pertinent for his argument on the Neutral. Perhaps Barthes shouldn't have put this color aside so quickly after it had caused a little domestic complication in his household (he knocked over one bottle and made a further mess when trying to sponge it up).⁷¹⁸ His irritation about this incident, for sure, prevented him from experimenting more with Neutral color. When applied on paper, Sennelier Neutral comes across as a deep purple. Isn't violet the result of mixing red and blue pigments? Doesn't this rule out the paradigmatic "opposition of primary contrasted colors (blue/red)," which Barthes so much objected to in his course on the Neutral, calling it "the opposition par excellence, the very motor of meaning (phonology)?"⁷¹⁹ Doesn't purple possess the potential to allow for a glimpse of a third term—a tertium?

When analyzing Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, as an example of a Flemish altarpiece, Barthes also emphasized the importance of its structure, consisting of a closable five-surface triptych:

a triptych in color on the inside and in monochrome values of gray (grisaille) on the two outer panels.⁷²⁰ When the two wings are closed, the outside displays a gray monochromatic panoramic landscape that represents “the third day of Creation, according to Genesis: time of the first rain, first trees and bushes.”⁷²¹ Barthes considered this biblical scenery in neutral tones as a third element, placing itself over the three colored panels, in a gesture of layering a nuanced space on top of the colorful main space of the altar’s front side. The Neutral, as he put it, is thus “shown in order to hide the colorful.” This way of proceeding, according to him, represents an ideology of “depth,” in which the apparent enters a game of alternation with the hidden. The Neutral may thus be understood as a back that shows and reveals something without attracting attention: it is a “peelable surface.” Behind this surface, according to Barthes, richness, color, and strong meaning hide. For him, this very structure recalled Lao-tzu: “colorless and undefined,” this monochrome is “like the newborn who hasn’t yet felt his first emotion.”

Chapter Ten develops an analysis of the color purple as a tool that points to a third way of looking at the paradigm red/blue in relation to the geopolitical situation in the Strait of Dover today. Here, it is timely to point out that for the doodles—in a similar vein—I took seriously yet another of Barthes’s recommendations about color.

To be examined: colored writings—the few of them that exist. Color is impulse; we are afraid to sign our messages with it; that is why we write black; we only allow ourselves well-ordered, flatly emblematic exceptions: blue for distinction, red for correction. Any change of color is particularly incongruous: can you imagine yellow, pink, or even grey missives? Books in red-brown, in forest green, in Indian blue? And yet, who knows if the meaning of the words would not be changed?⁷²²

Barthes further specified in this posthumously published entry on color that he presumed the outcome of this way of proceeding would not be a change in the lexicographic meaning of words, but in their *modal* significance. Nouns, just like verbs, have moods, he argued—modes instrumental for carrying, expressing, or instead constraining the subject that utters them. For him, color should therefore be a part of this “sublime grammar of writing, which does not exist: a utopian grammar, far from normative.”⁷²³ Consequently, all textual components of the doodles are in purple. Since this is only visible to readers of the e-version of *Ground Sea*, I have also made them available at www.groundsea.be.

In his essay on Daniel Boudinet, Barthes argued that photographs can appear as *moirés* and cameos. Both black-and-white and color photographs can thereby be considered figures of the Neutral. As shimmering

Neutrals, photographs appear as quickly as they disappear again. They reveal insight into an instance of the Neutral's potential, and at the same time quickly recede again into the background. But the experience of them can be repeated and through this *return*, photographs germinate new ideas on each occasion that we observe them. In this sense, photographs are key actors within the science of the shimmers or nuances that store knowledge of the Neutral. This insight that photographs can be figures of the Neutral is key. The Neutral, Barthes said on repeated occasions in the course, enables us to imagine the germs of new rights. During his lectures on *The Neutral*, he proposed a range of imagined new rights to his students, such as the "right to mourning," and the "right to weariness"; he specified: "new things are born out of lassitude—from being fed up {*ras-le-bol*}."724 He concluded that the Neutral even "postulates a right to be silent—a possibility of keeping silent."725 This is why the Neutral, even if eventually against Barthes's will, may have caused him to claim a "right to silence" about the contents of the novel he so arduously desired to start writing.726

Photographs, as figures of the Neutral, thus make it possible for us to imagine new rights as well. Although Barthes himself never actually went as far as to start drawing such conclusions from the observation of photographs, he did confess in *Camera Lucida* that studying photographs became an increasingly vital practice for him. In this book, entirely dedicated to the study of photography, he argued that he had always felt "torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical."727 Any critical language that he practiced, be it the discourse of sociology, of semiology, or of psychoanalysis, dissatisfied him. In his view, these discourses were absorbed in a reductive system of thinking, and over the years he aimed to develop a "desperate resistance" against them. His preference for working in the expressive mode kept pulling him toward writing on photography. During the first weeks of 1980, Barthes prepared a seminar on "Proust and Photography," which he unfortunately never had the chance to teach due to his untimely death. After some preliminary introductions, he explained in his notes the basic idea of the seminar: to *examine* the set of fifty-six photographs he selected, "one by one, in alphabetical order."728 The ultimate goal of the workshop was "to produce an intoxication, a fascination."

It is worth elaborating on Barthes's desires, doubts, and hesitations toward the end of his life at length because of the lesson to be derived from them. Instead of starting to write his novel, Barthes kept going back to photography, as photographs can "intoxicate you with a world." As one gets better and better acquainted with this *world* through the sustained observation of photographs, one may be drawn into it. Photographs, in Barthes's words, can help generate *a wild desire* for what he elsewhere called a changeover.729 For this changeover, Barthes also introduced a

more technical, if elusive, term. The force behind this changeover, he wrote, is that of a “nontactical *kairos*.” This *kairos*, for him, is “contingency, an exalted image of the Neutral as nonsystem, as nonlaw, or art of the nonlaw, of the nonsystem.” It carries within itself an ethical dimension. For the Neutral as understood in terms of a *kairos* is “not meant to trap the other.” It listens to contingency without, however, submitting to it. What is more, this specific, interiorized mode of being-in-the-world “prevents [...] the becoming arrogant of worldliness.”

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How then can one translate this imagined *art of the non-law* into a real claim for a right to a changeover—a right to a rebirth? This is where Allan Sekula enters the stage again. He also expressed a strong interest in the “binarism at work” at the borders.⁷³⁰ Borders, Sekula would argue, are as comfortable as they are deceiving. He added that, even if he was fascinated by the “dialectical maneuvers” that can be discerned at the borders, he felt the need to search for places “where it is impossible to speak of this side and that one.” Sekula’s “Swimming in the Wake” is an essay that unfolds in three parts, which he defined as *attempts*. As the opening lines to the “Second Attempt: Notes on Photographic Spaces and Exhibition Spaces,” he wrote,

I confess [...] to a longstanding fondness for the structural possibilities of the number three. The Holy Trinity, the Oedipal triangle, the Peircian semiotic, the basis of trigonometry (and thus of surveying and topography and navigation), the Hegelian dialectic: what more could one ask for? Arriving at the number three, counting encounters history and geography, dramas of conquest and revolt. Either the third term closes the system, seals it shut and throws away the key, or it opens it up to some unforeseen possibility.⁷³¹

For Sekula, one should first imagine this type of place based on what he identified as “that informal republic of the sea”—in his opinion, one of the last areas to resist colonial control.⁷³²

Both Sekula and Barthes shared a strong aversion to what the latter identified in *The Neutral* as the “petit-bourgeois ideology of ‘showing off.’”⁷³³ Although Barthes sincerely rejected the petit-bourgeois mentality, he never abandoned a certain—let us call it, in Sekula’s words, *individuated*—bourgeois way of life, to which he had been accustomed since early childhood. A speculative hypothesis could posit that this element was also at play when Barthes had such a hard time converting to novel writing: it might have involved giving up some aspects of a meanwhile

firmly established lifestyle. But, again, this is mere speculation. More relevant is to investigate how Sekula, indirectly, complemented Barthes when he made the central transition in his observations from the individual to the collective level. Sekula associated—if cryptically—Rodin’s ensemble of six chained medieval Calais burghers with the fact that bourgeois, however *individuated* they might be, inevitably had to engage in their joint death dance—a *Totentanz*.

From his published texts, we learn that Sekula was searching for a systemic shift, away from what he identified as “bourgeois culture,” which he felt to be caught up in a deep and sustained crisis.⁷³⁴ In his unpublished notes, he even pointed at a specific type of bourgeois character: “the new bourgeois technocratic Europaman.”⁷³⁵ For Sekula, understanding bourgeois culture’s paradoxical treatment of photography as a symptomatic utterance of the crisis happening at its very center was a key challenge. Bourgeois society, from the eighteenth century onward, displayed a tendency to separate art from science. Photography, in 1839, entered the stage with the capacity to serve both fields equally. In its extreme, photography has served as a war technology, such as in reconnaissance pictures. This doubtful type of objectification of the photographic image at the service of warriors found its counterpart, or compensation if you will, in what Sekula called the “reconstructed *subject*” of the artist.⁷³⁶ Like Barthes, Sekula saw photography as a key tool for helping to bring forth a social transition, under the condition that we remain consciously aware of photography’s various uses within society. Only when photography was employed in a way that allowed the medium to escape reification by established power structures within society as much as possible could it serve as an instrument to help bring about a systemic shift.

From the late nineteenth century onward, photography, Allan Sekula wrote, has always been haunted by these “two chattering ghosts: that of bourgeois science and that of bourgeois art.” Sekula went to great lengths to explain how, exactly, photography became trapped in this fraught relation to power, and what, in his view, could be done to prevent this from happening again. Photography, even if it contributed greatly to science and art, has simultaneously been deployed to strengthen the strangling grip of bourgeois society’s power over individuals. To the extent that the legal basis of the self within bourgeois society lies in property rights, bourgeois society will always experience the need to delimit and establish the terrain of the “*other*”—as the one who does not enjoy the same rights or, in the worst case, hardly any rights at all.⁷³⁷ Of course this is where the conundrum, or rather the vicious circle, appears to become irresolvable: even the delimitation of the terrain of the other serves to affirm and further instrumentalize this uneasy bourgeois conception of the self. Consequently, Sekula

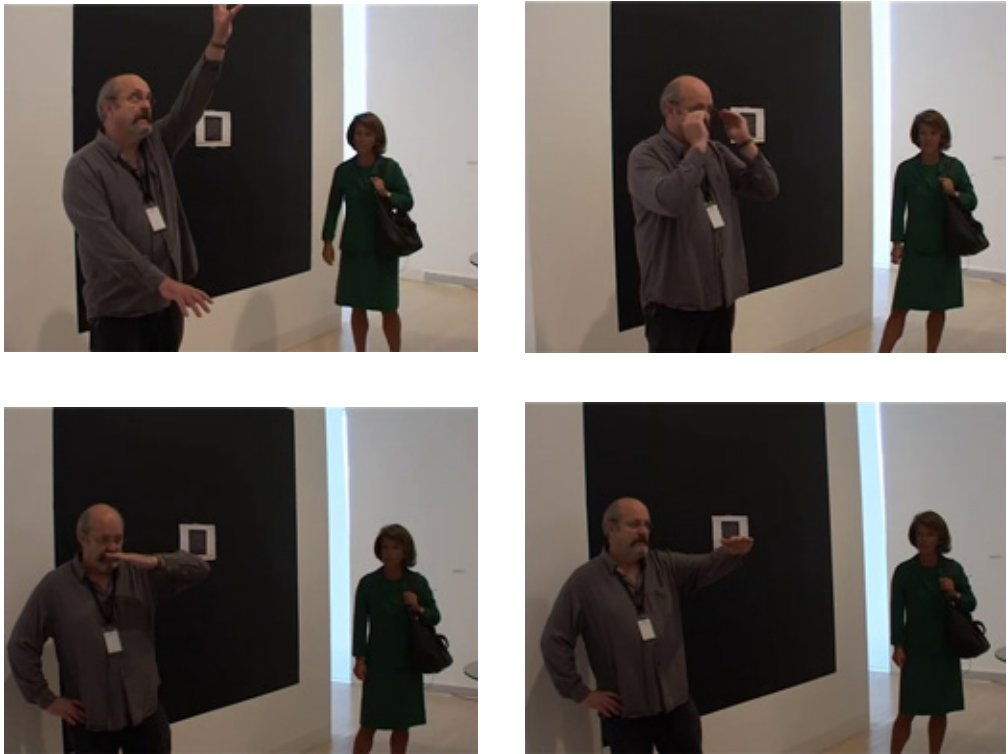
concluded, “every work of photographic art has its lurking objectifying inverse in the archives of the police.” Or, to put it differently, “every proper portrait of a ‘man of genius’ made by a ‘man of genius’ has its counterpart in a mug shot.”⁷³⁸

Thus, whereas Barthes, through *kairoitic* and brief contact with the non-law, provided a glimpse of how we might start to think about what reimagined, fair laws and a workable social system could look like for individuals in the future, Sekula would pursue a career by theorizing and teaching on these concerns at the collective level. He aimed at a more general metamorphosis of society, away from a bourgeois system based on individual property rights—however utopian it seemed at times. Sekula could be harsh when judging photography’s development over time. From its initial emergence, the medium has undeniably proliferated largely as a central mode of communication that contributed to developing the “capitalist *world order*,” which has been under construction from the sixteenth century on—when mercantile capitalism started its process of expansion and “global colonization” kicked off.⁷³⁹ Sekula actively sought to counter this systemic instrumentalization of photography. Concretely, he deconstructed one myth underlying this discourse—namely, that photography provides some sort of a visual language that can be easily understood in a universal way.

Fig. 5.1.

Allan Sekula, *Four Lessons on Photography for the Petit-Bourgeoisie*, 1976–2010. Chalk on a blackboard painted surface, exact size unknown. Installation view in the exhibition *Allan Sekula: Polonia and Other Fables* at the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest, 2010. © Photo: Tibor Gulyás / Archive of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.





As the frontispiece to *Performance Under Working Conditions*, a catalogue that accompanied his retrospective exhibition at the Generali Foundation in Vienna, Sekula selected a photograph of a graffiti that he made outside of a classroom in 1978. Bearing the title *Four Lessons on Photography for the Petit-Bourgeoisie*, it provides a schematic overview of how the social category of the petit bourgeoisie has historically been conditioned to observe photographs. Sekula redrew the scheme on a blackboard for his exhibition *Polonia and Other Fables* at the Zachęta National Gallery in Warsaw (2009). For the subsequent venue of the show at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, he decided to reinstall this same scheme at the entrance of the exhibition. (fig. 5.1) On July 8, 2010—on the occasion of the opening—he gave a guided tour.⁷⁴⁰ We observe the artist standing next to a small photo print attached to the black square on which he would later draw it, playing a role he was intimately familiar with: that of an experienced classroom teacher. (fig. 5.2) While stretching his left arm horizontally in front of him, he explained that, for him, the principal challenge for photography is how to create a “horizontal relation to one’s audience.”

Fig. 5.2.

Allan Sekula giving a guided tour in his exhibition *Polonia and Other Fables* at the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest on July 8, 2010. Four stills from a video recording. © Photos: Tibor Gulyás / Archive of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

Only this horizontal relation, in his view, is a truly *democratic* one. In present-day society, the usual institutional approach to photography, Sekula said to the group, is to display pictures in such a way that viewers must place themselves in the position of *looking up* or of *looking down*. When looking up, we are invited to observe “those who are in power, those who are celebrities, those who are beautiful, those who are successful.” Looking down, we watch “those below us.” Sekula suggested Louis Althusser’s influential critique of ideology to criticize the conventional ways Western societies have employed photography’s power of interpellation. Through this, Sekula expressed his awareness of the shortcomings about the way traditional audiences have come to accept how photography usually *calls* to us in contemporary society. This, he specified elsewhere, has had far-reaching consequences regarding how photography occupied its “paradoxical status [...] within bourgeois culture.”⁷⁴¹

“Especially in the United States,” Sekula wrote, “photography could sustain an imaginary mobility on [a] vertical scale.”⁷⁴² By this he meant that, with regard to “*public looks*,” human beings are either put under systemic pressure to “look up, at one’s ‘betters,’” or “to look down, at one’s ‘inferiors.’” Depending on their framing and contextualization, photographs can thus provoke “both ambition and fear.” They question, in class terms, Sekula concluded, “a characteristically ‘petit-bourgeois’ subject.” Pressured to put ourselves in the *imaginary* position of the petit bourgeoisie, as he continued in his exposé in Budapest, the viewers of contemporary photographs find themselves stuck *in between* the bourgeoisie (pointing with his arm upward) and the working class (bending his stretched arm downward). (see fig. 5.2) With the latter, he meant the *global poor*: “those who do the work, two hundred million Chinese workers.” On repeated occasions, he defined the bourgeoisie negatively, as the ideal that the “petit-bourgeois” permanently dreams about.⁷⁴³ Sekula would identify this bourgeois ideal further as the optimistic “upward aspiration” of the petit bourgeois, which usually falters or fails—especially in periods of economic crisis—and subsequently leads to either progressive or reactionary “class identifications.”

As indicated in the introductory lines to this book, in his later writings Sekula increasingly started to target the *rich people*—the *financial elites*. With this, he seemed to have wanted to indicate that the vertical upward slope for petit-bourgeois aspirations has increasingly become steeper and steeper and less and less within realistic reach, as the elites have grown more numerous, and even richer, in the new millennium. As they face an increasing risk to failure of their upward ambitions and slip off in the direction of global impoverishment, the petit bourgeois will turn to either militancy or retrograde aspirations—Shrunk Britain, for example, as Bruno Latour had it, or the difficult-to-translate slogan

“On est chez nous,” as Marine Le Pen cried out in the 2017 presidential campaign in France.⁷⁴⁴

Sekula set out to dismantle this vertical power structure in society. Before investigating his concrete proposal, let us first turn to his analysis of this basic principle that the underlying visual logic of photography today is entirely defined in vertical terms (looking up or looking down). He described four scenarios imposed on viewers about how they are conventionally expected to look at photographs. (see fig. 5.1) He vehemently rejected and resisted each one of them.

For looking down (a bird’s-eye view), Sekula thus outlined two options:

1. at palm trees in the tropics; the likely result is a simulation of the experience of *pleasure*;
2. at crumbling, smelling buildings somewhere in the slums; in that instance, the likely result is a simulation of the experience of *pity*.

For looking up (a nadir view), Sekula sketched the following scenarios:

3. at money—for example, owned by celebrities or glamorous people; the likely result is a simulation of the experience of *envy*;
4. at a gun pointing at the camera, such as when confronted with the police or any other person with authority and power; in this case, the likely result is a simulation of the experience of *terror*.⁷⁴⁵

It is within such an ego-oriented atmosphere that looking at photographs of misery generates individual compassion rather than collective struggle, and that pity comes to supplant political understanding.⁷⁴⁶ To counter this debasing, vertical way of observing photography, Sekula explained during the guided tour in Budapest, one needs to engage in a horizontal *struggle* (moving his stretched arm back and forth on a horizontal axis). That battle’s principal aim is meant to *cut through* this very power mechanism of hierarchization (and often even institutionalized subordination) at the level of a global citizenship. In his ideal view, each person in the world should be treated by the other as a fellow civilian-inhabitant of an equally shared world. Only then can one ask oneself, “what is democracy, how do we speak straight across the table, face to face, eye to eye?” Sekula, as a result, not only encouraged the viewers of his photographs to observe his works horizontally; he also aimed to *create* his own images in a way that was as horizontal as possible: at equal height, looking his subjects in the eye.

Bearing all this in mind, we can look back at Roland Barthes who, for his part, also specified that a gaze that may potentially come to signify neutrality should be one that looks its object right in the eye.⁷⁴⁷ Discussing the photographic oeuvre of Richard Avedon, Barthes added that, in this body of work, the photographed subjects tend to look back at their viewers, right in the eye as well. The visual effect produced, according to Barthes, is one of truth. This is possible because the eye of the portrayed is only looking at the lens, and therefore at no one. It thus becomes an eye expressing a gaze that can act as “the very organ of truth.” The eye of the photographed person, animal, or object operates in a “space of action that is located *beyond appearance*.” This very eye, which orients its gaze toward that mysterious beyond postulates that what it perceived there is truer than what is simply shown. Barthes even went so far as to identify one figure who appears to master this gaze more than any other: Christ himself. The truthful gaze par excellence, for him, is that of Christ, whom he encountered staring him right in the eye as he is depicted in a picture, on display in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, by the Master of Alkmaar.

*

This leads the discussion back to the concluding slide of “Walking on Water,” partly representing Christ attached to the cross. (see fig. 1.3) Allan Sekula gave instructions that, when projected on a screen in a black box exhibition space, this image needs to be blown up to a size of 1.5×2.25 m. As, for example, in the later drawings of Michelangelo, the focus falls on Christ’s feet, not on his eyes. Although Barthes saw truth in those eyes, the general public consensus is rather that Jesus’s eyes embody Christ’s heavenly power. While photographing his feet instead, Sekula emphasized Christ’s relinquishment of power and his surrender to humanity. In another image, also included in “Walking on Water,” Sekula proposed that his viewers look a photographed person right in the eye. I am hinting at the figure of Professor Jerzy Doerffler. The caption to this slide (no. 24) reveals that it was Doerffler who explained to the artist in 1990 that—now that the forty-five years of slavery by the Communist regime had come to an end—the Polish people also finally wanted to be treated as citizens of Europe. (see fig. 1.4 above right image)

Jerzy Doerffler looks straight into the camera lens. Sekula couldn’t be clearer in his acknowledgment of a person that he valued and appreciated, and with whom he identified as a fellow civilian of an equally shared and cared for “weather-world,” to refer to Ingold’s term once more. Such a horizontal, democratic, and egalitarian approach—both with regard to the photographic subjects and toward the photograph’s

spectators—implies that photographers develop a certain personal connection with their subject matter. Here, once again, Sekula and Barthes meet. To Angelo Schwarz and Guy Mandery, Barthes confessed to have “postulated a certain ‘promotion’ of private photography.”⁷⁴⁸ “In contrast to painting,” Barthes added,

the ideal future of photography lies in private photography, images that represent a loving relationship with someone and possess all their power only if there was a bond of love, even a virtual one, with the person in the photo. This is all played out around love and death. It’s very Romantic.

Sekula postulated a similar, virtual bond with Doerffler. Sekula wished for more citizens like Doerffler, and paid tribute to him by making his portrait.

As posited by Susan Sontag, “photographs do not explain; they acknowledge.”⁷⁴⁹ Aligning with Robert Frank and Diane Arbus, Sontag argued that, if the photograph is to be an “authentic contemporary document,” it should seek “to nullify explanation.” A photograph should find the right balance between transparency and mystery yet keep the secret alive. Photography in that sense, for her, is far from an ideal means to convey truth. Here Sontag diverged from Barthes. Sekula, no doubt, would have disagreed with Sontag’s choice of examples, and possibly also with her analysis of them. In the Frank tradition, he distinguished, quite harshly, only “transcontinental anomic *flânerie*.”⁷⁵⁰ With regard to Arbus, he warned for the “indeterminacy” surrounding possible ways of reading her works, which he found to be “cast adrift between profound social insight and refined solipsism.”⁷⁵¹ Sekula opposed any “fetishistic cultivation and promotion of the artist’s humanity,” which, according to him, entails a “certain disdain for the ‘ordinary’ humanity of those who have been photographed.”

Sekula and Sontag, however, would have aligned in what is clearly Sontag’s expression of her skepticism about what photographs can do on the level of interpretation. She warned for indoctrination. After all, as she wrote, the reality depicted in a photographic image can too easily be transformed “into something beautiful.”⁷⁵² She referred to Walter Benjamin’s 1934 essay “The Author as Producer,” also a key reference for Sekula, paraphrasing Benjamin’s warning that viewers should, at all times, be aware of that the camera is “incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish heap without transfiguring it” into a beautiful object.⁷⁵³ “Abject poverty,” Benjamin said, can be handled by the camera in a modish way—and thus all too easily be turned into a platitude, a simplistic object of enjoyment.⁷⁵⁴ If we want to confer upon

photographs a “revolutionary use value,” it is by means of their captions that they will potentially be rescued from such “ravages of modishness.”

Benjamin urged that writers should not feel inhibited from taking photographs themselves—such as “to show the way,” Sontag added.⁷⁵⁵ If authors want to contribute to producing political progress, they should not shy away from using technology. For intellectual production to become politically useful, Benjamin wrote, “the specialization in the process of production that, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order,” must be surmounted.⁷⁵⁶ To that extent, the barriers of specialist competence must be breached jointly by the productive forces that were created to divide them. Thus, the author as producer will discover solidarity with the proletariat as well as solidarity with certain other producers who, up to that point, had not necessarily been regarded as useful. Benjamin thus referred once more to the photographic *praxis* that authors should dare to engage with, as also advocated by Sekula. The doodles, such as, for example, **8#** or **19#**, are to be understood along these very lines of production. Here, I looked right into the eyes of two women with whom, however ephemeral, a true bond was established at a key moment in the research process for this book.

The first woman was Sydelle Herzberg (**19#**), treasurer of the H&NRH Association, a volunteer community that preserves the Thomas Paine Cottage in New Rochelle, New York. Passionately, she gave a private tour of the house, on a day in early August 2018 when it was closed for renovation works. She was so busy that she really had no time for us at all: yet she *made* time. Similarly, Sheila Leggs—trustee of the Deal Maritime Museum (**8#**), an entirely volunteer-run, unheated space—showed a presumably Roman amphora hidden away in the back room while she was busy closing the building for the winter. When I knocked on the door unexpectedly (and unannounced) in late October 2018, she told me all there is to know about the Goodwin Sands. She informed me that if further research proved the amphora to be this old, the object was likely to join the collection of the British Museum. But I have come to doubt that presumed automatic collection process, given what happened to the Maglemose harpoon recovered near Lowestoft in 1931 (as discussed in Volume II). In a different but related, collaborative way I produced doodle **2#**. This involves a photograph of a black-and-white postcard from the early 1990s, copyrighted by The Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust. Auctioned online in 2018, I was able to purchase it as its highest bidder.

Here as well, as with *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud*, described in the Preface, I had the impression that this picture had found, or even sourced, me, instead of the other way around. I photographed it as it hung in my office for a long time, attached with a magnet to the side of one of the bookshelves. It represents what has been identified by

experts as the south end (i.e. the stern) of the so-called Dover Bronze Age Boat (ca. 1550 BC). This is, as the caption on the back of the card explains, “*the world’s oldest seagoing boat.*”⁷⁵⁷ Martin Latham was the one who most triggered our imagination pertaining to this ship. “When it was on the water, Stonehenge was in ritual use and the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses the Great [...] in power.”⁷⁵⁸ Now well preserved inside the Dover Museum, this impressive wooden, handmade vessel—held together only with rope made of twisted yew branches (no nails or dowels were used to make it)—was accidentally discovered during roadworks at Townwall Street in October 1992.

When I saw this vessel displayed in the museum, in early November 2018, I learned that the hull’s planks were made from trunks of 350-year-old oak trees. Each trunk had a length of twelve meters and a diameter of one and a half meters. The overall height of such an oak tree would have been at least thirty-six meters. Trees that straight, tall, and thick are extinct in Britain today, and extremely rare elsewhere in the world. They made for a seaworthy rowing boat, which could safely cross the English Channel in about five hours on a calm day. It could accommodate a crew of up to twenty persons, with around sixteen of them having to paddle. Experts have come to agree that routine traffic existed between Britain and Europe as early as 3,500 years ago. The Dover Bronze Age Boat is “the first known cross-channel ferry.” From archaeological research of the boat and of cargo finds in the Langdon Bay area just outside Dover harbor, it has been demonstrated that people have risked crossing the channel waters ever since the Bronze Age—often carrying goods (such as stones, metal, textiles, pottery, food, or cattle) with them.

The boat was found quite far up the former bedding of Dover’s River Dour. Researchers came to the conclusion that the still useful, seaworthy ship was beached there on purpose, probably on the occasion of the death of a great leader, as traces of a ritual feast were discovered in the boat’s vicinity (debris such as animal bones, scorched stones, and so on). This is where the story really gets interesting. According to the specialists, the boat had been positioned exactly on that spot because the river bank would allow it to be covered up by silt in just a couple of years’ time, “so that it would quickly be preserved for millennia.”⁷⁵⁹ From there, they concluded that these ancient Kentish navigators “*meant us* to find the boat intact.” Thus, when the boat was first discovered at a level deep below the former Roman wall of Dover, those who were there at the scene actually just did what these old navigators probably had hoped for: they viewed the “sacred memories” of a “significant ancestor.” “Across all the fuss of the last 3,000 years of art and warfare,” Latham suggested, “we come to appreciate their craftsmanship, their seamanship and their love of one of their chieftains.”⁷⁶⁰



Fig. 5.3.

Large crowd queuing in line to salute the tomb of Francisco Franco, Valle de los Caídos, early morning, Easter Friday 2019. Photo by author.

Contemporary people tend to be suspect when they read such lines. They think of sect leaders, or the entirely inappropriate admiration for an oppressive dictator or tyrant—as I was able to witness in awe on the last Easter Friday when Francisco Franco was still buried at Valle de los Caídos [Valley of the Fallen] near Madrid. (fig. 5.3) The story of the Kentish navigators, however, is deeply moving. Such an imaginary transgenerational connection to this selfless gesture by ancient inhabitants of Kent, and the implied pride and satisfaction, provided encouragement on those occasions when the writing process for this study slowed down and needed that little push. Latham gave the last, touching word to a little Australian girl who wrote the following in the Dover Museum’s visitors’ book: “It proves we were smart.” What exactly is the nature of this ancient smartness? Of course, we make infinitely safer boats today. In rough weather, the flexing of the boat’s stitched planks would let in water. In such circumstances, at least two men would need to work constantly to keep the vessel from sinking during the dangerous channel crossing.

Since the end of the previous millennium, humans even have the possibility to comfortably use the train and to forget all about the surrounding waters. Look well. The postcard of the Bronze Age Boat as it was found so delicately buried by caring hands, especially those in black and white, resemble a train track. The fact that it was found exactly during the years that the Channel Tunnel was dug—works started in 1988 and the Tunnel was opened in 1994—is a striking coincidence. In retrospect, we may regard its discovery as an omen. There is a sophistication to be taken from these ancient ancestors' ingenious simplicity, from their modest knowledge of and closeness to nature and the materials it provides. After all, there must have been days that a channel crossing was impossible due to weather conditions. In a different mindset—spiritually, temporally, spatially, socially, politically, and not in the least economically—from that of today, waiting before being able to safely cross must have belonged to the order of complete normality.

Without idealizing such a situation or pleading for a return to it, I do want to argue that, still today, inspiration may be taken from that weather-world logic. As a matter of fact, in 1996, an exact replica of part of the boat was built, using copies of original Bronze Age tools. The reconstruction process took eight men only six weeks to execute. The following lessons were drawn: the bronze tools were more efficient than anyone had predicted, and the techniques used obviously came from a long tradition of boat building—perhaps several centuries. No doubt, therefore, that these ancient navigators ardently wanted us to discover the actual *reliquiae*—or “remains, *esp.* fossil remains of animals or plants”—of their skill with regard to the complex system of cleats, rails, stitches, and wedges that hold the boat together and made it strong and waterproof enough for sea travel.⁷⁶¹

Consider a relic and how it functions. As it travels on its often very far journey toward where it ultimately will be preserved, a relic carries with it a reference to the name of the person from whom it is taken and to the place where it initially came into being. Wherever it goes, the relic takes with it the memory of the identity of a body, as well as the place and circumstances that generated its present status *as* a relic. “The relic,” Barbara Baert wrote in her analysis of Late Medieval *Enclosed Gardens* produced by women at beguinages in the Low Countries and the Rhineland, “is an index, an indicator of a site.”⁷⁶² It is “an *engram*,” which, in zoological terms, “is an impression or a trace left in the central nervous system.”⁷⁶³ A relic, furthermore, is the outcome of a long, sustained, and patient process of human handwork. In its literal form, a relic involves holy bones or other sacred fragments that are embalmed and wrapped in textiles, which serve to both conceal the relic and create its mysterious aura. These materials are held together using techniques of lacework, embroidery, and needlework.



The relic thus becomes an “indestructible artefact” that creates ancestral lines, transversal connections branching like a cobweb that captures cosmic time and that may come to be used as an imagined lifeline in case of a need for it.⁷⁶⁴ The Dover Bronze Age Boat materializes that very idea in a transitional way. Our present-day connection to this boat is that it is both a trace of that technical mastery and tangible proof of it. We thus can understand the preserved Bronze Age Boat as a relic that not only confronts us with cosmic time but also with a cosmic dimension of love—that matrilineal type of caring so powerfully embodied by the delicately decorated boxes that were the Enclosed Gardens.⁷⁶⁵ It also provides us with that type of image that Roland Barthes was after: the photograph that represents a loving relationship with someone and possesses all its power only if there was a bond of love. In an essay on the paintings of the French artist Bernard Réquichot, Barthes elaborated on Réquichot’s *Reliquaries*, boxes composed of oil, bone, and various other materials. Barthes read these artworks not, as one might at first presume, in terms of profaned tombs. Instead, he saw them as enclosed temporal spaces within which the artist’s body “worked, worked itself over: withdrew and added itself, rolled and unrolled itself, discharged itself.”⁷⁶⁶

Fig. 5.4.
Four untitled and un-numbered slides from Allan Sekula, *Reverse Magellan*, 2010. Collection M HKA, Antwerp / Collection Flemish Community.
© Allan Sekula Studio.

Réquichot, for Barthes, visibly “took pleasure” in doing so. In that sense, the boxes that he created should be understood as reliquaries, “not of saints’ bones but of Réquichot’s pleasures.”⁷⁶⁷ In many religions, traditional tombs encompass items that belonged to the deceased persons—precious objects that the departed might still need in the eternal afterlife. To shift the perspective away from this conventional emphasis on possession and property, Barthes referred to ancient Peruvian tombs discovered on the Pacific coast. In these, the corpse is surrounded by terra-cotta statuettes representing the dead person’s preferred ways of making love. The saddest thing about dying, Barthes emphasized, is not that our possessions are taken away from us—it is that we must leave behind the pleasure of love. This is a major and hugely inspirational shift in perspective. It allows for an understanding of the Dover Bronze Age Boat in terms of such an imaginary box that displayed for later generations the “traces of [...] pleasure,” both of the leader and of those who lovingly buried him there, protected by his boat.

When the boat was eventually found as the previous millennium came to an end, the different components that had sat there together for so many ages became disassembled. This fatality should not distress us, because “the separation of elements that have been joined in sympathy,” as Tim Ingold wrote, will always disentangle in a reassuring way.⁷⁶⁸ Ingold compared this disentangling to that of a knot in a rope. The untied rope remains marked by the shape and form of the knot. In other words, the memory of the knot is suffused into the rope’s very material. When a knot, like blob-like osseous elements, previously formed “a flexible and sympathetic union,” the untied knot will not become a disarticulation.⁷⁶⁹ Instead, a mechanism of “casting off” sets into motion, “whence lines that once were bound together go their different ways” just as siblings do. When siblings leave home, Ingold specified, they disperse without disassembling. That dispersal implies a “shaking out of those lines of interstitial differentiation otherwise known as kinship.”

In his last, uncompleted slide sequence, *Reverse Magellan* (2010), Allan Sekula included a set of images representing three crew members of the *Global Mariner* busy disentangling a knot in a rope by means of a wooden peg. (fig. 5.4) Originally built as a cargo vessel, the *Global Mariner*—as elaborated in greater depth in Chapter Eight—was reconverted into a campaign ship financed by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF). Sekula, who sailed on this ship several times during its two-year journey (1998–2000), described its voyage as a “counter-enactment” of Ferdinand Magellan’s “first circumnavigation of the globe.”⁷⁷⁰ Magellan’s remarkable achievement, in Sekula’s view, marked a decisive step in the process of “modern imperial dominion.” While this sequence featuring activist-seafarers struggling with such a

severely tightened rope unfolds before our eyes, we wonder how the knot of present-day imperial power will eventually be disentangled.

The knot's striking resemblance to the shape of an octopus forms a visual motif that is of key importance to the argument in Volume II of *Ground Sea*. Sekula never doubted that the practice of making and writing about photography could potentially contribute to shaping connectedness, involving ties of people who go their own way to join in activities with others elsewhere yet without giving up their initial bonds. On the back cover of Sekula's posthumously published book *Facing the Music*, Molly Nesbit is quoted from her review as follows: "Read it aloud and you will hear Allan Sekula's voice. He is still on the march, raising questions, wanting human kindness to prevail, demanding social justice for all, writing like all get-out."⁷⁷¹ How can we build on both Ingold's and Sekula's dreams about the prevalence of sympathetic relationships of, respectively, kinship and siblinghood? This question will be a guiding thread throughout what follows in the next chapters.⁷⁷²

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One speculative reflection on how we can use such dreams as a point of departure for reimagining the concepts of humanity and humanism today will now conclude the argument in Volume I. I will do this by turning the attention to an intense critical debate in art theoretical and philosophical writing about one photography exhibition that first took place in 1955: *The Family of Man*. Installed in the aftermath of a worldwide violent conflict, this landmark event, displaying over five hundred photographs from sixty-eight countries, embarked on a tour of the world to thirty-eight countries after an initial display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curated by Edward Steichen, *The Family of Man* was seen by over nine million people. With the support of the US Central Intelligence Agency and sponsored by companies such as Coca-Cola, the show is now generally considered to have visualized and further spread a founding myth of postwar liberal society: that human experiences such as love, work, and leisure can transcend ethnic, social, and economic differences.⁷⁷³

The Family of Man thus advanced the rather euphoric but voluntarist assertion that all humans are part of "one big family hugging close to the ball of Earth for its life and being."⁷⁷⁴ The most famous early critique of the project was Roland Barthes's devastating review, collected in *Mythologies* (1957).⁷⁷⁵ Barthes assessed that such grand proclamations make history collapse into nature, as they put forward a conception of humanism within which injustice and social division are celebrated as negligible differences that can be overcome by a rather abstracted focus on shared universal values. Likewise, Allan Sekula spoke out firmly

against the dangers of this type of photo exhibitions propagating the ideal that there is only one universal human condition. For him, *The Family of Man*'s "primitive, infantile, and aggressive discourse" promulgated the ill-placed idea that photography, in its turn, would also be part of one universal language.⁷⁷⁶

Instead, Sekula argued, photographic language needs to be understood in exactly the opposite terms. What a photograph eventually comes to signify depends on larger discursive conditions, which invariably involve a built constellation of verbal and/or written language. Photographic meaning, he wrote, is always the result of a hybrid construction within which iconic, graphic, and narrative conventions each play a part. When presented to a wider audience in exhibitions, photographs should not propose an illusory mirror of supposedly universal emotions but instead point explicitly at the historical and social circumstances that generated injustice or even humanitarian disasters. For Sekula, *The Family of Man*, with its rather basic captions—largely providing only the country where the image was made and the name of its maker, without offering any further circumstantial information—failed to do that. Seemingly "concerned," this type of "innocent" practice put photography at the service of postwar neocolonial liberal ideology.⁷⁷⁷ Sekula viewed *The Family of Man*'s claim as a "bogus humanism," which aimed to freeze the reality of social life, if not rendering it invisible.⁷⁷⁸

Moreover, he argued, the exhibition not only universalized the Western bourgeois nuclear family but also celebrated patriarchal authority by means of a formalist photographic project disconnected from uncomfortable, exploitative realities. Accordingly, *The Family of Man* celebrated bourgeois humanist art for the bourgeois capitalist epoch. It made the political collapse into the familial, and, along with it, imposed the language of the imperial center—the socioeconomic model of the United States—on the peripheries. What lessons should be drawn from such sharp insights? How to turn the tide in favor of those depicted in the photographs, whose lives changed little by having their portraits featured in the exhibition? These are questions prominently raised by Louis Kaplan, when he pointed out that the Marxist in Sekula put too much faith in the proletariat as the universal revolutionary class capable of struggling against the ever-strangling grip of global capital.⁷⁷⁹

Allan Sekula indeed forever remained inspired by a certain romanticized freedom of working-class people. During the abovementioned talk at HEAD in Geneva, he showed a short clip of Jean Vigo's film *L'Atalante* (1934) to the audience.⁷⁸⁰ Sekula presented the working-class reprobate figure of Père Jules, played by Michel Simon, as a moral model. He drinks and he goes to the brothel, yet, at the same time, he becomes a figure of forgiveness and social reintegration. *L'Atalante*, for Sekula, was a film about a possible construction of a radically different type of

community emerging from the proletariat.⁷⁸¹ In Kaplan's view, however, this dreamed-of community will always remain inoperative. At the same time, Kaplan also expressed belief in the possibility for a photographic project, such as Sekula's own undertaking, to have as its principal mission to *expose* this inoperative community without immediately knowing how to solve the basic, underlying problem. That, in Kaplan's opinion, remains one possible valid way to "unwork the Family of Man," a task he deemed to be as yet unfinished.⁷⁸²

In the opening lines of his 2002 essay "Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea (Rethinking the Traffic in Photographs)," his tirade against the contemporary financial elites, Sekula revisited *The Family of Man* once again. He identified it as a straightforward conceit—as if it would be possible to benignly conscript subjects as members of a metaphoric human family.⁷⁸³ As the global middle class is today ever more threatened with proletarianization, the type of liberalism underlying the entire humanist project of the 1950s has been exhausted, he posited. Proletariat, petit bourgeoisie, and individuated bourgeois will have to join hands against the excesses of the elites complicit with both powerful politicians and the strangling grip of multinational enterprises for whom humanism is no more than a gloss or a light sauce that one throws over rhetorical argumentation in the hope the distasteful main dish can be swallowed a little more easily.

In relation to the social division of classes in today's world, Giorgio Agamben, in *The Coming Community*, advanced an original hypothesis. Agamben provocatively suggested, in what may seem at first sight a rather counterintuitive move, that, in the contemporary world, all social classes have virtually dissolved into a single planetary petty bourgeoisie.⁷⁸⁴ What he meant by this is that we live in a system of globalized enviousness. The emotional registers ruling human beings, regardless of the concrete social class to which they belong, are those of the petty bourgeoisie. They balance between shame and arrogance, conformity or marginality. Agamben added that it is very likely that, in this extended form, humanity is moving toward its own destruction. In an early chapter of the book, entitled "From Limbo," Agamben wrote impalpably that "the life that begins on earth after the last day is simply human life."⁷⁸⁵ It remains unclear whether we should read between the lines a pessimistic message—that a doomsday will indeed be necessary for a reset—for reinventing a more humane human life.

How are we to avoid such a dire scenario? Can a revisiting of *The Family of Man's* photographs still be meaningful today if we want to reconsider a humanist project for the world at hand? Advocating that, once and for all, we abandon the "sentimental humanism" of *The Family of Man*, Abigail Solomon-Godeau also cautiously assessed that the exhibition continues to be "an object that is perhaps 'good to think

with.”⁷⁸⁶ Ariella Azoulay, for her part, tried to save *The Family of Man* more actively from the trash can of history.⁷⁸⁷ To Roland Barthes she replied, first, that he overestimated the curatorial discourse and at the same time grossly underestimated what a photograph actually can do. In her opinion, it is impossible for any exhibition or book project to remove historical content from photographs altogether. Secondly, she argued that Barthes also underrated the viewers of these images, who may have multiple readings and interpretations of the pictures despite the curator’s presumed attempt at putting forward an omnipotent vision.⁷⁸⁸ Reconstructing or tracing the historical-critical potential of each photograph in question may take “serious interpretative efforts” on the part of the viewer, she conceded, but it can be done.⁷⁸⁹

Azoulay proposed to look back at *The Family of Man*’s pictures from the perspective of our contemporary reality, as a “public archive.”⁷⁹⁰ When we do that, she pointed out, we find that nothing substantial has changed over time. We have been, and still are, living in “the imperial condition.”⁷⁹¹ The political philosopher in her emphasized that, however immanent the imperial movement and its intrinsic idea of progress now might seem to have become, human beings still have the power to propose “a counter-principle.”⁷⁹² This, for her, “consists in placing the human condition at the center of gravity of the world as a common space.” Azoulay here referred not only to Hannah Arendt’s likewise titled book *The Human Condition* of 1958, but also to *The Family of Man*. As readers of the *The Family of Man* book and spectators of the exhibition were invited to step back from the imperialist race for progress, they absorbed glimpses of “different temporalities along the lines of cycles, rest, leisure, non-productivity, and more.”

For Azoulay, both Arendt’s book as well as *The Family of Man* dared—at the risk of being condemned as nostalgic—to reconstruct what the imperial condition presented as irretrievably lost; in other words, a pre-imperial condition. Although an in-depth analysis of Azoulay’s lengthy argumentation goes beyond the purview of the present book, I want to briefly engage in a dialogue with her undertaking. For, as a historian, I believe there is a danger to this conflation of Arendt’s book and Steichen’s project. What *The Family of Man*’s photographs can teach us, according to Azoulay, is that the loss of humanity under the imperial condition has not been complete, nor has it been irretrievable. As an example, she selected an image by Nat Farbman representing Yvonne Chevallier in court during her trial for the passionate murder of her husband, French cabinet minister Pierre Chevallier—a crime of which the court absolved her.⁷⁹³ After a full identification of the picture’s content, she called Steichen’s choice to present a woman as a claimant for acquittal in court courageous. We will probably never know what exactly was on Steichen’s mind when he selected this picture. However, from

the patriarchal point of view that was still predominant in Steichen's own time, his decision to include this photograph can equally well be understood in terms of stigmatizing Yvonne Chevallier. Before her, only men had been acquitted in court for passionate murder.

With Arendt, Azoulay argued that the imperial condition, which seeks to make humans escape from their imprisonment to the Earth by making them fly to the moon and the stars, has endangered the human condition itself. That condition, as Arendt elaborated, posited that man is just one among the children of nature. Arendt opened her book by stating that humankind's ties with its sibling-creatures, who received the same "free gift from nowhere"—life on Earth—should not be cut.⁷⁹⁴ With regard to her underlying ambitions, Arendt, contrary to Steichen, did not leave much space in her book for interpretation of her profound critique of imperialism. In comparison, Roland Barthes's epochal criticism of Steichen's curatorial enterprise with *The Family of Man* still holds as strong as ever before. Even if individual visitors of the show back in 1955 potentially recognized in the portrait of Yvonne Chevallier what Azoulay more recently saw in it, the political and social context was not available at that time for an open, constructive debate about such topics.

Bearing in mind that Azoulay may be granting Steichen too much credit, should, however, not make us refrain from joining in her exercise of observing these pictures anew today. The only caveat when doing so is that we need to be aware of our own contemporary perspective on the



Fig. 5.5.
Ralph Crane, *West Berlin Police holding back crowds who are coming from East Berlin for food and clothing*, 1953. © The LIFE Picture Collection/ Getty Images.

photographic images, and the changed possibilities that we have at our disposal today for debating them compared to the late 1950s—if only already because of the historical distance in time. The positive message that we can then take from *The Family of Man* is indeed that it operates now as a project that helps unmask those underlying premises of the postwar social contract, which we can no longer endorse today. Azoulay proposed to read “each and every photograph where basic human needs are recorded” in terms of “an intervention in the unstoppable imperial movement.”⁷⁹⁵ No doubt, *The Family of Man* painfully stereotyped the *Bushmen* (San), she wrote.⁷⁹⁶ Yet, she continued, referring to a group of Austrian hand-laundering women on a riverbank, *The Family of Man* stereotyped Austrians as well.⁷⁹⁷ At the risk of generalizing her argument too much, Azoulay provocatively concluded that, from this systematic stereotyping of *all* populations, *The Family of Man* made a proposal for a visual universal declaration of “*inviolable*” rights, rights that came to complement the failures and hiccups of the then written human-rights declarations.⁷⁹⁸ Again, I want to add that *The Family of Man* arguably achieved this aim only a contrario.

Photographs, Azoulay continued, even enjoy the advantage of being able to claim “less abstract” rights than those that one encounters in written declarations, as they can visually display them as put into practice. Among several other examples, she referred to a photo by Henri Leighton depicting two boys not of the same color walking on a US street in a brotherly embrace.⁷⁹⁹ For Azoulay, this photograph embodies the right to free movement, everywhere and any time. The same right, she continued, can be imagined from a photo by Michael Rougier, reproduced on page 169 of the book. It depicts South-Korean women protesting against the imminent division of their country in 1953, from behind barbed wires.⁸⁰⁰ The same is true, I want to add, for the desperate horde of East Berliners depicted on the book’s following page, a photo by Ralph Crane (also from 1953). (fig. 5.5) The crowd tries to enter West Berlin in search of food and clothes, but, shockingly, while claiming their right to free movement, they are held back by West Berlin policemen.

*

Christian Phillip Müller’s artwork entitled *The Family of Austrians* (1993/2018), part of the permanent collection of the Upper Belvedere in Vienna, reproduces an ensemble of the seven black-and-white photographs in the original *The Family of Man* exhibition that represent Austrian subjects.⁸⁰¹ (fig. 5.6) Such a critical gesture that seeks to expose the project’s antiquated stereotypes to a contemporary audience greatly appealed to me. I decided to undertake a similar exercise for my fellow countrymen, the Belgians. The outcome of that experiment, I must



Fig. 5.6.
Two installation views of Christian Phillip Müller, *The Family of Austrians*, 1993/2018.
Vienna, Belvedere, March 2019. Photos by author.

confess, was rather astonishing. Contrary to numerous photographs representing people or landscapes in all of its neighboring countries—the Netherlands, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—neither the publication nor the master checklist of the exhibition include a single picture of Belgium or of the Belgians.⁸⁰² However, the book publication contains no less than five photographs taken in Belgian Congo—all of them images of breathtaking beauty yet portraying nameless persons, whose identities probably remain forever untraceable.⁸⁰³

The Family of Man's master checklist even includes a sixth image of Belgian Congo, which is not reproduced in the catalogue. It bears number four on the checklist and is mentioned as having been part of the exhibition's Prologue. Further information listed informs that the image was taken in Belgian Congo, that its photographer was Nat Farbman, of American nationality, and that it was published in *LIFE* magazine. As far as *The Family of Belgians* is concerned, then, only a Family of Belgian Congolese was included in the exhibition and in the book project. For sure, the absence of Belgians within the exhibition is one of *The Family of Man's* many blind spots. Although I searched through newspaper clippings reviewing the Brussels tour stop at the Palais des Beaux-Arts from 23 May until 1 July 1956, I found no author comment on this strange inclusion/exclusion—let alone notice it. It makes you wonder whether the visitors—who then no doubt identified as colonial rulers of the anonymous individuals on display—did give it any consideration at all. These fundamental, yet unanswered questions provide proof indeed that *The Family of Man* is an “unfinished text” that requires further “rewriting” and “updating.”⁸⁰⁴

I only made a preliminary start with the follow-up research, which may in time provide deeper understanding of this matter. As a point of departure, I tried to identify this image number four from the Prologue. A first step in that process was to contact the *LIFE* archive. A friendly email exchange with Amy Wong, responsible for arranging copyrights at *LIFE*, ensued. She immediately pointed to the photograph discussed (but not reproduced) in the Preface by sending me a web link. For one month, I was convinced that I had had an instant hit thanks to Wong, and that *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* was indeed the missing photograph from *The Family of Man's* Prologue. Pleased with this discovery, I started to search for her in the digitized installation views available online at MoMA's website, yet, to my surprise, without any result.⁸⁰⁵ Next, I investigated all the publications I could possibly find on *The Family of Man*, and I also double-checked with the staff at the Clervaux Castle in Luxembourg—where a copy of the exhibition is permanently on view.

Eventually, since I could not trace this photograph as having been part of the show, I contacted Wong again. She double-checked with her colleagues and replied that they could not confirm with certainty that

this photograph was included in the final selection. By that time, I had become quite attached to this intriguing photograph and decided not to give up my attempts to solve its mystery. Upon the advice of Christina Eliopoupolos, Archives Fellow for Research and Reference at the MoMA Archive, I wrote a request for research assistance. This allowed me to work with Julián Sánchez González, a most prolific PhD candidate at Columbia University, who did not stop digging in the enormous archive of *The Family of Man* preserved at MoMA before he was able to identify the Farbman photograph figuring on the master checklist as part of the prologue of *The Family of Man* exhibition. From that document, we also know that the picture was sized 20×17 inches.

Since the checklist guided our attention to Belgian Congo, we had no reason to doubt the plausible hypothesis that the picture had indeed been selected from the abovementioned set of published images on pages 105–113 of the June 2, 1947 issue of *LIFE* magazine (to which Wong and her colleagues had oriented us).⁸⁰⁶ Sánchez González’s initial results of a detailed search confirmed that the selection for the Prologue contained a photograph representing an “African Lady.”⁸⁰⁷ Consequently, we kept presuming that this “African Lady” must have been our “Pretty Young Girl.” However, failing to find an installation view, we remained uncertain whether she made it into the actual exhibition. Upon further searches, Julián Sánchez González was able to identify the photograph from the index cards of the exhibition (marked in the search engines as “working prints”). He wrote the following to me:

To my surprise, it was neither of the images we were thinking of, but rather yet another image of a less joyful woman, which was exhibited in a staircase and next to a photograph of a prehistoric mask from the publication “Art in the Ice Age.”⁸⁰⁸

We have been able to trace two versions of this photograph.⁸⁰⁹ (figs. 5.7–5.8) In neither version does this woman smile. Instead, she keeps her lips firmly pressed together, giving her face a worried expression—even more so in the version selected for the exhibition. (fig. 5.9) From a retrospective point of view, this seems to have been an apt choice—although it may have been an unconscious one in the heads of its patriarchal curators—as revealed by an installation photograph from the Paris edition of the exhibition.⁸¹⁰ (fig. 5.10) What first catches the eye in this photograph is a group of four women, three of whom are busy mopping the entrance to the

Fig. 5.7.

Nat Farbman working print used for the exhibition *The Family of Man* [MoMA Exh. #569, Jan. 24–May 8, 1955], ca. 1955. Photographer: Nat Farbman (copyright holder and rights status unknown). Gelatin silver print, 12.7 × 10.3 cm. The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 569.158. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Object Number: ARCH.9543. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). © 2019. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.



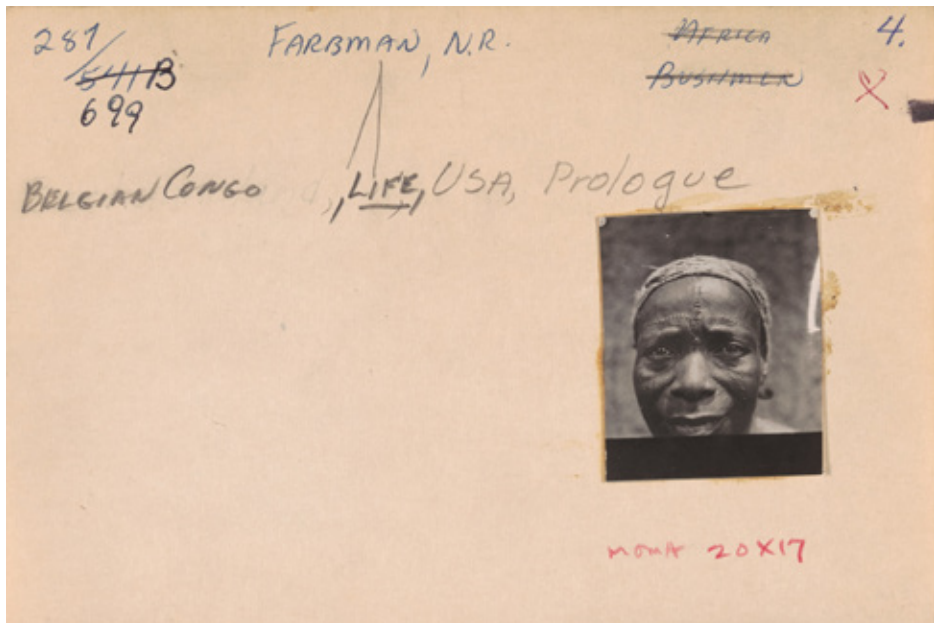


Fig. 5.8.

Index card with an image from the Belgian Congo by Nat Farbman used for the exhibition *The Family of Man* [MoMA Exh. #569, Jan. 24–May 8, 1955], ca. 1955. Photographer: Nat Farbman (copyright holder and rights status unknown). Gelatin silver print, 10.2 × 15.1 cm. The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 569.158. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Object Number: ARCH.9544. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). © 2019. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.



Fig. 5.9.

Installation view of the exhibition *The Family of Man*. MoMA, NY, Jan. 24– May 8, 1955. Photographer: Rolf Petersen (Copyright: The Museum of Modern Art, New York). Gelatin silver print, 17.8 × 24.1 cm. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Object Number: IN569.27. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). © 2019. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.



Fig. 5.10.

Staff mopping the entrance to the exhibition *The Family of Man* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1956. Paris, France. Gelatin silver print, 17.8 × 12.7 cm. Edward Steichen Archive, V.B.ii.13. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Object Number: ARCH.9542. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). © 2019. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

GRANDE FAMILLE DES HOMMES



exhibition with ample amounts water while the fourth one appears to be taking a short break from work (as there are four buckets in the space). The contrast to the large caption reading *LA GRANDE FAMILLE DES HOMMES* above the entrance couldn't be sharper: within the great family of *men*, which is a literal translation of the French caption, the women are summoned to come and clean up the mess once the great guys finished their cerebral job of installing the show.

On their left-hand side, it is possible to identify Pat English's photograph representing a crowd witnessing the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London on June 2, 1953. If unaware of the exact reason for this mass gathering, as could be the case for a contemporary viewer of this picture, it almost seems that they would be protesting something—for example, the subordinated role of the four working women standing next to this photograph. On the further left wall, beside the photograph of a galaxy from the Lick Observatory, is Wynn Bullock's *Child in Forest*, 1951. This particular photograph caused consternation when proposed for inclusion in the German stops of the exhibition's tour, which took place in Berlin from September 17 to October 9, 1955 and in Munich from November 19 to December 18, 1955. Both the psychological and ethical stir around the picture had been so unanimous that it was not included in the exhibition.⁸¹¹

Ariella Azoulay in fact put her finger on the problem with this photograph. "A young American girl lies alone on a forest floor," she wrote.⁸¹² Her "gleaming body [...] reflects light from an unknown source and lies there like a disturbing scar in the wood." Contrary to most critics of the exhibition, Azoulay wondered what could have motivated Steichen to include "a photo of a young naked girl, her face thrust in leaves wet from dew," as "the first member of 'The Family of Man' to appear to the viewer." She continued: "What happened to her? Why is she there, abandoned naked on the ground? Where are her clothes? Was she raped? Abused? Is she there to allegorize rape, to mark the threshold of tolerance toward it?"⁸¹³ After this, admittedly disturbing, range of questions, Azoulay continued: "Or is she there just to make the presence of a naked girl in art venues appear natural?"⁸¹⁴

Seen in the light of her selection right next to this photograph at the entrance of the Paris exhibition, our "African Lady" has every reason to be concerned about the fate of the naked girl lying face down—as if she were dead—next to her. Allan Sekula, in his private notebooks, came to a similar conclusion, when he called Wynn Bullock's naked young girl "the dead child."⁸¹⁵ Coupled with the prehistoric mask, these two pictures appear to send a signal of rage from a deep past.⁸¹⁶ Combined with the portrait of *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud*, this delivers a cluster of female photographic representations reminiscent of the "Nympha" motif as discussed in Ernst Gombrich's biography of

Aby Warburg. As Gombrich brought to mind, Warburg considered the nympha to be a “beautiful butterfly” that eluded his grasp.⁸¹⁷ *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* possesses this fleeting, expressive gesture that Warburg esteemed typical of the nympha figure and that he associated with a disarming, unrestrained emotion that can deeply move the viewer.

I want to recover this raw, basic positive energy, freed from paternalistic projections, from oblivion for the portrait of this anonymous Congolese girl. She has survived in the form of an image that reached me as a digital file. She thus came to embody the *Nachleben* or afterlife of images to which Warburg attached such importance, and even more so when they represented the nympha motif.⁸¹⁸ For Warburg, the nympha motif opened the way to a liberation from what Gombrich called “a humdrum realism”: we should understand them as a “safety valve through which passion can pour forth.”⁸¹⁹ According to Gombrich, the nympha’s path of a “rather pedestrian realism” opens up a “realism of rapid motion.” The nympha, then, becomes the very symbol of both liberation and anticipation of something embryonically new. Doodle **32#**, taken one summer morning in Brooklyn, New York, closely approaches this image of a mutinous, “striding young woman in fluttering garments”—actually, in my case, there were two.⁸²⁰ This doodle places itself in the vein of this line of mystery representations, which extend back at least to antiquity.

Bringing in this nympha motif, even if only briefly, also allows for a different reading of Wynn Bullock’s *Let There Be Light* (1954), a large night shot of a beach at low tide illuminated by a full moon that visitors were invited to observe upon entering the Paris show, on the left after having descended the first two stairs. In the context of the bombastic link found on the title page of the book on *The Family of Man* with a quotation from Genesis 1:3, “And God said, let there be light,” we may now tend to think that the lights should rather be dimmed in relation to the patriarchal overtones of the exhibition. How is one to imagine, with Azoulay, “the possibility of a different world”?⁸²¹ She ultimately came to understand *The Family of Man* as “an exhibition that wishes to move the weight of nation, religion, and national politics into the background, turning them into components of a civil existence they cannot fully master or organize.”⁸²²

How can we move forward from there? Strikingly, it seems easier to suggest the path *not* to follow. Page 186 of the catalogue offers a full-page reproduction of a photograph by Nell Dorr representing the perfect legs of a young woman walking out of shallow seawater, while holding in her arms a tray filled with flowers—“a Venus emerging from the waves, garlanded with hibiscus flowers,” as Sekula wrote.⁸²³ Such an erotic idea of a return to the sea is utopian, he argued. While there

is no doubt that humankind needs to move quite a few steps away from *The Family of Man's* "earthbound workaday world," which is "a world territorialized and exploited on strictly terrestrial lines," it is not by taking recourse to a "regressive longing for immersion" that a solution will come into view.⁸²⁴

According to Sekula, the exhibition suggested an "infantile" relationship to maritime space. It is that of the playful and relatively detached "*homo ludens*," who, it goes without saying, stays completely dry and nicely dressed while indulging in such visual pleasures given by the photographs. Fishermen for example, Sekula argued, are depicted not as voyagers upon the high seas but instead they look like "peasants afloat, seemingly never far from the littoral spaces of the shore." He deplored the fact that *The Family of Man* did not include images by French oceanographer-photographer Anita Conti, whom he praised for her courage to go as far in her embedded camera perspectives as to approach as closely as possible the fish instead of the fishermen.

Moreover, Sekula felt that *The Family of Man* basically ignored "the actual diasporic movement of populations—largely via crowded maritime transport—in the decade after the end of World War II." He deeply regretted the "invisibility of these migrants" within the show's selection. This, he remarked, was emblemized by the "all-white, all-English" crowd that witnessed the coronation ceremony of Queen Elizabeth II, used as large poster materials within the exhibition's installment. This is even more surprising because it involves a "ritual not exactly linked to human progress or to concepts of citizenship."⁸²⁵ With this very finding, Sekula concluded that *The Family of Man*, despite its verbose declarations of humanism, had more to do with a peculiarly defined "*family of man*" than with the "*rights of man*."⁸²⁶

Discussing what he identified as the "strange triumph of human rights" after World War II within the context of the United Nations framework, Mark Mazower even went one step further when he assessed that international human rights were only able to triumph because of the "fair share of cynicism," including a conflation with state interests.⁸²⁷ The Great Powers had a concrete geopolitical interest in the preservation of a "family of nations," and international human rights came to serve that purpose as a regime that, essentially, remained handcuffed because it had no means to threaten absolute state sovereignty. That immediate hollowing out of the rights of man paved the way, in Sekula's view, for "the new post-Cold War 'human rights' rationale for military intervention." Concretely, this meant that "a new rhetoric of state violence" within which violence is exercised "in the interest of abstract human rights" larded with layers of discourse that it is "*for the future of the children*." In Volume II, then, I will turn again to the contemporary realities on the North Sea beaches, and investigate in

greater depth what has become of the post–Cold War children by first considering Sylvain George’s film from 2010, *Qu’ils reposent en révolte* (*Des Figures de Guerres I*) [*May they rest in revolt* (*Figures of Wars I*)].

Now that we know for sure that *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* never had anything to do with *The Family of Man*, what conclusions may be drawn from the fact that this photograph first manifested itself from the infinite archive of digitized images that exists today as the one that was included in the selection? When this turned out not to be the case, I started to reflect on the meaning that could be given to its quasi-magical reappearance from a seemingly forever vanished past. My one possible conclusion was that it appeared *as if* this young woman, via the interference of her picture, had been seeking my assistance to make her seen again in a different light.⁸²⁸ What came to mind, as I also indicated in the Preface, was a call for acting “in defiance of” both the photographer’s original intention and the discursive context within which the image had originally been used.⁸²⁹

In my imagination, this image became a type of “metonymic fragment” as described by Victor Burgin: scattered images nesting themselves within our memory, becoming a part of a larger dreamlike “film” that plays inside our heads, and which feels familiar even if we have never seen it in real life.⁸³⁰ This imagined film, according to Burgin, or even any digital object (as he specified later) forms a “heterogenous psychical object” constructed from such types of image scraps, which are anchored in a contingent reality only arbitrarily. Within that psychical realm of our intimate phantasms and illusions, these images obtain imaginary identities that only become “fixed” in a fleeting way, on the basis of endlessly “shifting coordinates.” As Burgin clarified to Alexander Streitberger, these psychical objects may be read as “fragments of anecdotes,” “remembered stories,” or even “*story images*” (by which Burgin meant “memory images of transient and ephemeral content”).⁸³¹

“*Nachleben*,” George Didi-Huberman wrote, “is impure in much the way *Leben* itself is. Both are messy, cluttered, muddled, various, haphazard, retentive, protean, liquid, oceanic in scope and complexity, impervious to analytical organization.”⁸³² Aby Warburg, Didi-Huberman added, wanted to understand the *life, force, and impersonal power* of images without categorically defining in what exactly this consisted. Conceived as an impure psychical object, *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* can come to lead an afterlife within *Ground Sea* for which an infinite set of alternative reality scenes can be pictured. Let me sketch one among endless other possibilities. As a relic from a bygone era and resuscitated from some cosmic void, it appeared to me that this

unintentionally recovered portrait photograph indeed filed a request in defense of the subject depicted—or, rather, a claim for *renascence(s)*.

In other words, by claiming its right to be reborn in a different time frame and predicament, this photograph seemed to communicate that, while no one could do anything in favor of the girl herself (for whom any support irrevocably came too late), we can do justice to her portrait. Doing justice to her portrait implies making sure that any young woman anywhere around the world can claim her right to seek a rebirth into a safe environment from where she can grow as an autonomous person. I thus propose a counter-reading of *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud*. Alain Corbin has insightfully described how, in the eighteenth century, the shores of the North Sea and the English Channel transformed into a space of healing various types of ailments. The archetype of those who needed sea bathing as a medicine for the body or the soul was the “figure of the young girl, presented as [...] a sensitive, frail individual.”⁸³³

In my idea, this portrait has become the emblem par excellence of how photography can operate as a figure of the Neutral, and, as such, inspire resolutely different trains of thought. Let me explain. As a Belgian citizen born during the time that the ruthless military puppet dictator Mobutu ruled over a country that he renamed Zaire, I have often come to wonder how the Congolese girl photographed by Farbman imagined her future.⁸³⁴ Did she try to claim her future? Did the independence of her country eleven years after her picture was taken, and the regime-made disasters instigated upon it in its aftermath, contribute to her happiness at all? As an image of a potential history about which we lack any detail of information, I had already imagined a story for her in the Preface to this book. But later, I had a fevered dream about her, in which I saw an alternative, fictitious sequel.

In the tumultuous aftermath of the catastrophic murder of Patrice Lumumba, with the complicit involvement of Belgian officials, Diana joined the political rebel movement. In early 1965, she herself was assassinated during one of her undercover missions trying to prevent Colonel Mobutu's second coup d'état. The slaughter happened near the riverbank where she grew up, and where, eighteen years earlier, Nat Farbman had made that splendid portrait of her standing in front of the palm trees. In their desire to get rid of her dead body, her butchers threw her into the streaming waters. Since she had always been such an excellent open-water swimmer, the river gods pitied her and allowed her to heal in a grotto on the riverbank. There, she was transformed into a nymph.⁸³⁵ Born again, she decided to travel—to the United States, the country whose Central Intelligence Agency actively contributed to the elimination of her dear friend.⁸³⁶ Once there, she rapidly joined the movement behind Henry Darger's Vivian Girls—seven girls who led a revolt against cruel adults.⁸³⁷ After Darger's death in 1972, she roamed around the country for a little while until she decided, in 1979, to stay based in New York—since Donald Trump was about to start constructing his Tower on Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Sixth Street. She didn't trust at all what he was up to, and right she was. I found a trace of her downtown on an early morning in the summer of 2018, while busy re-photographing Allan Sekula's Thomas Paine Park, New York City (16#). Instead of a trash can including a paper shopping bag with the American flag on it, I saw the entrance to the sewer standing wide open (or was it an emergency exit from the nearby subway station?). Upon approaching this entrance, to look inside, no one was to be spotted as far as I could see, down that steep staircase. No one was on guard either next to this rather dangerous, smelly black hole. It seemed as if someone had opened it quickly and escaped from the city's deepest marshy depths. She must have run to the waterfront, and perhaps she took the ferry to Ellis Island—where I ended up meeting her again, but that's another story.

Except for working for the government ..., I don't think I ever worked anywhere where I was caught in a trap. I know someone who worked in a Navy office, this huge office with little compartments made with filing cabinets. And she shuffled papers all day long, and she thought it was useless, and not much good to anybody, and she put some papers in the wrong file once, and a sailor's records ended up in the office for dead people. He was still alive, and I used to worry about it. Kept asking, "Did you ever tell anybody you did it? Did you ever try to get them back?" She said, "No, I didn't want to." And I've often thought about that poor sailor and wondered where he is now? If he was officially dead as far as the records were concerned, did he ever get to come back, get a resurrection? But she felt that she'd cause more damage by admitting that she had accidentally killed someone off, than by just letting it go. She said, "I'm going to get out and I'll never find out."

Allan Sekula, *Aerospace Folktales* [1973], in *Photography Against the Grain. Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 158.



The Search Project (Continued)
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Notes

1. See Mitchell's essay in Streitberger and Van Gelder, "Disassembled" Images, 2019, 23–24.
2. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 1995, 50.
3. See Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur* [1992], 2013. Sekula owned a copy of this book, which is available for public consultation at the Clark Art Library. It is also possible to verify Sekula's complete book collection online (<https://francine.clarkart.edu/search>).
4. Allan Sekula penciled the production date and the specific type of underwater camera that he used for making *Dear Bill Gates* in his notebook #1, NB 060 (July 17, 1999–November 1999). Sekula's notebooks, which contain precious information, are preserved in the Allan Sekula Archive at The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles (hereafter abbreviated as ASA, GRI). For a concise contextualization of the work, see "RWM SON[IA]: Interview with the artist, writer and critic Allan Sekula," MACBA, January 27, 2011 <https://rwm.macba.cat/en/buscador/radio?key=allan+sekula> (accessed October 20, 2020).
5. For a further discussion of Sekula's concepts of the disassembled image, disassembled movie, and disassembled play, see Streitberger and Van Gelder, "Disassembled" Images, 9–10. On the disassembled movie, see the analysis in Chapter Seven (in Volume II).
6. Sekula, unpublished video-recorded lecture delivered on November 20, 2010 at the Palm Springs Art Museum, part of the ASA, GRI.
7. See, for example, the double CD *N30: Live at the WTO Protest November 30, 1999* by Christopher DeLaurenti, who audio-recorded the street protests. Sekula's letter may be consulted in his *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 2003, 306. Chapter Six discusses these protests in greater depth through Sekula's slide sequence *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]* (1999/2000).
8. A second, lesser-known public letter from Sekula to Gates exists (it is a laser printer letter on linen paper, three sheets, 30×24 cm each). Entitled *Dear Bill (Follow-Up)*, it bears the date of December 8, 2009.
9. Unpublished recordings of these conversations between Sekula and the author exist. Sekula also addressed this issue in public during the abovementioned lecture in Palm Springs. In the PowerPoint presentation that accompanied the lecture, he provided ample examples of aerial photographs of villas in Los Angeles having swimming pools in their backyards, which he took during a helicopter flight. He pointed out that the fact that so many among them were either empty or filthy was a symptom of the financial crisis.
10. Anonymous, "First woman to swim," 1926, n.p. On the internet, much information circulates about Ederle's channel crossing. Striking is that she became deaf by the 1940s, a condition that some attributed to her channel swim and that others traced back to her having caught measles at the age of five (as the result of which she started to have hearing problems). In 1933, she fell down a flight of stairs and fractured her spine. A *New York Times* article about her at the age of 94 described her sitting in a large chair, her legs wrapped in a plaid blanket. Thus, she finally looked like the mermaid she had always been. See Denman, "Swimming; A Pioneer," 2001, n.p.; and Anonymous, "Moment in Time," 2019, n.p. For an in-depth study of the mermaid as an underlying trope in Allan Sekula's *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, I refer to Anja Isabel Schneider's exhibition *Mermaid Honeymoon. A Curatorial Reflection on Allan Sekula's Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum (2010–2013)*, which was on view at М НКА from January 18 until September 6, 2020; and to her accompanying PhD dissertation (*Psychic Subtext(s)*, 2020).
11. See, again, Denman, "Swimming; A Pioneer," n.p.
12. A photograph of Ederle during the celebration in New York, holding a poster saying "Queen of the Waves" is reproduced in Anonymous, "Moment in Time," n.p.
13. Mikhail Karikis also developed this subject in his film *SeaWomen* (2012). For an analysis, see Karikis, "The Breath Sounds of Seawomen," in Farquharson and Clark, *Aquapopia*, 2013, 159–162.
14. For more on this subject, see Alban, *Melusine the Serpent Goddess*, 2003.
15. As the Allan Sekula Studio Manager, Ina Steiner, confirmed (in an email from May 12, 2020), the artist purchased the reproduction on a visit to the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. An illustration of the sculpture is available for consultation online via <https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/F.1972.40.1.S> (accessed October 20, 2020).

16. See Corbin, *Lure of the Sea* [1988], 1995, 20. Sekula possessed a copy of this book, which he studied at length.
17. See *ibid.*, 108.
18. *Ibid.*, 97.
19. *Ibid.*, 109. Corbin references here Benoit de Maillet's *Telliamed* (1755).
20. *Ibid.*, 110.
21. This is the opening line of Sekula's unpublished type-written notes accompanying the abovementioned Palm Springs lecture.
22. Vandenbroeck, *Utopia's Doom*, 2017, 89. A major source cited by Vandenbroeck is Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages. A Study in Art, Sentiment and Demonology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952). The notion of "wild folk" did not always have a positive connotation, linked as it could be with color prejudice. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example, artists did not hesitate to give African features or black skin to those represented as henchmen of the devil or evildoers in general. As argued by Vandenbroeck, it was not uncommon to use the phrase "*helse moren* ('infernal Moors')" to refer to devils in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature in Dutch. See *ibid.*, 84. Original emphasis.
23. Sekula, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 317. Sekula also published this small "prayer" in a short text that he wrote for the catalogue of the *Shadow Festival 3*, a documentary film festival held in Amsterdam from November 21 to November 27, 2002, 47–55 (the "prayer" itself is published on p. 55). Edward Dimendberg used it as the concluding paragraph for his essay "Fish Scales. Allan Sekula's TSUKIJI," *Parkett*, 66 (December 2002): 170–175. Initially, it was a notebook entry, dated June 16, 2001, included in Japan 5/23–6/6/2001 & Barcelona 6/17–6/28/2001, NB 067 (2001). Beneath "exhausted," Sekula marked "[depleted]." This first paragraph is followed by a second one (separated by three dots): "Enemies lurk below (and on all sides) / Abject apology is the price of vigilance / Forgive us our disasters / Enemies may lurk below / We'd tell you if we could / We're sorry to have struck you / [You'll thank us for our strength]."
24. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2010, 774 and 1604.
25. The literature on this topic is vast. For insightful, complete analyses from the perspective of art theory, see Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 2016; and *id.*, *Against the Anthropocene*, 2017.
26. Latour, "On a Possible Triangulation," 2018, 219. I paraphrase Latour's argument on p. 217.
27. Krastev, *After Europe*, 2017, 14.
28. Latour, *Down to Earth* [2017], 2018, 4. Original emphasis.
29. *Ibid.*, 5.
30. *Ibid.*, 6. Original emphasis.
31. *Ibid.*, 9. When using the uppercase "Earth," Latour indicates "a power to act in which we begin to recognize, even if it has not been fully instituted, something like a political entity": *ibid.*, 112n12.
32. See *ibid.*, 8.
33. Sekula, email to the author entitled "good birthday," October 7, 2009.
34. *Id.*, *Photography Against the Grain*, 1984, ix. Original emphasis.
35. See O'Brian, "Memory Flash Points," 1997, 81. The following analysis is on the same page.
36. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, ix. Original emphasis.
37. *Ibid.*, ix–x. Original emphasis.
38. *Ibid.*, x. Original emphasis.
39. For more on this subject, see, for example, Mark Morford, "The Stoic Garden," *Journal of Garden History*, 7 (1987), 151–175.
40. Welander, "Politics of Exhaustion," 2020, 33.
41. Burgin, "*Nagori*: Writing with Barthes," 2020, 167. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphases.
42. *Ibid.*, 168. Original emphasis.
43. *Ibid.*, 171.
44. Marin, "Frontiers of Utopia," 1993, 414. Original emphases.
45. Mariás, *Voyage Along the Horizon*, 1972 [2006], 182.
46. See Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, 1988, 28. Original emphases.
47. Mbembe, "Idea of borderless," 2018, n.p.
48. See <https://www.mint.gov.gh/services/right-of-abode/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
49. Research about how artistic "poiesis" can iterate, inform, and perform human rights is very scarce. I herewith draw the attention to the speculative text by Birte Kleine-Benne, who speaks of "poiein" in the sense of "pro-duc-ing", of bringing-into-being, what previously did not exist and was not yet present. See Kleine-Benne, "Künstlerische Poiesis," 2019, 1.
50. See https://books.google.be/books?id=UkgEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&redir_esc=y#v=twopage&q=far-bman&f=true (accessed October 20, 2020). The relevant pages are 105–113.
51. Burke, "Congo mission," 1947, 112.
52. See <https://www.gettyimages.be/detail/nieuwsfoto's/pretty-young-congolese-native-girl-proudly-wearing-nieuwsfotos/50439359?adppopup=true> (accessed January 20, 2021).
53. Sekula in Risberg, "Imaginary Economies," 1999, 240.

54. Here I reference Mark Godfrey's key distinction between "sourced" and "found" images. See Godfrey, "Photography Found and Lost," 2005, 101; and Daniel Palmer's essential writing on "thinking found photography" in id., *Photography and Collaboration*, 2017, 138–143.
55. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 2001, 182. Original emphasis.
56. Palmer, *Photography and Collaboration*, 143. Palmer referenced the working methods of the British artist John Stezaker.
57. Ibid., 148 and 146. Original emphasis.
58. See ibid., 143; and Cross, "Lost of Found," 2015, 47. The term "transitional object" was first coined by Donald Winnicott in 1951, indicating a material object to which one attributes a special value.
59. Before World War II, the concepts of genocide and crimes against humanity did not exist. Raphael Lemkin and Sir Hersch Lauterpacht, respectively, coined them. As Philippe Sands demonstrated in his powerful historical memoir on their insertion into international criminal legislation, law is a dynamic field and new rights *can* indeed at some point in time see the light of day. See his *East West Street*, 2016.
60. This fantasy of an *afterlife* may be approximated with what, in relation to Roland Barthes's oeuvre, has been identified as "Barthes' posthumous life," referring to the belated but immense impact of all his posthumously published texts: Andy Stafford, *Roland Barthes* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 9. Neil Badmington has spoken of a "renaissance of Roland Barthes, but a renaissance, it should be stressed, that is not a pale revival of the Same. In being reborn, Barthes has acquired a rather different form": Badmington, "Undefined Something Else," 2020, 66. In Chapter Five, I elaborate on Barthes's ardent desire for a *rebirth*.
61. Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*, 2019, 452.
62. For Azoulay, it is not necessary to draft or manufacture new rights. In her view, after World War II, human rights saw the light of day in a world within which colonialism and imperialism had ravaged and disabled previously existing rights. For Azoulay, what needs to be done, is to abolish imperial rights to let these dormant or disabled rights (rights exercised semi-clandestinely by dispossessed communities) to be given the conditions and the opportunity to materialize as part of a transition from an imperial condition to a worldly one. See ibid., 454.
63. Sontag, *The Volcano Lover*, 1993, 45. The following quotation is on the same page. Barbara Baert paved the way for making this connection to Sontag's interpretation of the Pygmalion myth. See Baert's essay "Mining Allan Sekula: Four Exercises," included in Streitberger and Van Gelder, "*Disassembled*" *Images*, 96–111. For the original Pygmalion story, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* [8 AD], 2010, Book X, verses 266–331; for the story of Ino and the Theban women, outlined below, see ibid., Book IV, 580–622.
64. Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 1986, 84. Corbin's book provides a rehabilitation of the sense of smell, against Immanuel Kant's aesthetic disqualification of it. Fascinatingly, Corbin connects the rise of narcissism in European bourgeois society from the end of the eighteenth century onward to the now widespread devaluation of a wide variety of organic manifestations and in favor of a deodorized environment.
65. Sekula, "School is a Factory [1982]," in id., *Photography Against the Grain*, 234. Original emphasis.
66. Id., "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," in id., *Polonia and Other Fables*, 2009, 59.
67. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* [1995], 2002, 52. The following description is on p. 46.
68. Mariás, *Berta Isla* [2017], 2018, 94. The following quotations are on the same page.
69. See W.J.T. Mitchell, *Mental Traveler. A Father, a Son, and a Journey through Schizophrenia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020).
70. Pamuk, *The New Life* [1997], 1997, 259. The following quotation is on p. 258.
71. The exhibition took place from March 21 until May 31, 2009.
72. This construction has now been dismantled to make place for a sports center.
73. Perrin, "Coopération culturelle," 2012, n.p. Original emphasis.
74. Heddebaut, "The Euroregion," 2004, 70.
75. A brief historical sketch of the Nord-Transmanche Euroregion is provided in Perrin, "Euroregional Cultural Policy," 2015, n.p.
76. Anonymous, *L'Eurorégion*, 1997, passim. The historical area named "Pays-Bas," i.e. the Low Countries, comprised—in variable constellations—the present-day Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of northwest France.
77. See Heddebaut, "Binational cities of Dover and Calais," 2001, passim.
78. After this, followed the EMDI (Espace Manche Development Initiative) and the CAMIS (Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy) projects, which mainly focused on a joint Franco-British maritime strategy. See <https://camis.arcmanche.eu> (accessed October 20, 2020).
79. Anonymous, "EU migrant crisis," 2017, n.p.
80. On April 21, 2019, *The Independent* released an alarming article, including shocking pictures, indicating that the transformation of Calais had reached a "breaking point." See Bulman, "Surge in child refugees," 2019, n.p.

81. Fifty-nine percent of the 970,000 people allowed to vote in Kent voted to leave the European Union. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36616172> (accessed October 20, 2020). Although this certainly amounts to a majority, I understood from conversations with inhabitants that the population has been very divided over the question.
82. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, 2009, 79.
83. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* [1994], 2004, 243.
84. For Sekula's decision to use a slash, with a space before and after it, to his project's overarching title, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2015, 76.
85. Here as well, Sekula used a slash, with a space before and after it, for the work's title. Sekula took the photographs in 1996 but only created the sequence in 1998. It was his habit to mark that way of working by using a slash in the dates (without spaces), instead of an en dash.
86. UK Home Office, *Fairer, Faster, Firmer*, 1998, n.p.
87. In a notebook entry dated November 20, 1990, and penned in Amsterdam, Sekula wrote: "I'm not communicating with the Dutch, whose dourness contrasts with Spanish euphoria. Manic-depressive European geography." See his Geography Lesson Fish Story—Notes—July 1989, NB 038 (July 1989—March 1990).
88. Among others, I considered two films by Laurent Van Lancker: *Kalès* (2017) and *Limbo* (2018). More information on these works is available via www.argosarts.org (accessed October 20, 2020). Olga Smith provided a challenging analysis of the works of Mohamed Bourouissa, Tobias Zielony, and Mathieu Pernot: "Making Visible," *Photographies*, 11: 2–3 (2018): 235–250.
89. See <https://www.laurawaddington.com/films/1/border> (accessed October 20, 2020). *Border* is available for online consultation through the artist's website.
90. See Didi-Huberman, *Survival of Fireflies* [2009], 2018, 84. Original emphases.
91. *Ibid.*, 87.
92. See Del Lucchese, "Two Speeds Frontera," 2005, n.p.
93. Nochlin, "Foreword," in Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock*, 1991, xiii.
94. On March 17, 2020, both the Netherlands and Belgium suspended the right to asylum due to the COVID-19 outbreak (see: <https://mailchi.mp/ecycle-weekly-bulletin-20032020?e=0778a16b26>); for the infamously called "transitory migrants," provisional accommodation in a Brussels hotel was put in place (see: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/all-news/belgium-all-news/101835/brussels-hotellerie-offers-accommodation-to-transmigrants-porte-ulysse-vervoort/>); Doctors Without Borders created a temporary hotspot at Tour & Taxis for those affected by the disease (see: <https://mice-magazine.com/artsen-zonder-grenzen-vangt-daklozen-met-symptomen-op-in-tour-taxis/>), but the center closed in the summer. Early in October 2020, a Brussels court of first instance pronounced a summary judgment ordering the Belgian state to provide accommodation to those who need it. The state was granted one month to settle the situation. See: https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20201006_95081293 (accessed October 20, 2020). As I was closing the manuscript in the winter of 2021, accommodation was still organized in an ad hoc and unsatisfying way (in two hotels, in an empty building in the Rue Trier, and in a squatted former hospital). See <https://www.bruzz.be/samenleving/meer-dan-een-miljoen-euro-voor-opvang-va-n-250-daklozen-trierstraat-2020-11-16> and <https://www.bruzz.be/samenleving/ocmw-brussel-gedoog-t-tijdelijke-bezetting-oude-kliniek-2020-12-31> (accessed January 20, 2021).
95. Fekete, *Europe's Fault Lines*, 2018, e-book, concluding paragraphs.
96. See De Ridder, *Violences policières*, 2018. For a general overview of the various forms of violence against people on the move in the European Union, see Dempsey, "Spaces of violence," 2020.
97. Rosales, "Vecinos de Lanzarote se manifiestan," 2000, n.p.
98. See Gómez, "El Nobel Saramago afirma," 2000.
99. See Castilla, "Saramago cree," 2000.
100. Demos, *Migrant Image*, 2013, xiii. Original emphasis.
101. Anonymous, "Migrant caravan: What is it," 2018, n.p.
102. For a challenging reading of what this "migrant caravan" means in the light of five hundred years of Western imperialism, see Azoulay, "Understanding the Migrant Caravan," 2018.
103. Lach, "Real Crisis," 2018, n.p.; and Raymond, "As Migrants Arrive," 2018, n.p.
104. See, for example, Stevenson and Pérez D., "Migrants fearful after hundreds arrested," 2019.
105. For an insightful overview and analysis of how contemporary artists have visualized these borders in their works, see Sheehan, *Photography and Migration*, 2018.
106. For an objective account regarding what this seemingly only economic involvement entails for the longer term political and human rights perspective within the European Union and Great Britain, see Van der Putten, *European seaports and Chinese strategic influence*, 2019.
107. T[he]N[ational]H[erald] Staff, "China's Cosco," 2019, n.p. Open registry, discussed in more depth in Chapter Eight, is a rather euphemistic denomination for the system of the flag of convenience, widespread

- in the shipping industry. It consists of registering ships in countries other than that of the ship's owner—in other words, countries that apply less stringent labor laws and other types of legislation, such as regarding ecology and safety. For a concerned reading of China's One Belt One Road initiative on the level of respect for the rule of law, freedom, and democracy, see Boden, *Chinese Propaganda*, 2019.
108. Mezzadra and Neilson, "Between Inclusion and Exclusion," 2012, 68.
 109. See the statement issued on October 5, 2020 by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) on seafarer's rights and the present crew change crisis, <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/itf-and-jng-joint-statement-seafarers-rights-and-present-crew-change-crisis> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 110. Beausse, "Critical Realism," 1998, 26. In an interview with Jack (John Kuo Wei) Tchen, Sekula emphasized his larger fascination for borders, resulting in his own development of what he called "border art." He, among others, also made works on the US–Canada border and on the East German–West German border. See Tchen, "Interview with Allan Sekula," 2004, 157–158.
 111. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_migrant_crisis (accessed October 20, 2020).
 112. See Vaughan-Williams, *Europe's Border Crisis*, 2015.
 113. For a profound questioning of the term "crisis" as well as other related terms, see New Keywords Collective, "Europe/Crisis," 2016.
 114. There is overwhelming scientific evidence that economic development in low-income countries initially raises emigration because such development contributes to shaping the democratic structure, income levels, education system, and people's aspirations in a way that encourages emigration. Emigration tends to slow down and drop only as countries develop beyond middle-income levels. But most of today's low-income countries will not approach that point for several decades to come. As a result, emigration will continue for generations, as all too often has been the case. See Clemens and Postel, "Can Development Assistance Deter Emigration?," 2018.
 115. Demos, *Migrant Image*, 257n6.
 116. See Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, *Borderscapes*, 2007, xxvii–xxviii. In *Spheres Volume 3* [2004], 2016, 250 and 848–849n160, Peter Sloterdijk made a similar case when—bringing to mind the principle of the *colluvies gentium*—he described how, over time, numerous "peoples" have developed through the "mingling of asylum-granting and asylum-seeking populations of the most varied origins."
 117. Daniel Trilling has provided an in-depth examination of how, since the summer of 2015, the media's framing of a "migrant crisis" has had an impact on our perception of the situation in the European Union, as well as of the people involved. According to Trilling, the "disaster partly caused by European border policies, rather than simply the movement of refugees towards Europe, was one of the most heavily mediated world events of the past decade": Trilling, "How the media contributed," 2019, n.p. Original emphasis.
 118. See http://fab-uv.m.blogspot.com/2006/04/if-there-s-no-solution-theres-no_24.html (accessed October 20, 2020). The Shadoks is a French animated television series, which was popular in France in the late 1960s and 1970s, and was also broadcast in the United Kingdom in the early 1970s.
 119. Elias, *Power & Civility*, 1982, 36. Elias's argument goes as far back as the Carolingian era.
 120. Bauman, *Wasted Lives*, 2004, 39.
 121. *Ibid.*, 58. Original emphasis. Elsewhere, Bauman introduced another distinction, between tourists and vagabonds. People are constantly on the move, but the key difference is if they travel because they want to, or if they are forced to leave because of war, economic reasons, etc. In the second case, their movement is likely to be restricted sooner or later. See *id.*, *Globalization*, 1998, 87. Chapter Three of this book elaborates on the terminology used today in relation to people on the move.
 122. Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 2014, 48. The following quotation is on p. 49.
 123. See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-factsheet-coast-guard_en.pdf; and https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/04/01/european-border-and-coast-guard-council-confirms-agreement-on-stronger-mandate/?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=5d41fab7e0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_04_02_11_49&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-5d41fab7e0-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). For critical comments, see Woollard, "ECRE's Work Goes On," 2019, n.p. The European Council of Refugees and Exiles (ECRE—a network of ninety-five NGOs in forty European countries) also commented on the matter in its weekly bulletin dated April 5, 2019, and—as a watchdog or pressure group for the preservation of fundamental rights and freedoms—continues to follow up on each step of the process of the deployment of the Frontex corps. Eventually, a first public scandal broke on October 24, 2020. Proof was released that Frontex is complicit in pushbacks by the Hellenic Coast Guard (see also Chapter Nine of this book). This would make the European Union vulnerable to an accusation of refoulement. As prescribed by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, collaboration in refoulement is illegal. See Fallon, "EU border force 'complicit,'" 2020, n.p.

124. See d'Albis, Boubtane, and Coulibaly, "Macroeconomic evidence," 2018. The authors clarified in the opening lines of their essay that "inflows of asylum seekers do not deteriorate host countries' economic performance or fiscal balance because the increase in public spending induced by asylum seekers is more than compensated for by an increase in tax revenues net of transfers. As asylum seekers become permanent residents, their macroeconomic impacts become positive."
125. However, the draft of a strategic EU agenda for 2019–2024—released on June 11, 2019—proclaimed as its number one priority a focus on the protection of the external borders, before fighting climate change, corruption, or unemployment. See <https://www.euractiv.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/Draft-EU-Strategic-Agenda.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2020).
126. See Kluge and Obrist, "What Art Can Do," 2017, 9. An implicit reference is made to Otto Neurath's famous boat metaphor (1921). See also Roland Barthes, "Le vaisseau Argo – The ship Argo," in id., *Roland Barthes* [1975], 1994, 46.
127. Ibid., 7.
128. Berardi, *Futurability*, 2017, 239.
129. Kluge and Obrist, "What Art Can Do," 10.
130. For an introduction to the prerequisite of documentary photography—namely, that pictures should seek to provide an accurate and authentic view of the world—see Wells, *Photography* [1996], 2015, 90–92.
131. Camille Waintrop, "Entretien: Allan Sekula," 2002, 3. My translation. Sekula stated to Waintrop: "Je pense que l'on peut parler d'aspect poétique dans l'image, mais il faut également exprimer sa résistance aux différentes stratégies manifestes 'd'esthétisation'. Il faut faire respecter l'objectivité de la photographie."
132. In the printed version of this book, the doodles are reproduced in black and white, whereas in the e-book, they may be consulted in color. As color photographs, the doodles also figure on my website: groundsea.be. A selective remix by R. Delange and Othillia G—, entitled *Dover and Calais to Dunkerque and Ramsgate*, has been published with De Blinkerd Editions in 2021 (deblinkerd.be). It also contains a one-page text of which I am the author, entitled "Breakwater: A Manifesto for Weak Images."
133. See Orlean, "Hash," 2010, n.p.
134. See Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 2015, 105.
135. See *ibid.*, 112–113. Regarding ancient writing practices, the reference is to *scriptio continua*, which was common before around 1000 AD.
136. For more information on Twitter's expanded character limit, see Newton, "Twitter is rolling out," 2017, n.p.
137. See <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-add-alt-text-instagram-posts/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
138. More information about the doodles follows in Chapter Four.
139. The reference is, once again, to Ariella Aisha Azoulay's *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*.
140. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 74–75. In the following paragraph, I paraphrase Sekula from the same pages. Original emphasis.
141. Here I paraphrase the title of Paul Vandenbroeck's *A Glimpse of the Concealed* (2017), a book to which I return in the body text.
142. Mariás, *Dark Back of Time* [1988], 2003/2013, 333. The following quotation is on the same page. Mariás indicated that this phrase is a rough adaptation from a mysterious expression by Shakespeare. See *ibid.*, 301.
143. *Ibid.*, 119.
144. In the following lines, I paraphrase *ibid.*, 118–119.
145. See *Ibid.*, 301. In his view, to see the future as past is to understand "what must come as if it had already arrived and happened."
146. *Ibid.*, 333.
147. Didi-Huberman, "Glimpses," 2016, 117. Original emphasis. In *Aperçues* (2018, 292–293), Didi-Huberman also sketched the portrait of a melancholic and self-demanding person—with whom he identified as a researcher—who is always on the lookout for warning signs. Although he confessed that such methodological activity verges on the border of paranoid worrying, it proves fruitful indeed.
148. Lowry, "Orozco, Heidegger and the Visibility of Things," in Pirenne and Streitberger, *Heterogeneous Objects*, 2013, 146.
149. For the reproach of neo-Marxism, see Kaplan, *American Exposures*, 2005, 78. For an insightful analysis of Sekula's approach as compared to those of Victor Burgin and Martha Rosler, see Alexander Streitberger, "'Cultural work as praxis.' The Artist as Producer in the Work of Victor Burgin, Martha Rosler, and Allan Sekula," in Streitberger and Van Gelder, *Disassembled Images*, 192–211.
150. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 74–75. Original emphasis.
151. *Ibid.*, 70.
152. Sebald, "Ein riesiges Netzwerk des Schmerzes," in id., *»Auf ungeheuer dümmem Eis«*, 2011, 236. My translation.
153. An unpublished video recording is available for consultation in the ASA, GRI. The discussed passage is around 7:30.
154. For a book-length study on the failure of implementing EU citizenship as either a replacement of or complementary to national citizenship, see Yong, *Rise and Decline*, 2019.

155. In Belgium, Belgacom introduced “Proximus” (with the historical prefix “075/”) on January 1, 1994. See https://www.astel.be/nl/info/20-jaar-GSM-in-Belgie-met-Proximus_4381 (accessed October 20, 2020). In the early phase, they remained a rarity. Although Hungary launched commercial GSM service only that same year, it instantly became much more widespread among private citizens.
156. Krastev, *After Europe*, 18.
157. According to Kobelinsky and Le Courant, the ongoing tragedy of human drownings in the Mediterranean Sea can be traced back to at least November 1, 1988, when nine lifeless bodies were found near the beach of Los Lances in Tarifa, Spain. See id., *La mort aux frontières*, 2017, 8.
158. See Bellu, *Fantasm*, 2004.
159. Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 2015, 63.
160. In its weekly bulletin of March 15, 2019, ECRE reported that most people drowned at the Moroccan maritime border are never identified. One of the reasons appears to be a negative side effect of the EU operation Sophia, started in June 2015 with the mandate to disrupt the attempts at crossing. One of its actions has been to destroy the wooden boats used by the smugglers, resulting in more dangerous crossings in smaller and cheaper rubber boats, and resulting in many more casualties of people, who die without leaving a trace. See also https://www.ecre.org/operation-sophia-eu-officials-aware-naval-military-mission-made-crossing-the-med-more-dangerous/?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=2d252e85c3-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_14_03_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e-c9497afd-2d252e85c3-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
161. Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 77. The prominent Belgian newspaper *De Standaard*, already in its headline, did not hide the principal reasons for the European Union’s new alliance with Abdul Fatah al-Sisi: “fighting against migration.” See Beirlant, “EU omarmt,” 2019, n.p.
162. Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 21. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
163. Ibid., 91. The following quotation is on the same page.
164. Brecht, *War Primer* [1955], 2017, 58. The following quotation is on the same page.
165. See Mazower, “Strange Triumph,” 2004.
166. For lack of a better word, I hesitantly identified how I worked a couple of years ago in terms of art research. See my essay bearing this same title in Wesseling, *See it Again*, 2011, 23–39.
167. Sebald, “Wildes Denken,” in id., *»Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«*, 84. My translation.
168. See Young, *Nautical Dictionary*, 1863, 303–304.
169. For a similar plea in favor of “thinking wild” in relation to contemporary art and the question of migration, see Graevenitz, “Art: Don’t Fence Me In!,” 2018.
170. Lapierre, *Pensons ailleurs*, 2004, 27. My translation of her key concept of “déplacement intellectuel.”
171. Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 2010, 12. The following quotation is on the same page.
172. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 75.
173. Osborne, *Photography and the Contemporary Cultural Condition*, 2019, 8. Original emphasis.
174. Woolf, “Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid [1940],” in id., *Death of the Moth* [1974], 2015, n.p.
175. Steyerl, “In Free Fall,” 2011, 1.
176. Ibid., 9. The following quotation is on the same page.
177. This wall text is reproduced in detail in Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 153. Sekula published a longer, more explanatory version of this phrase in response to a statement by Nato Thompson on Occupy Wall Street. There, he wrote, “the neoliberal managerial model is increasingly discredited, even as it extends itself into every nook and cranny of life. Elites are far stupider than they need to be to keep the game going—thus the increasing technocratic brutality and political inanity of official responses to democratic challenges from below. The rest of us are waking up to the fact that we are smarter than we are allowed to be under ‘normal’ conditions. The challenge is to build the ‘abnormal’ conditions under which a new democratic intelligence can flourish.” Sekula, part of a statement included in Thompson, “Debating Occupy,” 2012, 103.
178. Sekula, “Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea,” 2002, 6–7. Original emphases.
179. I particularly refer to a private interview conversation with Sekula at the Renaissance Society in Chicago on September 22, 2009.
180. See Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 2007, 123.
181. Sekula, “Allan Sekula Responds,” 2003, 160.
182. Id., “Swimming in the Wake,” in id., *TITANIC’s wake*, 2003, 116; also id., “Between the Net,” 14. Original emphasis.
183. Id., “Between the Net,” 18.
184. Ibid., 28. See also ibid., 7.
185. For more information on this topic, also in relation to the work of Allan Sekula, see Toscano and Kinkle, *Cartographies*, 2015, 60–61.
186. During a public conversation with Pascal Bausse and Jean Perret held at HEAD in Geneva on February 23, 2011, Sekula stated, “The object world of the port is one of things passing through. The use-value of the commodity is not being fully

- realized, it's in transit, it's a kind of slumber of the commodity which is of course made all the more emphatically opaque by containerization and by the hiding of the port. So, in the age when we could smell goods in the harbor we had some access but now things are more remote. There is no longer a kind of cognitive understanding of what's passing materially under our noses you might say." See <https://vimeo.com/78807540> (accessed October 20, 2020).
187. Sekula, "Between the Net," 32.
 188. *Ibid.*, 14; *id.*, "Swimming in the Wake," 116.
 189. *Ibid.*, 116 and 110. The following quotation is on p. 110.
 190. *Ibid.*, 32. In the following lines, I paraphrase Sekula from the same page.
 191. *Id.*, "Between the Net," 7. My emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
 192. *Id.*, *TITANIC's wake*, 13.
 193. *Id.*, "Swimming in the Wake," 116.
 194. Berger, *Portraits*, 2015, 42–43. All further quotations are on the same pages.
 195. See Sebald, *After Nature*, 2003, 104.
 196. *Id.*, "Ein riesiges Netzwerk des Schmerzes," in *id.*, »Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«, 233. My translation.
 197. *Id.*, "Die Sensation der Musik," in *id.*, »Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«, 140. My translation.
 198. Woolf, *Room of One's Own* [1929], n.d., 271. Woolf, interestingly, uses "justice" to replace "fraternity."
 199. The perspective developed here again aligns with that of Latour, who wrote in *Down to Earth*, 18: "the elites have been so thoroughly convinced that there would be no future life for everyone that they have decided to *get rid of all the burdens of solidarity as fast as possible*." Original emphasis.
 200. Mounk and Foa, "End of the Democratic Century," 2018, n.p.
 201. See <https://truepublica.org.uk/united-kingdom/post-brex-it-britain-to-be-the-largest-and-most-destructive-tax-haven-in-the-world/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 202. Luyendijk, "De Britten zijn echt de weg kwijt," 2018, n.p. Original emphasis. My translation. It would be worthwhile to mention many other instances, but it may suffice to recall two absolute low points. The first involves the Brexit Party MEPs who turned their back to the room as the EU anthem was played during their installation ceremony in Parliament after the May 2019 elections. See Kennedy, "Brexit Party MEPs turn their backs," 2019, n.p. The second one involves the then would-be UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling the French "turds" for their intransigence on Brexit. See Moss, "Calling the French 'turds,'" 2019, n.p.
 203. For a deeper analysis of this matter, see Scheffer, *Vorm van vrijheid*, 2018, 60. On p. 147, Scheffer sketches a dark image of how "illiberal" EU democracies, such as those of Hungary and Austria, reinforce "undemocratic liberalism." For a further example, see the concern expressed by Diakonie Austria with regard to a new bill on the establishment of a federal agency for supervision and support services, an agency that is not institutionally independent as it falls under the direct responsibility of the federal government. This could undermine and impair the rule of law as conflicts of interest cannot be excluded. See <https://www.ecre.org/austria-new-agency-for-asylum-support-the-end-of-independent-legal-assistance/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 204. Rachman, "Why the Germans are right," 2017, n.p.
 205. See Sebald, "Wie kriegen die Deutschen das auf die Reihe?," in *id.*, »Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«, 94. In this conversation with Marco Poltronieri from 1993, he stated that, during the second half of the twentieth century, humans have evacuated and rapidly expelled themselves from nature. However, since we originally belonged to the natural context, our organic bodies keep within themselves the memory of nature—but nothing more than a vague souvenir, he lamented.
 206. Giannari, "Des spectres hantent l'Europe," in Didi-Huberman, *Passer*, 2017, 15. My translation.
 207. See https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/anthem_en (accessed October 20, 2020).
 208. Gierstberg, "Dismal Science," 1998, 8.
 209. See Sekula, "TITANIC's wake," 2001, 26.
 210. See *id.*, "Between the Net," 17.
 211. *Ibid.* The following quotation is on the same page.
 212. See also on the back cover of the special Documenta 11 issue of *A Prior* magazine (#15, 2007).
 213. This is an exact transcription of the sentence, which could have had an "A" instead of an "A." My emphasis.
 214. Hereafter, the original French title is used.
 215. Sarmiento and Delgado, "Q&A: Sylvain George," 2013, n.p.
 216. See Sekula, "A Note on the Work," in *id.*, *Fish Story*, 202.
 217. Allan Sekula published a selection of eleven slides from "Walking on Water" in *Camera Austria* 53, 1995, 21–28. A second, once again limited, selection of seventeen diapositives was reproduced in *id.*, *Polonia and Other Fables*, 75–93. Neither of the selections published during Allan Sekula's lifetime included this final slide.
 218. Ten seconds is the projection interval indicated by Sekula in *Polonia and Other Fables*, 96. In the *Fish Story* publication, on page 202, and in *Camera Austria* 53, on page 30, Sekula mentioned an even longer interval between each slide: fifteen seconds.
 219. Sekula, "Note on the Work," in *id.*, *Fish Story*, 202.

220. On page 30 of the *Camera Austria* 53 issue, Sekula specified both the dimensions of the projection room and the projection size of the images.
221. Sontag, *On Photography*, 1979, 122.
222. Baert, "The Washing Wound," 2004, 219.
223. See *ibid.*, 220.
224. This motif's origins are intimately connected to that of Christ in the winepress. See *ibid.*, 207–208.
225. *Ibid.*, 220.
226. Sebald, *For years now*, 2001, 15. The same micro-poem is included in *id.*, *Unrecounted* [2003], 2005, 57. There, it is combined with an etching by Jan Peter Tripp of the eyes of dancer Daniela Näger. The text says: "Blue / grass / seen / through a thin / layer / of frozen / water."
227. See *id.*, »Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«, 143. My translation.
228. *Ibid.*, 143 and 140. My translation.
229. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 1999, 464.
230. Endo, *Life of Jesus* [1973], 1978, 160.
231. See *ibid.*, 162.
232. *Ibid.*, 22.
233. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213. Available at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm (last accessed October 20, 2020).
234. In his personal library, Allan Sekula owned a copy of Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978). However, in a notebook entry, Sekula distanced himself from an "ethics of liberation theology," with which he could not identify. What he did appear to preserve from these ideas are more abstracted fragments or excerpts that he deemed relevant for understanding the deeper subtexts of our contemporary society. See FS Notebook #2, July 1991–, NB 040 (July 1991–ca. May 1992).
235. The second slide of the sequence informs the viewers that all images were produced between November 22 and December 3, 1990. Sekula wrote elsewhere that Chapter Nine of *Fish Story* "traces a path from Warsaw to Gdańsk and back to Warsaw over a period of about two weeks during Poland's first democratic elections in the early winter of 1990." See his "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," in Sekula, *Polonia and Other Fables*, 62–63.
236. Sekula, "A Note on the Work," in *id.*, *Fish Story*, 202.
237. Stafford, "Breaking Open the Container: The Logistical Image and the Specter of Maritime Labor," in Streitberger and Van Gelder, "Disassembled" *Images*, 170. The following quotation is on the same page.
238. Sekula, "Walking on Water 1990/1995," in *id.*, *Polonia and Other Fables*, 95. This text serves partly as prologue and partly as epilogue to the slide sequence. It contains a list of seventy-eight detailed captions. An earlier version (including a German translation) was published as *id.*, "Walking on Water," 1995, 20 and 31–32. In his insightful study of the films of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Joseph Kickasola also emphasized the two constants in Polish history—the Catholic Church and Slavic heritage—which I discuss in the body text. Poland is a country with a tragic geopolitical history. World War II started with Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Sixteen days later, Stalin invaded Poland as well, therewith eventually lugging along the entire world in a previously unseen period of evil and destruction. Auschwitz-Birkenau, on Polish territory, was the largest of the extermination centers built by the Nazis. According to Kickasola (*Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, 2004, 4–5), Poland's history is "a surging sea of instability and devastation," so much so that the middle of the seventeenth century—a time when Poland was virtually destroyed by several internal conflicts, numerous foreign invasions, famine, and the bubonic plague—is generally referred to as "The Deluge."
239. *Id.*, "Walking on Water 1990/1995," 95.
240. Davies, *The Heart of Europe*, 1984, 66.
241. Sekula, NB 040. Original emphasis.
242. *Id.*, "Black Tide/Marea negra, 2002/03," in *id.*, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 324.
243. When quoting Allan Sekula, I use the more common "Walesa." However, considering the argument developed later on in the present study with regard to the importance of the slash (and the slashed *l*), it is key to bear in mind the original Polish spelling of this name.
244. Sekula, "Walking on Water 1990/1995," 98. The following quotation is on the same page.
245. *Ibid.*, 99.
246. See Dowd, "Solidarity's Envoy," 1989.
247. Sekula, "Walking on Water 1990/1995," 99. The following quotations from this text are all on the same page.
248. See Tony Judt's undated public lecture, "Disturbing the Peace Intellectuals and Universities in an Illiberal Age," available at <https://youtu.be/fNE83HXfGXo> (accessed October 20, 2020).
249. During my visit on August 8, 2018, I discovered that this ship was built in 1901 by J.C. Tecklenborg for North German Lloyd in Geestemünde, near Bremerhaven, Germany. The ship manifest also mentions Sekula's professional occupation as "smith." See <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger-details/czoxMjoiMTAxOTA4MTMwMDEwIjwYXNzZW5nZXliOw==#passengerListAnchor> (last accessed August 14, 2018).
250. The information on Wiktoria Sekula is available at <https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/passenger-details/czoxMjoiMTAxMTMzMDEzMDEwIjwYXNzZW5nZXliOw==> (last accessed August, 22 2018).

251. Sekula, "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," in id., *Polonia and Other Fables*, 57.
252. Sekula referred to his grandfather as a railroad worker during a video-recorded guided tour that he gave in 2010 at the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest. The short version of this video can be consulted online, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUjF9rPqauc> (accessed October 20, 2020). The longer version is available in the archive of the museum.
253. Marie, "Allan Sekula: Polonia," 2010, n.p. The following quotation is on the same page.
254. Sekula, "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," in id., *Polonia and Other Fables*, 57.
255. Id., *Aerospace Folktales* (1973), in id., *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 157.
256. Id., FS (Forgotten Space) Continuity 2009/POL install 2009, NB 109 (May 31, 2009–January 2010). Entry dated July 28, 2009.
257. Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 2008, 89.
258. In the Greek edition of this verse, it says "περιπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆν θάλασσαν." Ibid., n.p. The following quotations from the Greek version of this pericope are on the same page.
259. See, for example, H.E. Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu, als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (Heidelberg: C.I. Winter, 1828), 357–365.
260. See Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 105.
261. Goh, *Walking on Water*, 2005, 46–51.
262. For an ampler discussion of this theme, see Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, passim.
263. See James, *Mosaics*, 2017, 446–447. See also <http://stpetersbasilica.info/Interior/Portico/Scenes/Navicella.jpg> (accessed October 20, 2020).
264. For a detailed discussion of this work, see Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 161–170.
265. Augustine, *Expositions*, vol. 2, 1848, 141.
266. See his comment on Psalm 94:17, id. *Expositions*, vol. 4, 1850, 372.
267. See his comment on Psalm 131:12, id. *Expositions*, vol. 6, 1857, 86.
268. Id., *Expositions*, vol. 2, 142.
269. Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 196. The following quotations are on the same page.
270. Ibid., 50.
271. Jelinek, *Charges*, 2016, 92.
272. See Nicholls, *Walking on the Water*, 53–59.
273. An overview of the saints from the former Low Countries worshiped for having walked on water is provided by Madeleine Ambrière in her introduction to the text in Balzac, *Comédie humaine*, 1979, 302.
274. Balzac, *Christ in Flanders* [1831], 2010, n.p. All further quotations are taken from this non-paginated translation.
275. Since Cadzand is already situated near Breskens on the left bank of the Western Scheldt, there seems consensus in the literature on this essay that Balzac must have meant the island of Walcheren. However, given that those aboard all appear to be from Flanders (Bruges, Louvain), and not from Zeeland, it is equally reasonable to presume that Balzac did mean them to have set sail in Cadzand but that he romanticized the setting by calling it an island.
276. Allan Sekula referenced Balzac's *The Lily of the Valley* in his essay "Swimming in the Wake" as a key source for his own project *TITANIC's wake*. See Sekula, "Swimming in the Wake," in id., *TITANIC's wake*, 108–109. In his personal library, Sekula owned several translated and original volumes of works by Balzac, but as far as I could trace, none that contains this short story. He also possessed a copy of György Lukács's *Studies in European Realism* (New York, [1964] 1972), a volume in which three chapters are devoted to the work of Balzac.
277. Sekula, in Najafi and Wallenstein, "Allan Sekula at Fotografiska Museet," 1995, 6.
278. See Foster and Sekula, "Gone Fishing," 1996, 14–16.
279. Ibid., 17. In his personal library, Sekula owned two copies of Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (1978), among other books (co-) authored by Thompson.
280. Go., "Deux migrants repêchés dans le port," 2017, n.p.
281. Another incident was reported on October 6, 2015. See <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/calais-des-migrants-syriens-repeches-dans-le-port-823761.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
282. The photograph can be consulted via this link: <http://www.lavoixdunord.fr/150861/article/2017-04-20/deux-migrants-repeches-dans-le-port-apres-avoir-ente-de-rejoindre-un-ferry-la> (accessed October 20, 2020).
283. Hocquet, "Il sauve un migrant en mer," 2017, n.p.
284. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1211.
285. Cook and Saunders, *Rough Guide*, 2017, 114. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
286. For more information, see Cox, *Operation Sealion*, 1977.
287. One may wonder how the British, having realized their much-desired escape from "European sovereignty," will now manage to conceive of the possibility to evade the increase of the United States' or other world power's influence that verges toward an inverted neocolonial relationship. For more on this topic, see van Middelaer, *Nieuwe politiek van Europa*, 2017, 312–314.
288. Cassidy et al., "Debordering and everyday (re)bordering," 2018, 176.

289. See Vollmer, “paradox of border security,” 2019, 2–7 *passim*.
290. On this occasion, the body text follows the British measurements. The Goodwins are a sixteen-km sandbank consisting of approximately twenty-five meters of fine sand. The banks lie between eight meters and fifteen meters beneath the surface, depending on the location. At low tide, they can easily stand two meters above sea level.
291. See Cracknell, “*Outrageous Waves*.” *Global Warming*, 2005, 107.
292. This corresponds to about eighteen kilometers long and eight kilometers wide at its widest point.
293. Cracknell, “*Outrageous Waves*.” *Global Warming*, 106.
294. See Ferguson, “Tudor approach,” 2018, n.p.
295. Chamberlain, *Goodwin Sands*, 2003, 33.
296. See Lamont Brown, *Phantoms*, 1972, 73–75; and Hadfield, *Phantom Ship*, 1937.
297. Lamont Brown, *Phantoms*, 75.
298. Smith, *Deal*, 2003, 16. The information in the following paragraph stems from this volume as well.
299. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 114n24.
300. Campana, “Out of Africa,” 2018, 488.
301. See, for example, the case of a political refugee from Iran in France, who preached as an imam in a mosque near Rouen, who was sentenced to jail in June 2019: Stefanello, “France: Imam jailed,” 2019, n.p.
302. Over the many years that I closely followed the news reports about this topic, only every now and then did a local newspaper pay attention to it. In January 2019, the Flemish *De Morgen* reported about the activities of a human-smuggling gang headed by a forty-one-year-old Bulgarian citizen. The network gave instructions to local garage mechanics to reconvert vans, small trucks, and trailers so people could hide inside. See Maeckelbergh, “Oost-Vlaamse garagisten bouwen wagens om,” 2019, n.p.
303. However, the murder of a nine-year-old Lebanese child living in a Belgian asylum detention center in the spring of 2019, presumably the outcome of unsettled bills between his parents and their smugglers, made clear that it involves an extremely dirty, relentless business. See Struys, “Zo gaan mensen-smokkelaars te werk,” 2019, n.p.
304. See Wright, “Human trafficking arrests,” 2018, n.p.
305. Hunter, “It’s a matter of time,” 2018, n.p.
306. Marsh, “Sajid Javid cuts holiday short,” 2018, n.p. As of the summer of 2019, this phenomenon began to take on even larger proportions as well as gain greater media visibility. See Crowcroft, “France and UK to take ‘urgent action,’” 2019, n.p.
307. Nossiter, “As Migrants Risk,” 2019, n.p.
308. There have been rumors for years that sailing vessels are also used for the crossing. One was intercepted off the coast of Ostend on June 14, 2019—since it was battling engine troubles. See https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/zeiljacht-met-vermoedelij-k-negen-transmigranten-onderschept-op-noordzee-levensgevaarlijk-bec2774f/?utm_source=demorgen&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=news-letter&utm_content=avond&utm_userid=&utm_ctid=fc31af5904f2b02057e78fe404736e30 (accessed October 20, 2020).
309. See Anonymous, “Deux jeunes migrants,” 2019, n.p.
310. De Bouw, “Aangespoeld op het chique strand,” 2019, n.p. My translation.
311. See <https://www.rte.ie/news/2019/1226/1103133-migrants-intercepted-in-english-channel/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
312. See https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-51420971?fbclid=IwAR2EHP3DjO5FKuPd-TlJ0llJ5kwWkEz1rCQ15WE3mmljTGth_Pz97g0kM (accessed October 20, 2020).
313. See https://www.euronews.com/2020/08/08/uk-military-to-step-in-to-intercept-migrant-boat-s-in-dover?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=en&utm_content=uk-military-to-step-in-to-intercept-migrant-boats-in-dover&_open=eyJndWkl-joiZmZmMWFmNTkwNGYyYjAyMDU3Z-Tc4ZmU0MDQ3MzZlMzAifQ%3D%3D; https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/09/11/dans-le-detroit-de-la-manche-les-traversees-de-migrants-en-small-boat-se-multiplient_6051734_3224.html#xtor=AL-32280270; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/18/body-of-suspected-asylum-seeker-found-on-beach-near-calais>; <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrant-boat-sinks-drowning-english-channel-france-uk-asylum-rescue-b1372991.html>; <https://news.sky.com/story/migrants-being-processed-at-rubble-strewn-building-site-inspectors-find-12111782>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRv64F7PFXI> (accessed October 30, 2020).
314. See Grierson, “Kent inspectors find wet,” 2020; and Taylor, “‘I was shocked,’” 2020.
315. See <https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/28835/manche-121-migrants-secours-en-une-seule-journee> (accessed December 4, 2020).
316. See Grierson, “Home Office accused,” 2020. The news came out only days after *The Independent* reported that the Home Office was jailing persons for steering dinghies, despite an official report finding that there were no organized crime group members on board. See Dearden, “Asylum seekers jailed,” 2020.
317. See Grierson, “Asylum seekers on hunger strike,” 2021, n.p.
318. The Home Office has concocted other spectacular plans, potentially to be rolled out in the nearby future: underwater nets, locking newcomers up on

- oil rigs, or deportation to Ascension Island in the south Atlantic. See Grierson, "Home Office May Use Nets," 2020; and Walker and Murray, "Priti Patel looked at," 2020.
319. See PA Media, "UK and France sign deal," 2020.
320. Mahmood, "Far right Britain," 2019, n.p.
321. For a most iconic example of this deeply rooted instinct among inhabitants of treacherous shores, see the impressive documentary by Raymond Vogel and Alain Kaminker, *La mer et les jours* (1958). Filmed on and near Île de Sein, it provides testimony to a partly successful rescue operation at sea in stormy weather. The work became legendary as its making took the life of Kaminker, who, busy filming the tempestuous sea from a lifeboat, was swept by a groundswell and drowned. It can be viewed online: <https://www.kub-web.media/page/documentaire-mer-jours-raymond-vogel-alain-kaminker-nouvelle-vague/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
322. Churchill, "Wars Are Not Won by Evacuations," in Cannadine, *Winston Churchill*, 2002, 163. The following quotation is on the same page.
323. The *Flandres* sank about one and a half miles east of Deal Castle (51° 12' 87" N. 01° 27' 25" E.). An impressive photograph of the wreck of the *Flandres* can be consulted via this link: <http://davidskardon.wixsite.com/skardons-world/wrecks> (accessed October 20, 2020).
324. See Chamberlain, "The Pig's Name was Adolf," in id., *Tales*, 2004, 54–55.
325. Erasmus, "Shipwreck," in Johnson, *Colloquies*, 1878, 283. All further quotations are on the same page.
326. Pye, *Edge of the World*, 2015, 175.
327. See Azoulay, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*, 22–25.
328. See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bt-v1b525033083/f8.item>, for Martin le Franc's reproduction from 1440 in *Le champion des dames* (accessed October 20, 2020).
329. The atlas is available for consultation online via <https://galerij.kb.nl/kb.html#/nl/ortelius/page/11/zoom/2/lat/-57.51582286553883/lng/-67.8515625> (accessed October 20, 2020). It represents Zeeland as a land that emerges from the sea, and that humbly continues to struggle with it in a deeply respectful relationship. The title page of Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* contains a female personification of Europe seated on a throne above the other parts of the world. From a present-day perspective, the tension between the imagined harmony of Europe's global rule, a reflection of Ortelius's Eurocentrism in an era of colonial expansionism, and Zeeland's own fight with the water, offers much food for thought. For an in-depth analysis of the title page, see Neumann, "Imagining European community," 2009, passim.
330. Corbin, *Lure of the Sea*, 110.
331. Bushell, "Paratext or imagetext?," 2016, 182.
332. See also Allan Sekula's comments on the salvaging skills of the Dutch, which he compares to the Belgian specialization in dredging, during a public talk he delivered at HEAD in Geneva on February 23, 2011, available via <https://vimeo.com/78807540> (accessed October 20, 2020). The recorded passage is around 30:26.
333. Booy, *Tusschen mijnen*, [1946], 8. My translation.
334. A survey map is provided in the form of an opening illustration in Rose, *Calais*, 2008, n.p. Rose has suggested how, in the context of Calais, the term "Pale" has a colonial connotation. Under King Edward III, all French natives were forced to leave Calais and only pure English blood was admitted. "Pale" is an archaic English term for "area, jurisdiction" (Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1279). It is derived from the Latin word *palus*, meaning "stake," specifically a stake used to support a fence. *Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary* provides the following information: "A pointed stake or slat, either driven into the ground, or fastened to a rail at the top and bottom, for fencing or inclosing; a picket. Deer creep through when a pale tumbles down. Mortimer. 2. That which incloses or fences in; a boundary; a limit; a fence; a palisade. 'Within one pale or hedge.' Robynson (More's Utopia). 3. A space or field having bounds or limits; a limited region or place; an inclosure;—often used figuratively. 'To walk the studious cloister's pale.' Milton. 'Out of the pale of civilization.' Macaulay." It is striking to note that the adjective and noun forms of pale also signify pallor, bleak(ness), looking sick, or wanting for color. See <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/29765/pg29765.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
335. Demotier, *Annales de Calais*, 1856, 101. My translation.
336. Anonymous, *History of Life*, 1682, 124.
337. Sarmiento and Delgado, "Q&A: Sylvain George," n.p.
338. *Le Petit Robert* provides two meanings for "éclat": fragment ("brisure," "morceau") and intensity of a bright and brilliant light ("clarté," "luminance," "feu," "scintillement"). See Rey-Debove and Rey, *Nouveau Petit Robert*, 1993, 709.
339. See Grenier, "Deux ports romains," 1944, 372–386.
340. See Smith, *Deal*, 6–8.
341. Barry, "Walking on Water," 2007, 627. Hereafter, I paraphrase Barry's argument on pp. 627–630.
342. *Ibid.*, 631. See also Baert, "New Iconological Perspectives," 2017, 30.
343. See <https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/GeositesChannelTunnel> (accessed October 20, 2020).
344. Barry, "Walking on Water," 631; see also Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 2017, 39 and 45.
345. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1084. Original emphasis.
346. *Ibid.*, 1080. Original emphasis.

347. Barry, "Walking on Water," 631; and Baert, *In Response to Echo*, 2016, 69. Original emphasis.
348. Barry, "Walking on Water," 631. Original emphasis.
349. Baert, *In Response to Echo*, 69. Original emphasis.
350. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 744. Original emphasis.
351. Barry, "Walking on Water," 631.
352. See Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 37. Hereafter, I paraphrase her argument on the same page. Original emphasis.
353. In both published versions of Sekula's complete "Walking on Water" essay, the sentence included as the epilogue to the *Fish Story* book is slightly rephrased to "They build churches so that people can pray for houses." See Sekula, "Walking on Water," 1995, 20; and "Walking on Water 1990/1995," in id., *Polonia and Other Fables*, 95.
354. Christian Dotremont, postcard to Michel Butor sent from Hammerfest, Norway on May 26, 1976. Transcribed and published in Dotremont, *Christian Dotremont*, 2008, 227. My translation.
355. Dotremont, letter to Franz Hellens from Karasjok, dated June 10, 1961, reproduced in *ibid.*, 216. My translation.
356. Dotremont, "Voyage d'études en Laponie," 1961, 9.
357. My translation. For more information on Dotremont's 1976 voyage to Lapland, see Ghyselen, *Avec Dotremont*, [2016]; and Van Gelder, "Entretien sur la neige," 2019.
358. Dotremont, letter to Paul Bourgoignie from Ivalo dated April 4, 1964, reproduced in Dotremont, *Christian Dotremont*, 217. In the published version, one word from the original is missing—namely, "sec." I have added it in the English translation from my transcription notes. See the original letter kept at the Royal Library, Brussels (AML, ML 5044/48). My translation.
359. My translation.
360. For further reading on this subject, see my "Christian Dotremont's Theory of Photography," in Allmer and Van Gelder, *Collective Inventions*, 2007, 210–240.
361. Dotremont, unpublished letter, 1961, sent from Ivalo, Finland, as personally communicated to the author by Caroline Ghyselen. My translation.
362. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 2012, 16.
363. *Ibid.*, 15.
364. *Ibid.*, 16. The following quotation is on the same page.
365. *Ibid.*, 214–215.
366. *Ibid.*, 222.
367. Zomlin, *World of Waters*, 1843, 332. Hereafter, I paraphrase from the same page.
368. Findlay and Purdy, *Memoir*, 1845, 192. The following quotation is on the same page.
369. Neuser, *Studien zur Darstellung der Winde*, 1982, 173. Neuser uses the term "das Unwesen." My translation.
370. Zomlin, *World of Waters*, 332.
371. Findlay and Purdy, *Memoir*, 192. The following quotation is on the same page.
372. See *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1913, s.v. "Ground sea," which says: "the West Indian name for a swell of the ocean, which occurs in calm weather and without obvious cause, breaking on the shore in heavy roaring billows; -- called also rollers, and in Jamaica, the North sea," http://www.dict.org/bin/Dict?Form=Dict2&Database=* &Query=Ground+sea (accessed October 20, 2020).
373. Hutton, Shaw, and Pearson, *Philosophical Transitions*, 1809, 1. The following quotations are on the same page.
374. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1909.
375. Hutton, Shaw, and Pearson, *Philosophical Transitions*, 1.
376. Beukema, *Tussen banken en grondzeeën*, 1993, n.p.
377. For specific information about the Stortemelk, see Hoekendijk, *Waddenzee*, 2010, 74–75. See also the following websites for more information about "grondzeeën" (all in Dutch): <https://www.euroszee-ilen.utwente.nl/wiki/Oppervlaktegolven>; <https://www.yumpu.com/nl/document/view/18286355/help-een-grondzee-deltavissers>; <https://www.guusjen.nl/historie/weer-en-grondzee%C3%ABn/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
378. See Van der Linden, *Handboek Varen*, 2015, 79. My translation.
379. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* [1990], 1997, 207.
380. *Ibid.*, 206.
381. *Ibid.*, 34.
382. *Ibid.*, 27.
383. *Ibid.*, 34. Original emphasis.
384. *Ibid.*, 196. Original emphasis.
385. See *ibid.*, 143–144. Original emphasis.
386. Glissant, *Philosophie de la Relation*, 2009, 45. All further quotations are on the same page. My translations. In the French text, Glissant put the emphasis on *la pensée archipélique*, whereas he decided not to italicize "pensées continentales" (in plural). I have kept this differentiation in the body text.
387. See *ibid.*, 87. My emphasis.
388. My ideas about how to concretely battle inequality align with Piketty, *Capital* [2013], 2014.
389. This term refers to the famous painted map by Heinrich Caesar Berann, *Northern Atlantic Ocean* (1968), available online: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Heinrich-Caesar-Berann-Northern-Atlantic-Ocean-1968-Based-on-the-HeezenTharp-maps_fig6_238384006 (accessed October 20, 2020). Berann based his painting on the physiographic map of the North Atlantic created by Bruce Heezen and Marie Tharp in 1957. See Doel et al., "Extending modern cartography," 2006, 618–619.

390. Tombs and Tombs, *Sweet Enemy*, 2007, 2.
391. Morris, "From island nation to Atlantic Archipelago," 2014, n.p. See also id., *Scotland and the Caribbean*, 2015.
392. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 33. The following quotation is on the same page.
393. See Malfliet, "Europe as sleepwalker," 2019; and Hancké and Sioen, "Poetin is machtiger dan ooit," 2019.
394. Glissant, *Philosophie de la relation*, 58. My translation.
395. Ibid., 59. My translation.
396. Ibid., 45. My translation.
397. Bakker, *Storm op de kust*, 40. My translation.
398. In the film, Diawara's voice can be heard along with documentary footage of people climbing fences and crossing ditches, while border guards are trying to withhold them, sometimes beating them. See 38:32–39:06.
399. See 39:55–39:56.
400. Diawara, "Édouard Glissant's Worldmentality," 2015, 234. The following quotations are on the same page.
401. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 190.
402. Diawara, "Édouard Glissant's Worldmentality," 2015, 234.
403. Deleuze, *Desert Islands* [2002], 2004, 9. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
404. Deleuze wrote, on the same page: "Continental islands serve as a reminder that the sea is on top of the earth, taking advantage of the slightest sagging in the highest structures." In the French original, it says: "elles survivent à l'engloutissement de ce qui les retenait": id., "Causes et raisons des îles désertes," in id., *L'île déserte*, 2002, 11. Besides "sagging," the French verb *engloutir* can also be translated as "swallowing." Continental islands can thus be formed from land that remains after most of its lower situated parts have been swallowed by violent seawaters.
405. In a similar vein, it remains striking that Britain is this large island that appears to spark the imagination more than others, it being the same island that, five hundred years ago, also inspired Thomas More to write *Utopia* (1516).
406. Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law*, 2018, 5. Mawani reports how the Canadian authorities quickly revised immigration legislation when the ship was still on its way to the Canadian shore, expanding and fortifying legal restrictions on Indian mobility.
407. See Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 1993.
408. Mawani, *Across Oceans of Law*, 19. Mawani quotes Epli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in Waddell et al., *A New Oceania*, 1993, 8. This text has been reprinted in Hessler, *Tidialectics*, 2018, 103–114.
409. See *ibid.*, 10.
410. Castoriadis, *The imaginary institution* [1975], 2005, 212. Original emphases. The following quotation is on the same page.
411. See Westerhoff, "Iets over het gebruik van kalk," 1845, 265.
412. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 494. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
413. As demonstrated by Anja Isabel Schneider in (*Psychic*) *Subtext(s)*, however, this connection is not far-fetched at all when one seeks to understand the deeper meaning and subtexts of Allan Sekula's *The Dockers' Museum* project. Schneider based her argument on the profound connection between Sekula's undertaking and Sandór Ferenczi's *Thalassa* [1938], 2005. For Ferenczi, as for Sekula, water is the shared common ground of all human beings. As she argues, Ferenczi develops an analogy between the depths of the sea and the mother's womb, as the ultimate place for safeguarding the most precious creations and "secret-ory" products (sperm/ semen/seamen). See also Lynn Turner, "Fort Spa: In at the Deep End with Derrida and Ferenczi," in Morgan Wortham and Alfano, *Desire in Ashes*, 2016, 103–119.
414. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 991n4.
415. Id., *Das Passagen-Werk* [1982], 1991, 618.
416. Id., *Arcades Project*, 494.
417. Sekula, Unpublished fax to Jérôme Saint-Loubert Bié, 10 May 1998. Available for consultation at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Calais and in the ASA, GRI.
418. Aviv, "Trauma of Facing Deportation," n.p. The following quotations are from the same text.
419. Diomé, *Belly of the Atlantic*, 2006, 182.
420. On the shame felt by those who return home after having failed to make a new life in Europe, see Goethals, "Had ik geweten," 2017.
421. Diomé, *Belly of the Atlantic*, 77.
422. Ibid., 76–77.
423. Lapierre, *Pensons ailleurs*, 68. My translation.
424. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1260. Original emphasis.
425. Sekula, "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," 59. The following quotation is on the same page.
426. Baert, *Kairos or Occasion*, 2016, 8. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page. For the etymology of the term *kairos*, see *ibid.*, 7.
427. Ibid., 105.
428. I have accessed the online edition through KU Leuven's library resources, which require a login. See <https://www-oed-com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/view/Entry/19792?rsk=UfUzvM&result=1#eid18999257> (accessed October 20, 2020). The online version traces the following etymological history of the term: "Common Germanic: Old English *blæd*, neuter, (plural *blado*, *bladu*) = Old Frisian *bled*, Old Saxon *blad* (Middle Dutch *blat*, Dutch *blad*, Low German *blad*), Old High German, Middle High German *blat* (modern German *blatt*),

- Old Norse *blað* (Swedish, Danish *blad*) < Germanic **blado*-(*m*; perhaps a participial formation (with suffix -*ðo*-*do* < Aryan -*tó*-) from Germanic verbal stem **blō*-, see blow v.2, cognate with Latin *flos*). The long vowel in Middle English and modern English appears to be derived from the oblique cases and plural, *blād-es*, *blād-o*, made in Middle English into *blā-des*, *blā-de*. The 15th cent. northern spellings *blayd*, *blaið*, and Chaucer's dissyllabic *blade*, *bladde*, require explanation. The sense-history is notable: in German *blatt* is the general word for 'leaf,' *laub* being the foliage collectively of trees; in Norse 'herbs or plants have *blað*, trees have *lauf*'; but in Old English *leaf* is the general word for 'leaf' and 'foliage'; *blead* occurs only once, (as it happens, poetically, in the *brād blado* of the plant of wickedness), and this sense is quite absent in Middle English, while that of the 'blade' of an oar (also in Old English), of a sword or knife, is frequent. It would almost seem then that the modern 'blade' of grass or corn is a later re-transfer from 'sword-blade'; while in regard to corn, there is some reason to suspect influence of medieval Latin *bladum*, Old French *bled* corn, wheat; at least these were evidently supposed to be the same word. The modern Scots 'cabbage-blade' also is probably not directly connected with the Old English; but Norse influence may possibly have contributed to a retention of the vegetable sense in the north."
429. See Young, *Nautical Dictionary*, 8.
430. Sebald, *After Nature*, 10. The German original says "in dem Meer zu Grund gegangen." See Sebald, *Nach der Natur*, 1988, 11.
431. For traces of this collaboration, see Van Gelder, *Constantin Meunier*, 2005; and id., "Allan Sekula in Leuven (2005): Staging a Tidal Wave, for a 'Mediation' on Today's 'Workers' Struggles,'" in Setari and Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula: Mining Section*, 2016, 13–28.
432. See Baetens and Van Gelder, *Critical Realism*, 2006.
433. A photograph of this marginal note is available on my website: <http://groundsea.be/hilde-van-gelder/>.
434. This interview was conducted in our library at Oostendestraat/Rue d'Ostende 58 in 1080 Brussels—my then home. There is a transcription of its recording (yet unpublished).
435. Letter from the French Ministry of Culture addressed to the then mayor of Calais, Jean-Jacques Barthe, dated July 22, 1998 (preserved in the work's production archive at the Calais Museum of Fine Arts). The following quotation is from the same report. My translations.
436. Beausse, "Critical Realism," 20–26.
437. The complete sequence was first reproduced in this book. See Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 2001, 12–27 and 30–49.
438. For an initial selection from these materials, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum*.
439. From December 2011 until February 2012, the San Francisco Art Institute hosted *Oceans and Campfires: Allan Sekula and Bruno Serralongue*, a group show in which Sekula combined selections from *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum* with exhibiting Part 2, "Ship of Fools"—2e volet, "La Nef des fous" from *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*. From November 2012 until February 2013, Sekula exhibited in Vancouver selections from *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum* in the Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr University and again the totality of Part 2, "Ship of Fools"—2e volet, "La Nef des fous" in the local Maritime Museum (as part of the group exhibition *Lured*).
440. The wall texts accompanying the work inform us that Part 1, "The Rights of Man"—1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme" was produced in January, March, and May of 1996, while Part 2, "Ship of Fools"—2e volet, "La Nef des fous" was made in May 1996. In the production files of the work, preserved in the archive of the Museum of Fine Arts in Calais, I was able to trace the specific dates of the May journey through fax correspondence between Allan Sekula and Annette Haudiquet, dated May 5–6, 1996. Allan Sekula spent time in Calais and the region between Monday, May 13 and Saturday, May 18, 1996. This information is confirmed in the log that the artist kept from his trip in his forty-seventh notebook, "Calais Notes" 1/95–, NB 047 (January 1995–May 16, 1996). He returned for another short trip on May 24–25. He arrived from Paris at the railway station in Lille, where Marie-Thérèse Champesme awaited him, early in the morning of May 13. From there, they drove by car to Calais, and on to Boulogne, where Sekula took photographs. On May 14, Sekula visited the industrial port of Calais, where he took photographs in the sugar terminal (9–11). In his fax letter of May 6 to Haudiquet, he specified that, regarding the industrial port, he was interested in "the facilities for the export of sugar, titanium dioxide, and coal." May 15 and 16 were entirely devoted to the ferry crossings. About the latter, Sekula gave the following instructions to Haudiquet: "I would like to be able to photograph as freely as possible aboard the ferry, with access to the areas that are normally off-limits to passengers." He added: "I would like to be able to do the same in the Calais terminal, and if possible, on the Dover side as well" (7–8, 14–23, 25–26, 28, and 33). They also traveled on a harbor patrol boat on May 17 and went to Dunkirk later in the day (where Sekula made photographs 4–6, as confirmed in his notes). Yet, as Sekula would inform Haudiquet in an undated letter (most likely early October of that same year), none of the photographic materials from the trip with the "*sauveteurs*" [*rescuers*, original emphasis] made it to the final selection. On Sekula's wish list was a visit to the petrochemical port of Dunkirk and to a petrochemical factory. For the visit to Boulogne, made because of Sekula's interest in its fishing activity, Haudiquet wrote a letter on May 15 to the head of the

local Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie asking if Sekula could be granted access to a fish-packing plant within the next few days. In a reply fax from May 17, Sekula was granted permission to photograph the harbor zone, which he did, most likely on the same day (32). Another option was to cross the tunnel and quickly visit the maritime museum in Greenwich, but he certainly did not do this. Sekula intended to make this visit in anticipation of his visit to the Musée de la Marine in Paris later that same month, when the other photographs from Paris must have also been produced (27, 29–31). From a fax letter sent to Marie-Thérèse Champesme on February 26, 1996, we know that Sekula traveled to New York from March 1 to 6, 1996 to visit an exhibition organized by Alana Heiss at PS1, presenting proposals for the Channel Tunnel project, and to photograph Thomas Paine Park (12). Sekula made a note that he visited the Dover Marine Station on May 25 (7–8). Given the similarly gray lighting conditions, the cod fisher photograph was most likely produced during the same visit (13). The log confirms that the Gravelines triptych was added as the result of the later visit on May 25 as well (1–3). Because there are similar installation views made by Sekula that include exhibited photographs from *Fish Story*, Ina Steiner has serious reason to presume that 24 was photographed when *Fish Story* was on view at the Museum of Fine Arts in Calais. This was in January 1996, meaning that Sekula would have been slightly mistaken in his respective dating of Parts One and Two. The Calais log in NB 047, however, mentions Sekula took a photograph in the Fine Arts and Lace Museum on May 25. It could be this one, and then the dates in the wall texts indeed match.

441. See Cadava, *Words of Light*, 1997, 64. The following quotations are on the same page.
442. Sekula first included the complete sequence in the group exhibition *Voyage, de l'exotisme aux non-lieux* at the Musée de Valence (May 14–August 30, 1998). It then traveled to its home base, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Calais, where it was on view from September 18 until October 4 of that same year. Over the years, the Calais museum has integrated selections from *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* within the display of its permanent collection. The complete set, along with the chairs and books, was exhibited for the first time again posthumously during the summer of 2017 at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, in the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*.
443. Sekula, unpublished letter to Sheryl Conkelton, February 5, 1997. This document is now part of the ASA, GRI.
444. See <https://www.channelswimmingassociation.com> (accessed October 20, 2020). As may be observed from this website, the 2020 swim season has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.
445. Such regulations have contrasted sharply with the fact that various types of stunts continued

to be allowed, such as, for example, crossing the channel from Sangatte to Saint Margaret's Bay with a jet-powered hoverboard. See https://www.euronews.com/2019/08/04/second-time-lucky-frenchman-to-attempt-hoverboard-channel-crossing-for-second-time?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=en&utm_content=second-time-lucky-frenchman-to-attempt-hoverboard-channel-crossing-for-second-time&_open=eyJndWlkjoiZmMzMWFMNTkwNGYyYjAyMDU3ZTc4ZmU0MD-Q3MzZIMzAifQ%3D%3D (accessed October 20, 2020).

446. The four other sequels to *Fish Story* are *Dead Letter Office* (1997), *Freeway to China* (1998–1999), *Dear Bill Gates* (1999), and *TITANIC's wake* (1998–2000). See Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 5.
447. Demotier, *Annales de Calais*, 1. My translation.
448. Corbin, *Lure of the Sea*, 190.
449. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2004, 341. The following quotation is on the same page.
450. France abstained from the vote regarding this part of the Resolutions. For a complete online facsimile of all the Resolutions, see <https://www.ucolick.org/~sla/leapsecs/scans-meridian.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
451. See, among numerous online sources, <http://www.thegreenwichmeridian.org/tgm/articles.php?article=10>; and <http://www.paullee.com/titanic/icewarnings.php> (accessed October 20, 2020).
452. Tombs and Tombs, *Sweet Enemy*, 1. The following quotation is on the same page.
453. For more information, see Rose, *Calais*, 20.
454. Sekula, [1/25/2007], NB092 (2007), entry dated January 6, 2007. Original emphases. The medieval theme of the death dance (or *danse macabre* in French), which served to remind humans that all are equal in the face of death, is well documented. See Perger, *Totentanz-Studien*, 2013. The motif figured prominently in Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff* (1494), a work that greatly inspired Sekula. See Eckhardt, *Totentanz im Narrenschiff*, 1995.
455. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 460.
456. For fluency of reading, only the English titles are used hereafter, and numbers one and two are spelled out.
457. See Sekula, letter faxed to Annette Haudiquet, March 22, 1998, available for consultation in the archive of the Calais Museum of Fine Arts.
458. A history of the SeaFrance fleet can be found online (in Swedish). See http://www.faktaomfartyg.se/seafrance_rederi.htm (accessed October 20, 2020).
459. See *ibid.*, 10–11 (for the text); and 28–29 and 50–51 (for the captions). These materials are reproduced together with the photographs at the end of the present Volume.

460. Beausse, "Deep Six / *Passer au bleu*. Or Social Work Seen from a Ferry," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 8. See also "Deep six: tr.v. -sixed, fixing, sixes. Slang. 1. To toss overboard 2. To toss out; get rid of." Anonymous, *American Heritage Dictionary*, 1985, 374.
461. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 457. As a noun, "the deep six" either indicates a "burial at sea" or a grave since "[g]raves," Richard A. Spears clarified, "are usually six feet deep": Spears, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 2006, 89.
462. Allan Sekula sent the letter as a fax from a hotel in Toronto, where he was staying on the occasion of a lecture entitled "Dismal Science: Photography and Imaginary Economies," which he delivered at the School of Image Arts of Ryerson Polytechnic University on May 7, 1998.
463. Sekula owned a copy of this book. He may have taken the title from this chapter.
464. Heezen and Hollister, *Face of the Deep*, 1971, 235. The following quotation is on the same page. Kipling's poem is entitled "The Deep-Sea Cables". See https://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/deep_sea_cables.html (accessed October 20, 2020).
465. See Rey, *Grand Robert*, 2001, 1477, where the following verbs are mentioned: "éviter ou oublier de faire"; "faire disparaître"; "subtiliser." My translations.
466. Linden, "Michelangelo Antonioni's melancholy classic," 2016, n.p.
467. Beausse, "Deep Six / *Passer au bleu*," 8.
468. This faxed letter (edited by the author on the level of typewriting errors only) can be consulted in the archive of the Calais Museum of Fine Arts. Original emphases.
469. This faxed letter is part of the ASA, GRI. The slides and transparencies that Sekula produced during his field trip to New Rochelle are available for consultation there as well. In his letter, Sekula gives 1830 as a date for the monument, whereas it was erected in 1839. A scan of one of the transparencies, a beautiful image of Paine's cottage in the snow, as if it were a fairy-tale house, is reproduced in my forthcoming essay "As a Dog Finds a Spear," in Leonida Kovač, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, Ihab Saloul, and Ilse van Rijn (eds), *Memory, Word and Image: W.G. Sebald's Artistic Legacies* (Amsterdam University Press).
470. See Paine, *Collected Writings*, 1955, 845.
471. As clarified by Robert and Isabelle Tombs, this is likely not a coincidence. "The Union Flag was of course progressively put together from the banners of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick as the struggle with France brought about a consolidation of the three kingdoms into one. The Tricolour, invented by La Fayette in 1789, was probably inspired in part by the red, white and blue of the American flag, which had developed from the British": Tombs and Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy*, 43.
472. Beausse, "Critical Realism," 26. This link is also confirmed in Anonymous, "Trois couleurs," 1998, n.p.
473. Beausse furthermore understood these structural elements as a demonstration of how Sekula was a "natural colourist," who "builds up a succession of echoes from one image to another, from one group of works to another: the uniform of the SeaFrance employees and a Renault 2 CV on the beach: a sign warning of the dangers of electricity on the ferry and the disused maritime station at Dover: brushstrokes on the docks at a port where a cargo ship carrying the name of a French colony (Guyana) is docked and a dustbin in the Thomas Paine Park in New York into which a shopping bag has been thrown": id., "Deep Six / *Passer au bleu*," 8.
474. Anonymous, "Trois couleurs," n.p. The following quotations are on the same page. My translations. The reference is, of course, to Krzysztof Kiesłowski's *Three Colors* trilogy, the collective title of three films (*Blue*, *White*, and *Red*) that he made between 1993 and 1994.
475. Kickasola, *Films of Krzysztof Kiesłowski*, 84. The following quotation is on the same page.
476. *Ibid.*, 52. Kickasola references Edmund Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (trans. 1970).
477. *Ibid.*, 296. The following quotation is on the same page.
478. See *ibid.*, 263.
479. See also *ibid.*, 269.
480. *Ibid.*, 293. The following quotation is on the same page. Kickasola quotes Kiesłowski from Danusia Stok, *Kiesłowski on Kiesłowski* (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1993), 217.
481. *Ibid.*, 295. Here as well Kickasola quotes Kiesłowski from Stok, *Kiesłowski on Kiesłowski*, 218.
482. *Ibid.*, 319.
483. The film integrates real footage from the tragedy with the *Herald of Free Enterprise* on March 6, 1987. The ferry departed for Dover from Zeebrugge in Belgium and capsized soon after. The disaster's causes were ruled to be complex, but the principal reason for the incident was that the bow door was left open, which gave rise to flooding of the various lower decks as soon as the ship reached open water. The sinking caused a traumatic shock, especially in Belgium and the United Kingdom, where most of the 193 victims were from.
484. The seventh survivor, so it is reported on TV, is the ferry's barkeeper, Stephen Killian. He is an entirely new character, possibly someone who could have figured in a next film (which Kiesłowski never made). Kickasola has suggested that Kiesłowski's choice of seven survivors of the disaster should be

- understood as corresponding to a perfect number in the Jewish biblical tradition. See *Films of Krzysztof Kieslowksi*, 319.
485. *Ibid.*, 302–303. My emphasis. Kickasola borrows the concept of “aesthetics of intersection” from Glenn Man.
486. *Ibid.*, 323.
487. The philosophical concept that comes closest to suggesting something similar is Étienne Balibar’s “equaliberty,” a term that joins both concepts by simultaneously accepting that the tension between both remains open. Whenever a higher degree of equaliberty is realized, rights that do not yet exist can be won or existing ones can be expanded. See Balibar, *Equaliberty* [2010], 2014, 4–8.
488. Chapter Ten proposes to understand the watery space of the English Channel in similar terms, as a page full of old, dark ink that is in need of being wiped away to facilitate a reset of relations: a refreshed start, a blank page to depart from once again.
489. According to Kickasola, the film prepared this suggestion by visualizing Valentine’s struggle with a white theater curtain, which completely encapsulates her, “not unlike the foam of the ocean.” *Ibid.*, 317.
490. Sebald, »Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«, 157. My translation. Sebald refers to Hans Blumenberg’s book *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer. Paradigma einer Daseinsmetapher* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979). The book provides a history of humankind’s fascination with the shipwreck both as catastrophe and as source for imagining new opportunities that a disaster inevitably also brings in its wake.
491. Sekula, “On ‘Fish Story,’” 1997, 56. Sekula confirmed to Beausse that this was a key anecdote for him, triggering the production process of the work. See Beausse, “*Deep Six / Passer au bleu*,” 8.
492. For affirmative versions of this tall tale, see Foot and Kramnick, *Thomas Paine*, 1987, 71–72; Hayden, *Irish on the Inside*, 2001, 73; and Leach, *Politics Companion*, 2008, 198. For a discussion of the more likely course of events—namely, that Paine’s bones were repatriated to the United Kingdom in 1819 by William Cobbett with the intent of raising money for a memorial and were only lost after he failed to do so and died—see, for example, Nelson, *Thomas Paine*, 2007.
493. The passage continues as follows: “*In that way there’s a connection to Che Guevara. But on the other side there was also in Paine a profound refusal of terror: as much as he was a protagonist of the American Revolution, his opposition to capital punishment led him to speak out against the execution of Louis XVI. For this he was ultimately exiled from France. John Kean, recent biographer of Paine, has argued that Paine’s childhood, growing up next to the gallows in England, could have set him on the path of radical opposition to capital punishment. Remembering Paine is all the more important in America today, where the death penalty is being used with a vengeance as a way of controlling the poor. So even though it’s*
- a work made for France and a French museum collection, I wanted to make this linkage to England, and to America today. It’s a very American work in that way.*” Beausse, “*Deep Six / Passer au bleu*,” 8. Original emphasis.
494. Sekula, “On ‘Fish Story,’” 56.
495. Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 1999, 118.
496. There are many online sources providing a short history of the Channel Tunnel, but, in English, the following one is quite concise: <http://www.dover.freeuk.com/port/chunnel.htm> (accessed October 20, 2020).
497. This is the total of the chapter as exhibited. The final sequence for the book publication of *Fish Story* only contains six photographs. Together with the text that accompanies them, they are reproduced in Sekula, *Fish Story*, 139–148.
498. Comparisons between the movements of *Nautilus* and of an “express train” can be found in Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues* [1870], 2009, 26 and 263. The source of the second part of the citation is on p. 313 of this same book.
499. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 141.
500. *Ibid.*, 110. Verne’s influential literary act of romanticizing the submarine world was sharply dissected by Roland Barthes, who described Verne’s approach in terms of a “cherished seclusion” from everyday reality. See Barthes, *Mythologies* [1957], 1972, 67.
501. Sekula, “On ‘Fish Story,’” 57.
502. This letter is part of the ASA, GRI.
503. Considering this, the advertising promotion that Eurostar made in Fall 2019 for traveling to London by train is quite absurd. It shows a photograph of an ostrich, accompanied by the slogan “you see more when you don’t fly.” See: <http://view.eurostar.com/?qs=b5beae608a6d91f1f1b160d9964cd-c2a27e39414b3f0be8306e307bcef90c0129d-3b70e72a8d2a1402826050563b61f98ed-11e49588bc7b3e14bcbbf8a6774b07696308918bb-deb7182a3a3ff307642> (accessed October 20, 2020).
504. See <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/12/world/social-issues-world/bed-equipped-shipping-g-containers-set-boost-soggy-calais-jungle-camp-migrants-lot/> (last accessed September 30, 2019).
505. With this way of working, Sekula touched upon issues that were soon after developed theoretically by Rosalind Krauss. For her as well, the very obsolescence of photography contained a promise to reinvent it as a medium that embraces its inherently plural condition and therewith can stand “apart from any philosophically unified idea of Art.” Krauss, “Reinventing the Medium,” 1999, 305. For a short, critical note on Sekula’s approach in terms of a utopian act, see Magagnoli, *Documents of Utopia*, 88.
506. Moix, *Dehors*, 2018, 29. My translation.
507. *Ibid.*, 35. My paraphrasing of “La Jungle était jadis à Calais; la Jungle est à présent Calais.”
508. *Ibid.*, 55. My translation.

509. Boussemart, "Calais De nouvelles grilles," 2019, n.p. My translation.
510. Moix, *Dehors*, 55. The following quotation is on the same page. My translations.
511. *Ibid.*, 27. My translations.
512. See https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_le_s-migrants-du-parc-maximilien-evacues-ce-vendre-di-une-operation-en-prevision-du-tour-de-france?id=10259168 (accessed October 20, 2020).
513. The summer, then, had not even reached its lowest point. On July 12, a TV reportage on RTL-TV1 did not hesitate to shockingly proclaim on television: "A failed start of the holiday for Charlotte," a tourist who had spotted a dead man's corpse on a beach in Djerba, Tunisia. The Belgian Superior Council for the Audiovisual (CSA) opened an investigation of RTL-TV1's potential violation of the journalistic code in esteeming the holiday of Belgians more important than the inalienable right to a dignified life. See <https://www.levif.be/actualite/europe/ce-s-migrants-qui-gachent-nos-vacances-l-indecence-a-son-comble/article-opinion-1165895.html?cookie-check=1569260574>; and <https://www.nouvelobs.com/teleobs/20190716.OBS16013/cadavres-de-migrants-et-vacances-gachees-un-sujet-tv-provoque-un-scandale-en-belgique.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
514. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1121.
515. See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/migrant_en (accessed October 20, 2020).
516. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1494.
517. For a concise introduction to this topic, see Agier and Madeira, *Définir les réfugiés*, 2017.
518. Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 10.
519. Moix, *Dehors*, 16–17. The following quotation is on p. 17. My translations.
520. In 2013, T.J. Demos also expressed doubts with regard to the sustainability of the term, when he wrote, "it may be questionable whether even 'migration' remains both capacious enough and the most accurate term to describe the multiple forms of movement and singular expressions of dislocation in contemporary experience; nonetheless the term offers the advantage of opening up the possibilities of conceptualizing a form of life that is politically and aesthetically committed to a certain mobility." It is this very mobility itself that is now increasingly branded as unlawful for those who *have not* or whose lives are dismissed as already *wasted*. See Demos, *Migrant Image*, 3.
521. Moix, *Dehors*, 17. My translation.
522. Amnesty International, *Targeting Solidarity*, 2019, 5n3.
523. See Schreuer, "How the EU's Migrant Crisis," 2018; and Crew, "Transitory Migrants in Brussels," 2018.
524. TLG, "Vrouw moet kosten," 2018, n.p. My translation.
525. See <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/01/30/jambon-over-ongeval-met-transmigrant--spijtig-voorval--maar-pol/> (accessed October 20, 2020); and Lallemand, "Transmigrant doodgereden," 2018.
526. Saïd, "Reflections on Exile," in *id.*, *Reflections on Exile*, 2000, 180–181.
527. *Ibid.*, 181.
528. On October 27, 2020, the ECHR ruled that, in a concrete case of removal to Sudan, Belgium had violated both Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights. See <file:///C:/Users/u0019278/AppData/Local/Temp/Judgment%20M.%20A.%20v.%20Belgium%20-%20deportation%20of%20applicant%20to%20Sudan%20violation%20of%20Convention.pdf>; for an interpretation by Amnesty International, see <https://www.amnesty.eu/news/belgium-european-court-rules-deportation-to-sudan-was-unlawful/> (both accessed November 9, 2020); and Debeuf, "Belgium's collaboration with Sudan's secret service," n.p.
529. Moix, *Dehors*, 61. My translation.
530. *Ibid.*, 13. My translation.
531. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 613.
532. Saïd, "Reflections on Exile," 177. The following quotation is on the same page.
533. *Ibid.*, 173. The following quotations are on the same page.
534. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 615.
535. Saïd, "Reflections on Exile," 181.
536. Moix, *Dehors*, 229. My translation.
537. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* [1988], 1991, 96.
538. Burgin, *In | Different Spaces*, 1996, 119.
539. Barclay, "Kristeva's Stranger Within," 10. The quoted passage from Kristeva is in *Strangers to Ourselves*, 9.
540. Saïd, "Reflections on Exile," 173. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (p. 573) writes that an émigré is "a person who has left their own country in order to settle in another, typically for political reasons." The origin of the term strongly connects to persons escaping the French Revolution—in other words, members of the higher social classes in the ancien régime. For this reason, it is not useful for the category of persons I intend to better identify in this book.
541. Marie-Bénédicte Dembois and Marie Martin have argued along the same lines in their in-depth study of the situation in the Calaisis, wondering whether the concept of refugee might or might not be applicable today regarding those who find themselves stuck there. According to them, one should consider "the Calaisis migrants as 'refugees,'" not in law but in fact. "The paradox," they have added, "is that it is precisely

- because they are denied a refuge that they are de facto refugees”: Dembour and Martin, “The French Calaisis. Transit zone or dead-end?,” in Dembour and Kelly, *Are Human Rights for Migrants?*, 2011, 135 (the full article is on pp. 123–145).
542. Azoulay, “Regime-Made Disaster: On the Possibility of Nongovernmental Viewing,” in McLagan and McKee, *Sensible Politics*, 2012, 29. In the following lines of the body text, I paraphrase Azoulay’s argument on p. 31 of her essay.
543. Maurizio Albahari found himself in agreement with this when he wrote that we collectively have to engage in an “analysis of how ‘law’—including the practices and taxonomies of citizenship, nation building, and border enforcement—‘produces citizens, illegal aliens, legal permanent residents, legal immigration, illicit travel, and even territories and the state’”: Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 10.
544. Azoulay, “Regime-Made Disaster,” 41. The following quotation is on the same page.
545. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 505.
546. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 355. The following quotation is on the same page.
547. Albahari, *Crimes of Peace*, 209n18. Albahari bases his research on Giordano et al., “An Automatic System for Skeletal Bone Age Measurement,” 2009.
548. Attempts to declare the law constitutionally invalid have failed. See Jacquain, “Conseil constitutionnel,” 2019, n.p. For an insightful description in French of the numerous problems this entails, see https://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article6129&utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=8fe0afd7ec-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_25_01_06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-8fe0afd7ec-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). For a concise summary in English, see http://en.rfi.fr/france/20190321-legal-experts-decry-bone-tests-migrants-determine-their-age-france?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=8fe0afd7ec-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_25_01_06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-8fe0afd7ec-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
549. Moix, *Dehors*, 141. My translation. The following quotation is on p. 145.
550. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1998, 71–72. The quotation from Agamben at the end of this chapter is on p. 65.
551. Lee, *Ingenious Citizenship*, 2016, 26. Original emphasis.
552. *Ibid.*, 252. Original emphasis. I am aware that the metaphor of being like water can also be used negatively, in terms of opportunism. But this is not what Lee intends when using it.
553. In *Pensons ailleurs*, 198, Nicole Lapierre gives the example of the US author Richard Wright (mentioning his contested novel *The Outsider*), who, for her, is the type of displaced intellectual that she seeks to celebrate. Allan Sekula also owned copies of Wright’s *Black Boy* (1945) and *Twelve Million Black Voices* (1941).
554. I am building on the distinction between the snail as the image of diachronic *chronos* and the Angel as representing the interruptive synchronic flash of *kairos*, as elaborated by Barbara Baert from Francesco del Cossa’s *Annunciation* (1470–1472). See Baert, *Kairos or Occasion*, 86–88.
555. Serralongue, *Faits divers*, 2010, 58.
556. For a more in-depth analysis, see Van Gelder, “Artistic ‘Non-Compliance,’” 2014.
557. Stevenson Stewart, “Toward a hermeneutics of doodling,” 2013, 409. Hereafter, I paraphrase her argument.
558. Here, I freely use the argument of Brisman, “The image that wants to be read,” 2013. My emphasis.
559. See Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 1994, 90.
560. *Ibid.*, 89n9. Original emphasis. The following information is from the same footnote.
561. See Anonymous, “In, Out or Limbo?,” 2019.
562. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 2004, 24. The following quotation is on the same page.
563. See, as already mentioned in note 132 of the present volume, groundsea.be; and R. Delange and Othillia G —, *Dover and Calais to Dunkerque and Ramsgate*, 2021 (deblinkerd.be).
564. The list of publications on photography’s indexicality is large. The foundational essay is Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1” and “Notes on the Index: Part 2,” in *id.*, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 1986, 196–219. For a roundtable discussion on photography in relation to the index, see “The Art Seminar,” in Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 2007, 129–173.
565. Devlin, “Myth, Montage,” 2019, 3. The following quotation is on the same page.
566. For a concise introduction to the activities of Clare Francis, see Reller, “Anonymous whistleblowers,” 2013, *passim*. Also interesting in the wake of these whistleblowing activities is the blog Retraction Watch, which reports on retractions of scientific papers. See <https://retractionwatch.com/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
567. Sontag, *On Photography*, 71.
568. *Ibid.*, 181–207. The following quotation is on p. 181.
569. Benjamin, as quoted from the *Schriften* (I, 571) in Arendt, “Introduction. Walter Benjamin: 1892–1940,” in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1968, 38. The following quotations are all on p. 39.
570. Roberts, “Photography after the Photograph,” 2009, 298. The following quotations are on the same page.
571. West Brett, *Photography and Place*, 2016, 2. Original emphasis.
572. Company, “Safety in Numbness: Some remarks on problems of ‘Late Photography,’” in Green, *Where is the Photograph?*, 2003, 126.

573. West Brett, *Photography and Place*, 5.
574. Shobeiri, *Place*, 2017, 130. The reference is to Nancy, "Forbidden Representation," in id., *Ground of the Image*, 2005, 37. Original emphasis.
575. West Brett, *Photography and Place*, 51.
576. Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 2002, 63. Original emphasis.
577. Ibid., 68.
578. Shobeiri, *Place*, 131. Original emphasis.
579. Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 73.
580. Ibid. Original emphases.
581. Shobeiri, *Place*, 132. The reference is to Derrida and Stiegler, "Spectrographies," in Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader*, 2013, 40.
582. Derrida and Stiegler, "Spectrographies," 41.
583. Ibid., 40.
584. Sexual violence perpetrated against women, girls, men, and boys along the central Mediterranean route to Italy has assumed nothing short of epidemic proportions, as is demonstrated by a report from the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) based on fieldwork in Rome and Sicily in October 2018. See https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/gbv/resources/1689-more-than-one-million-pains-sexual-violence-against-men-and-boys-on-the-central-mediterranean-route-to-italy?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=f77b91b4ae-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_27_11_41&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-f77b-91b4ae-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
585. Toubon, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 2015, 6. My translations. The following quotations are on the same page.
586. G.D., "Migrants à Calais," 2017, n.p.
587. Amnesty International, *Report 2017/18*, 2018, 167.
588. These types of breaches are no fiction. To give but one example among numerous (and more recent) others, on February 28, 2019, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in case *Khan v. France* (*application no. 12267/16*) that the failure of the French authorities to provide care for an unaccompanied minor in the Calais refugee camp was in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. See <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%22itemid%22:%22001-191277%22> (accessed October 20, 2020).
589. See Goudeseune, "Après la décision de justice," 2017.
590. See Le Défenseur des droits, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 2018, 10, 25–26.
591. See Amnesty International, *Targeting Solidarity*, passim.
592. See <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/23522/france-migrants-left-out-in-fight-against-coronavirus> (accessed October 20, 2020). The first concrete cases of a COVID-19 outbreak among people on the move living in cramped informal settlements near Calais and Dunkirk were reported on April 11, 2020. See <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/coronaviru> s-jungle-calais-dunkirk-fear-outbreak-a4412411.html (accessed October 20, 2020). I discuss this topic further, from personal experience, in Volume II (and most explicitly in Chapter Nine).
593. In Pas-de-Calais, Macron even lost, with only 47.95 percent of the vote. In Nord, he won with 56.90 percent of the vote. See <http://www.lemonde.fr/nord-pas-de-calais-picardie/elections/presidentielle-2017/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
594. I borrow this terminology from Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 7 (who in their turn quote Benedict Anderson).
595. Monk et al., "Six Months On," 2017, 24.
596. Almost nine out of ten respondents confirmed having experienced police violence. See *ibid.*, 9.
597. See, for example, Powell et al., "Carnage in Calais," 2016.
598. See Drake, "Refugees Welcome," 2017.
599. Anonymous, "Démantèlement du camp," 2016, n.p.
600. Amnesty International, *Report 2016/17*, 2017, 160.
601. See "Calais, The End of the Jungle," broadcast on BBC Two on October 24, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09c1psj> (accessed October 20, 2020).
602. Jelinek, *Charges*, 59–60.
603. Garcia Bochenek, "Like Living in Hell," 2017, 25.
604. The full report, as well as a summary, can be consulted at <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Publications/Rapports-de-l-IGA/Rapports-recents/Evaluation-de-l-action-des-forces-de-l-ordre-a-Calais-et-dans-le-Dunkerquois> (accessed October 20, 2020).
605. Baumard and Sanchez, "Des conditions de vie 'inhumaines,'" 2017, n.p. In 2018, it turned out that all official calculations stopped and were simply missing. The assumption throughout 2018 was that we needed to continue speaking of hundreds of persons. See Barbiroglio, "Dunkirk, Calais," 2018. In June 2019, Amnesty International published a figure of 1,200 persons, which conflicted with that of the official sources, which indicated only 350. See Amnesty International, "France: Police harassing, intimidating," 2019; and, id., *Targeting Solidarity*, 5n6.
606. See <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/080719-000-A/re-calais/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
607. Chrisafis, "UN urges France," 2019, n.p.
608. See Stuble, "More than 500," 2020.
609. See Pascual, "Dans l'impasse de Calais," 2020.
610. The Calais-based charity Care4Calais regularly posts updates on the various raids. See, for example, its post of October 10, 2020, concerning one such raid in Dunkirk, <https://care4calais.org/news/refugee-s-lose-their-only-shelter-in-dunkirk-raid/> (accessed October 20, 2020). See also Bénézit, "À Calais, en plein hiver," 2021, n.p. and Moniez, "À Lille, deux journalistes," 2021, n.p.

611. Bulman, "Surge in child refugees," n.p.
612. Nonetheless, shortly after *The Guardian* announced that the Home Office considered closing the so-called Dubs scheme, which was put in place to transfer unaccompanied minors to the United Kingdom safely. See Grant, "Transfer of vulnerable child refugees," 2019. In early 2021, this materialized. See Bulman, "Britain closes door," 2021, n.p.
613. Grierson, "Calais child refugees went on hunger strike," 2019, n.p.
614. Savary, "France arrests 44 migrants," 2019, n.p.
615. Renout, "Migranten bestormen veerboot," 2019, n.p.
616. Beausse, "Deep Six / Passer au bleu," 8.
617. Deleuze, "What is the Creative Act? [1998]," in id., *Two Regimes* [2003], 2007, 327. The following quotation is on the same page.
618. Lanier, *Ten Arguments*, 2018, 23. The following quotations are on the same page.
619. Ibid., 7 and 5. The free online movement of photographic images—at least certain types of footage—made on smartphones and related devices appears to grow and proceed unimpeded. But in May 2019, by contrast, it was reported that British citizen Tom Ciotkowski faced up to five years in prison for recording video of police abuse of volunteers and people on the move in Calais. See Bulman, "British man facing up to five years," 2019.
620. Jelinek, *Charges*, 75.
621. Eastham, "Documenta 14," 2017, n.p.
622. Near Stade de France in Paris on November 17, 2020, 2,800 were evacuated from under a highway turnpike: https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/11/17/evacuation-d-un-important-campement-de-migrants-au-pied-du-stade-de-france-a-saint-denis_6060013_3224.html (accessed November 20, 2020). On Monday November 23, 2020, police officials dismantled hundreds of small tents in Place de la République, a square in the heart of Paris, which had been installed there by the aid organization Utopia 56 and a group of lawyers. In its analysis of the circumstances, Infomigrants reported on a tweet by Médecins du Monde, which stated that it was proven that the methods developed in Calais had been adopted in Paris. See Dumont, "France: Police violence," 2020 n.p. The event, filmed by journalists and volunteers, came as France's National Assembly was preparing to vote on a security law that outlaws the dissemination of images of police officers' or soldiers' faces. Disseminating such images with the aim of damaging an officer's "integrity" would carry a prison sentence of up to one year and a maximum fine of €45,000. Human-rights activists and press-freedom groups have been protesting this new measure, which was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Council in May 2021. See Chadwick, "Police forcefully remove," 2020.
623. Serralongue, "Calais (2006–08 and 2015–ongoing)," n.d., n.p.
624. Fragments (10 and 22 seconds) of this work can be consulted online via: <https://vimeo.com/220889854> and <https://vimeo.com/220889963> (accessed October 20, 2020).
625. Information on the website of the Peter Kilchmann gallery states that *Glimpse* was sold in an edition of three (+ 1 AP + 1 EP). See <http://www.peterkilchmann.com/artists/artur-zmijewski/overview/documenta-14-2017> (accessed October 20, 2020).
626. Heitz and Żmijewski, "About 'how we treat others,'" 2017, n.p. The following quotations are from the same interview conversation.
627. Jelinek, *Charges*, 58.
628. See Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs [1981]," in id., *Photography Against the Grain*, 77–101.
629. Mitchell, "Migration, Law, and the Image: Beyond the Veil of Ignorance," in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 13. Original emphasis. All further quotations are on the same page. For several years, a lecture bearing the same title could be consulted online via <http://townsendlab.berkeley.edu/critical-theory/audio/wjt-mitchell-migration-law-and-image-beyond-veil-ignorance> (last accessed September 8, 2011).
630. Garcia Bochenek, "Like Living in Hell," 33.
631. See <https://www.france24.com/fr/france/20201121-loi-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9-globale-des-ong-alertent-sur-les-cons%C3%A9quences-dangereuses-pour-les-libert%C3%A9s-individuelles> (accessed November 30, 2020).
632. Sekula, "Traffic in Photographs," 79.
633. See Anonymous, "Gezichtsscreening voor nieuwe paspoorten," 2017.
634. See Anonymous, "Liga voor Mensenrechten," 2018.
635. See <https://www.const-court.be/public/n/2021/2021-002n.pdf> (accessed January 15, 2021).
636. On this topic, see also Hausken, "The Archival Promise of the Biometric Passport," in Blom et al., *Memory in Motion*, 2017, 257–284. In her chapter, Hausken has extensively elaborated how the connectivity of contemporary digital technology has made the boundaries between police databases and other governmental databases more fluid. This creates an easily accessible global archive, in which mobile humans are at risk of being automatically perceived as pre-criminals.
637. Diomé, *Belly of the Atlantic*, 154.
638. See, once more, Latour, *Down to Earth*, 5.
639. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 2015, 154.
640. Id., "Earth, sky, wind, and weather," 2007, 19.
641. Ibid., 26.
642. Ibid., 27.

643. *Ibid.*, 28. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
644. *Ibid.*, 29. Ingold quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) here. Original emphasis.
645. *Ibid.*, 31. Original emphasis.
646. *Ibid.*, 32. In this case, Ingold refers to Merleau-Ponty's influential essay "Eye and Mind" (1964). The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
647. Homer, *Iliad* [750–650 BC], Book XIV, verse 246; Barb, "Diva Matrix," 1953, 206.
648. *Ibid.*, 206; and Vandenbroeck, "The Solomonic column," 2016, 123. On the ancient Greek etymology, see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Ddolfo%2Fs> (accessed October 20, 2020).
649. In 2020, sea arrivals through the most dangerous so-called *Atlantic route* resumed at an exponential rate—reaching the highest number of attempts in over a decade. The underlying reason is a deal between the European Union and Morocco in 2019, preventing people from embarking to Spain via the Mediterranean Sea. On November 7, more than one thousand persons arrived in the Canary Islands on eighteen boats within twenty-four hours. In total, an estimated 16,760 persons have reached the islands in 2020 alone. Spanish authorities built makeshift camps and put people up in temporarily empty holiday resorts, since tourists were failing to come in large numbers due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions. See Bakker, "Migranten vullen lege hotels," 2020, n.p.; https://www.eldiario.es/canaria-sahora/migraciones/maximo-diario-ruta-migratori-a-canaria-900-personas-llegadas-embarcaciones-fallecida_1_6395196.html; and <https://migration.iom.int/reports/west-and-central-africa-%E2%80%94irregular-migration-routes-europe-january-%E2%80%94november-2020?close=true> (accessed December 3, 2020).
650. See <https://vimeo.com/78894811> (accessed October 20, 2020). The quoted passage appears around minute 27 of the recording. For a connection to Allan Sekula's works and the Homeric figure of Okeanos, the god who ruled over the oceans and water, see Zyman, "Not Just a Fish Story," in *id.* and Scozzari, *Allan Sekula: Okeanos*, 2017, 24.
651. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 33.
652. *Ibid.*, 40 and 45. The following quotations are on p. 45.
653. *Ibid.*, 40. The following quotations are on the same page.
654. *Ibid.*, 42. The following quotations are on pp. 42–43. Original emphasis.
655. *Id.*, "Earth, sky, wind, and weather," 33.
656. *Ibid.*; *id.*, *Life of Lines*, 43. Original emphasis.
657. *Ibid.*, 49. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
658. *Id.*, *Life of Lines*, 71. Original emphasis. Ingold borrowed the term from the environmental sociologist Bronislaw Szerszynski.
659. *Ibid.*, 26.
660. Baert, *Pneuma and the Visual Medium*, 2016, 151. Original emphasis.
661. Marai, "When hope is gone," 2016, n.p.
662. See the anonymous announcement on the *BBC NEWS* site, "In pictures: Remembering photographer Shah Marai," April 30, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-43948130> (accessed October 20, 2020). The caption says, "Marai regularly photographed the site of suicide bombings. Here, residents inspect one outside a voter registration centre on 22 April this year."
663. See Sontag, *On Photography*, 19.
664. For more on this topic, see also Lauwaert, *Artikels*, 1996, 52.
665. Sontag, *On Photography*, 19.
666. See *ibid.*, 20. The following quotations are on the same page.
667. Barthes, "On Photography [1980]," from interviews conducted by Angelo Schwarz and Guy Mandery, in *id.*, *Grain of the Voice*, 1984, 356. All quotations above are from this same page.
668. *Ibid.*, 360.
669. *Id.*, *Preparation of the Novel*, 2011, 304. The concept of rebirth also appears earlier in the course; for example, on pp. 212 and 214. The following quotations are on p. 304. Original emphases.
670. *Ibid.*, 284.
671. *Ibid.*, 285. Original emphasis.
672. *Ibid.*, 214. The following lines are a paraphrase and quotation of pp. 214–215 (session on January 19, 1980). Original emphasis.
673. In *Mourning Diary*, Barthes goes as far as to link this idea of a rebirth to the resuscitation of Lazarus by Jesus. See Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, 2011, 186, "struck by the fact that Jesus loved Lazarus and that before resuscitating him, he wept (John 11)."
674. Barthes, *Neutral*, 2005, 33.
675. *Ibid.*, 34. The following quotation is on the same page.
676. Brambilla and Pöttsch, "In/Visibility," 2017, 81.
677. Sylvain George, email to the author, November 8, 2019. My translation. My emphasis.
678. Éric Marty clarified that, possibly, Barthes had made up his mind on making the shift toward writing literature as early as April 15, 1978, a date to which he repeatedly referred in his provisional concept notes of the book. Marty hypothesized that this decision came as a substitute for the loss of his mother, whom Barthes considered to be his eternal guide and whose name he abbreviated as *Mam*. From the perspective of literature, Barthes's referential horizon of

- thinking obviously included Dante Alighieri's *La Vita Nuova* (1295), which also deals with the loss of a beloved person. See Barthes, *Œuvres complètes V*, 2002, 1008n1, 1013 and 1014. Original emphases. In *The Preparation of the Novel*, the referenced passages in Barthes's text are on pp. 398, 402, and 403. Marty's annotation can be found on p. 454n1.
679. Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, 74. Original emphasis.
680. Id., *Preparation of the Novel*, 454n2. Elsewhere, Marty also wrote: "Nous ne savons rien de précis sur cette « décision » ; il est clair cependant qu'il s'agit mythiquement – sur un mode pascalien – de se convertir à une « nouvelle vie » dans laquelle la « littérature » serait l'horizon total de l'existence." Id., *Œuvres complètes V*, 1008n2.
681. Van Montfrans, "Barthes, Cayrol, Perec," in Hofstede and Pieters, *Memo Barthes*, 2004, 191.
682. Barthes, *Neutral*, 1.
683. Van Montfrans, "Barthes, Cayrol, Perec," 177. My translation of "un mot-pensée" (original emphasis).
684. See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [1991], 1996, 213.
685. See *ibid.*, 85, 96, 187, 196. See also Guattari, *Lines of Flight* [2011], 2016.
686. Barthes, *Neutral*, 7. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
687. *Ibid.*, 42.
688. *Ibid.*, 7. Original emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
689. *Ibid.*, 214n9. My emphasis. As the French footnote is slightly longer than the translated note, I completed the quotation (adding in the idea of the "line of caesura"), because it is relevant to the discussion later in this book. See *id.*, *Neutre*, 2002, 31n8. As a matter of fact, and although the footnote in *Le Neutre* says *césure*, the original French text in *S/Z* mentions *censure*. Although it is unclear whether this might be a lapsus, it certainly can be considered an interesting transition. See *id.*, *S/Z*, 1970, 113; and *id.*, *S/Z* [1970], in *id.*, *Œuvres complètes III*, 2002, 207.
690. *Id.*, *Neutral*, 7. In this lecture course, Barthes also called this binarism "neither-norism" (see pp. 79–81). Elsewhere, he spoke of "The Critique Ni-ni." See "Neither-Nor Criticism" in *id.*, *Mythologies*, 81–83.
691. See *id.*, *Neutral*, 6. My emphasis.
692. *Ibid.*, 7. Original emphasis.
693. See *ibid.*, 12.
694. *Ibid.*, 8.
695. See *ibid.*, 13.
696. See <https://www.britannica.com/science/comboination-tone> (accessed October 20, 2020).
697. See Barthes, *Neutral*, 13.
698. *Ibid.*, 13 and 47.
699. See Auerbach, "Imagine no Metaphors," 2007, n.p.
- Chapter Ten returns to the powerful impact of the dialectical image.
700. Barthes, *Neutral*, 51.
701. See *id.*, *Roland Barthes*, 132.
702. *Id.*, *Neutral*, 51. My emphasis.
703. See *ibid.*, 11. Original emphasis.
704. *Ibid.*, 215n32. Thomas Clerc wrote "la 'diaphoralogie', science des nuances ou des moires, qui parcourt toute l'œuvre de Barthes," Barthes, *Neutre*, 36n29.
705. My translation and emphasis. In *Le Neutre* (p. 83), the title of the fragment "Moire" is translated by Rosalind Krauss and Denis Hollier as "Shimmer" (p. 51). They consequently render the phrase "science des moires" (p. 108) as "science of the shimmers" (p. 75). In *Le Neutre*, Clerc referred to Barthes's "Délibération," in which he wrote the following: "Il y a une odeur de ce qu'on mange et une odeur de ce qu'on prépare (observation pour la «science des Moires», ou «diaphoralogie»)." Barthes, *Œuvres complètes V*, 2002, 674. In *The Neutral*, Krauss and Hollier have added a note that Richard Miller used "watered silk" for "La Moire" in his translation of Barthes's *Sade/Fourier/Loyola* (New York: Hiller and Wang, 1976, p. 135): "it is a damask fabric, a tapestry of phrases, a changing luster, a fluctuating and glittering surface of styles, a watered silk of languages."
706. "Une moire d'intensités," in Barthes, *Œuvres complètes V*, 318. My translation. All photographs are published along with the commentaries. Possibly, Barthes was implicitly alluding to the so-called "moiré effect" in photography, a surface patterning of the picture that emerges when two dot matrices misalign during printing. To the human eye, this flawed reproduction appears as disruptive to the photographed subject matter—as a mistake within the picture.
707. "[...] un camaïeu subtil": *ibid.*, 321. My translation.
708. *Ibid.*, 322. My translation.
709. *Ibid.*, 327. My translation.
710. *Ibid.*, 328. My translation. My emphasis.
711. Pinsky, "Method and Time," 2004, 193; and Adorno as quoted by Benjamin in *Arcades Project*, 461.
712. Barthes, *Neutral*, 54.
713. *Ibid.*, 51.
714. *Ibid.*, 7. Original emphasis.
715. *Ibid.*, 51; *id.*, *Neutre*, 83. My emphases.
716. *Id.*, *Neutral*, 48.
717. *Ibid.*, 49. The following quotation is on the same page.
718. Neil Badmington elaborated on Barthes's accidental spillage of Neutral Sennelier ink, aptly calling it an "inkident": Badmington, *Afterlives*, 2016, 62.
719. Barthes, *Neutral*, 51.

720. See *ibid.*, 49. A drawing of the triptych, both in its open and closed form, is included on that page.
721. *Ibid.*, 50. The following quotations are on the same page.
722. *Id.*, “Variations sur l’écriture,” in *Œuvres complètes IV*, 302. My translation follows the translation by Badmington in *Afterlives*, 64.
723. *Ibid.* My translation.
724. Barthes, *Neutral*, 17 and 21. Original emphasis.
725. *Ibid.*, 23.
726. *Ibid.*, 22.
727. *Id.*, *Camera Lucida*, 1981, 8. The following quotation is on the same page.
728. *Id.*, *Preparation of the Novel*, 310. Original emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
729. See *ibid.*, 311. Original emphasis; and *id.*, *Neutral*, 172. The following quotations are on the same page of *The Neutral*. Original emphases.
730. Tchen, “Interview with Allan Sekula,” 158. The following quotation is on the same page.
731. Sekula, “Swimming in the Wake,” in *id.*, *TITANIC’s wake*, 110.
732. *Ibid.*, 162.
733. Barthes, *Neutral*, 50.
734. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 78.
735. *Id.*, Geography Lesson Fish Story – Notes – July 1989, NB 038 (July 1989–March 1990).
736. *Id.*, *Photography Against the Grain*, 78. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
737. *Ibid.*, 79. Original emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
738. Sekula also elaborated this argumentation in his “The Body and the Archive,” 1986, 7.
739. *Id.*, *Photography Against the Grain*, 80. Original emphasis. In the following lines, I paraphrase Sekula’s argument on p. 81.
740. The quotations are transcriptions of what Sekula explained to his audience.
741. Sekula, “Body and the Archive,” 3.
742. *Ibid.*, 10. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
743. *Id.*, *Photography Against the Grain*, 54. The following quotation is from the same chapter, “Dismantling Modernism,” and can be found on pp. 55 and 70.
744. See <https://www.europe1.fr/politique/marine-le-pe-n-le-slogan-fn-on-est-chez-nous-un-cri-du-coeur-et-damour-2981255> (accessed October 20, 2020).
745. To those readers who want to investigate each aspect of Sekula’s four vectors in photography separately, I recommend reading the following of his essays: for 1. “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning”; for 2. “Dismantling Modernism”; for 3. “Paparazzo Notes; and for 4. “The Body and the Archive.” The first three essays are included in *Photography Against the Grain*.
746. See Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 67.
747. Barthes, “Right in the Eyes [1977],” in *id.*, *Responsibility of Forms*, 1991, 237 and 240. All further quotations and descriptions of this text are taken from p. 240. Original emphasis.
748. Barthes, “On Photography,” 358. The following quotation is on the same page.
749. Sontag, *On Photography*, 111. The following quotation is on the same page.
750. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 73. Original emphasis.
751. *Ibid.*, 59. The following quotation is on the same page.
752. Sontag, *On Photography*, 112.
753. *Ibid.*, 107.
754. *Ibid.*; see also Benjamin, “The Author as Producer [1934],” *id.*, *Reflections*, 1978, 230. The following quotations from Benjamin are on the same page.
755. Sontag, *On Photography*, 111.
756. Benjamin, “Author as Producer,” 230.
757. Original emphasis.
758. Latham, *Kent’s Strangest Tales*, 2016, 234. The following quotation is on the same page.
759. *Ibid.*, 235. The following quotations are on the same page. My emphasis.
760. *Ibid.*, 236.
761. See, once again, the online version of the OED, <https://www.oed-com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/view/Entry/161977?redirectedFrom=religiae#eid> (accessed October 20, 2020). Original emphasis.
762. Baert, *Late Medieval Enclosed Gardens*, 2016, 41.
763. *Ibid.*, 46n70. Original emphasis. For developing the concept of the *engram* in relation to the relic, the reference is to Aby Warburg.
764. *Ibid.*, 60.
765. For more on this idea of cosmic love in relation to the Enclosed Gardens, see *ibid.*, 42.
766. Barthes, “Réquichot and his Body [1973],” in *id.*, *Responsibility of Forms*, 208. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
767. *Ibid.*, 210. The following quotation is on the same page.
768. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 25.
769. *Ibid.*, 26. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
770. Sekula, “Between the Net,” 32. The following quotation is on the same page.
771. Nesbit, as quoted on the back cover of Dimendberg, *Facing the Music*, 2015.
772. Although I am aware of Peter Sloterdijk’s vehement criticism of the concept of kinship as used in Plato’s *Republic*, I have decided to follow Ingold’s suggestion and will (though sparingly) continue to use the term for the message of hope and connectedness that it still contains. Sloterdijk, however, did not shy away

- from calling the idea of kinship an archaic, tribal phantasm (*Spheres*, 244, 266, and 368). To Plato's assertion that feelings of kinship among citizens can help deal with the outrage of the disadvantaged about class divisions, he replied that this is merely a mystification of where the principle of human coexistence is to be found, or a delusion benefiting only the liars and not those that are lied to.
773. The literature on this topic is extremely vast. For a general overview of its contradictory and polemical critical reception, see Berlier, "Family of Man," 1999; later critical analyses include Back and Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Family of Man 1955–2001*, 2004; and Hurm et al., *Family of Man Revisited*, 2018.
774. Carl Sandburg, "Prologue," in *Family of Man*, 1955, 4.
775. See Barthes, *Mythologies*, 100–102.
776. See Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 81 and 101.
777. *Ibid.*, 46. The following quotation is on the same page.
778. See *ibid.*, 88. Hereafter, I summarize Sekula's argumentation on pp. 99–100.
779. See Kaplan, *American Exposures*, 78–79.
780. See <https://vimeo.com/78894811> (accessed October 20, 2020).
781. In late May 2019, Italian port union workers demonstrated that this militant spirit had not faded completely. They refused to load electricity generators onto a Saudi ship transporting weapons to feed the conflict in Yemen and potentially use against civilians. Earlier that month, the arms were loaded aboard the suspect *Bahri-Yanbu* in Antwerp, at pier 1225 of Katoennatie, strikingly without any protest from the dockworkers. The munition, inflammable 12.7-cm caliber made for military purposes, was made by the Belgian company FN Herstal. The nonprofit organization *Vredesactie [Peace Action]* protested the loading of the four containers, if in vain. The Antwerp city administration has a strong representation on the port's board of administrators. The city of Antwerp is also the main shareholder of the port company. The Flemish Nationalist Party (*N-VA*), which strongly objects immigration, rules the city. The New-Flemish Alliance is thus complicit for a policy of the vicious circle: it first contributes to creating war refugees to whom it subsequently makes clear that they are not welcome in the city. See Barry, "Italian Union Refuse," 2019, n.p. and Struys, "Saudisch schip onderweg," 2019, n.p. See also <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2019/05/20/596464/Italian-union-s-Saudi-Arabian-ship-Bahri-Yanbu-weapons-consignments-Genoa> (accessed October 20, 2020).
782. Kaplan, *American Exposures*, 79.
783. See Sekula, "Between the Net," 3. Hereafter, I paraphrase from the same page.
784. See Agamben, *Coming Community*, 1993, 63–65.
785. *Ibid.*, 6.
786. See Solomon-Godeau, "The Family of Man. Refurbishing Humanism for a Postmodern Age," in Back and Schmidt-Linsenhoff, *Family of Man 1955–2001*, 28–53. The quotation is on p. 53.
787. The same is true for John Roberts's laudable defense of the project as a coveted critique of Cold War politics in *Art of Interruption*, 1998, 122–126.
788. See Azoulay, "'The Family of Man,'" 2013, 29–31.
789. *Ibid.*, 33.
790. *Id.*, "Photography is Not Served," 2016, 119.
791. *Id.*, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*, 50.
792. *Id.*, "Photography is Not Served," 123. The following quotations are on the same page.
793. See *id.*, "'The Family of Man,'" 31–32. The photograph can be consulted online via <https://www.gettyimages.be/detail/nieuwsfoto's/yvonn-e-chevallier-during-her-trial-for-the-murder-of-her-nieuwsfotos/50534759> (accessed October 20, 2020). It is reproduced on p. 172 of the *The Family of Man* catalogue.
794. Arendt, *Human Condition* [1958], 1998, 2–3.
795. Azoulay, "Photography is Not Served," 127.
796. See Azoulay, "'The Family of Man,'" 40. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
797. The photograph is reproduced on p. 80 of the *The Family of Man* exhibition catalogue.
798. Azoulay, "'The Family of Man,'" 40. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
799. This photograph is reproduced on p. 136 of the *The Family of Man* catalogue.
800. For an image, see <https://www.gettyimages.be/detail/nieuwsfoto's/south-korean-youths-demonstrating-against-truce-nieuwsfotos/5077117> (accessed October 20, 2020).
801. On an adjacent wall hangs a framed collage, in four parts, mocking the relevant double pages from the catalogue. Müller has overpainted all pictures on every simulated page with a transparent white paint, except for the images representing Austria. Each reworked double page is thus further accompanied by an enlarged reproduction of the photograph from Austria.
802. See https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_325962.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
803. The first illustration in the *The Family of Man* book is by Lennart Nilsson, representing a woman holding her child, on p. 28 (it is nr. 63 on the master checklist); further images are on p. 72 (Dmitri Kessel) and p. 73 (Lennart Nilsson), both of workers (nrs. 150 and 505 on the master checklist); two further images by Nilsson, part of the section "food," are on pp. 90–91 (nrs. 267 and 268 on the master checklist).
804. Azoulay, "'The Family of Man,'" 37.
805. See https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2429?installation_image_index=1 (accessed October 20, 2020).

806. As is also mentioned in the Preface, this issue can be consulted online. See https://books.google.be/books?id=UkgEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=front-cover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&redir_esc=y#v=twopage&q=farbman&f=true (accessed October 20, 2020).
807. This information is available at the MoMA Archives, in New York City, in Collection MoMA Exhs., Series Folder 569.63, and the image bears no. 287/699. In total, Julián Sánchez González was able to track down nine photographs by Nat Farbman: no. 4 or 287/699—African Lady (not reproduced in the catalogue); no. 66 or 287/83—Children playing in dune (reproduced on p. 35 of the catalogue); #109 or 287/603—Father and son hunting (reproduced on p. 51 of the catalogue); #116 or 287/372—Portrait of family (reproduced on p. 58 of the catalogue); #123 or 287/295—Woman and man building with fibers (reproduced on p. 61 of the catalogue); #317 or 287/295—Two men with top hats (reproduced on p. 137 of the catalogue); #328 or 287/580—Group laughing (reproduced on p. 120 of the catalogue); #342 or 287/280—University professors/students ((reproduced on p. 126 of the catalogue); #434 or 287/500—Woman under trial (reproduced on p. 172 of the catalogue).
808. Email from Julián Sánchez González to the author, May 30, 2019.
809. See MoMA Archives, NY, Collection MoMA Exhs., Series Folder 569.3, which contains information that “1 strip of two original negatives” was used for printing image no. 287/699.
810. *The Family of Man* was exhibited at the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris from January 21 to February 26, 1956. See MoMA Archives, NY, Collection IC/IP Series Folder I.B.132. The installation photograph from Paris, reproduced as fig. 5.10, is included in MoMa Archives, NY, Collection ESA Series. Folder V.B.ii.13.
811. See Shamoon Zamir, “*The Family of Man* in Munich. Visitor’s Reactions,” in Hurm et al., *Family of Man Revisited*, 86. Following a similar logic as for *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud*, I have decided not to reproduce this photograph so as not to reiterate the harm done to the young girl in this picture. It can easily be consulted online, for example at <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/55598> (accessed October 20, 2020).
812. Azoulay, “‘The Family of Man,’” 27. The following quotations are on the same page.
813. *Ibid.*, 28. The following quotations are on the same page.
814. In Azoulay’s view, there is no excuse: “No matter what allegory the photographer or the curator meant for her to embody [...] one cannot ignore the conditions of producing this image: Wynn Bullock, a male photographer whose project is to photograph his naked wife and daughter.” This motivated Azoulay to defend the photographed girl. “Soon,” she wrote, “the photographed girl will become a citizen but now she is still subject to the authority of her father and cannot stop the act of being photographed—naked—by him.” By means of conclusion, Azoulay called for the “right not to be photographed naked by one’s father.” See *ibid.*, 41.
815. Sekula, 5 October 2000–, NB 066 (October 4, 2000–March 19, 2001). The note, which was made during a conference that Sekula attended in Trier on *The Family of Man*, is part of a cluster of notes dated October 11, 2000.
816. The mask was reproduced on p. 32 of Johannes Maringer and Hans-Georg Bandi, *Art in the Ice Age: Spanish Levant Art, Arctic Art*, trans. Robert Allen (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953).
817. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* [1970], 1986, 110.
818. On Aby Warburg and the concept of *Nachleben* as the survival of visual images and motifs through afterlife and metamorphosis, see Didi-Huberman, “Artistic Survival,” 2003, 273.
819. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, 127. The following quotation is on the same page.
820. *Ibid.*, 106.
821. Azoulay, “‘The Family of Man,’” 43.
822. *Ibid.*, 44.
823. Sekula, “Between the Net,” 25.
824. *Ibid.*, 22. The following quotations are on pp. 23–26. Original emphasis.
825. For an installation view with the wall posters of this “sea of humanity,” as Sekula called it rather disparagingly, see <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/2429> (accessed October 20, 2020).
826. Sekula, “Between the Net,” 26. The quotations from Sekula below are on pp. 21 and 27. Original emphases.
827. Mazower, “Strange Triumph,” 381. The following quotation is on the same page.
828. Here, I engage with the discussion between Jacques Rancière and W.J.T. Mitchell concerning Mitchell’s influential *What Do Pictures Want?* (2005). In the preface (p. xvi), Mitchell argued that “pictures want to be kissed,” and that “we want to kiss them back.” Rancière, in a more sober vein, has suggested we behave “as if” pictures want all that. This, for him, is the only way to do justice to the life of pictures “without forcing them to be too alive”: Rancière, “Do Pictures Really Want,” 2009, 131. Original emphasis. The realist in me knows we need to follow Rancière. Still, this does not prevent me from longing to give this girl from another time a comforting and sisterly hug, during which I would urge her (by whispering in her ear) to please immediately remove the bulbs.
829. Palmer, *Photography and Collaboration*, 146.

830. Burgin, *In | Different Spaces*, 23. The following citation and paraphrase are taken from the same page.
831. Streitberger, *Psychical Realism*, 2020, 252. Original emphasis.
832. Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival," 282. Original emphases.
833. Corbin, *Lure of the Sea*, 88.
834. On Azoulay's proposal for a right to imagine one's future, see her *Potential History*, 2012.
835. On the riverbank and grotto as the genius loci of the nymph, see Baert, *Nymph*, 2014, 67–69.
836. See De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*, 2002, passim.
837. For an identification of the *Vivian Girls* as "Dargerian nymphs" enslaved by evil adults, see Agamben, *Nymphs*, 2013, 19. The full title of Darger's unpublished illustrated novel, which he worked on his entire adult life, is *The Story of the Vivian Girls in What is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinnean War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*. For more information, see, among others, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/book_report/the-mysterious-story-of-outsider-artist-henry-darger-the-vivian-girls-of-the-realms-of-the-55476 (accessed October 20, 2020). Although entirely nonfictional, Ariella Azoulay imagined something similar from her observation of Esther Bubley's photo taken at Cheltenham Ladies' College in 1954, reproduced on p. 163 of *The Family of Man*. The photograph represents seven young girls intensely talking to one another. Azoulay recognized in this gathering a germinal claim for the right to public association of young girls. This, in her view, can create a hub where the girls can intimately exchange their experience, and discover common traits that they will soon transform into civil claims. See Azoulay, "The Family of Man," 41.

Allan Sekula

Deep Six / Passer au bleu

1996/1998

33 Cibachrome matt photographs printed on stuck paper,
3 text panels, 2 chairs, 2 books

Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais

Deep Six

. . . little more than sixteen years of age, raw and adventurous, and heated with the false heroism of a [school]master who had served in a man-of-war, I began the carver of my own fortune, and entered on board the Terrible privateer, Captain Death.

Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man.

I used to swim about two miles out in the Gulf of Mexico near Corpus Christi, and whole schools of porpoises used to dive by, parting and sweeping around me and out to sea, and suddenly I would feel under me the awful waters and the unknowable life in them, and it seemed I would surely die of terror before I could get back to land. . . It was as dreadful as if you might be set down suddenly in a preglacial age in a wilderness of monsters. . . I love the sea, but as an old-fashioned Christian loved God—with fear and trembling.

Katherine Ann Porter to Caroline Gordon, 28 August 1931.

This is the idea: imaginary editions of The Rights of Man by Thomas Paine (1791–92) and Ship of Fools (1962) by Katherine Ann Porter, each illustrated by a set of photographs that would be kept separate from the text. The two books would be slipcased together, thus changing the usual association of each of these books with another prior book.

Porter's novel would replace Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), the royalist polemic that had prompted Paine's republican response. And Paine's book would in turn substitute for the woodcut-illustrated book that had inspired Porter, Sebastian Brant's Narrenschiff of 1494. (In Brant's book, the first fool on the ship of fools is the collector of books.)

Paine and Porter belong, respectively, to the first and last generations of American writers to have been formed by the long duration of sea travel. They shared a sympathetic materialism, born of seasickness.

Paine thought practically about ships. His sailor's familiarity with the maritime world purged nautical metaphors from his literary imagination. His favored metaphors for politics were drawn instead from the illusionism of painting and theatre.

For Porter—swimmer, passenger and astute physiognomist—ships were above all else metaphoric stages for politics, for autocracy and contested intimacy, and for the drama of a human nature less good than that imagined by Paine.

Passer au bleu

J'avais tout juste un peu plus de seize ans, aucune expérience, le goût de l'aventure et l'esprit enfiévré par l'héroïsme factice d'un maître d'école qui avait servi dans la marine, quand j'entrepris de sculpter ma destinée, et m'embarquai sur un navire corsaire, le *Terrible* du capitaine La Mort.

Thomas Paine, *Les Droits de l'homme*.

J'allais souvent nager dans le golfe du Mexique, près de Corpus Christi, parcourant trois ou quatre kilomètres au milieu des bancs de marsouins, qui plongeaient, décrivaient de grands cercles autour de moi, puis s'éloignaient. Soudain, je sentais sous moi la mer redoutable et toute la vie secrète qu'elle abrite. Je me disais que j'allais mourir de frayeur avant de pouvoir regagner la terre ferme. [...] J'étais aussi terrorisée que si on m'avait lâchée brusquement parmi les monstres d'une période préglaciaire. [...] J'aime l'océan, mais à la façon dont les chrétiens de la vieille école aiment leur Dieu : en tremblant de peur.

Katherine Ann Porter à Caroline Gordon, le 28 août 1931.

L'idée, ce serait de réaliser des éditions fictives des *Droits de l'homme* de Thomas Paine (1791-1792) et de *La Nef des fous* de Katherine Ann Porter (1962), illustrées chacune par un ensemble de photographies en hors-texte. Les deux livres seraient présentés sous un même étui, associés l'un à l'autre en lieu et place des ouvrages antérieurs auxquels on les rattache habituellement.

Le roman de Katherine Porter remplacerait ainsi les *Réflexions sur la Révolution française* d'Edmund Burke (1790), le plaidoyer royaliste qui avait provoqué la riposte républicaine de Thomas Paine. De son côté, le livre de Thomas Paine remplacerait l'incunable xylographique dont s'est inspirée Katherine Porter, *La Nef des fous*, ou *Das Narrenschiff*, de Sébastien Brant (1494). (Dans la satire de Sébastien Brant, le premier fou sur la fameuse nef est le collectionneur de livres.)

Thomas Paine et Katherine Porter appartiennent respectivement à la première et à la dernière génération d'auteurs américains dont l'écriture s'est nourrie des traversées au long cours. Tous deux ont acquis une sorte de matérialisme affectueux, conséquence du mal de mer.

Thomas Paine a un rapport très concret avec la navigation. Sa connaissance intime de l'univers des marins élimine de son imagination littéraire toutes les métaphores nautiques. Il préfère comparer la politique aux effets de trompe-l'œil de la peinture et du théâtre.

Pour Katherine Porter, qui nage, voyage et observe finement les autres, le bateau est avant tout un théâtre métaphorique de la politique, de la tyrannie et de la promiscuité, où se donne en spectacle une nature humaine moins bonne que ne le pensait Thomas Paine.





















Deep Six, Part 1: The Rights of Man

A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward, with greater glare, the puppet-show of state and aristocracy.

The Rights of Man.

Large Photographs

Nuclear power station and aluminum factory, Gravelines (triptych)

Dunkerque (triptych)

Abandoned Dover marine station (diptych)

Dockers loading sugar ship, Calais (triptych)

Thomas Paine Park, New York City and cod fisher, Dover (diptych)

January, March, May 1996

Passer au bleu, 1er volet. Les Droits de l'homme

Une grande majorité de l'humanité se trouve rejetée basement à l'arrière-plan de la réalité humaine, pour mieux mettre en avant et faire reluire les marionnettes de l'État et de l'aristocratie.

Les Droits de l'homme.

Grandes photographies

Centrale nucléaire et usine d'aluminium à Gravelines (triptyque)

Dunkerque (triptyque)

Gare maritime désaffectée à Douvres (diptyque)

Dockers chargeant un cargo sucrier à Calais (triptyque)

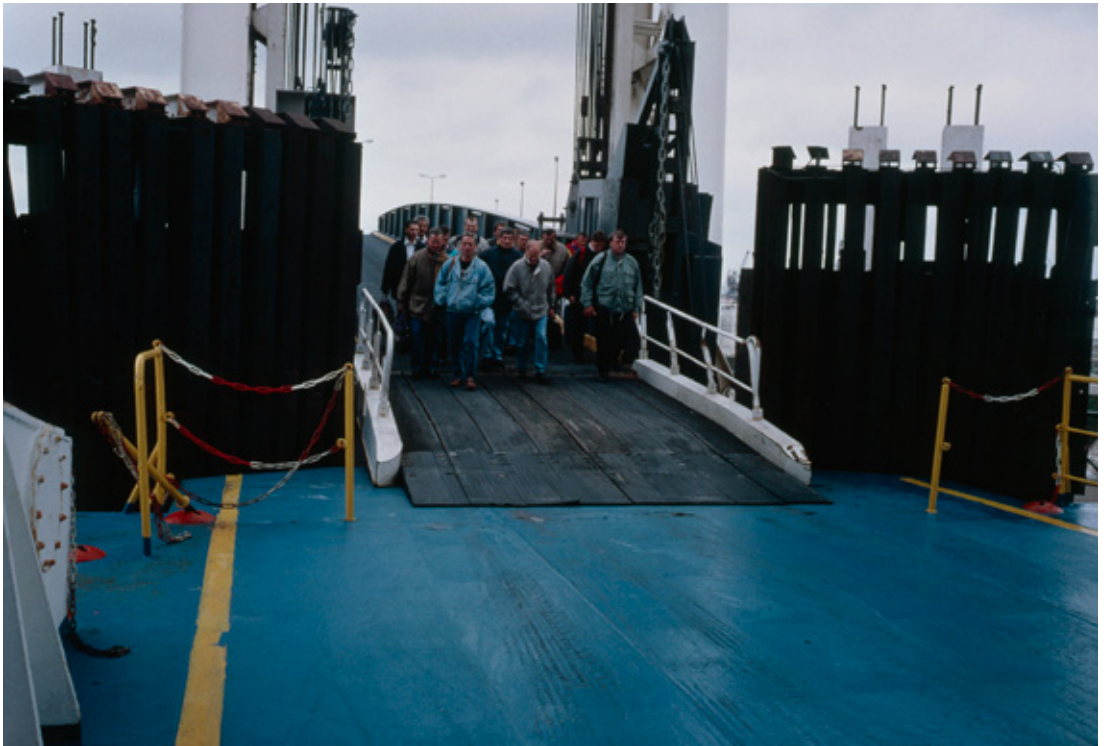
Le parc Thomas Paine à New York, et un pêcheur de morues à Douvres (diptyque)

Janvier, mars et mai 1996







































Deep Six, Part 2: Ship of Fools

He knew well what human trash his ship--all ships--carried to and from all ports of the world: gamblers, thieves, smugglers, spies, political deportees and refugees, stowaways, drug peddlers, all the gutter stuff of the steerage moving like plague rats from one country to another, swarming and ravening and undermining the hard-won order of the cultures and civilizations of the whole world.

Ship of Fools.

Small Photographs

The Sea France ferry Renoir en route between Calais and Dover

Musée des Beaux Arts et de la Dentelle, Calais

Rue de Venise, Paris

National Front Demonstration, Hôtel de Ville, Paris

Place de la Bastille, Paris

Musée de la Marine, Paris

Boy on abandoned waterfront, Boulogne

From the engine room to the engine room, May 1996

Passer au bleu. 2ème volet. La Nef des fous

Il savait bien quelle lie du genre humain son navire, comme tous les navires, transportait d'escale en escale à travers le monde : des flambeurs, des voleurs, des trafiquants, des espions, des expulsés et des réfugiés politiques, des clandestins, des dealers, toute cette faune misérable de l'entrepont qui va d'un pays à l'autre, tels les rats porteurs de la peste, qui grouille, rôde et ébranle la belle ordonnance des cultures et civilisations du monde entier.

La Nef des fous.

Petites photographies

Le *Renoir*, de Sea France, qui assure la liaison entre Calais et Douvres

Le musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle à Calais

La rue de Venise à Paris

Manifestation du Front national devant l'hôtel de ville à Paris

La place de la Bastille à Paris

Le musée de la Marine à Paris

Un garçon sur un quai désaffecté à Boulogne

De salle des machines à salle des machines, mai 1996

Passer au bleu, 1er volet :
Les droits de l'homme
Deep Six, part 1:
The Rights of Man

1–3.
Centrale nucléaire et usine d'aluminium de Gravelines (triptyque encadré)
Nuclear power station and aluminum factory, Gravelines (framed triptych)
51.9×200 cm.

4–6.
Dunkerque (triptyque)
[Le Guyane, Une 2 CV Citroën, Un sémaphore]
Dunkerque (triptych) [The Guyane, Citroën 2 CV, Semaphore]
74.5×103.3 cm,
74.8×103.5 cm,
74.5×103.3 cm
(avec cadres/with frames).

7–8.
Gare maritime désaffectée à Douvres (diptyque encadré)
Abandoned Dover marine station (framed diptych)
66.8×206.6 cm.

9–11.
Dockers chargeant un cargo sucrier à Calais (triptyque encadré)
Dockers loading sugar ship, Calais (framed triptych)
51.8×200 cm.

12–13.
Le parc Thomas Paine à New York et Un pêcheur de morues à Douvres (diptyque)
Thomas Paine Park, New York City and Cod fisher, Dover (diptych)
75×103.3 cm and
75.3×104 cm (avec cadres/with frames).

Passer au bleu, 2ème volet :
La Nef des fous
Deep Six, part 2:
Ship of Fools

14.
Le Renoir, Sea France
[Trois ingénieurs mécaniciens]
Sea France Renoir [Three engineers]

15.
Le Renoir, Sea France [Un caissier]
Sea France Renoir [Cashier]

16.
Le Renoir, Sea France
[Fermeture des portes]
Sea France Renoir
[Closing the gate]

17.
Le Renoir, Sea France [La relève de l'équipage]
Sea France Renoir [Crew change]

18.
Le Renoir, Sea France
[Agent de sécurité britannique dans la boutique hors taxes]
Sea France Renoir [British security guard in duty free shop]

19.
Le Renoir, Sea France
[Couple de passagers]
Sea France Renoir
[Traveling couple]

20.
Le Renoir, Sea France
[Deux jeunes filles au bar]
Sea France Renoir [Two girls at the bar]

21.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Décor photographique,
 portrait de Jeanne
 Moreau]
Sea France Renoir [Photo
 decor, portrait of Jeanne
 Moreau]
22.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Bureau de change]
Sea France Renoir
 [Currency exchange]
23.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Baiser du bout des
 doigts]
Sea France Renoir [Faux
 kiss]
24.
*Musée des Beaux-Arts
 et de la Dentelle, Calais*
 [Des Marines]
*Musée des Beaux-Arts
 et de la Dentelle, Calais*
 [Marine paintings]
25.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Décor photographique,
 reproductions de Cézanne
 et de Renoir]
Sea France Renoir [Photo
 decor, Cézanne and
 Renoir reproductions]
26.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Risque d'électrocution]
Sea France Renoir
 [Electrical hazard]
27.
Rue de Venise à Paris
 [Femme en rouge]
Rue de Venise, Paris
 [Woman in red]
28.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Deux membres de
 l'équipage]
Sea France Renoir
 [Two crewmen]
29.
*Manifestation du Front
 National devant l'Hôtel de
 Ville de Paris*
National Front
*Demonstration, Hôtel de
 Ville, Paris*
30.
*La Place de la Bastille à
 Paris* [Femme au pistolet]
Place de la Bastille, Paris
 [Woman with gun]
31.
*Le Musée de la Marine à
 Paris* [Enfant et esclave]
Musée de la Marine, Paris
 [Boy and slave]
32.
*Garçon sur les quais
 désaffectés à Boulogne*
*Boy on abandoned
 waterfront, Boulogne*
33.
Le Renoir, Sea France
 [Écran vidéo dans la
 salle des machines à
 l'approche de Douvres]
Sea France Renoir
 [Engine room video,
 approaching Dover]

mesures encadrées 28 ou
 29×36 cm.
 framed measures 28 or
 29×36 cm.

**Les légendes entre crochets
 ont une valeur purement
 descriptive, et ne doivent
 pas être considérées comme
 des titres de photographies
 prises isolément. Pour plus de
 commodité, le titre complet
 de toutes les photographies
 intitulées *Le Renoir de la
 compagnie Sea France*
 effectuant la liaison entre
Douvres et Calais est abrégé
 en *Le Renoir, Sea France*.**

**Captions in brackets are given
 for descriptive purposes only
 and are not part of the titles
 of the individual photographs.
 The complete title listed as *Sea
 France Renoir* is *Sea France
 Renoir en route between Dover
 and Calais*.**

Colophon

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Ground Sea

VOLUME II

Photography and the Right to Be Reborn

Hilde Van Gelder



Leuven University Press

Ground Sea
VOLUME II

The Lieven Gevaert Series is a major series of substantial and innovative books on photography. Launched in 2004, the Series takes into account the ubiquitous presence of photography within modern culture and, in particular, the visual arts. At the forefront of contemporary thinking on photography, the books offer new insights on the position of the photographic medium within art historical, theoretical, social and institutional contexts.

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Ground Sea

Photography and the Right to Be Reborn

VOLUME II

Hilde Van Gelder

Leuven University Press

Table of Contents

Contents of Volume I

Preface: Water-Bound	15
Embarkation: <i>Bone Point</i>	33
Acknowledgments	55
Introduction: Sea-Stricken	63
PART I: Blade	97
1. Running on Water	99
2. Ground Sea	131
Plates	168
3. Ossuary	177
4. <i>Kairology</i>	215
5. Reliquiae	243
Notes	291
<i>Deep Six / Passer au bleu</i> (1996/1998) by Allan Sekula	319

Contents of Volume II

PART II: Shuttle	375
6. The Right to Reappear	377
7. Naming the <i>Person</i> without a Name	419
8. <i>Fools & Rights</i> : Leaves for an Illustrated Reader	457
Plates	512
9. This Precious Jewel	529
10. Plotting	577
<i>At Anchor: Pearl Diving</i>	631
Notes	673
Bibliography	701

How is the late emperor to be remembered?
As a warrior astride his horse?
Or as a marine biologist bent over his microscope?
— Allan Sekula, *The Lottery of the Sea* (2006)

Although there are only a few of us left who played an active part in the Second World War, for us it's insulting, an out-and-out mockery, what these pusillanimous, authoritarian fools want to do and impose on us in the name of security, that prehistoric pretext. We didn't fight those who wanted to control each and every aspect of our lives only to see our grandchildren come along and slyly but very precisely fulfil the crazed fantasies of the very enemies we vanquished.

Javier Marías, *Your Face Tomorrow. Volume One. Fever and Spear* [2002], trans. Margaret Jull Costa [2005] (New York: New Direction Books, 2007), 369.



#topoftherock #girl inspecting the #trump Tower on the #day @MelaniaTrump's Slovenian-born #parents @ViktorAndAmalijaKnavs were sworn in as new citizens at @26FederalPlaza in #nyc #BookLoversDay #sunset #american #immigration #usa #Americanborders #borderless

A fifth time they dug her up years later.
A gaping hole where her heart had been ripped out
to be placed in a reliquary.
Three centuries later physicians would examine it,
would find a wound an inch and a half in length,
the edges of the wound charred
as though by a burning iron.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera. The New Mestiza*
(San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 159.



#heart of #stone

Gleaned at #beach of Le Cardinal @Sauzon @Belle-Île-en-Mer

"Reunited" #OneYearLater with the #memorial plaque indicating the exact location of the desecrated #grave of @ThomasPaine

#sauzonforever #fightforlife

I AM REBORN IN THE TIME RETOLD IN THIS NOTEBOOK.

Susan Sontag, *Reborn. Journals & Notebooks 1947–1963*, ed. David Rieff (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2008), 18. Original emphasis.



@SydelleHerzberg giving #tour of the @ThomasPaineCottage in @NewRochelle
#thanks #moment #memory #treasure #inspiration #motivation @gvrvg
#MountainofHeart

shuttle ► **noun** 1 a form of transport that travels regularly between two places: *the nine o'clock shuttle from Edinburgh* | [as modifier] *a shuttle bus departs every 30 minutes.* ■ short for **SPACE SHUTTLE**.

2 a bobbin with two pointed ends used for carrying the weft thread across between the warp threads in weaving. ■ a bobbin carrying the lower thread in a sewing machine.

3 short for **SHUTTLECOCK**.

► **verb** [no obj., with adverbial of direction] travel regularly between two or more places: *the Secretary of State shuttled to and fro seeking compromise.* ■ [with obj. and adverbial of direction] transport in a shuttle: *the river taxi shuttled employees between the newspaper's offices and the capital.*

– **ORIGIN** Old English *scytel* 'dart, missile', of Germanic origin; compare with Old Norse *skutill* 'harpoon'; related to **SHOOT**. Sense 1 and the verb are from the movement of the bobbin from one side of the loom to the other and back.

PART II

Shuttle

Chapter 6

The Right to Reappear

Something in the proliferations of immanence tends to overtake the vertical world, to reverse it, as if the hierarchy bred a particular anarchy, and the love of God, an internal atheism proper to it. Heresy is flirted with every time. And the Renaissance will tirelessly develop and extend this immanent world, which can be reconciled with transcendence only at the cost of threatening to inundate it anew.

Gilles Deleuze, "Zones of Immanence [1985]," in *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995* [2003], ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007), 267.



#road sign right off the A16 highway exit @Calaiscentre, installed next to a parking lot where #volunteers were distributing meals from small #vans to persons #camping in the adjacent @BeauMarais #BeautifulMarshland #DayBeforeLaborDay



Fig. 6.1.

Sylvain George, *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* [*May they rest in revolt (Figures of Wars I)*], 2010. Video, black-and-white and color, 2 hrs. 30 mins. Three stills. © Noir Production and Sylvain George.

A silent shot of a solitary man warmly dressed in dark-colored clothing. (fig. 6.1) To protect his hands from the cold, he keeps them safely hidden inside his trouser pockets. Cautiously trying to find his way across a rough field, irregularly plowed in jagged horizontal furrows, he searches for a foothold among the muddy chunks of claylike soil. Where are we? Where is this desolate, quasi-pictorial landscape located? The slender row of leafless trees on the field's edge, reminiscent of those depicted in Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Fall of Icarus*, suggests a setting somewhere in the Low Countries. Flanders perhaps? The perfect line of high-voltage electric pylons in the otherwise barren landscape indicates that this must be France. Who is he? A farmer, possibly, who, on an early winter morning, inspects his fallow land covered with hoary frost. Walking away from the motionless camera, the loner continues to hide his face.

After having made three slow, faltering steps to balance his feet, the image freezes when the man straightens his back and slightly raises his head. Standing erect with his arms tightly against his body, we briefly continue to observe his fixed image. Almost blending into the landscape, he now resembles a pillar, aligning with the pylon on the far horizon. He looks like an old statue lost in the middle of nowhere, as if he is the last visible trace of a larger architectural structure—a former Huguenot cult house?—forever sunk into this very soil. Suddenly, an abrupt cut to black. The film's opening credits start to roll on the screen. The viewer now understands this man is not a local farmer enjoying a contemplative moment on his cherished lands. The frozen person's afterimage from then on accompanies our gaze at the opening lines—as if he were a piece of dark graphite stone on an archaeological site, the invisible remains of which still must be unearthed.

This solitary figure might remind those acquainted with the landscape of French Flanders of a scarecrow, a common presence in that area. Briefly, the spectator feels confused. Why did he petrify? Since Sylvain George first portrayed the man alive and moving on his feet, his frozen image feels eerily strange. It is almost as if he had not been walking around somewhere in the old heart of western Europe—the site of some of the bloodiest fights during the Great War that colored this same soil red. He seems to have been dwelling elsewhere—on a remote planet. The sequence then continues with a transition from black to an underexposed detail shot of barbed wire pulled to pieces, followed by a set of relationally edited pans displaying a wild, uninhabited range of mountains—Mount Sinai. These shots amount to a close-up of a pyramid. The shrill, contrapuntal sound of crying seagulls enhances the *uncanny* effect of that surprising moment.¹

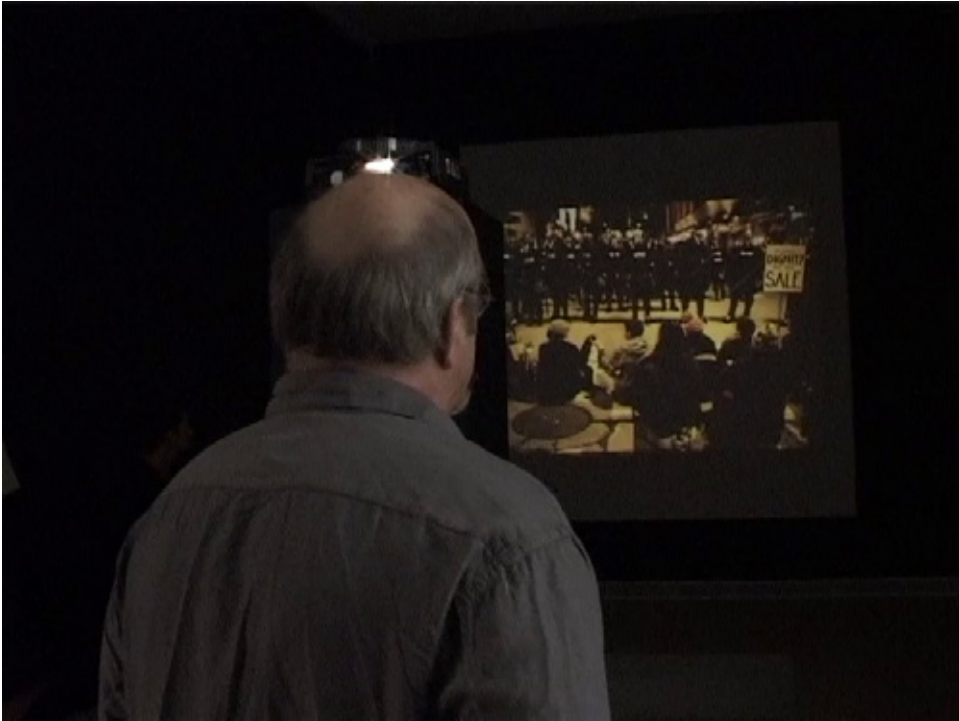
Thus, *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* [*May they rest in revolt (Figures of Wars I)*], released in 2010, opens. Directed by Sylvain George, this compelling two-and-a-half-hour, black-and-white

documentary is the accomplished result of deep immersion in what the artist identified as the “maquis” of Calais.² George used this term to refer to the barren heathland near the passenger ferry terminal. It is the site of the camp, meanwhile dismantled, commonly known in French as “La Jungle.” The OED defines “maquis” as a “dense scrub vegetation consisting of hardy evergreen shrubs and small trees, characteristic of Mediterranean coastal regions.”³ George’s delicate search for different, less dehumanizing language is admirable. When speaking to locals, I noticed that, like George, many *Calaisiens* have adopted *maquis* to refer to the nomadically populated dune landscape surrounding their town, as a euphemistic alternative to the more pejorative “La Jungle.”⁴ In the summer, this moorland brings forth violet heathers.⁵

The above-described initial titles of the film conclude with a projection of an enigmatic sentence in white fonts on a black background, clearly a quotation, yet without mention of its author’s name. In French, it says, “La violence divine, qui est insigne et sceau, non point jamais moyen d’exécution sacrée, peut être appelée souveraine.” The English translation, displayed in red font right below, reads, “Divine violence, which is pin and seal, and not a way for a sacred execution, may be called sovereign.” The spectator reading this phrase, however, might realize that it is a citation of the much-debated closing sentence from Walter Benjamin’s 1921 essay “Critique of Violence.”⁶ In this early text, Benjamin introduced the concept of divine violence as a form of violent intervention that is the sole prerogative of God. Divine violence, therefore, can never be a concrete human strategy to fight injustice or to establish justice. Divine violence is an absolute purpose, which realizes justice immediately and manifests itself without the assistance of any deliberate means.

Numerous human beings presume that God’s violence *will* eventually interfere when they challenge the absolute authority of the Ten Commandments. For that reason, certain persons feel encouraged to undertake efforts that may interrupt the injustice put in place by other humans, an injustice often following from the coercive force of the laws under which they live. The violence of these worldly laws is what Benjamin called mythical violence. Individuals, alone or as a group, aim to strike at power in times when they cannot endorse the political, economic, and social decisions of the ruling authorities. People will develop forms of resistance that do not necessarily focus in all cases on immediately creating newly designed laws. Because such reality is often out of reach, human acts of protest may instead be geared toward uncovering the mechanisms of injustice that contribute to shaping unfair concrete life situations.

Frequently, these acts of human resistance merely consist in *not* doing something anymore, such as when people refrain from taking recourse



to violent terror and instead seek peaceful forms of collective manifestation as a relevant form of protest. Accordingly, they place their bets on the fact that this type of active passivity, meant to postpone bloody violence, will eventually be more disruptive regarding the control mechanisms installed by the ruling authorities. Allan Sekula's slide sequence *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]* (1999–2000) well illustrates how these human gatherings operate and how photography can serve to reveal what is at stake during such moments. (fig. 6.2) From November 28 to December 3, 1999, a movement of civilian protesters gathered in Seattle to voice their disagreement with the proposals negotiated at the table during the WTO conference then held in that city. As Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St. Clair, and Allan Sekula have explained in a jointly written text on the Seattle events, the protesters—instead of opposing trade as such—disagreed with how WTO controls world trade, because it generates an uneven creation and distribution of wealth.

Unfortunately, they wrote, the “big corporations” have successfully instrumentalized WTO “to lock in their gains.”⁷ On top of that, these corporations enlist formal backing by the WTO “in their ceaseless quest for cheap labor and places to dump their poisons.” Fundamentally, the N30 protesters opposed the very definition of capitalism in terms of a

Fig. 6.2.

Allan Sekula observing an installation view of slide no. 26 from his *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]*, 1999/2000. 81 slides, 35 mm, color, and wall text, 13–16 mins. (depending on the selected interval within the allowed range of 10–12 secs.), looped. Sequence coeditor: Sally Stein. Still from a video recording made while Sekula gave a guided tour in his exhibition *Polonia and Other Fables* at the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest on July 8, 2010.
 © Photo: Tibor Gulyás/Archive of the Ludwig Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

“‘market economy,’ which destroys human culture and community, exploits labor and degrades nature.”⁸ For Cockburn, St. Clair, and Sekula, the WTO is “the mouthpiece of neoliberalism, an outlook and an economic philosophy that finds radical democracy equality intolerable.” *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]* is a sequence of eighty-one 35 mm slides made by Sekula during the four days and nights during which he joined the activist crowds. (Plate 10) He ardently followed their protests with the explicit intention to avoid producing a set of photo-journalistic clichés.⁹ Projected in an interval of sixteen minutes, the diapositives intend to make their viewers feel how, as Sekula assessed, through this very form of “Gandhian” protest “the human body asserts itself in the city streets against the abstraction of global capital.”¹⁰

“Ideally,” Sekula specified, “the projected image is about three meters across in its horizontal dimension, with the lower border close to the floor, suggesting a threshold through which the viewer can step.”¹¹ While setting up the projection this way, Sekula hopefully anticipated that viewers would eventually come to sympathize with this type of peaceful protest, which he understood to be an essential outcome of the key contribution by feminism to the politics of the left. Feminism, Sekula explained on the occasion of the already mentioned guided tour he gave in his retrospective exhibition at the Ludwig Múzeum in Budapest (2010), has allowed “the idea of non-violent protest to survive even though states demand and insist that the opposition always is taking the form of a kind of terrorism.”¹² The other dominant myth surrounding this type of protest, Sekula told his audience, is that they would be “expressions of the dissatisfaction of the children of wealth, spoiled children of the rich countries who do not understand that it is the neoliberals who have the interests of the poor of the world at heart.”

Instead, his observation from having participated in the protests and having joined the crowds at the time was that these protesters predominantly had a working-class background and came from the United States, as well as Canada (given the proximity of Seattle to the border). Sekula found out that the best-paid workers who took part in the protest and who adopted a very militant stance were the dockworkers and the truck drivers of Seattle. (see Plate 10 upper left image) As he pointed out, it might be logical at first to think that the self-interest of these two groups of skilled workers would be consistent with increased world trade. However, he added, they had relatives—cousins, brothers, sisters—who worked in industries threatened by the type of globalization endorsed by the WTO. As a result, they sometimes did things, Sekula further claimed during his talk, that would seem to go against their own short-term self-interest. In fact, they were sophisticated enough to understand that human society should organize its global economic system in such way that it can aim at what Sekula called “a longer term collective

interest that might be said to be the interest of the common people of the world.” The multinational corporations, he concluded, “which pretend to be families and pretend to have a family relation with all of us are completely indifferent to this question of the long-term future.”

In his reading of *Waiting for Tear Gas*, Benjamin Young zoomed in on one picture representing a young man and woman holding a three-quarter-length makeshift mirror in their hands as a key to understanding what is at stake in this sequence. (see Plate 10 upper middle image) In its reflected image, Young wrote, the viewer is invited to observe, “a staggered line of police clad in black uniforms, their faces unrecognizable behind the glare of plastic visors, their bodies thickly padded with armor, their truncheons raised.”¹³ The overall visual effect of Sekula’s picture on the viewer is indeed one of feeling caught, along with the photographer, in the middle of this tense situation. We see the demonstrators stretched out in front of us while, at the same time, we can almost feel the gaze of the police officers staring at our backs. The thus created dazzling photographic hall of mirrors reminded Young of Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meniñas*, with the crucial difference that here—contrary to the Spanish king and queen in Velázquez’s masterpiece—the *sovereign couple* at the center of the work does not embody state power.

Instead, the sovereigns have shifted sides. They have now joined the ranks of those who stand up against autocratic authority. They are those civilians who, in the Benjaminian sense, seek reparations for the wrongdoings of, in this concrete case, the WTO, as well as the nations and multinational corporations complicit with WTO’s policies. Moreover, Young argued, Sekula’s photograph brilliantly captured the gesture of this young pair holding a mirror to the armed security forces as an attempt at “apotropaic deflection.”¹⁴ In the mirror’s specular image, we observe the police officers struck mute, as if turned into stone. Thus, the police officers represent what Benjamin called “mythical violence,” by which he meant violence that relates to the preservation of the laws that have been put in place in a society.¹⁵

Mythical violence, even if it has the law on its side, can come to challenge what Benjamin called fate. He referred to the Greek myth of Niobe, whose fourteen children were all murdered as a punishment by the goddess Latona, because Niobe boasted too much about her children to Latona. It is Niobe’s arrogance, Benjamin wrote, “that calls down fate upon itself not because her arrogance offends against the law but because it challenges fate.” Fate, whenever challenged to such a fight, Benjamin continued, must triumph. Only in its triumph can it bring to light an inviolable divine law. After murdering Niobe’s husband, Latona stiffens Niobe in grief and turns her into marble. With this unexpected turn of events, Ovid introduced an important nuance. Niobe’s children have died cruelly, yet Latona—she herself chased by the eternally jealous

Juno—does not destroy her. She leaves Niobe behind forever muted, grieving in guilt the death of her children. She has become, as Benjamin deduced from this episode in the *Metamorphoses*, a “boundary stone on the frontier between men and gods.”¹⁶ Niobe’s fixed body, as argued in turn by Young, thus becomes the ground on which law imposes itself: “we witness in Niobe an arrest that codifies a certain arrangement of bodily life and the world of things.”¹⁷

The immediate violence that manifests itself mythically in Ovid’s narration sheds light on how lawmaking violence works in the world. According to Benjamin, we should understand mythical violence in relation to the power mechanisms established democratically by the citizens in a society. Citizens delegate to the state a right to employ violence proportionally, thus confirming the state’s legitimate power over the population ruled. Nevertheless, whenever, in any such organized society, principles of justice are at risk as the result of state authorities exceeding or misusing the prerogatives granted to them by their citizen subjects, divine violence will interfere. Divine violence will seek to break or end the process of lawmaking and law enforcement given to these very authorities mythically by the citizens, for only as long as they were worthy of it—meaning as long as this power is not put to the service of unfair, unjust, or violent measures. Concretely, during the Seattle protests, the local authorities quickly declared a state of emergency.¹⁸ They suspended the common laws and replaced them with regulations allowing the police forces greater freedom to intervene, without the necessary validation by the ruling system of democratic checks and balances. Aside from the WTO measures under negotiation, this abuse of power by the authorities rapidly became a second target of the protesters.

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Niobe continued to be able to weep, even if all her internal organs had turned to stone. She cried with deep regret and shame, and she does so to this day, if we are to believe Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. Her tears continue to flow down from the mountaintop in her native land to the place where a great whirlwind swept her up.¹⁹ Bearing this in mind, it is as if the young man and woman who hold a mirror in front of the police officers place their bets on the possibility that these officers, when seeing themselves reflected in such a dehumanized and menacing stance, might start—like Niobe—to feel ashamed of their own conduct. They may even feel compelled to drop their weapons and refuse any further orders. Sekula’s iconic photograph thus serves as a trope, a means of persuasion. By thus exposing the image of violence, it can help to turn violence against itself and possibly even counteract it. Benjamin Young went as far as to suggest that the photographs of Sekula’s *Waiting for*

Tear Gas “perform a kind of reverse magic that seeks to turn stone back into flesh.”²⁰ Indeed, slightly later in the sequence, another photograph comes to substantiate that germinal potentiality. With only his camera, which he holds in both of his hands in front of his chest, a man seeks to engage in dialogue with an armed police officer, who appears to talk back. (see Plate 10 upper right image) It remains unclear whether the law enforcement officer is in the process of lowering or raising his machine gun.

Although it is more likely that the latter scenario applies, Sekula’s photograph does provide its viewers the option to imagine the former. It is not difficult to assimilate the camera’s eye pointed at this myrmidon of law with a divine gaze that comes to the unarmed man’s aid and, in an apotropaic gesture, disarms the opponent. Despite their anger, the protesters, protected only by deep purple raincoats, hold back their tears. (see Plate 10 lower left image) Yet the tear gas makes them weep, and they need to soothe their sore eyes with wet towels. (see Plate 10 middle left image) In other words, these photographs demonstrate how Sekula intended to make the materiality of the human body predominate over the abstract economic mechanisms of commodity exchange, global trade, and flows of finance capital. Toward the end of the sequence, he included a blurred, reddish late-night shot of a police truck driving by. (see Plate 10 lower right image) One local police officer turned his head to the scene he was leaving behind, and the camera aptly caught his starry-eyed gaze. Perhaps he was barely holding back his natural tears behind the plastic shield that protected him from the artificial ones all day; perhaps he was looking back in shame. Could he, quite unexpectedly, have spotted his own mother among the protesting crowds? Or, alternatively, did he have to spray tear gas at his brother, another strong man who worked in the docks?

In his afterthoughts on the protests, as Sekula noted somberly, the deep alliance that he had felt on the streets between the revolting human bodies—often deliberately naked despite the cold—was so inspirational that it could not possibly be reduced to cute alliterative plays with words such as “teamsters” and “turtles.”²¹ If carnivalesque moments took place during those days, even then the atmosphere had been of rather a dystopian nature, bathing in “civic solemnity” or even blatant “urban anxiety.” This, in several instances, made the masses move close together. Halfway into the sequence, Sekula included two images that point this out. (Plate 11) They represent the crowds moving diagonally across the picture plane, each in the opposite direction. Seen as a diptych, the two groups appear to move closer together, as if they are about to merge into one fluid human sea. Strong blues, reds, and whites (see Plate 11 above image) seem to flow together in a subtle purplish hue. (see Plate 11 below image) For Benjamin Young, this melting visual effect of the crowds having “slipped from their moorings” makes us as viewers start to feel

as if “the ground were giving way beneath [our] feet.”²² This intense moment of a crowd flowing together, as if it is about to start floating like a sea filled with waves, is tremendously inspirational.²³

Let us return to Walter Benjamin. By presenting his complex sentence as an introduction to the entirely plotless narrative that is to follow in his film, Sylvain George conveyed a general setting for *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)*. What if the abovementioned solitary man not only smelled the humid winter land but was also weeping, as if someone had sprayed tear gas into his eyes? What if he was a fallen angel anxiously keeping his wings closed, so a whirlwind from the past could not sweep him away? It seems as if he lingers, afraid of his body being catapulted further toward the future by time, whereas he appears only able to turn his back to it in awe and fear. From where he found himself there and then, he did not appear to be in a position to shape his future. If society would not allow him to engage with his own future and instead forced him to keep watching the ruins that loom up from the past, he would be lost. The freeze-frame literally makes that tragedy explicit. Terrified, we watch him as he becomes frozen, unable to turn around and find the firm path showing him the way.

Implicitly, George's inclusion of Benjamin's phrasing appears to allude to the numerous public reports and court cases condemning the French state for violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which stipulates that “no one shall be subjected to [...] inhuman or degrading treatment.”²⁴ The artist's explicit appeal to Benjamin's concept of divine violence, in its turn, reinforces the film's quasi-biblical ambiance. It suggests that George engaged in a search for renewed forms of justice in relation to his documentary's protagonists. Indeed, after having allowed his viewers to read the sentence quietly, George introduced yet another jump cut to black. This is followed immediately by a transition to early-twenty-first-century Calais—to its municipal Richelieu Park, located just across from the street from the Museum of Fine Arts that is home to Allan Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*. With this radical change of atmosphere, the filmmaker invited us to observe a scene in which police officers implement disproportionate mythical violence in practice—this time, with the inclusion of actual sound.²⁵

We watch a group of visibly non-European youngsters running to hide from a nervous horde of easily—in other words, ethnically—identifiable French policemen who are on the lookout for them, chasing them and catching some of them. The montage operation underlying the film's rather bewildering first five minutes makes the spectator understand that George wanted to present the zone surrounding the Channel Tunnel as if it were the “fringe where a war is manifest, and these refugees its figures.”²⁶ Thereby, his own position behind the

camera was all but a neutral one. As George confirmed in an interview with Jay Kuehner, a resolute “politics of intervention” inspired his filmic stance. He made it clear to his audience that he explicitly sided “with the migrants as much as with the militants who come to their help on a daily basis.”²⁷ At all times, the persons appearing on-screen were aware that George was filming them. This required numerous instances of negotiation, with all parties involved. George intended for his work to reflect this activist approach. The film is a tool for starting up a “dialectical dialogue”: not only between him and them, but also between him and us—spectators of his works.²⁸

Concretely, the artist shared with his audience a range of more intimate moments within the filmed persons’ lives, which they allowed him to register with his camera. The viewer soon realizes that the individuals who gave the cinematographer the permission to come so close to them must have had complete confidence in him. George attended a scene in which three anonymous Ethiopians engaged in rhythmic hand-claps while singing Orthodox Christian church songs in Amharic.²⁹ The viewer sees and hears them sing: first, a song about God’s miracle, God who protects them and who is believed to never abandon them, which is followed by a song about the Virgin Mary, who will save them and who will dry the tears of Ethiopia. Right after finishing this ritual encouragement and moving tribute to their faraway homeland, as George made us understand, the men straightly say to the camera: “Thank you. Now we are ready for loss.” And off they run—hoping to hide somewhere underneath a truck waiting in line to board a Channel ferry, as George’s camera ended up demonstrating in a later scene of the film. The filmmaker also zoomed in on a group of men washing themselves intimately in full sight of passersby, while taking cold water from a public pump near a riverbank. He continued with close-ups of a nurse curing and stitching a wounded hand and an image of a corset around an injured back.

Outright shocking is the long high-angle shot followed by a zoom-in on a scene of self-harm. A man is busy slicing off slivers of skin from the pads of his fingers with razor blades. (fig. 6.3) We learn that persons on the move execute such self-destructive acts—often complemented by the use of corrosive chemical products—with the sole intention of “going to England,” as one of George’s interlocutors wrote in Kurdish on a wooden panel attached outside of the food distribution container. Right after this disturbing detail shot—almost forty-five minutes into the film—we observe, along with the filmmaker, a Ghanaian man identified as Ashak in the artist’s notes about shooting of this footage.³⁰ What initially appeared to be a convivial cooking scene rapidly turns dismal, when the viewer finds out that Ashak was in the process of burning all his fingers with irons heated from a campfire of gleaned wood. This self-harm performed with astounding determination had but one

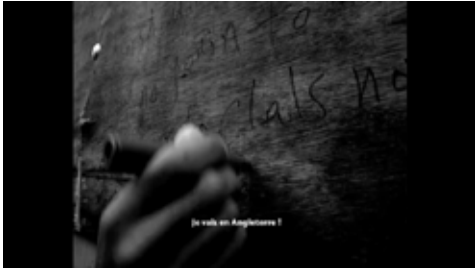


Fig. 6.3.

Sylvain George, *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* [*May they rest in revolt (Figures of Wars I)*], 2010. Video, black-and-white and color, 2 hrs. 30 mins. Five stills. © Noir Production and Sylvain George.

purpose: to erase as much as possible the lines of his own unique fingerprints. Temesghen Berhe, whom we already encountered as a key protagonist, accompanied Ashak to encourage him. Identifiable fingerprints “destroy our life,” Berhe explained in the gruesome scene: “if it were possible to cut off this hand and to put on another one, I would do that.”

That day, George, for his part, returned to his lodgings in a disturbed state of mind. In his diary of the film’s shooting sessions, he jotted down the following anguished entry on October 15, 2007:

I hear Temesghen, Temesghen whom I have known for five months now, I hear Temesghen tell me, his face amused by my catastrophic gaze: “We are survivors.” He shows me his hands. Hands that I hadn’t seen. I perceive a crack, a split, in a finger. The flesh is raw. A hole induced by a cigarette kept burning for too long. At such moment you must try hard not to cry.

Later, months after, I would learn from Ashak, the Ghanaian, that it is also possible to apply used battery acid. That hurts. But it is very effective. The fingerprint is permanently erased. Others who employ the more “common” methods will pursue, once in England, such erasure once and for all. To that end, they will call on a medical doctor whose address they all pass on to each other. He is expensive. Very much so. But he is good. With him, life will surely begin. The new life.³¹

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Under what is commonly called the Dublin III EU regulation of June 26, 2013—which applies to all the member states, plus Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein—each person entering the above-described area without citizenship documents or a legal visa is obliged to lodge an asylum claim in the country of first entry. At that moment, it is mandatory for claimants’ fingerprints to be digitally scanned. This disproportionate measure challenges several underlying principles of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, because it comes, for example, with the risk of violating the prohibition of disclosing information to the alleged actors of persecution. The EU Asylum Procedures Directive forbids sharing such data with a person’s country of origin to determine their nationality or identity.³² Nonetheless, local authorities transmit this information to EURODAC, the European Union’s asylum fingerprint database established in 2003 to help implement the Dublin system.³³

What purposes the EURODAC data may eventually come to serve remains unclear. This data has certainly been used by the Home Office for identity verification upon first entry into the United Kingdom.³⁴

Since June 2020, the British border police officers in the Calais region fingerprint every person on the move intercepted during an attempt to cross—a practice that had been abandoned in 2010 because of violent incidents and self-harm, as demonstrated through Sylvain George’s powerful testimonies. Lucy Moreton, Secretary General of the U15 (a British trade union representing frontline border police officers), reported that officers were only equipped with ink, as no digital fingerprint recorders were available. “We have,” she said, “to literally hold their hands and press their fingers from one side to the other to get a correct print.”³⁵

Often, the country of first entry is Italy or Greece. In 2015, Hungary and Austria used to be in a similar situation, but these countries have since taken measures to seal off their borders. When a refugee travels from, say, Italy to France to put in a request for asylum, local authorities have the right to transfer this person back to the country of first entry. The French authorities are reputed to pursue a strict application of the Dublin rule. France frequently makes use of this right or at least actively threatens to do so while at the same time creating confusion among the “Dublined” [*dublinés*].³⁶ With regard to those evacuated from the former “Jungle,” this has in fact happened despite promises made by the then interior minister Bernard Cazeneuve that people transferred from the Calais camp would not be sent back to their first country of entry.³⁷ Contrary to what some might have hoped, this situation did not change under Emmanuel Macron when he became the new president.³⁸ Already back in 2010, under the Dublin II system (following an EU regulation adopted in 2003), the result of this politics of deterrence was that many persons fingerprinted elsewhere refused to request asylum in France.³⁹

When, in the year that should have marked the festive thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the preliminary Schengen treaties Hungary erected a four-meter-high fence along its 175-kilometer border with Serbia, France expressed public indignation in the name of common European values.⁴⁰ Still, this did not prevent France from temporarily closing border-crossing points with Italy that same year, a practice it has been using ever since whenever deemed necessary. Much worse, soon after, France accepted the UK offer to finance the construction of a wall on its own territory around the Port of Calais.⁴¹ For Guillaume Le Blanc and Fabienne Brugère, this proves that a “politics of kindness” [*politique de la bienveillance*] does not exist within the EU nations any longer. Calais, they concluded, is in the process of becoming a “wonderful example of European collaboration within which one country can implant in a third country a wall that it finances integrally in order to prevent migrants of other countries already present in Europe to enter further.”

According to Le Blanc and Brugère, the de-humanization of populations asking for refuge is the dismal consequence of the “sur-humanization” of women and men “integrated in the Empire of

Western nation-states,” who have come to understand these vulnerable lives as a threat to their sovereignty.⁴² This is a terrible misconception, Le Blanc and Brugère argue. For it is no more than a mechanism of defense installed by “vulnerable nationals”—who can lose their jobs or themselves end up in precarious living conditions—against “vulnerable foreigners,” and, for that matter, it is a dead-end street that can only result in the complete loss of a “common world.” By building walls and camps, we all become trapped within the very spaces into which we are supposedly confining others. Already in 2003, Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen sent a sharp warning, bringing to mind Giorgio Agamben’s reference to Franz Kafka’s short story *Der Bau* [The burrow].⁴³ The nameless animal that is the protagonist of the story—according to Agamben, it could also be a mole, fox, or human being—is so obsessively engaged in building an inexpugnable burrow that it turns out to become a trap with no way out.⁴⁴

This, Agamben has argued, is precisely what has happened in the political space of Western nation-states: “the homes—the ‘fatherlands’—that these states endeavored to build revealed themselves in the end to be only lethal traps for the very ‘peoples’ that were supposed to inhabit them.” In 2006, Herman Asselberghs poignantly commented on this development by way of his gripping video essay *Capsular*. (fig. 6.4) Keeping unwelcome people “off screen as much as possible,” as he put it, “seems part of a policy to render their lives present as a threat.”⁴⁵ For his project, Asselberghs took the ferry across the Strait of Gibraltar to Ceuta, a Spanish enclave on the coast of North Africa. A news event in the fall of 2005 triggered his journey: African migrants sought access to the enclave by crossing the barbed wire fence, then having a height

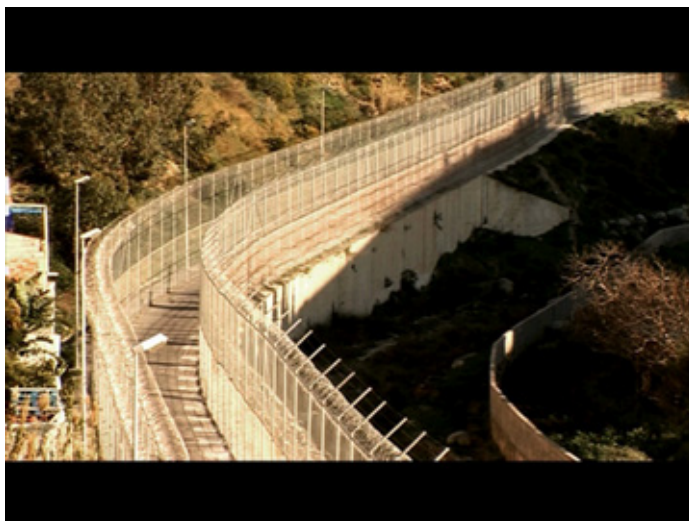


Fig. 6.4.
Still from Herman
Asselberghs, *Capsular*,
2006. 16/9 film, color,
stereo, English-
spoken, 23 mins.
© Herman Asselberghs.

of three meters. In response, the Spanish government, with support from the European Union, almost immediately decided to increase the fence's height to six meters.⁴⁶ The aim of Asselberghs's trip was to come to terms with the remarkably vague media reporting on this event. He wanted "to see with his own eyes how the reality differs from the media images."⁴⁷ That ambition resulted in confrontational recordings, made under difficult circumstances. Asselberghs, for instance, had to conceal his camera when filming the first European iron curtain on colonized African soil since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. He also had to hide in the shrubs to record shooting exercises by border patrol officers from a safe distance.

On the hermetically glass-covered ferryboat to and from Algeciras, where filming was also prohibited, Asselberghs, with a hidden camera, scanned the horizon in vain for signs of trafficking of human persons. At first sight, then, *Capsular*, perhaps best described as a counter-documentary, shows nothing spectacular at all. The work merely registered a specific reality, but this aspect precisely defines its unsettling effect on viewers. What spectators of this work see unfold before their eyes is a procession of successive capsule-like environments: from a secured port terminal and a ferryboat, closed off like an aquarium, to a heavily guarded barbed wire structure surrounded by overseas coastal territory. Next, there is the journey back on the covered capsule boat to the fortress that is the European continent. In between, there is an extensive water surface, the Mediterranean Sea—as an only seemingly meaningless intermediate zone that, nonetheless, in the twenty-first century has turned into a mass grave of drowned people.

Asselberghs shared his doubts about Ceuta with the viewer: "You find it difficult to decide whether this enclave is pioneering terrain for a vanguard carrying out a mission in enemy territory, or just a ridiculous patch of land about to be pushed off the African continent."⁴⁸ Unmistakably, and to an ever-increasing extent, this European contortedness uncovers the duplicitous side of the hope for stable prosperity, human rights, solidarity, and justice, which has characterized the European community project since the 1950s. Artworks such as *Capsular* confront viewers with the naked fact that the EU border does not necessarily coincide with the outer boundary of its continental territory.⁴⁹ The EU border has been, is, and will continue to be mobile and impermanent. It will continue to be moved to places where "confinement" of "undesirable people" is needed.⁵⁰ Transit zones in airports or train stations may first come to mind here. However, in the light of Brexit, the British-funded construction of walls of shame in the Pale of Calais may demonstrate the reverse movement. At least in the outspoken imagination of the post-Brexit UK government, it would be extremely convenient to have this small patch of land on the Continent at its discretionary disposal.

The nightmare scenario that France loses further degrees of sovereignty over Calais to the United Kingdom once again seems rather unthinkable. To the outside world, both countries continue to seem united in their willingness to counter the phenomenon of the small boats crossing the Channel. In late August 2019, the UK government announced an investment of over £6 million into new security equipment, after a meeting between the British Home Secretary Priti Patel and the French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner.⁵¹ However, as crossings increased exponentially in the warmer months of 2020, rumors started to circulate that the French navy was escorting boats until they reached British territorial waters.⁵² It would take a crystal ball to predict the impact of Brexit. But that the United Kingdom would, at some point, consider re-expanding its territorial claim on the Continent via the *Calaisis* (as in Gibraltar) cannot entirely be excluded.⁵³

Italy, for example (of course, backed by the EU apparatus), continues to bear a great responsibility for how its former colony Libya—a politically unstable country reputed for its illegal oil exports and density of weaponry—has recently been dealing with persons on the move finding themselves on Libyan territory.⁵⁴ As of late 2017, Italian medical doctor Pietro Bartolo started to make public disturbing information about how Libyan detention centers, built to accommodate migrants picked up at sea by a Libyan coast guard reinforced via EU investments, were being turned into “concentration camps” where practices of torture, including skinning, had become commonplace.⁵⁵ Contrary to what citizens could have expected and despite overwhelming evidence, EU officials have shamefully remained silent on the matter, back then and to this day, instead of expressing indignation and clear condemnation of the dramatic detention conditions in the centers in and around Tripoli.⁵⁶

In summer 2017, Amnesty International did not shy away from warning against a deliberate *outsourcing* practice.⁵⁷ Later that same year, on December 12, this organization released a short video made in collaboration with the NGO Sea-Watch to prove just that: the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG), operating in its territorial waters on a ship formerly used for rescue operations, was detaining persons in capture. Amnesty traced the obviously well-equipped boat back to the Italian government, which contracted a deal with the LCG. The video clip was accompanied by a solid report denouncing the complicity of European governments in “horrific abuses.”⁵⁸ At the end of 2018, *The Guardian* reported that an Ethiopian asylum seeker planned to sue the United Kingdom for funding the Libyan detention centers where he was tortured.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, and despite many protests, France delivered six boats to the LCG in the spring of 2019.⁶⁰ In a commentary on the French-language pages of Amnesty’s Belgian website, the reporter on

these atrocities identified the structural collaboration between Libya and the European Union as “criminal.”⁶¹

In the report itself, Amnesty accused Italy of being “directly engaged in *refoulement*,” which consists of forcibly returning or otherwise transferring people to a country or territory where they are at risk of torture or other serious human-rights violations.⁶² In international law, non-refoulement is an absolute principle, and the same is true for the prohibition of torture. According to Amnesty, Italy has been involved—through its naval ships and crews—in operations that consist of making sure that “refugees and migrants [are] returned to Libya, where they face torture, other ill-treatment, extortion and other human rights violations.” Therefore, Italy has been violating its obligations under international law. When he cried out for help, Pietro Bartolo did not hesitate to use the loaded word *genocide*—though crimes against humanity is probably the better qualification.⁶³ Late in 2017, Bartolo confirmed that he possessed evidence that guards in these detention facilities murder people in order to keep down the numbers. This enables the authorities to boast in official statistics that the number of migrants has dropped as the result of new policies put in place.⁶⁴ In its report, Amnesty also mentioned that the term *concentration camps* has been employed in undisclosed, leaked communication between the German embassy in Niger and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs when discussing the living conditions in the Libyan camps.⁶⁵ Despite the severity of this accusation, it failed to elicit thorough international investigation.

A small spark of hope has been the fact that, in 2019, Bartolo was elected to be a member of the European Parliament.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, one swallow does not make a summer. Before closing this deplorable yet essential short episode on Libya, a few more such courageous swallows deserve tribute: the captains of the very few NGO rescue ships in the Mediterranean Sea that stayed on, in spite of the increasingly difficult conditions.⁶⁷ In late March 2019, the European Union suspended its Operation Sophia—which had saved forty-five thousand lives at sea since 2015—as the Italian government no longer wanted to take in ships with people rescued at sea.⁶⁸ Ever since, there has been a chronic lack of rescue ships in the Mediterranean, while those still there have been increasingly criminalized.⁶⁹ The cases of Pia Klemp, Carola Rackete, and a few other captains who have continued to resist the mechanism of incrimination and who continued to save lives against all the odds are telling: they risk imprisonment and astronomical fines.⁷⁰

What is more, newspapers have also reported on the exploitation of workers with a sub-Saharan African background (“boat people”) on Tomato farms in the south of Italy, where the mafia is said to run a parallel system of local rule based on its own violent enforcement.⁷¹ Workplace inspectors are “very few and very corrupt.” The mafia also

controls the management of asylum centers in the south—thus finding itself assured of a systematic flow of workers. As a result, there is a complete lack of attention for agricultural workers' well-being and health. Worse even, whenever these persons protest, the strategy is to brand them as criminals. The fruits of this form of “modern slavery” land in supermarkets all over Europe. In the light of this dim reality, it is no surprise that individuals decide to escape such situations and desperately try to move on to the United Kingdom via France.

However, chances are that life in the United Kingdom will bring other forms of human exploitation, such as sex work or slave labor in nail salons, for those who survive the perilous Channel crossing. On October 23, 2019, thirty-nine corpses were discovered in a refrigerated container trailer in Grays, Essex, underscoring that the United Kingdom continues to function as a magnet for people from all over the world, in this case Vietnam.⁷² One of the victims, Pham Thi Tra My, had sent a text message to her parents in Vietnam at 22:30 BST on October 22—two hours before the lorry arrived at the Purfleet terminal from Zeebrugge, Belgium. Her portrait rapidly circulated on the internet, rendering these anonymous corpses at least one identifiable name and face. Others followed, such as Bui Thi Nhung, who was nineteen years old.⁷³ Because the dead themselves are incapable of protesting their fate, it is of key importance to continue to talk about them and to find means to protest on their behalf.⁷⁴ An example of such an endeavor is the documentary film *Who is Dayani Cristal?* (2013), directed by Marc Silver. It retraces the story of a man on the move, who was found dead in the Sonora Desert in Arizona (the so-called “corridor of death”). Carrying no documents on his body, the corpse was given the file name “John Doe ML 10-01558.” The only trace of his real identity was a tattoo across his chest: “Dayani Cristal.” This engram, eventually, allowed for his identification (as it turned out to be the name of his daughter), and for a reconstruction of his life and aspirations for the future.⁷⁵

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In 2012, Daniela Ortiz and Xóse Quiroga released *Homenaje a los caídos* [*Tribute to the Fallen*]. (fig. 6.5) In this video work, we follow Ortiz as she walks through the streets of Madrid during the celebration of Spain's national day on October 12, 2012. In her arms, she is carrying a placard attached to a wooden stick. The poster image represents the face of Congolese immigrant Samba Martine, who died in Madrid's 12 de Octubre Hospital after thirty-eight days of detention at the immigrant detention center in Aluche, Spain. During her itinerary, she stopped at, among other places, Columbus Plaza and near the apartment where Congolese politician Moise Tshombé used to live after he received



Fig. 6.5.

Still from Daniela Ortiz and Xóse Quiroga, *Homenaje a los caídos / Tribute to the Fallen*, 2012. Mono channel video, 19 mins. 38 secs. © Daniela Ortiz and Xóse Quiroga; Creative Commons CC.

asylum in Francoist Spain. The undertone of the work is resolutely bitter and harsh. It urges its spectators to think through the disturbing fact that numerous Spanish squares are still replete with monuments for Columbus without any further guidance or contextualization. It points out that a Spanish dictator offered refuge to one of the most corrupt African politicians of his own generation while, today, ordinary persons from that continent desiring to find work and a better life are met with racism and rejection.⁷⁶

Musing about these exclusionary mechanisms, Eyal Weizman has argued that we today find ourselves worldwide in a “dynamic morphology of [...] spaces,” which “resembles an incessant sea dotted with multiplying archipelagos of externally alienated and internally homogeneous ethno-national enclaves under a blanket of aerial surveillance.”⁷⁷ This painful reality shows the reverse side of the harmonic archipelagic thinking that Glissant had in mind. It should come as no surprise, then, to see that lawyers have made concrete attempts to accuse the European Union of crimes against humanity. On June 3, 2019, French lawyer Juan Branco and Omer Shatz, a professor of law at Sciences Po University in Paris, submitted a report to the International Criminal Court. The purpose was to initiate a prosecution process of the European Union and its member states, focusing on refoulement by proxy and crimes against humanity. Although this procedure is unlikely to be successful, the document puts forward the argument that the right to control borders and ensure security cannot imply neglect of the inherent duty to protect the rights enshrined in maritime, human-rights, and refugee laws.⁷⁸ For a couple of years now, the notion of “Black Mediterranean” is frequently used, referencing Paul Gilroy’s influential framing of the historical Atlantic slave trade as the “Black Atlantic.”⁷⁹ Among many elements, this concept hints at the fact that the European Union, as was

revealed by *Politico*, has been and is consciously aware that some of its strategies and policies—such as, first of all, temporarily suspending its rescue operation Sophia—have made the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea more dangerous.⁸⁰

In front of the camera, Temesghen Berhe explained to Sylvain George that he and his fellow travelers have been forced against their will to give away their fingerprints. In his view, this degrading treatment transformed them into persons enslaved by a system that does not allow them to build up their future as they imagine it. After all, these digital fingerprints prevent them from *changing their life*, as he put it, and to move toward their aspired destination—the United Kingdom, in their case. In the abovementioned scene with the razor blade, the viewers imagine how the man’s fingers must have bled during his act of self-mutilation. George, however, did not show us that. Instead, he confronted us with detail shots of a hand deeply marked by scars that look like a “multitude of barcodes.”⁸¹ Here, the red color of the burning wood, as well as the white void of the hot iron branding this shockingly regular pattern of lines into human flesh, is even easier to imagine.

Body modifications are an age-old element of African culture. They were a means of corporeal beautification or they were intended to mark an individual’s position within a social group. Here, at Calais, these traditional practices, virtually obsolete today, turn against themselves, thus shifting toward a horrible act. Let me briefly investigate the mechanism of how this evolution took place in the twentieth century. Back then, at least in the Western colonial centers, a social consensus predominated that a process of civilization and modernization was taking place in the colonized territories. The photoreport in the already discussed issue of *LIFE* magazine (June 2, 1947) illustrates this phenomenon well. Nat Farbman made the photographs in Monieka, a bush mission post in an eighty-nine-acre clearing “deep in the jungle of the Belgian Congo,” as Donald Burke commented in the text.⁸² The Disciples of Christ, a us-based church headquartered in Indianapolis, ran the post situated on the bank of the Busira River. The Disciples of Christ Congo Mission society oversaw six such stations in the area.

The line of argumentation and choice of words in the report by Burke and Farbman summarize what happened there during those years. Burke informed his readers that sixty thousand of the world’s “most primitive” people, subsisting in their 17,500-square-mile territory on fishing, hunting, and tending their tiny, weed-choked gardens were now cared for by and under the guiding influence of five white missionaries. As if to reassure his readership, the author added that in no way should they be compared to the amateur missionaries of the early twentieth century—whom he described as caricatures who traveled around with not much more than a Bible. At Monieka in the immediate postwar

years, the reportage informs us, the missionaries were trained experts. They used modern tools and added to the Word of God the Power of Medicine and the Magic of Learning. As a result, Burke concluded, the missionaries of Monieka “have helped the African natives physically as well as spiritually, and have exerted a profound and beneficial influence throughout the area.” “Virtually all that remains,” he finally added, “of the primitivism that was customary when the missionaries arrived is an occasional decorative scar on the face or body of an older native.”⁸³

Little or nothing remains today of the spirit of progress Burke’s words appear to be so willing to express. Stronger even, a deep feeling of shame arises upon observing what was lost in the process of erasing what the author self-confidently described as “primitivism” in order to replace it with preaching Christianity, which he identified as the station’s “prime objective” ever since missionaries first entered the area in 1908.⁸⁴ The opening illustration of the reportage displays a set of biblical lithographs. One of these scenes catches our attention most. It depicts Jesus when calling his first disciples, as narrated in Luke 5:1–11. It is the moment when Jesus has made sure Simon Peter and his companions have caught an abundant amount of fish in the Sea of Galilee after an initial disappointment. Upon seeing this, Simon Peter decided to follow Jesus, who reassured him: “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”

How is one to make sense of a charged history of colonialism of “fishing for people” in the Congolese jungle’s remotest corners only to tell their descendants that they are not welcome in our midst? In a devastating commentary, Peter Sloterdijk denounced Catholicism’s imperialist use of this type of religious symbolism and its intrinsic complicity with a violent establishment of the present-day global capitalist world order. “Catholic realism,” as exemplified in the above-described illustrations shockingly displayed in the jungle for didactic purposes, served to eradicate what was left of hunter-gatherer life in certain parts of the world.⁸⁵ This way of life, according to Sloterdijk, became extinct in the colonizing countries as early as the “Neolithic revolution,” which introduced farming—and, in due course, appropriation of land.⁸⁶

As this part of *Ground Sea* proceeds further, the discussion will turn its gaze to this deep and remote prehistory that haunts the twenty-first-century Strait of Dover. Let us first linger slightly more on techniques of scarification horrendously performed for a purpose radically different from its origins. By means of preamble, I want to return to the *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* photograph. According to Jean-Marie Schaeffer, there can never be one single human subject in the production of a photographic portrait. There is always a mutual experience of looking between the photographer and the photographed person, even if the latter averts the gaze from the camera. For Schaeffer,

as a result, the photographic portrait forms a “pact” between the photographer and the photographed person.⁸⁷ Which is not to say this means that the photographer’s desire to realize the work automatically coincides with the desire that the photographed person feels about the making of the portrait.

To attain their own identities, Schaeffer wrote, the portrayed persons must expose themselves to the (risky) mediation of the photographer’s gaze. Photographers, however, expose themselves through the way they take charge of this situation of mediation or instead decide to neglect it (either already when pushing the shutter or later, in how the portrait is put into circulation). I follow Schaeffer’s analysis when he concluded that, because of the specificity of this situation, the photographic portrait will always reveal its truth at some point through negotiation of the tension between the gazes, which have inevitably crossed at some point. Therefore, portrait photography, in his view, is a most difficult and risky genre, as it rests on an unstable equilibrium that can become broken.

Just as the photographers may eventually experience a sense of betrayal by the narcissism of the portrayed, the latter may come to feel retracted by photographers who seek to impose the sovereignty of their will to power. Because of that underlying pact situation, portrait photographs, Schaeffer felt confident to say, never entirely surrender to any type of expressive will to power. Given its relative transparency, which always reveals itself after a certain period, portrait photography is a most unforgiving genre: it ends up denouncing its own failures. This is exactly what happened to *Pretty young Congolese native girl proud* in the context of its inclusion in *LIFE* magazine’s overall reportage. From the perspective of the contemporary viewer, who engages in “unlearning” to employ the imperialist gaze, it is easy to see how the missionaries, and the Catholic iconography they brought with them in the wake of photo cameras and other shutters that they could push, betrayed the people who let themselves be portrayed in this reportage.⁸⁸

How, then, could one not see the self-harm done to the human body in Calais, as so disturbingly portrayed by Sylvain George, as a desperate attempt at revenge by the descendants of formerly enslaved peoples? Seen in this light, the use that these young men make of the skills and knowledge taught by their cultural ancestors is as impalpable as it is ambiguous. If it deepens our understanding of their collective tragedy as victims of colonization, it also—more positively (though profoundly lamentably)—reflects their spirit of inventiveness and survival. Debarati Sanyal identified this way of effacing one’s own uniqueness, this self-violating act of undoing the stigmatization as unwelcome “migrants,” in terms of a “strategy of counter-branding, a self-tattooing in resistance to the border’s *dispositif*.”⁸⁹

For Sanyal, this manner of proceeding indeed reverses the violence inflicted by slaveholders. As these descendants of slavery “deterritorialize themselves,” it turns the harms of the slave owners against them through what can be seen as a contemporary form of “*marronnage* or fugitivity.” The inscription of racial violence is made visible as “a white scar on dark skin, enhanced by the black and white image.” Yet, Sanyal added, “this mark of enslavement is redrawn as the threshold of a line of flight.” In conversation with Julien Legros, Sylvain George elaborated on the terminology employed in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) to assess how he conceives of the persons that he films as “political subjects who for reasons that are theirs and that I find legitimate decide to trace their line of flight in order to build their future.”⁹⁰ Sanyal, for her part, argued that the subversive gesture of burning one’s own hands with the tools that are used in a forge marks these persons’ resolute refusal to submit themselves to the technological regime of border controls and the mechanisms put in place to maintain that very system.

In basic courses on archaeology, the traditional profession of the blacksmith who forges tools is usually understood as a hallmark of human civilization’s progress. Metalwork was also the profession of Allan Sekula’s grandfather, who was employed as a railroad worker and kept a smithy in his backyard. The precious skills of the trained farrier in fact helped Pawel Sekula to work his way into US society. Realizing this very fact makes it even more confrontational to see how the desperate individuals trapped in Calais teach us that, today, the basic knowledge on what to do or make with a heated iron essentially serves repulsively different purposes. Instead of protecting one’s hands from the fire, one must gather strength and put one’s fingertips right into it. In *Qu’ils reposent en révolte*, one man, hurting himself, sarcastically tells the others (in English): “I said it is our tradition,” upon which his friends burst out in laughter. “We have seen it from our great-grandfathers. We pain ourselves.” Ancient knowledge (“keep away from the fire”) is thus resolutely turned against the human body. Hot screwdrivers now serve to reshape or remodel the human body as a basic means to help them reinvent themselves and to make sure that the border officers’ dark ink will remain neutral, and not betray them. However repulsive that may be, here we encounter a line of flight that, eventually, might transform into a productive “line of resistance,” a concrete first step toward finding a way out or an escape route.⁹¹

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“Blacksmith. Sudden overwhelming memory of the shed in my grandfather’s backyard. My brother and me at the bellows.”⁹² Allan Sekula

wrote this in 2009, as if he sensed something or anticipated a calamity in the making—a premonition. Musing over *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)*, Debarati Sanyal drew a conclusion that such distressing lines of escape cannot possibly lead to a secure way out of an already much too dire and precarious situation. Indeed, this very mechanism or strategy of “Deleuzian forms of becoming imperceptible”—willfully eliminating one’s own fingerprints—undoes “the humanist regime of subjects and citizenship.”⁹³ These gestures profoundly challenge “the ubiquitous politics of representations, rights, and visibility.” Temesghen, Ashak, and their companions questioned the validity of the global regime of human rights, based on a refined identification system of each and every person that relies on photographic representation and fingerprints—one that deeply disrupts the very foundations of present-day civil society and the confidence that we can allow ourselves to have in it.

Where do we go from here? To imagine viable solutions and alternatives, a first step is to visualize what *is* going on, as an indispensable conscience-raising effort. *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)*—a phrase borrowed from Henri Michaux—exactly serves that purpose. It is a preeminent example of a work of art that visualizes this disruption of the collective social fabric. This film makes its audience understand, in an emotionally disturbing manner, that in the Calais region the reigning social consensus about what is to be considered *human* has gradually crumbled over the past twenty-five years. Sylvain George’s search for a visual art that seeks to counter this perfidious dynamic is a challenge to his audience. His work undeniably shows how political language and presently applicable humanitarian laws end up doing no more for the affected individuals than the “mask securitarian violence” that serves to dehumanize them.⁹⁴ The exclusive use of black-and-white footage is of central importance to George: it provides a counterweight to the violence of biased color television and media reporting on the predicament of those in and around Calais simply referred to as “migrants.”

In this way, his methods are as much “anti-photojournalist” as those introduced and defined by Allan Sekula at the turn of the new millennium. Sekula described his approach in creating *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]* as follows: “No flash, no telephoto zoom lens, no gas mask, no auto-focus, no press pass and no pressure to grab at all costs the one defining image of dramatic violence.”⁹⁵ Following similar methodological rules, George set out to give his audience a contemporary chronicle of mass migration marked by empathy and compassion. His intention was to sensitize the spectator of his films away from the criminalization of these individuals, as shaped through right-wing populist discourse and fed by certain mass media that contribute to creating

a wider support for reprehensible opinions. Previous generations used to identify such movements rather phlegmatically in terms of the wandering of nations or of peoples. The Dutch language has an adequate word for which there is no good equivalent in English or French: *volksverhuizers*. Literally, the word refers to “migratory people” or “people on the move.” In just one generation, this has become an odd word that has completely fallen out of use.

Yet it may be worthwhile to collectively rehabilitate the term, because migrations of peoples have been and will be of all times. It is frightening how, lately, Western liberal democracies have not been able to prevent the emergence of an incriminating climate around wandering peoples. Instead, we have all been witnessing a process of “cimmigration” in recent years.⁹⁶ Cause for concern and deserving a thorough moral debate is the very fact that EU nations deploy the “penal system — or indirectly, the representations and strategies used by the criminal justice system and its agencies — in the treatment of unwelcome foreigners.”⁹⁷ Present-day research on the topic is vast. This book, which focuses on photography’s capacity to contribute to resisting the treacherous logic of turning a penal system against innocent persons, can only scratch the surface of the enormous quantity of publications on the subject. To illustrate the numerous problems and pitfalls of this utterly dangerous downhill road, I settle for two representative examples.

The first is a detailed study of the criminalization of immigration violation in the United Kingdom since the mid-1990s. Its author, law professor Ana Aliverti, has argued that, from that time on, the catalogue of immigration offenses and their more systematic enforcement has substantially expanded.⁹⁸ What is even more worrisome, Aliverti wrote, is that the emphasis with regard to the blurred category of immigration crimes has heightened the incrimination of a particular group of noncitizens.⁹⁹ These crimmigrants are the persons increasingly distinguished from the globally privileged population—identified as “bona fide travelers.”¹⁰⁰ Those targeted as potential crimmigrants are mainly nonwhite, poor, unskilled workers from developing countries—those “third world immigrants” who, in 1994, as Aliverti reminded us, were polemically identified by Robin Cohen as the new “helots.”¹⁰¹ Aliverti impressively researched a substantial, representative set of legal cases and data. Her dim conclusion is quite perplexing. Prosecution in the United Kingdom tends to target those identified as illegal immigrants and sometimes their facilitators, yet their smugglers or even traffickers are hardly ever mentioned. Frequently, they get off scot-free.¹⁰²

Apparently, according to Aliverti, “it is the petty crime of illegal immigrants — and not of those who profit from them — on which legislative activity and enforcement operations concentrate.” The fact that smugglers often do not get identified properly is certainly cause

for concern. As a result, the wrong people—in other words, volunteers and NGO collaborators—are now sometimes incriminated for smuggling and trafficking. This was demonstrated by the case of Sarah Mardini, a swimmer on the Refugee Olympic Team in 2016. Active in Lesbos as a member of the nonprofit Emergency Response Centre International, she was arrested at the local airport in August 2018 and charged with belonging to a criminal organization, people smuggling, money laundering, and espionage. Mardini, who is far from alone in her dismal situation, claimed to be the victim of the harder line on immigration that most European governments take today, using anti-smuggling laws to delegitimize humanitarian assistance.¹⁰³

The second example of how this stigmatizing mechanism of immigration is put into practice concerns the concept of “asylum shopping” or its variant, “asylum tourism.” Asylum shopping refers to so-called secondary movements, meaning that those who have already applied for asylum in the first country they entered travel on to another EU member state and seek protection or permanent resettlement there.¹⁰⁴ Asylum tourism is a term that initially possessed a very different meaning in the English language. As Kári Tulinius explained, it meant “visiting disused psychiatric institutions” and as such had strictly “nothing to do with asylum seekers.”¹⁰⁵ Tulinius went on to identify three origins of the term. The first, he wrote sarcastically, “comes from Slovakia and began life as yet another slur on the Roma.” The second meaning refers to “asylum-seekers being housed in tourist accommodation” and “was born in Austria.” The third meaning is the one that is of interest here, indicating “the practice of shuttling asylum seekers between different countries in Europe.”

It doesn’t take advanced web-surfing skills to find out how degradingly this term has been used by prominent EU politicians.¹⁰⁶ In 2018, Horst Seehofer, the German Minister of Domestic Affairs, Community, and Construction [*Bundesminister des Innern, für Bau und Heimat*], did not shy away from boldly stating that “we do not want asylum tourism in Europe.”¹⁰⁷ How should such resolutely xenophobic discourse be countered? First, one needs to investigate who the “we” *are* that Seehofer—a conservative member of the Bavarian Christian-Social Union, a center-right political party—implied. From a sociolinguistic point of view, Seehofer’s suggestion appears to refer to a homogeneous community with a Christian democratic background. Such community may still be found in some parts of Bavaria, but it is harder to find in other parts of Germany, let alone in *Europe* (i.e. the EU).

Susan Sontag wrote powerfully that “no ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain.”¹⁰⁸ How exactly can photographs help us to overcome that prototypical “failure of [...] imagination, of empathy” that Sontag distinguished among



Fig. 6.6.
Sylvain George, *Les Éclats*
(*ma gueule, ma révolte,*
mon nom) [*The Outbursts*
(*my fucking face, my*
revolt, my name)], 2011.
Video, black-and-white
and color, 84 mins. Two
stills. © Noir Production
and Sylvain George.

the “members of the educated class” and which Seehofer appeared to express?¹⁰⁹ The key question, for Sontag, is to find meaningful ways to “unite the people of good will.”¹¹⁰ Her *Regarding the Pain of Others* specifically focused on the impact of photographs of war. Yet while our focus here shifts to observing photographs and footage of people who are on the move, much of what Sontag wrote in the context of war photography proves useful. It is of crucial importance to take the time to slowly study works such as Sylvain George’s *Qu’ils reposent en révolte* (*Des Figures de Guerres I*). Only then can we fully grasp what is unfolding before our eyes and reflect on the fact that he identified these persons on the move as finding themselves in a war zone. Sontag wrote about the “shock-pictures” of war she investigated that such “photographs are a means of making ‘real’ (or more ‘real’) matters that the privileged and merely safe might prefer to ignore.”

Sontag—who built her argument on Virginia Woolf’s polemical *Three Guineas*—believed that photographs have the capacity to include within their address “not just the sympathizers” but also “a far larger constituency—those only nominally concerned.” A photograph, in her view, “has only one language and is destined potentially for all.”¹¹¹ In an entirely different context, and not referring to photography, Jacques Derrida suggested something similar, when he quoted one of Silesius’s maxims: “*Nothing lives without dying* / God himself, If He wants to live for you, must die: / How do you think, without death, to inherit his own life?”¹¹² If this may be true in absolute terms, there is a danger to this logic. As a seasoned photo theoretician, I have come to the unfortunate conclusion that a photographer should never take for granted the addressed community. Photographic images, whenever they are seen, need to be contextualized as well, so they can be properly *read*. As Sontag formulated it, the “shock-pictures” need “captions.”¹¹³ This is a complex exercise, but it is exactly what Sylvain George appears to have placed

his bets on. He opted for working with moving images that integrate sound and words to instruct the viewers of his works about how degraded individuals take their fate into their own hands. They do so by fully assuming that European society tries to perform an operation for which there is no word in English. In Dutch, it would be the counterpart of the commonly used *inburgeren* [literally: to “become integrated as a burgher”]. Since, for them, no chance is available to become a compatriot or a (national) citizen they aim to become *ontburgerd* as much as possible [at “never qualifying as a burgher”].

It is cruel, violent, and unacceptable that our society tolerates the fact that people first need to mutilate themselves (erasing the physical features needed to be identified as burgher, as a member of the community in which they previously felt rooted) to have a chance of integration elsewhere afterward. Through their painful effort at *disidentifying* their own body, Temesghen, Ashak, and their companions—rather shockingly—staged a death dance in front of an audience of EU citizens that will potentially give rise to a further collective moral breakdown among the latter. Fingerprint mutilation, Sanyal wrote, is “a voluntary ‘de-humanization’ in the sense that it breaks the relation between your name and your body.”¹¹⁴ “A body without a name,” she continued, “is a nonhuman human being; an animal which runs. It is non-human because it deliberately abandons the humanist regime of rights.” Once the humanist regime of rights is abandoned, bourgeois culture is overthrown. The “migrants” then reclaim autonomy and control over their life and become “the harbinger of a politics beyond the exclusions of representation, visibility, citizenship, and (human) rights.”

It is tragic that one of the core areas where these self-mutilating acts are performed is that region that was, not so very long ago, promoted as the pioneering Euroregion *Nord-Transmanche*. Its logo was an omen. (see fig. I.4) Kent, after all, was only the size a pinky’s fingerprint. The big thumb was granted to the Continental side. From the point of view of the English psychology as shaped in a thousand-year history of Eurasian threats and menaces, it is not difficult to imagine that such a constellation could not possibly work. The image of David and Goliath: what more is needed to whip up the British collective imagination and start preparations, as it were, for the next battle? In retrospect, it is as if the devil himself was involved in inventing that disastrous logo— it must have been designed by someone battling with a hangover somewhere in a French office on a Friday the thirteenth (21#).

In 1999, Eve Darian-Smith commented rather ironically on this logo, saying that “the common French idiom *donner un coup de pouce*—literally, ‘to give a hit of the thumb’—means ‘to give a boost to’ or ‘to nudge in the right direction.’”¹¹⁵ At the same time, she warned, referencing Michel Foucault, that “the thumbprint brings to mind the use of

passports as a mechanism of classification and social control by modern nation-states to govern the borders of exclusive and inclusive territories.”¹¹⁶ From a retrospective point of view, then, this logo may have been aptly imagined as a preeminent symbol for the supposed abolishment of borders following in the wake of the Channel Tunnel. Yet it was also tragically ill-chosen, as it soon became clear that the outsourcing of Britain’s border to the mainland at Calais brought new and unforeseen challenges. Today, there are individuals in Calais—as elsewhere on or near the European continent—who are preoccupied with making their fingerprints *disappear*. That they feel forced to remove physical traces of their identity is unacceptably painful, in all senses of the term.

Around the same time that the abovementioned and now infamous logo was invented, Allan Sekula decided to give the photographic sequence he made in the area the emblematic title *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, which, to be sure, was a prescient decision. In *Les Éclats*, Sylvian George included a sequence of detail shots lasting one and a half minutes showing Rodin’s *Burghers of Calais* as installed in front of the town hall. (fig. 6.6) However implicit and unintended—for, of course, George did not read Sekula’s notebooks—a better allusion to Sekula’s bourgeois death dance could not possibly be created. This arguably melancholic interval within *Les Éclats* contrasts sharply with an episode from its counterpart, *Qu’ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerre I)*. (fig. 6.7) In the latter work, an unidentified man showed George where they slept at night in the open air next to a terrain gated with chicken wire. As George, busy filming, moved his camera around near this very grassland, he captured for the viewer a group of well-to-do French nationals in the company of a bunch of leashed dogs.

The message hits hard. In this training club for well-fed dogs, the animals are being treated incomparably better than the ragged, excluded individuals looking over the fence. When, on several other instances throughout *Qu’ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerre I)*, the dogs are used for threatening or even attacking those in search of a better life, it is clear that even man’s proverbial best friend has turned against him in Calais. A distressing shift in the treatment of humans in comparison to dogs can be sensed in these scenes. A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding the attribution of roles. Menacing dogs are part of the in-group. Unarmed and helpless persons are not. The critical message George’s works convey is that when security measures mainly come to serve what he identified as “predatory capitalism,” civilized bourgeois society ends up bogged down in a deep-rooted problem.¹¹⁷ This calls for an urgent ethical answer, which subsequently needs to generate a concrete impact on civil society by means of political measures. No matter how difficult the search for it may be, giving up is simply not an option.



Fig. 6.7.

Sylvain George, *Qu'ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* [*May they rest in revolt (Figures of Wars I)*], 2010. Video, black-and-white and color, 2 hrs. 30 mins. Four stills. © Noir Production and Sylvain George.

George's works both engage in and seek to push forward the discussion. They point at those spaces and situations in which most of the available laws leave us with a void—mainly because the present legislation only applies to victims in times of war, and France does not consider the present situation in Calais a war zone. In relation to this legal void, Sanyal urged her readers to realize it is high time to reclaim “the right to have rights.”¹¹⁸ I want to add that we should do this *beyond* situations of war. It was Hannah Arendt who introduced this right to have rights. She understood it as “the right of every individual to belong to humanity,” which “should be guaranteed by humanity itself.”¹¹⁹ She immediately added to this that “it is by no means certain whether this is possible.” Arendt was sharply aware that “this idea transcends the present sphere of international law which still operates in terms of reciprocal agreements and treaties between sovereign states.” Soon after Arendt published these lines, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) was established (1959), which remediated much of the situation that Arendt sketched regarding its forty-seven member states.

Yet condemnations by the ECHR for states breaching the human-rights provisions, such as the abovementioned Article 3, take time. Sylvain George, for his part, did not wait for the establishment of a universally enforceable right to have rights beyond war situations—at present, a remote utopia—to both verbally and visually start shaping it. In an artist book entitled *La Vita Bruta [The Brute Life]* (2016), he documented his recollection of John Yihaish, whom he met in the summer of 2007. Eritrean and trained as a professor of physics, Yihaish fled his village, Makouka, to escape the war with Ethiopia (1998–2000). He kept a notebook of his journey, which he allowed George to consult. To conclude his own text entitled “Notes (brèves) de l'égaré” [(Brief) Notes of the Haggard], George quoted the following lines from it:

Life.
Life after death.
Success is not a matter of luck
But difficult labor
and a question of discipline.
I am here in France.
And I do not want to surrender.
*I must walk and disappear.*¹²⁰

*

To walk and disappear. These words deliver a decisive step for imagining a right to be reborn. Debarati Sanyal, building on George's insights, identified a claim on behalf of the “refugee.”¹²¹ Through their act of

becoming imperceptible via self-mutilation, as she put it, these persons on the move demand a *right to disappear*. First coined by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), she combined this very right to disappear with another fundamental right: “the right to belong to some kind of organized community.”¹²² Whenever human beings, as the consequence of a wide possible range of circumstances, lose membership of the polity to which they previously belonged, they risk becoming victims of a far greater calamity: being expelled from humanity altogether. Arendt sketched a pessimistic scenario when writing that such circumstances may account for living conditions possibly even more dehumanizing than that of the historical slave. Enslaved persons, for all their misery, “still belonged to some sort of human community.”¹²³ Even if unacceptably “exploited,” enslaved people’s labor was “needed.”

This touches on a very delicate issue. From our present-day point of view, it seems as though we have now ended up living in the grim future that Arendt predicted. However, it hardly makes sense to balance out variants of tragic suffering. They all are equally unacceptable. Still, it cannot be denied that the everyday living conditions of those suffering under the terrible life circumstances of what Yann Moix has come to call the “exclusion of the excluded,” as is the case in contemporary northern France, demonstrate that we have collectively reached yet another low ebb for humanity.¹²⁴ The only human community they belong to is that of those who do not belong—the living dead. Although most newcomers have the intention to seek work, the reigning tendency within the political discourse of many present-day EU member states (as well as in post-Brexit United Kingdom) is that “migrants” are no longer welcome, unless they have specialized skills and qualifications.

Under populist pressure, politicians from various EU member states rather systematically express their intention to put in place mechanisms facilitating triage between what they call “economic migrants” and “asylum seekers.”¹²⁵ The implication is that economic “migrants” need to be sent back home immediately. The iconic symbol of that drama of shortsightedness is the high “wall of shame” [*mur de la honte*] that nowadays crisscrosses the marshy grounds of the deeply mutilated landscape in the Pale of Calais.¹²⁶ In his report on the situation, the French ombudsman Jacques Toubon emphasized that this wall, consisting of a four-meter-high concrete barrier with numerous wire fences over a length of one kilometer, “echoes other walls at the borders of Europe in Melilla, Spanish enclave in Morocco, in Greece, in Bulgaria, and more recently in Hungary, walls that appear as so many symbols of ‘Fortress Europe.’”¹²⁷ For Yann Moix, this *Europe forteresse* is the ultimate proof that the EU project as originally conceived is failing its citizens. In his pessimistic view, Europe, by erecting walls, has undermined its foundational principles.¹²⁸ These walls “are the expression, not of power, but of

powerlessness.”¹²⁹ For they *will* be climbed and crossed. Smugglers know how to bribe gatekeepers. People despise these blockades. Eventually, they will end up demolishing them. No one, however, can tell how long this will take and at what cost.

According to Jacques Rancière, the strength of Sylvain George’s *Qu’ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* precisely lies in its ability to make us see “the intolerable” unfold before our eyes.¹³⁰ Rancière expressed admiration for George’s approach to the topic, marked as it is by slowly but surely setting up a “contemplative and [...] reflexive distance” toward his subject matter. In Rancière’s opinion, the viewer comes to realize, while watching George’s work, that “a destructive French migratory policy is nothing but a cog within a European and global control apparatus.” Consequently, “France, formerly sovereign, has become vassal,” as is the reproach by Moix of his country’s president, Emmanuel Macron.¹³¹ As he polemically added,

France is not a *start-up*, Mister President [...] she is not for sale. Humiliating itself in Calais, France smears the world. She controls on behalf of. The French Republic is not a kapo, Mister President; we have elected a Statesman, not a watchdog.¹³²

In 2015, when Hungary began to close its borders, comments started to circulate on Facebook suggesting that the European Union—transformed into an ever-increasing gated fortress—had revealed itself to be growing into a veritable “monster.”¹³³ Whether such postings were orchestrated in the infamous Russia-based troll factory Internet Research Agency in Saint Petersburg remains difficult to determine.¹³⁴ For Timothy Snyder, in any case, Vladimir Putin’s Russia has long maintained a clear agenda to change the general perception about the EU project.¹³⁵ Snyder brought to mind a speech given by Putin at the United Nations on September 28, 2015, in which he expressed his wish to realize a “‘harmonization’ of Eurasia with the European Union.” Russia, in Snyder’s view, has bombed Syria with the intention of generating a large flow of refugees, one so enormous that it would make Europeans panic. This, he concluded, would help the extreme right-wing Alternative for Germany political party to gain influence in German politics, “and thus make Europe more like Russia.” From late 2013 on, Russia’s active financial support of the far-right French Front National party has instigated an open culture war within the country.¹³⁶

In the United Kingdom, then Prime Minister Theresa May resigned from office on June 7, 2019, finding both herself and her country in a state of exhaustion and exasperation. People on both sides of the English Channel felt left behind—the one certainty was that only time would tell what Brexit would really come to imply for both British and EU

citizens, as well as for the hundreds of aspiring Britons presently living a forgotten life in and around Calais.¹³⁷ Somehow, both the European Union and the United Kingdom will need to jointly rise above the new challenges. Of course, despite the many emotional calls for a redistributive solidarity, the barriers for developing sustainable forms of peaceful coexistence seem more enormous than ever.¹³⁸ A hermetically sealed “gated community,” however, cannot possibly be a sustainable response.¹³⁹

Sharing essential information will be vital to balance the interests of all parties involved. Only a few high-ranking officials have more detailed knowledge of the most important mutual agreements regarding the fixed Channel link. The French–British Sangatte Protocol of November 25, 1991 (expanded in 2000) and the so-called Le Touquet Treaty (of February 4, 2003) have settled arrangements about security measures and border control in the seaports of Dover and Calais. In a 2015 report, the French *Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme* (CNCDH) alarmingly wrote that these bilateral texts have been drawn up, for the most part, with no transparency, making effective political control impossible.¹⁴⁰

As a result, and since they are unpublished, these agreements “escape jurisdictional control and create *de facto* a zone of non-law.”¹⁴¹ The authors added that this situation required urgent clarification, and concluded their report by recommending a complete withdrawal of the “so-called Le Touquet and Sangatte treaties and agreements.”¹⁴² Until January 31, 2020, the wall in Calais—rather than indicating an external EU border—was one between two EU member states. Now that the British finally have left the European Union—after their first missed momentum at 11p.m. GMT on March 29, 2019—the question that arises is whether the United Kingdom will eventually need to budget gating and fencing investment costs at the Dover train and port terminals.¹⁴³ It is ironic that those UK citizens who voted to leave the European Union have potentially been under the wrong impression that being in favor of the Brexit would prevent Dover from turning into another Calais.

If post-Brexit Dover will not be refurbished into a newly walled port city, both France and the European Union will have conceded that Great Britain creates its own Ceuta on French soil in the *Calaisis* once again. For the English, who, only in 1802 with the Peace of Amiens formally renounced their claim to Calais and recognized French sovereignty over the Pale, this reconquering of the area by means of delocalized borders in its key strategic passenger port and train terminals would signify both a political victory and a return on cynical investments made.¹⁴⁴ On April 27, 2017, however, then French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron made a forceful promise to his electorate on national television (*TF1*) that he would renegotiate the Le Touquet border treaty in the case of an actual Brexit. He formally objected to the British understanding of

having a “shared border at Calais,” as a dauntless Conservative spokesman reportedly said to media across the Channel around that same time.¹⁴⁵

The implications of Brexit regarding the geopolitical management of the fixed Channel link are likely to remain unclear for some time. Since Macron was elected, the French government has not pursued a complete revision of the previous agreements. France has, rather, adopted a pragmatic approach of negotiating compensation from the United Kingdom concerning increased reception of asylum seekers, support for the return of migrants, and financial aid to the Pale of Calais.¹⁴⁶ In this context, it deserves emphasis that the implementation of the Treaty of Le Touquet and the Sangatte agreements contradicts EU law at several levels. As claimed by the CNCDH in the abovementioned report, it is “extremely worrying” to realize that France is serving as “the ‘policing arm’ of British immigration policy.”¹⁴⁷ Key aspects of the bilateral Franco-British cooperation in relation to the Pale of Calais, even if acknowledged by the CNCDH as “particularly important,” are even “established at the expense [...] of the European Convention on Human Rights.”¹⁴⁸

Amid these worrisome and volatile sociopolitical circumstances, artists such as Sylvain George and Yann Moix have creatively addressed such overwhelming realities. In a desperate attempt to counter the way that citizens of EU member states tend not to deal with the death toll about which they are nonetheless informed on an almost daily basis, George added wryly, yet poetically, on the back cover of his *Vita Bruta*: “Forgetfulness in the ultimate ‘safe’ place: / the hole in the ground.”¹⁴⁹ Such acute works make us reflect on what it means to take seriously the right to belong to some kind of organized community, in the words of Hannah Arendt. This right was not articulated as such in the European Convention on Human Rights, in force since 1953. Nor was it included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet the latter declaration comes close since it stipulates in article 27 §1 that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.” When read together with article 29 §1, saying, “everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible,” it is clear that the ratio of the declaration included the *presupposition* of a solid community of humans.

I want to build on this key premise by arguing that the right to belong to some kind of organized community should go hand in hand not only with a right to disappear but also with the *right to reappear* within an existing social community—even if this community is not ready or entirely willing to accept you. In the following chapters, I elaborate on how photography can serve this purpose and contribute to putting in place international legislation that forces communities to welcome newcomers under fair circumstances and following clear rules. In return, it can be requested that they exercise their duties and obligations toward

this very community. For Yann Moix, there can be no doubt: the real Europeans today are those who, often against all odds, remain true to the original intentions of the unification project. They are the ones he identified as *Les Justes* [The Just or The Righteous].¹⁵⁰ He invoked this term to refer to the volunteers who take care of the “exiled” near Calais by providing food, warm clothes, and medical assistance. They are, “Frenchmen who, like all the Just, refuse categorically to be named Just.”¹⁵¹ The Just proceed to constructive action from human person to human person, and this at a time when both the political and police apparatus struggle in lethargy and even tend to collapse under negative behavior.

In the late winter of 2017 in Calais, I in fact happened to witness an instance of voluntary food distribution from the trunk of a small truck. The event took place on March 20 in a parking lot where I had parked my car to explore the nearby marshlands by foot. My plan was to find out with my own eyes what this area looked like after the dismantling of the former “Jungle.” The parking lot is situated just off a road named *Boulevard des Justes*. Everything went very fast: suddenly, several young men showed up, seemingly out of nowhere. They had been waiting in the adjacent shrubs for the van to arrive. All those present were nervous and anxious about the police. Small survival packages were quickly handed out. There were a few blankets available for those who requested them. Each item was safely hidden under their clothes, after which they thanked the volunteers and rapidly took off. I felt glued to the ground, while simultaneously struggling with my own uselessness. Being present there in plain sight but apparently unnoticed, my eye fell on the street sign, displaying the coincidence of names. Memories of this oddly ambiguous scene—one of total deprivation and courageous support—continue to haunt me. A good month later, I returned to the area to photograph the sign, as a belated tribute to all the Just that fate allowed me to admire in action (20#).

Some explanatory scenarios:

1. Having an illiterate father encourages the habit of reading.
2. An illiterate father encourages the habit of reading.
3. A literate mother encourages the habit of reading, in light of the limits reached by the illiterate father.
4. A blacksmith works with words. Words and phrases fly from the anvil as the hammer hits the soft red steel: “hammer and tongs,” “strike while the iron is hot,” “mind-forged manacles.”

Allan Sekula, “Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009,” in *Polonia and Other Fables* (Chicago and Warsaw: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and Zachęta National Gallery of Art, 2009), 60.



EUROREGION
 EUROREGIO

- Some explanatory scenarios
1. Having an illustrious father encourages the son's habit of reading.
 2. An illustrious father encourages the habit of reading.
 3. A librettist mother encourages the habit of reading, in spite of the lessons received by the illustrious father.
 4. A blacksmith works with words, words are splinters fly from the anvil on the hammer, hits the soft red steel: "hammer and anvil" - strike while the iron is hot, "round-foreged manacles."

Allen Tate, "Tolson and Other Father-Son's Days," in
 The Tolson and Other Father-Son's Days, ed. ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, p. 10

"The seas join the nations they divide" ([Croll], "#ocean Currents," 1893, 422)
 @MessBook Inadequate attempt to neutralize the @DoverStrait / @LePasDeCalais
 #qotd #thumbprint #EU #littlefingerprint #uk #cavity #emptiness #midstream
 #surface #energy #519SenegalYellow #931NeutralTint #EphemeralStampDoodle

Chapter 7
Naming the *Person*
without a Name

*and I know your room has no walls
but it really won't take long anymore
we regain strength in Calais
we regain strength in Calais
and tomorrow we go together to the beach
dreaming of the far side across
waiting just a little more in Calais
waiting just a little more in Calais
we will get there, though it may be awfully slow
though the hours sometimes seem like days here
the nights are long in Calais
without a prospect by the sea
the wait is long in Calais
but son, hold on, really, imagine once:
people see, people hear
they recognize our fate, they went ahead of us
in thoughts they are with Calais
in thoughts with Calais
hope is not taken away from us
for that we didn't come from so far
waiting just a little more in Calais
waiting just a little more in Calais*

Excerpt from Het Zesde Metaal, "Calais,"
included in the album *Calais*, 2016. My translation.
This song is sung in West-Flemish. The Dutch version is published in
Wannes Cappelle and Robin Aerts, *Zeg alles af voor morgen*.
Het Zesde Metaal (s.l.: Het Zesde Metaal, 2017), 32.



Five people on the move erring near the roundabout underneath the A16 highway at the height of @BoulevardDesJustes @Calais
#LastDayofWinter #crisis #migration #wall #europe #shame #anxiety #fearless

“The one who leaves goes through a metamorphosis,” wrote Yann Moix.¹⁵²

He does not just change the location of his life; he changes life. He does not simply leave his country; he abandons himself; he comes into the world. He will leave to be born far away from his native country.

Temesghen Berhe and his companions in Sylvain George’s *Qu’ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* seem to have been precisely in the process of setting such a transformative procedure in motion. They were *leaving*, as Moix put it, and they did so not only in the geographic sense of the verb [in French: *partir*], but also in its philosophical sense. As Jacques Rancière put it, “by sculpting themselves, by tattooing themselves in order to escape the [state] logic of identification,” they displayed a “capacity to transform themselves.”¹⁵³ For that potential metamorphosis to develop realistically out of such a dramatically self-destructive act, however, help is needed. As George’s *Qu’ils reposent en révolte* demonstrated, volunteers can do much, but far from everything.

Contemporary residents of EU member states have grown up with the expectation that, in a democracy, it is the task of the authorities to put in place adequate structures and programs, rather than leaving this up to volunteer citizens. The German government’s remarkable example of dealing with a massive intake in 2015 demonstrated that this is possible.¹⁵⁴ As the years pass, nonetheless, people living in the European Union continue to realize how enormous the odds are, and how fragile it has become to rely on the state—even within the European Union. I return to this question in Chapter Nine, when reflecting on how to realistically define hospitality today. As a point of departure, the one I know best, let us continue the analysis from an observation of the Belgian context. The coastal region near the border with France has a somewhat particular character. The scars of two world wars are easily visible in the landscape to this day. The people living there appear to generally be friendly, hospitable, and easygoing. The proximity of the North Sea and its shipping tradition perhaps partly accounts for their freebooting, adventurous mentality. As a result, the inhabitants of this so-called Westhoek of Flanders [literally: West Corner] tend to solve problems on their own.

The West-Flemish village of Mannekensvere illustrates how Belgium, with its overall complex political constellation and historical aversion to state interference, has been dealing rather pragmatically with the unanticipated influx of “migrants.” Mannekensvere is the first decent highway stop for English visitors after having disembarked from the ferries in Calais or Dunkirk. Handwritten billboards warmly welcome

English-speaking guests. The village hosts a Texaco gas station, a restaurant, and a night shop along the E40 highway. In the inland direction, toward Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels, the restaurant serves a recommendable full English breakfast that is widely reputed as one of the best in the region. In the direction of Calais, coming from Belgium, this gas station is the last one before the border with France. As a major border site, it is common for intense activity to take place on and near the premises of this gas station during the night. For one thing, numerous persons on the move will hide in the old cow tunnel beneath the highway, and from there many will try to enter parked trucks. The two local farmers whose lands are adjacent to the resting area have been most unhappy with the situation. Interviewed in early 2019 in the midst of a cold winter, one of the farmers, Dirk Demeyere, testified that he and his wife had difficulties sleeping at night as their watchdog barked all the time.¹⁵⁵ He was also worried about his cattle (a couple of hundred double-muscle bovines). The persons who try to reach the parking lot—around fifty per night—regularly cut the barbed wire put in place by the farmer to prevent his cattle from crossing the highway.

According to legend, the small village of Mannekensvere, with its 271 inhabitants, owes its name to a medieval ferryman whose name was Mannekin. In his boat, passengers could cross the nearby Yser River. The entire village of Mannekensvere was rebuilt after the 1918 armistice, as every single house was destroyed during World War I. Locals still remember and sustain that history, also considering themselves tolerant and peace-loving. They find themselves caught in a global tragedy completely surpassing their microcosmic life world, and they have a hard time dealing with it on a day-to-day basis. To illustrate that fact, the abovementioned newspaper report sketched a fine portrait of the cashier of the Texaco gas station. Although she regularly spotted men trying to hide behind a container when checking the monitor of her surveillance equipment, she would not call the police and instead only alerted the drivers. Asked why, she replied in a sober tone to the journalist: “They are ordinary men. They want to live. Like us.”¹⁵⁶ The article mentioned the interviewed farmer by name but left out the names of all others—the people on the move, the cashier, and the truck driver. This is striking. Yet it should not come as a surprise in a village that refers to the ancient ferry of a manikin—an English word indicating an ordinary, small man, derived from the Dutch *manneken*, diminutive of *man*.¹⁵⁷

Not every inhabitant of coastal Middelkerke—the larger village-turned-beach-resort to which Mannekensvere belongs—thinks along these same lines. During the May 2019 elections in the Ostend district, the far-right political party *Vlaams Belang* [Flemish Interest] obtained 20.9% of the vote (an increase of 14.8%), trailing only the Flemish

Nationalist *N-VA* (21.3% of the vote).¹⁵⁸ Many among the right-wing voters, presumably, depend for their livelihood on the locally prominent tourist industry, considered incompatible with the undesired presence of “transitory migrants.” Others may simply be disappointed in the failed policies of the political establishment. This shift to the right is happening although an increase in gates, fences, and other deterring mechanisms are merely a vain attempt to try to empty the ocean with a thimble.

If the root causes for people who decide to go and search for a better life remain the same, nothing will change fundamentally. Meanwhile, an urgent need for more efficient welcoming policies has presented itself, and this is exactly the void that Sylvain George’s *Qu’ils reposent en révolte (Des Figures de Guerres I)* wished to fill. According to Debarati Sanyal, his film proposes a hospitality of visual form that can offer “small acts of repair,” which is to say that his art conceptualizes before our eyes a form of “visual asylum.”¹⁵⁹ For it is barbaric to let Temesghen, Ashak, and all the others find their way *out [dehors]* there on their own, left to themselves in a *zone* aptly identified by Yann Moix as one of an “existence subtracted from death without allowing access to life.”¹⁶⁰ It is not because the “exiled” person at Calais is not dead that the authorities or local inhabitants grant them “the right to live,” Moix observed. Instead, such a person on the move inhabits a “chasm, within which he is neither dead nor alive.”

Somehow, someone will need to pilot these unfortunate people out of this uninhabitable crevice outside of organized society, and toward a safe and welcoming inside. To imagine this visual asylum is one element. Musical asylum might be a second one. Therefore, I translated the song “Calais” by the Belgian group *Het Zesde Metaal* into English. I combined it with a photograph made in the late winter of 2017, at a time when official communication in France self-confidently ventilated that—after the dismantling of “La Jungle”—everyone had left the *maquis* (22#). As I first wrote these lines in June 2019, the people on the move were still there, in a fluctuating number ranging between 1,000 and 1,500 persons. By then, the few charities still operating in the area, among which prominently a British-run organization, called it a “forgotten problem.”¹⁶¹ The plight of those living there out in the open and sleeping in the woods, alongside polluted industrial wastelands, or just on the streets, is a harsh one. The larger Calais border region’s fertile soil today is an open, collective wound—it hurts everyone, not only those harming themselves there with burning irons.

As Gloria Anzaldúa wrote,

In the Borderlands

*you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger,
the border disputes have been settled
the volley of shots have shattered the truce
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;*

[...]

To survive the Borderlands

*You must live sin fronteras
Be a crossroads.¹⁶²*

Languages “die and are born,” Anzaldúa added.¹⁶³ The language of the Borderlands will show this inevitable influence most. There, “at the juncture of cultures,” a new language can sprout—a convivial language that is the result of cross-pollination and revitalization of different languages.

For reconceptualizing our politics and ethics of solidarity, it has become urgent to learn from that language of the Borderlands and use vocabulary precisely. It is mandatory to condemn the employment of words such as “razzia”—as used by the *N-VA* mayor of the city Antwerp, Bart De Wever, in 2016, three years before the far-right, nationalist, and populist party *Vlaams Belang* won the general May 2019 elections in Flanders.¹⁶⁴ Numerous communities within the European Union have to rethink the premises and bases for inclusive citizenship. They must invest in this effort, for to descend the downhill slope of increasing racism, and, ultimately, fascism is to risk reawakening a ghost capable of turning life within Europe into the worst imaginable nightmare.

“The boat is full,” as Zoltán Kovács, spokesperson for the Hungarian government in 2015, put it bluntly, sending a shockwave through the European Union by announcing unilaterally that his country had suspended the Dublin III political asylum regulation indeterminately and effective immediately.¹⁶⁵ Even though the Hungarian government had to reverse the decision the next day, as “the Dublin rules do not foresee such a suspension,” the sheer pronouncement undermined all the European Union has stood for from its inception.¹⁶⁶ Ever since, the inhospitable atmosphere has continued to linger. In clear violation of European and international law, Hungary persevered in building a fence while subjecting newly arriving asylum seekers to mandatory detention “in *shipping containers* surrounded by high razor fences for the entire length of the asylum procedure.”¹⁶⁷ The underlying message seems to be that the sooner someone takes care of shipping these people back

to where they came from, the better. This attitude causes tremendous psychological damage to those detained inside such entities.¹⁶⁸

Hungary, together with a couple of other Central European member states, has persistently refused to comply with the relocation scheme of persons in need of international protection from Italy and Greece, imposed by two EU Council Decisions in September 2015 and reconfirmed by an EU Court of Justice (CJEU) ruling in September 2017.¹⁶⁹ The European Commission started an infringement procedure, which resulted in an affirmative CJEU ruling on April 2, 2020.¹⁷⁰ This may merely result in a fine, however. Despite these efforts, then, the Hungarian government has no reason to feel intimidated, and it continues to unroll its far-right policies, while, at the same time, overlooking deep corruption.¹⁷¹

When, on May 14, 2020, the CJEU delivered a judgment, declaring that the placement of persons in the Rözske transit zone was a case of unlawful detention, it achieved a Pyrrhic victory.¹⁷² The Hungarian government confirmed that it would comply with the ruling and abolish the transit zone. However, on June 17, it adopted the Act LVIII on Transitional Rules and Epidemiological Preparedness related to the Cessation of the State of Danger in response to the COVID-19 situation. Based on this new act, those who arrive at the border will be redirected to a designated Hungarian embassy in a nearby country, where they will need to start up the asylum procedure. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) immediately expressed concern.¹⁷³ Since Hungary is a State party to the 1951 Refugee Convention as well as to numerous other human-rights instruments, it is required under international and EU law to provide access to its territory, at least for the time people need to exercise their right to seek asylum. If admission is refused to those who reach the border, asylum seekers incur the risk of being exposed to refoulement.

Paralyzed, or so it seems, the European Union for some time has tried to avert its gaze and proceed with the order of the day.¹⁷⁴ In the early fall of 2020, news came out that the European Commission—under the presidency of Ursula von der Leyen—is preparing a Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management (RAMM), which is set to provide adequate answers to the numerous practical problems caused by the implementation of the Dublin rules.¹⁷⁵ A critical editorial released soon after by Catherine Woollard (director of the European Council of Refugees and Exiles [ECRE], a network of ninety-five NGOs in forty European countries), however, did not leave much room for hope. “From the first substantive article,” she wrote, RAMM’s “emphasis is on the responsibilities of countries outside Europe.”¹⁷⁶ The report, she argued, treats human rights and protection of individuals as almost a tangential or parallel question. For, “explicitly,” the RAMM has “other objectives”—which consist in “giving the Member States what they want – even if they want

contradictory things.” The planned RAMM, according to her, “is about trying to ‘manage’ something that is ultimately beyond control – people fleeing across borders – while abandoning what is within the EU’s control – compliance with EU law.” Therefore, the projected RAMM looks as it does, she concluded: “the rights of those on the move isn’t really the point – which *is* the point.”

*

What, then, *can* photography do when put at the service of the delicate purpose of raising politically inclusive awareness? Commenting on Sophie Calle’s photo-textual work *Suite vénitienne*, Jean Baudrillard observed that “photography is itself an art of disappearance, which captures the other vanished in front of the lens.”¹⁷⁷ Consequently, he wrote, photography saves nothing but the certainty of this vanished presence of the other. Baudrillard here powerfully criticized a truism of documentary photography, repeated ad nauseam in theoretical texts. It holds that the only certainty about an individual or a given situation represented in a photograph is its having existed somewhere sometime. This implies that, in the present time, that person or situation does not exist as such anymore—or not in its then capacity. This logic presumes, however, that the photograph, in a mild gesture of passive registration, preserves a trace of that previous existence.

Baudrillard ascribed to the photographic image a much more active power—one that is not simply preservative, but instead destructive, as far as concerning the subject represented. For him, the photograph has the force to perform no less than a vanishing act. In *The Perfect Crime*, he provided the further specification that photography—beyond being this active art of disappearance—is also, and essentially, a means of dissociating the photographed subject “from any previous existence.”¹⁷⁸ This mechanism of disappearance, followed by even further dissociation from its reality object, leads to a paradoxical result. It is undeniable, after all, that a photograph makes an image reappear on its very surface. Indeed, for Baudrillard, this photographic surface image reveals itself to the viewer as if it arises “*ab nihilo*.” As he argues, we observe a photographic image as if inscribed out of nothing, stripped of all traces that link the photograph’s subject matter to its prior existence in the world.

Therefore, the photographic image—as if deriving its magic “from the arbitrary, from the absence of causes and history”—always presents us with something “radically new.” Of course, this apparent magic relies entirely on the technology of the camera, which enacts the vanishing of what it photographs when photographers decide to push the button. Nonetheless, the photographic image, in this logic, bears the capacity to make the photographed subject rise—radically renewed—as a phoenix

from the cooled ashes of the vanishing performed by the camera. The photograph proceeds toward the creation of this radically new in two movements. First, the photographic image claims a resolute rebirth of the photographed subject in a specific way: as a dissociated photographic surface that may in its turn be subjected to a radically different reading. Second, the photographic image pushes the spectators to imagine the conclusions to be drawn in real life from what exactly the photographic image presents as so radically new.

Bearing this in mind, we can look back at Sylvain George's camera capturing Temesghen Berhe's mutilated fingers. If the camera can do what Baudrillard said it could, we need to conclude that Berhe's filmed portrait comes to reinforce the young man's operation of self-harming disappearance. (see fig. 6.3) The camera seems to actively double his act of self-mutilation and make disappear, one more time, what had disappeared already—Berhe's fingerprints. We can thus see Berhe's mutilated, anonymized hands as filmed/photographed images dissociated from his body. The photographed hands present themselves as resolutely new hands. They put forward a claim for a different, renewed conception of the identity of the person to whom they once belonged. This, in turn, should help us find ways to abandon the politics of exhaustion that smashed his body.

To visually introduce a possible conception of such radically new identity, let us turn to a project that Allan Sekula realized in Kassel, Germany. In July 2006, Sekula photographed a group of midwives, mothers, and gravediggers there. This field research resulted in a new sequence of photographic billboards that he added to a preexisting body of work entitled *Shipwreck and Workers* (2005–2007). (fig. 7.1) Sekula identified this large-scale sequence, installed outdoors, as a “temporary portable monument to labor.”¹⁷⁹ He wanted us to understand the term *labor* in the double sense of handwork and the process of delivering babies. Either way, he wished to represent bare life in its most basic state—as the reproduction of the working class through women's toil. The artist's camera focus on the depicted persons' hands in all except one image is striking indeed.¹⁸⁰ The only photograph without helping hands displays a prototypical heart-shaped gripper. In full motion on its way toward a cistern, it is filled with earth and grave remains. Sekula here staged before our eyes the photographic loop of disappearance as described by Baudrillard. We observe in this image the operation of *making disappear further* those who already disappeared through death and burial. What reappears on the surface of this photograph, then, contained in the excavator's closed bucket, are bones and possibly other relics.

When displaying this work in the Wilhelmshöhe Park in Kassel for Documenta 12 (2007), Sekula juxtaposed it with a triptych of gravediggers in action, as if performing a ballet—a dance with the dead. (fig. 7.2)



Fig. 71.

Allan Sekula, *Gravediggers, Kassel* and *Gravediggers, Kassel (triptych)*, from *Shipwreck and Workers (Version 3 for Kassel)*, 2005–2007. Ink printed on vinyl (print system VUTEK), 26 impressions, one and three panels, each 243×338 cm. Collection MACBA, Barcelona. Gift from the artist. © Allan Sekula Studio. Installation view at *Documenta 11* in Park Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel, 2007. Photos by author.



Fig. 7.2.

Allan Sekula, *Gravediggers, Kassel (triptych)*, detail (right panel), *Midwife and newborn, Kassel* and *Mother and Premature Baby*, from *Shipwreck and Workers (Version 3 for Kassel)*, 2005–2007. Ink printed on vinyl (print system VUTEK), 26 impressions, each panel 243×338 cm. Collection MACBA, Barcelona. Gift from the artist. © Allan Sekula Studio. Middle image and image below: installation view at *Documenta 11* in Park Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel, 2007. Middle photo by Diarmuid Costello. Photo below by author.

He further combined this work with a night shot showing a midwife in a local women's clinic and a photograph of a young mother briefly allowed to hold her premature baby.¹⁸¹ In the accompanying text that he wrote, a bewildering piece of concrete poetry, Sekula did not provide much explanation.

As brave men shout in the Westerns:
Bring boiling water and clean rags!

Oh children who run down the steps:
You are midwives.¹⁸²

The young mother's gaze wanders out of the frame, as if she is day-dreaming. She compresses her lips into modest laughter.

The photograph represents a mother and child who find themselves still bound together within the primitive stability of what Julia Kristeva identified as the *chora*. *Chora* is a nonplace absorbing, in Kristeva's words, anaclitic facilitation, and which produces laughter.¹⁸³ The mother laughs in response to her infant child's voice, and to reassure the child. In the psychosexual development stage of the *chora*, during the very first weeks and up to three months of a child's life, mother and child laugh together as a dual *it*.¹⁸⁴ The only "place name" that can be given to *chora*, Kristeva argued, is laughter.¹⁸⁵ Laughter therewith becomes constitutive of a space that, as time goes by, starts to define itself ever more independently from the mother and within which the child can grow further.

Kristeva understood the space of *chora* as still "prior to the sign." Jacques Derrida, for his part, saw choral space not so much as prior to the sign but rather as *prior to the face*. Choral space, in Derrida's view, is buccal, in the sense that it is entirely determined by the newborn's mouth on a visage that is otherwise still defaced and disfigured.¹⁸⁶ In *Mother and Premature Baby*, the caring mother turns her left ear close to the machine through which her baby receives oxygen. In the dynamics between her stressed laugh and the baby's state (pure buccality, as Derrida would say), the photographic images present us with something that Roland Barthes has described as the undefined moment of the Neutral, "like the newborn who hasn't yet felt his first emotion."¹⁸⁷ This is a key moment, when there is still a being together that *precedes* the individual distinction through given names. This "time of the not yet," as Barthes called it, contains an enormously constructive potentiality. It is the moment when "within the original nondifferentiation" something only "begins to be sketched, tone on tone, the first differences." The child may, or may not yet, have been given a name. In any case, "*khōra*," according to Derrida, is the "place [*lieu*] of everything" within which one can still say in a murmur, "'save its name' [*sauf son nom; safe, its name*]."¹⁸⁸

Eyes closed, the Filipino midwife on night shift focuses in intense concentration on lifting the newborn that she holds in her hands.¹⁸⁹ (Plate 12) Her scales, prominently displayed in the image, by means of which she may measure the child, is the attribute that makes us think of her as if she were a personification of Lachesis, one of the Moirai or Fates. The solid surface underneath the colorful bath towel on which she may put the baby to rest is a changing pad of barely visible dark blue tissue decorated with yellow stars—as if it were a European flag. It is not a little pool or a bath, as one could perhaps have expected. Instead, she has put on a diaper and warm clothes on the baby, and readied the child for a first start in life. This provides a connection between Sekula's thinking and that of Walter Benjamin. In his essay "Experience and Poverty," Benjamin described how artists such as Paul Klee or Adolf Loos turned their attention away from "the traditional, solemn, noble image of man."¹⁹⁰ Instead, their interest went to "the naked man of the contemporary world who lies screaming like a newborn babe in the dirty diapers of the present."

As soon as the viewer has noticed this interesting parallel as a constitutive component of the image, its meaning shifts further. The immigrant, expert midwife now appears to question and weigh in which Europe this native German baby was born and will eventually grow up. In association with its counterpart, the mother and premature child, we may conclude that Sekula feared the EU project might have been ahead of its time. Although, for him, there seemed to be no doubt it would make it, he felt it needed a lot of further caretaking and nurturing motherly hands. At the same time, however, Sekula's combined presentation of the two newborns and the triptych of the gravediggers gives *Shipwreck and Workers: Version 3 for Kassel* a cyclical dimension. Back in 2007, Sekula expressed a message of hope that Germany, the European country that, in the previous century, had twice lost its moral compass, would set a guiding example when the next sociopolitical challenge would occur. In 2015, under the firm guidance of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany did just that indeed.

Today, in a globalized market economy gone wild, we need photography more than ever for what it is capable to *perform* in front of our eyes. Photography has a multifarious capacity not only to *show* how a transformation process of renewal and rebirth—both collectively and individually—can take place, but also to give us hope and stay visually convinced of its possibility. Let us now return to the still image portrait of Temesghen Berhe. The photograph actively assisted him in accomplishing a "perfect crime"—the doubling of his own vanishing act. His photographic portrait, however, also reverses this act of disappearance and dissociation from the original reality situation. It becomes an instrumental aid for Berhe's reemergence "from the void" as a portrait image,

to stay with Baudrillard's vocabulary. The result is that it becomes possible for the viewer to identify Berhe anew, as a fellow human who desperately wants to join a new community as one of its equal members. Photography thus not only becomes a privileged tool in Berhe's act of reappearance but also concretely assists—like a midwife—in his claim for a right to be reborn.

My tribute to photography's visual power is hardly a sign of naïveté. This boundless admiration for what a photograph can positively perform goes hand in hand with a sharp awareness of the multiple dangers and pitfalls. Photography can betray humans as much as it can help them to find meaningful ways to be reborn. Photographs can actively contribute to stigmatization. They can stereotype people and help speed up the standardization of administrative procedures that are not always to the benefit of those concerned. Photographs can facilitate public officials in distinguishing persons with the "right" passports from others. They allow public authorities to identify and subsequently legitimize individuals they consider eligible for free circulation within a state territory.

It may be time now to pause briefly to explore the following questions: what information does a passport containing a picture of a person really provide? How can one possibly know who people really are based on trying to read their photographed faces? Imagine persons who drew a winning number of what Ayelet Shachar has called the *birthright lottery*—meaning those who are members of a state that provides such a degree of wealth, stability, and respect for fundamental rights that it has a positive impact on their general well-being.¹⁹¹ Imagine further that one of these lucky persons, who is a full member of an affluent society (say, Germany, Sweden, or Norway), does not appear to have a criminal track record, as far as is traceable from the available databases. What if such a seemingly perfect citizen is, for example, a chronic tax evader or a human trafficker of the most brutal type? Why would this person, as a coincidental heir to an entitlement that she largely abuses, have a greater right to enjoy the benefits of an immensely valuable collection of rights and opportunities?

In the light of the sometimes arbitrary decisions with regard to who can enter and then stay in the European Union or not, it would be urgent to complement the present set of criteria—largely based on an old-fashioned, "complex form of property inheritance," as Ivan Krastev argued—with a few new ones.¹⁹² Decisive standards should then be one's loyal contribution to the existing community and one's ethically responsible behavior toward those who are trying to join in order to concur with all their good will. The above exercise would be a difficult one; it would also require a lot of nuance. For, as Carolina Kobelinsky and Stefan Le Courant have pointed out, the smuggling

business is part of a vicious circle created by the European Union itself.¹⁹³ The more the borders are closed, the more aggressive and dangerous smugglers will emerge.

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With this knowledge in mind, let us return to the concrete example of images taken in Calais and investigate the exact ways in which photographs can contribute to seeing human persons in a transfigured way. The major corpus of pictures shot by French artist Bruno Serralongue over time in and around Calais provides that ideal set of study materials, especially the portrait pictures among this body of work. Serralongue's *Calais* series is the result of many trips to and personal encounters in the region, first between 2006 and 2008, and, after a long pause, again from 2015 onward.¹⁹⁴ Over the years, the artist printed a selection of these photographs, for them to "migrate" to us, spectators, as works of art exhibited in public and private galleries or in museum exhibitions.¹⁹⁵ *Calais* now serves as a pioneering example of the delicate exercise of balancing aesthetics and civic skill when photographing the situation in the region for artistic purposes.



Fig. 7.3.
Bruno Serralongue,
*Deux hommes, zone
des dunes, Calais, juillet
2007* [*Two Men, Area
of the Dunes, Calais,
July 2007*], 159×126 cm.
Part of the series *Calais*,
2006–. Ilfochrome
mounted on aluminum,
Plexiglas frame.
© Bruno Serralongue.
Courtesy Air de Paris,
Romainville and Baronian-
Xippas, Brussels.

Central within the earlier cluster of images engaging with the subject is *Deux hommes, zone des dunes, Calais, juillet 2007* [*Two Men, Area of the dunes, Calais, July 2007*].¹⁹⁶ (fig. 7.3) The artist provides no clues that allow us to identify by name the two anonymous men represented in the photograph. This absence of identification options provides a striking contrast with the acclaimed series of pictures made by Thomas Ruff as large tableau photographs in the 1980s. They consist of sixty half-length portraits of young, white persons posing against monochrome backgrounds in various colors.¹⁹⁷ Most of them are looking straight into the camera. The overall lighting is sober and rather cool, and the images have neither been staged nor been manipulated. At first sight, this group of similar-looking people aged twenty-five to thirty-five appears as a prototypical confirmation of what W.G. Sebald named the “total homogenization of Germany as social microstructure” in the aftermath of the “experience of Fascism.”¹⁹⁸ Seen in this light, however, *Portrait (T. Bernstein)* of 1988 can be understood as a potentially provocative counterexample to that homogeneous overall superficial impression. (fig. 7.4)

In what is only seemingly a neutral gesture, Thomas Ruff thus transformed what looks, at first sight, like a banal passport photo into a pictorial photographic portrait that confronts its viewers quite bluntly. “T. Bernstein” clearly identifies as a documented person. There is no reason to doubt that this man is a compatriot of Ruff, enjoying all the same rights that he does. Yet this man’s name hardly comes with a neutral connotation. Bernstein being a typically Jewish-German surname, *Portrait (T. Bernstein)* thus subtly raises questions about layers of meaning underlying the possibly only superficially identifiable photographic surface that is “T. Bernstein.”¹⁹⁹ The same goes for his specific relationship to the photographer who portrayed him, and for his social position in West-German society at that time—just before the Berlin Wall came down. Ruff presented him against a neutral white background, as if he were a plaster bust. The title of the work furthermore suggests that the only certain element Ruff wanted the viewers to know about this man—beyond his photographed face—is his surname.

There is no reason to consider this as an attempt on behalf of the artist to stigmatize T. Bernstein. Rather on the contrary, I want to argue. For since this portrait is part of a much larger group of look-alike photographs, Ruff primarily set out to confront us with the multiple resemblances among all the human faces that he photographed. This predominant focus

Fig. 7.4.
Thomas Ruff, *Portrait (T. Bernstein)*, 1988.
Chromogenic print,
210×165 cm.
© Thomas Ruff.



even tends to suppress any differences among them, of which there are stunningly few. As a result, the psychological inscrutability and the opaqueness of these photo-pictorial surfaces suggest that, from their sheer observation as photographic portraits, little to nothing can be known about a person's individuated interiority.²⁰⁰ The fact that each portrayed person, despite superficial physiognomic resemblance, remains an enigma should not distract us from the conclusion that Ruff requested his viewers to connect with T. Bernstein just as much as with any other of the persons he chose to portray. The underlying demand is that we familiarize with Bernstein as an integral member of the community of identifiable citizens to which all of them, Bernstein included, belong.

Shot almost twenty years later, Bruno Serralongue's *Deux hommes, zone des dunes* erases such a possibility to identify with certainty the duo of men he photographed in the dunes of Calais as fellow citizens. Surely, the decision not to mention their names was inspired by the artist's wish to protect their anonymity—pursued and chased as they were by the local authorities. His position was that of the “chronicler,” “historian,” “poet,” and “portraitist” of the “without-names” [“sans-noms”], as Georges Didi-Huberman has called them—“those, in reality, about whom don't count for society neither their name, nor their speech, nor their gestures, and not even their work.”²⁰¹ We definitely should not conclude that these “Namenlosen” [nameless persons], to borrow from Didi-Huberman's vocabulary once more, were complete strangers to Serralongue. Nor should we derive from this that Serralongue wanted to present these men to us, spectators of his work, as enemy strangers. On the contrary, the artist intended for us to reflect on the fact that people only apprehend strangers *to be* strangers through the mental image they themselves form of them. The stereotypes and caricatures accompanying a photograph are accountable for identifying them *as* strangers.²⁰² We need to “denature” exactly these very stereotypes, according to Roland Barthes, as well as the “repression effects” of them.²⁰³

Upon closely observing *Deux hommes, zone des dunes*, it becomes possible for the spectator to merge sensory experience that is concrete, embodied, and empirical with phantasm-oriented thoughts. These may be geared toward an ideal or even fantastic desire for a reality. For some, this may involve thinking that shabbily dressed men such as the two pictured—who are likely on their way to the United Kingdom—are troublemakers, disturbing peaceful bourgeois life, and thus a nuisance. Others will rationally be aware that these nameless persons are human beings just like all others. Some will respond by starting to look for relevant ways to help or assist them. From the phantasmatic point of view that involves observing these two men in terms of a photographic surface or representation, viewers can add two rather divergent dimensions to this

sensory experience. They can view the two men as heroic pioneers (positively). At the same time, and more negatively (or demonized), others will consider them as part of a threatening, invading horde.

The moral dilemma the two men raise seems hard to resolve on an irrational level. The immediate presence of a large quantity of micro encampments arranged by persons living in inhuman conditions in the immediate vicinity of local citizens' backyards is cause for irritation and fear to some of the local inhabitants. Yet, rationally speaking, many of these people are not just fleeing impossible living conditions in their home country but are also seeking to be reunited with family members or old friends. They are pursuing their dream and, in the process, claiming their right to go after it. What is human society without dreams? Essentially, the two men depicted need to get by in a place where *their* life is under threat. Danger can close in on them like a knot, rapidly and at any moment. They are exposed to "the place that is best to hit the body with a death blow."²⁰⁴ They find themselves in "the place where life is in danger," the Homeric "*to kairion*"—an extremely rich concept the root of which refers to "death," "plunder," and "slaughter," but also to the "heart" as much as to "worry, to be afraid." They could be badly beaten by a human trafficker to whom they owe money. They could fall off a truck or hurt themselves when climbing a fence—not to mention all the horrible diseases and evil conditions that may befall them just from living unprotected outdoors.

Before our very eyes, Serralongue's *Deux hommes, zone des dunes* depicts bare life and impaired citizenship. In the light of these two men's extreme vulnerability, Sekula's abovementioned notebook entry dated January 6, 2007—just six months before Serralongue made his picture—in which he referred to the *Totentanz* of the individuated bourgeois reads as a deeply somber presage. These two men look at Serralongue's camera, and at any individuated bourgeois spectator of the ensuing photograph, in a disarming way. Nonetheless, we know that many will only return their gaze with terrible discomfort. Even in the art gallery, where they will be confronted with just the photograph and not with the two men, some visitors would much rather turn their faces away than continuing to look at such a picture and engage with it. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari traced this mechanism to how racism works visually. Cruel and incompetent as it is, the racist visual gaze "operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face."²⁰⁵

When we overrule this racist mechanism of watching other people's faces, something happens. These two nameless men also appear as if they could be relatives. To the extent that they look so much alike, they could be the reversed mirror image of two white native French men in the narrow-minded or populist sense of that term: one another's copycat. *Deux hommes, zone des dunes* thus confronts its viewers with the

reality that a small change of circumstances may suffice for *their* deplorable fate to eventually befall anyone else. As soon as the stop button is pushed to see them as an immediately recognizable racial subgroup that can easily be disregarded, an emotional mechanism can be set in motion that urges us to take them in as those who we are obliged to accept and include. In this sense, *Deux hommes, zone des dunes*, as a photographic image, filed a resolute claim for radical human equality.

As these two men have no names, the only way to identify them, at least provisionally, is to refer to them as “manikins” or little men—as nobodies. The latter term recalls a famous episode from Homer’s *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus succeeded in misleading the Cyclops Polyphemus. After having sailed his own ship filled with a small group of men from a natural harbor near an island across the edge of the land of the Cyclopes, they enter Polyphemus’s cave. During the introductions, Odysseus tells Polyphemus, who asks him to give his name, that his parents and his friends call him Nobody. When, later in the story, Odysseus and his men blind the Cyclops with a burning stick, Polyphemus cries out loud from pain. To the other Cyclopes, who come to see what is going on at the entrance of his cave and who ask him if anyone is doing harm to him, he replies that “Nobody is killing me by force or treachery.”²⁰⁶ The Cyclopes conclude Polyphemus should be more courageous in bearing what they consider to be an ailment, and they retreat to their own caves. Eventually, this way of fooling Polyphemus allows Odysseus and his men to find a safe escape out of the lethal cave.

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“Giving in-to the name of the other,” as Samuel Weber put it, involves “a great deal.”²⁰⁷ Indeed, the consequences for Polyphemus are enormous. How are we to read the metaphorical dimension of Homer’s epic for today’s situation at Calais? Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno argued that the name *Udeis* can mean either “hero” or “nobody.”²⁰⁸ Even “to modern ears,” they claimed, “*Odysseus* and *Udeis* still sound similar.”²⁰⁹ In their view, it is “conceivable that in one of the ancient dialects in which the story of the return to Ithaca was handed down, the name of the island’s king did indeed sound the same as ‘nobody.’” The hero, Odysseus, therefore “is able to break the spell of his own name.”²¹⁰ “He declares allegiance to himself by disowning himself as Nobody; he saves his life by making himself disappear.”²¹¹ This is a description that aptly summarizes the fates of Temesghen Berhe, Ashak, and their companions.

Slightly earlier in the same episode, Odysseus informed the Cyclops that they are suppliants whose ships have driven off course at sea. He asks Polyphemus to give them a “guest present or otherwise some gift of grace, for such is the right of strangers,” and he warns him, at the

same time, that “Zeus the guest god, who stands behind all strangers with honors due them, avenges any wrong toward strangers and suppliants.”²¹² Odysseus even begs the Cyclops to “respect the gods,” for he knows that the gods are on his side. It is “God, the Wholly Other, [...] it is the divine violence that [...] will have *given* all the first names,” as Derrida commented on Benjamin’s decision to sign his essay on violence (*Gewalt* in German) with his full name, *Walter Benjamin*, close to the end of the concluding sentence “*mag die waltende heißen*” [*may the reigning one be called*].²¹³ In “Prénom de Benjamin,” Derrida specified that, since it is God alone who *gives* first names, to men only the *ability* to name is granted.²¹⁴

Polyphemus, notwithstanding the godly warning, refuses to provide hospitality. He calls them fools, and kills two of Odysseus’s men, whom he devours on the spot. It is upon this monstrous refusal of hospitality that Odysseus, with the gods’ blessing, decides the Cyclops deserves no better than to be informed only about Odysseus’s camouflaged identity—the name Nobody, which saves their lives and ruins that of Polyphemus with the mighty name. “According to a Platonic tautology,” Giorgio Agamben wrote, “which we are still far from understanding, the idea of a thing is the thing itself; *the name, insofar as it names a thing, is nothing but the thing insofar as it is named by the name.*”²¹⁵ In another text, “Sauf le nom,” Derrida engaged in language play that is relevant here. He wrote, in French, “tout sauf le nom.”²¹⁶ This phrase translates as “everything, save the name,” meaning you give everything away on the level of personal information except for your own name.²¹⁷ Simultaneously, it also means, “totally safe, the name.” As Odysseus’s story demonstrates, a name can protect someone from great harm. The gods gave him his first name, but, with their blessing, Odysseus disappeared in the name that he chose to save his life.

“What returns to your name, to the secret of your name, is the ability to disappear *in your name*,” Derrida wrote.²¹⁸ In ancient Greek, the word that Odysseus pronounces is *Outis* (Οὔτις), which literally means absence of existence. As Nicole Lapierre explained, Odysseus says that “he is who-is-not,” or “he who is not caught in a name.”²¹⁹ By using this distance between his identity as a person and the sign that represents him, on which every nominative is built, Odysseus can hide behind a mask. The French language, Lapierre indicated, can clarify this point like no other language. In French, the sentence reads: “c’est *Personne*, mon nom.”²²⁰ Etymologically speaking, the French *personne* stems from the Latin *persona*, meaning “theatre mask.”²²¹ At the same time, it is also “a common name for human, individual, a mortal, and a pronoun for no, none, no one [*aucun*].”²²² Behind each name, Lapierre concluded, a reference, a difference, and an absence is hiding. Vulnerable and inventive, she wrote, the masked Odysseus understands this. From stem to stern,

the Cyclops, for his part, had only seen fire before it turned eternally dark in his mind.

In English, the ambiguity in the translation of *Outis* disappears, as it uses separate terms for the indefinite pronoun “nobody” and the noun “person.” At the same time, this tension in the English language between an implied absence of identity (nobody) and a clear identification of someone or somebody in terms of a person is both interesting and productive. It is said that, on his deathbed, Charles Baudelaire proclaimed the following words before he took his last breath, “Non, cré nom, non!”²²³ The translation would be “No, [sa]cred name, no!” It is the “cry of man,” Blaise Cendrars wrote, of a person who exposed his “naked heart.” The sentence “c’est Personne, mon nom” also contains this ambiguity of a negation. In French, it sounds like “c’est Personne, mon non”—or, “It is Person, my no”—meaning: in refusing my sacred first name, given by the gods, I become somebody, a person. When Sylvain George wrote about Ashak that “Personne ne pourra plus lui échapper” [“Not a single person will ever be able to escape from him anymore”], we can now interpret that, through his act of filming him and writing about him, George helped him to become Somebody—a human body that he himself can no longer escape from but also, and more importantly, that we can no longer run away from.

Writing about his earlier group of photographs in 2017, Bruno Serralongue recalled that, when he provisionally concluded the *Calais* series in 2008, he felt sufficiently reassured that the situation in the area had stabilized.²²⁴ In April 2015, however, harshened socialist government policies under Bernard Cazeneuve and Manuel Valls resulted in the demolition of all the smaller camps and in regrouping everyone around the newly created day center Jules Ferry (which was also demolished in late 2017). Upon hearing this news, Serralongue decided to return to the area. To shape its identity, any newborn child needs to be given a name. Serralongue must have also come to that conclusion about captioning his photographs. Within this group of more recent works around the French state’s incapacity to deal humanely with the shantytown, one portrait stands out: *Ahmed, en route vers le centre de jour Jules Ferry, Calais, jeudi 16 avril 2015* [*Ahmed, On His Way to the Day Center Jules Ferry, Calais, Thursday April 16, 2015*].²²⁵ (Plate 13) Compared to *Deux hommes, zone des dunes* from almost eight years earlier, this photograph marks an important shift. The artist explicitly *identified* the man he portrayed, by means of his first name. The close observer of this photograph will see even more. Shot on a cloudless, sunny day, Serralongue’s picture includes the shadow of his own head—deliberately cast on Ahmed’s body while the artist took the image with his view camera. *Ahmed, en route* thus becomes an impression of the artist’s commitment as he leaves it embedded within the DNA of the photograph itself.

It seems almost as if Serralongue implicitly referred to Susan Sontag's powerful criticism of Sebastião Salgado's *Migrations: Humanity in Transition* project.²²⁶ The problem with this project, she wrote, is not only its "sanctimonious Family of Man-style rhetoric" but also, since it does not name the powerless in its captions, the reduction of the powerless to their sheer powerlessness.²²⁷

A portrait that declines to name its subject becomes complicit, if inadvertently, in the cult of celebrity that has fueled an insatiable appetite for the opposite sort of photograph: to grant only the famous their names demotes the rest to representative instances of their occupations, their ethnicities, their plights.

Certainly, Serralongue did not reveal the names of the two men for the very reasons sketched by Sontag; rather, he wanted to protect their identities and pay tribute to the mutual confidence they had constructed. Yet as time went by and the situation for this type of persons only continued to deteriorate, Serralongue must have realized he had to change tactics. By pushing the button at that moment in time, he marked a place where he and Ahmed were together, facing one another and binding together their respective fates. For a short moment, they shared their Thanatos—their mortality.

To better grasp what this photograph does, I propose to make what is, at first sight, perhaps an unlikely comparison: by considering *Ahmed, en route* as a relic. Seen in this way, the photograph becomes a "memory trace" that brings to life the memory of the past contained within the image as a dormant absence.²²⁸ *Ahmed, en route* "contains the [visual] *engram* from the moment when" Bruno Serralongue acknowledged Ahmed as his equal. Strikingly, Ahmed is wearing a red sweater, blue jeans, and a sleeveless down jacket finished with a white clasp and inner collar. Serralongue, as a French citizen intimately solidarizing with him, thus subtly marked Ahmed's undeniable presence on French soil. At the same time, Ahmed's remarkable tricolor garb points at the country he aspires to travel to: the United Kingdom. The pilgrim who travels far with a relic wants to go and send out a claim for preservation, worship, honoring, and dedication, or even devotion. Serralongue accepted the stick that was thus planted into his native soil, and he requested the same from the spectators observing this photograph.

To observe the picture frontally, one needs to take the same position as the photographer when he made the picture. It is as if every viewer will thus cast their own shadow on Ahmed's photograph. This image thus encourages its viewers to become what Janneke Wesseling has identified as *verticons*, by which she meant receptive, embodied spectators.²²⁹ Such self-reflective works of art possess an internal critic—by which

Wesseling meant the inherent potential the work has to both focus on and prompt the spectator to engage in a dialogue with the work and to activate the reflective potential embedded within the picture's contents. The spectator thus becomes a vital counterpart completing the imagined effect of the artwork. Through this type of spectator contemplation, this imagined effect of the artwork can be carried forward. The spectator helps to shape and even to activate the work's potential impact.²³⁰

In Wesseling's opinion, "how an artwork has meaning [...] reveals itself in the performativity of contemplation."²³¹ In this "interplay of looking," Wesseling concluded, the spectator "is aware of her own gaze."²³² This is foundational for the spectator-related aspects of the theory of photography, particularly in relation to a picture such as *Ahmed, en route*. Ahmed, a man with a name, returns our gaze. Building on Wesseling, one could argue that Ahmed is the gazer within the photograph. As the work's internal critic, he stares at the spectators who, in turn, become his mirror image, his copycat. As a result, the viewers cannot resign themselves to remaining the picture's passive addressees without having to face severe moral dilemmas.

Of course, people can always pretend to be buy off feelings of guilt by donating to charities and NGOs fighting for change and better conditions. It is important to continue doing so. Yet, at the same time, people should not stop short there. On the level of performative action, Ariella Aisha Azoulay's eloquent formulation of the need to develop a civil spectatorship when observing photographs implies that further actions are needed. Civil spectators of a photographic image, she argued, have to employ their "civic skill."²³³ They have to "attempt to anchor spectatorship in civic duty toward the photographed persons who haven't stopped being 'there.'"²³⁴ We may never get to know Ahmed in person yet what matters is the civic claim that his photographic representation puts on us, spectators of his portrait, with regard to his own future and that of his fellow travelers. It is these "dispossessed citizens," Azoulay wrote, "who, in turn, enable the rethinking of the concept and practice of citizenship."²³⁵

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Civil spectatorship indeed implies that we come to see our perceptual relationship to the subjects depicted and to the artist that produces the work in juridical terms. Ariella Aisha Azoulay conceived of this legal relationship as a contractual one. For her, photographs operate in terms of signing a contract involving three parties: the artist, the individual depicted in the image, and the spectator. I want to build on this logic by going a step further, outside of the private and individual sphere of a contract, and into the public and collective domain of claiming fundamental

rights. Let us, to start out, apply Azoulay's reasoning to *Ahmed, en route*. Signing a legally valid contract implies that all parties enter its terms on an equal basis, meaning that each contracting party can be named and identified. It is true that Bruno Serralongue rendered Ahmed a certain identity, an identification that the photographer did not yet grant to the two anonymous men in the dunes eight years earlier.

The proviso that all names of the signatories to the contract need to be known thus appears to be met at least in part, as Ahmed's surname is missing. More importantly, however, there is another basic premise for contracting an enforceable document that will likely not easily be fulfilled. To obtain a legally valid contract, it is mandatory that each signatory represents an equivalent value as a conscious subject who signs the contract's terms because of free will. Obviously, this potential lack of consensus or mere agreement of all parties involved is the Achilles's heel of Azoulay's civil contract theory for photography. Ahmed and Bruno Serralongue can be considered as expressing their agreement regarding their intention to jointly come up with solutions allowing them to meaningfully coexist in a shared civil space. It is not at all hard to imagine that a potential third party involved, a xenophobic European spectator possessing an EU passport, is not into civil behavior and readily disagrees with this plan. For such people, the consensual contract theory, a constitutive element of private law, is not enough. They will simply not feel the need to respect the bilateral contract concluded between Serralongue and Ahmed. It will take a much stronger enforcement tool of international public law to make the unwilling comply with the rules of fair play and civic being-together-in-the-world.

When I first wrote the above lines in the spring of 2017, I felt hesitant to draw such conclusions. As a young law student back in the late 1980s, our professors simply framed the so-called *plein gré* or *libre volonté*, the *Willensfreiheit*, as an infallible basic premise of contract theory. For a long time, I continued to believe in this ideal—even though the Brexit vote had taken place already. The real number of EU citizens who are overtly xenophobic, so I told myself, remains marginal. The decisive turning point for abandoning that thought was the outcome of the spring 2018 Italian elections, which demonstrated a clear shift to the right with a substantial rise in votes for soon-to-become Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini's far-right League. Confronted with Serralongue's *Ahmed, en route*, it now seems evident that more and more EU citizens would no doubt categorically refuse the suggestion that they and Ahmed are supposed to be signing an imaginary contract for peaceful cohabitation within the EU constellation on a fully egalitarian basis.

As underscored by the present book, there hardly seems a basis for proposing a reversal of this grim reality. Instead, and here I also

want to recall Roland Barthes's later work as discussed in Chapter Five, I propose a shift in thinking that builds on the value of Azoulay's important contractual theory while simultaneously trying to circumnavigate its pitfalls. The plan, in other words, is to find a way to get around all those individuals who will never consent to signing it. The civil contract-based theory for photography as developed by Azoulay works well for those who adhere to democratic values and who find it self-evident to respect legal checks and balances. Yet it remains entirely impotent to coerce those who do not find these mechanisms relevant. When contracts fail because no consensus ad idem can be obtained, ambitions need to change focus. The absence of a reasonable contract with performative force can shift toward arguing in favor of renewing or inventing complementary fundamental rights. This involves a resolute shift away from the barely manageable free will of individuals toward installing collective responsibility via legislative bodies. At the same time, these legislative bodies will need to grant these fundamental rights to individuals rather than granting them to clusters of persons as a group. The simple example of the United Kingdom now claiming its right to be reborn as a sovereign nation, independent from the European Union, may suffice to demonstrate that the practical implementation of this right to be reborn is a delicate matter. For only the future will tell who, eventually, will benefit from this supposed collective rebirth of the United Kingdom.

In *The Body Politic. A Visual Declaration of Human Rights*, Azoulay focused on the historical phenomenon of the strike in order to document what she identified as "rights in action."²³⁶ She selected a set of forty-eight photographs that invite the viewer to observe fundamental rights at the time when protesters imagined and claimed them. Azoulay thus proposed there:

the right to leisure, to decent wages, to friendship, to a nurturing future, as well as aspirations for better working conditions, food for the starving (even if those who starve today are the enemies of yesterday), and the right to vote and to shape the way they are ruled as well as the way others rule in their names.²³⁷

And, as she added on the same occasion, "the right to give birth safely."

The earliest pictures represent Suffragettes' actions in London and at Long Branch Casino in New Jersey in the 1910s. The claim for these newly imagined or re-demanded rights, according to Azoulay, informs the strikers' resistance to a world order based on a body politic that takes the differential sovereignty of nation-states as a given premise. It is the world order that produced political leaders who established the United Nations, and who in 1948 proclaimed the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights that we continue to cherish today. In the text that accompanies this cluster of photographs, Azoulay proposed to object to this very world order, because, to this day, it perpetuates “colonial and imperial regimes,” as well as the “ongoing and unacknowledged abuses” that come in its wake. This systemic order, over the past few decades, has left ever-increasing numbers of people disappointed. To paraphrase Mary Shelley, like Victor Frankenstein, we bore a monster. Something went wrong in the assembling process, and the machinery will have to be disassembled before a viable reassembly will be possible.

Despite this dim perspective on today’s reality, Azoulay’s message remains replete with hope. Both in installation context and in the poster version of the work, she juxtaposed her selection of photographed strikers with nineteen photographs of “lovers” as originally included in *The Family of Man*—yet in a mirrored way, and in a light gray tone.²³⁸ In the accompanying text, Azoulay explained that she selected these “visual afterimages” from *The Family of Man* as a background to portray those who have suffered from the present world order, yet who also stood up to resist it simply by being “lovers of life.” They were doing their best to change their lives and sought ways to transform the means of their abuse into sources of empowerment. Committed to improving their own lives, they also aimed to improve the lives of others. For Azoulay, it was crucial to argue that the people shown in *The Body Politic* not only engaged in private love with their partners; they were simultaneously intimately and politically engaged in other activities as well. This, she suggested, releases *The Family of Man*’s “lovers” photographs from the individuated bourgeois cocoon, in which the exhibition’s curator imprisoned them. Bearing this in mind, we can view them in more ways than “solely along the course that goes from courting to wedding.”

Against all odds, the strikers, so Azoulay says, “continued to dream.” They sought ways to “imagine different political horizons for being-together.” Now imagine this wild idea: the European Commission sets into motion a procedure that eventually leads to a proclamation of the fundamental right to be reborn within the European Union, provided one meets certain basic premises such as not having been convicted for a major felony in one’s country of origin. The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers readily approve the proposal, after which the EU regulation in question immediately takes effect in all member states. This signifies a shift from an aesthetic model of spectatorship to a sociopolitical, even juridical, concept of spectatorship. Through his photograph, the person Ahmed is claiming respect for his fundamental right to be reborn—a right of which the implementation can be asserted by the European Court of Human Rights, even in the absence of a large part of the European population’s agreement on the matter.

In the real world, this utopian scenario is all but likely to happen, of course. Yet it is exactly because of this very utopian character of such legal aspirations that *Ahmed, en route*—as a photographic representation—calls for an *imagined* community of resolutely equal human beings. As Didier Eribon has convincingly argued, it may be vain to think that the working classes will continue to drive these changes.²³⁹ Although the present book cannot provide an answer to how societal change will eventually come about, it is certain that, in the end, people *will* have to undo the nineteenth-century societal model of a planet of nation-states that they inherited, including the often arbitrary borders that come with it. The supposed “universality” of fundamental rights remains no more than hollow, woolly language when prescribed by political leaders who pretend to speak for “everyone,” yet who only perpetuate the differential ruling of populations and groups under the same oppressive regimes.

As Azoulay concluded, “universality” needs to be “prescribed, demanded, or claimed” by a diversely composed group of “concrete people” that faces “those who betray them,” even if they turn out to be their democratically elected leaders.²⁴⁰ Only then a new body politic can emerge to replace this failing system by a re-empowered mechanism of international law that provides clear rights and duties—and in return, global protection for all—with the inclusion of Earth itself. This will involve collective claims for fundamental rights beyond the contractual theory, and, subsequently, a sustained effort to make sure that the agreed upon universal declarations of fundamental rights can be enforced in court.

For now, since a world or universal citizenship remains a faraway dream, photographs and video works that seek to activate the civic skills of those who observe them are therefore both necessary and meaningful. Such photographs urge their spectators to imagine themselves as *civilians* of art—in the old French sense of *civilien*, the one who really *practices* civil law. With *Ahmed, en route*, Bruno Serralongue put his bets on the long-term potential of his photographs. As W.J.T. Mitchell also pointed out, contrary to excluding human beings from a territory—often a very lucrative governmental business today—the anathema on the free circulation of images is much less easy to maintain.²⁴¹ Just like racism, iconophobia or the fear of idols is eternal. Yet images have always managed to trespass boundaries and have often more easily succeeded in continuing their lives than human beings themselves.

Visual proposals for true solidarity—such as photographically expressed by Sekula, George, and Serralongue—do live on. The ideals embodied in these artists’ pictures will continue to haunt people in the future as well. This also represents the long-term power of their photographs. They radically imagined a new model for living together in an egalitarian relationship of a truly “shared humanity,” as Philip Cole had it.²⁴² No one knows where the two men dwelling in the Calais

dunes in the summer of 2007 are now. One may only hope that they and, likewise, Ahmed have safely reached the United Kingdom—that they have found work and built a new life there (and sorted out their legal papers). Yet, since we don't know, their photographed portraits have come to transgress these persons' earthly existence. These images now embody a desire for universal world citizenship on an egalitarian basis. In other words, even if it remains fully uncertain whether these men have been capable of effectively claiming and executing their right to be reborn, there can be no doubt that they visualize what Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, has framed in terms of a making a claim to this "second birth."²⁴³ The impulse to begin something new on our own initiative and to set something into motion, she wrote, needs to be understood as a response to man's initial birth.²⁴⁴ It is a natural, inborn way for humans to seize freedom, a prompting into action by a beginner who therewith intends to become "somebody."²⁴⁵

Both Sylvain George and Bruno Serralongue did not just present us randomly photographed or filmed surfaces of faces. They portrayed persons whom they met and bonded with. The visual power of photographic images such as *Ahmed, en route* or George's extended focus on Temesghen Berhe is impressive. As both relics of a lost life and the threshold of a new one, these images of portrayed people encourage their spectators to sympathize with them and to stop being afraid in order to collectively engage in finding solutions. As works of art, they contribute to a change of mindset for those viewers open to studying their portraits as civil spectators and who acknowledge their fundamental right to be reborn. Unfortunately, their moral impact as a work of art is directly proportional to their powerlessness in real life. For that reason, as both Serralongue and George have demonstrated, it is essential not only to identify their faces as impaired citizens but also to properly name these men—each one of them and not only those who acquire a certain fame. Arendt's rather bitter comment is relevant here: "the chances of the famous refugee are improved just as a dog with a name has a better chance to survive than a stray dog who is just a dog in general."²⁴⁶

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Persons who mutually call themselves by their given names take a major first step in accepting each other's existence as human beings. This is also the powerful message that Daniela Ortiz and Xóse Quiroga conveyed in the end credits of *Tribute to the Fallen*. They state that the work is in honor not only of Samba Martine but also of Idrissa Diallo, Osamuyia Akpitaye, Jonathan Syzalima, Mohamed Abagui, Alik Manukyan (who all died either on an Iberia airplane or in the same immigrant detention center as Martine), and the thousands who died at the borders. In *Noir*

inconnu [wanderer], Sylvain George did something similar. The short text entitled “Piece of floating space 3” starts as follows:

Recollect one by one the names of the dead: Ivan, Magdy, Khaihullah, Tarek, Louam Beyene, Chulan Zhang Liu, John Maïna, Baba Traore, Karim Ibrahim, Malik ‘Nour’ Nurulain, Mamadou-Alpha Diallo, Ismaëla Deh, Taminou Derman[...]

«34 361[...]»²⁴⁷

The same pounding text thus ends:

Petition
The name is up to you.
Petition.

«No names in the streets»²⁴⁸

The exclusionary model toward which the entire world seems to be developing will promote more comprehensive and more subtle blocking of undesired people’s free movements. This is exactly the opposite from the ideals articulated in the Schengen Agreement—or, at least, from what people were made to believe when the Agreement was signed. It is striking to observe this list of individual names, and to realize that only more people continue to die. This should bring our discussion to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s profound skepticism of putting too much faith in the power of the proper name alone. People entering a community as newcomers should be granted recognition by that community, but also, as individuals bringing in their own unique names; they should be viewed as people carrying a collective potential.

Rather than being determined by someone’s individuality or name, this potential is grounded in her capacity to create “lines of flight” toward what may be considered “dividual” among humans rather than individual.²⁴⁹ The “*Dividual*,” for Deleuze and Guattari, is formed by capacities of humans that can be truly shared between them. They are powers that only generate through collective communality, not through exclusively celebrating individuality. Concretely, this means that, in addition to respecting someone’s proper name (which we have to continue to do), the absolute togetherness of a space in which it did not yet matter who bears which name must also be remembered: the motherly, *dividual* space that every person has known before becoming an individual—that of the *chora*. In that space of radical *dividuality*, or radical equality, it does not matter what your face looks like. It is there

as well that the germs of a radical hospitality, as imagined separately from the failing idea of a shared humanity, can take shape.

Building on similar lines of thought, Jacques Rancière convinced his readers when he wrote that, today, the key question is no longer that of immigration but instead that of circulation. For him, the entire debate about “the intolerable” needs to shift, toward what Rancière called “the State” itself.²⁵⁰ For the real threat of our era, he specified, is “the way how the right to circulate is rigidifying.” Capital circulates globally at a dizzying speed while the free movement of human bodies becomes increasingly restricted. Only a supranational level can conceive of these matters properly, with true respect for fundamental rights. Thinking this through and proceeding to action will imply breaking a consensus, said Rancière—the one defined by Azoulay, in *Potential History* (2019), as complicit with regimes of violence. This break will hit the foundations of the Western philosophy of law, which are grounded in liberal political theory.

An inviolable principle underlying the liberal philosophy of law is to postulate a moral equality of all human beings before the law. Each person is understood to be a legal subject for whom—to be equal in the face of the law—abstraction is made from their human identities such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. This is the famous blindfold or the veil of ignorance that philosopher John Rawls regarded as foundational to the notions of justice and equality.²⁵¹ However, this moral equality depends—paradoxically, as Mitchell demonstrated while referring to Philip Cole, among others—on “philosophies of exclusion” and on the policing of borders to protect existing liberal policies based on such theories.²⁵² Equality, in its present-day social definition, is articulated concretely in the notion of citizenship. As conceived today, citizenship stops at the border. As a result, the foundational myth of today’s Western liberal law philosophy has come under new kinds of pressure in a time when the borders have become zones of increasing violence and despair, and when a world of supposedly perfectly functioning nation-states—in which each individual is supposed at least to have one passport and thus possess a valid citizenship to one country—is increasingly suffering from the effects of a deficient condition.

Citizenship only works as a foundational concept of equality, justice, and universal validity in a world in which all nations function on a sufficiently performant level and offer comparable comfort and wealth to the citizens of each nation. The present state of the world, however, seems to be drifting further away from that situation. The idea that each human person can possess a well-defined, self-containing monadic subjectivity and satisfied identity as a national of any country has become, for too many humans, inapplicable. The reality is that there is merely a too small set of nations on this planet of which most persons would like to be a



Fig. 7.5.
Thomas Ruff, *Portraits*,
1986–1988. Chromogenic
prints, 210×165 cm.
Installation view, Museum
Folkwang, Essen, 2002.
© Thomas Ruff.

citizen. Let us look once more at an installation shot of Ruff’s work, this time representing a photograph of T. Bernstein taken two years earlier, in 1986. (fig. 7.5) The well-balanced presentation of each image is striking, providing the effect of a certain serenity, stability, peace, and rest—even if this may only eventually be an apparent or superficial impression, and the result of an artist’s attempt to slightly mislead his spectators. All the same size and hung at equal distances from one another, each portrait presents a monadic, well-defined entity—even if, once again, that does not disclose much about the real identity of the portrayed individuals. When compared to Serralongue’s *Calais* photographs, however, it becomes apparent that Serralongue works with variable sizes. (see figs. I.1–3) Serralongue also has the habit of hanging his pictures at different heights—thus emphasizing a multipolar viewing experience that introduces a degree of instability. (fig. 7.6) The captions added account for a different narrative, one that immediately makes the developed discourse appear to be less self-evident and more fragmented.

For Mitchell, it is through the trial-and-error methods of such presentations that we may be capable of “enabling the production of new, self-generated images and words to articulate the common interests of



Fig. 7.6.
Two installation views from the exhibition *Bruno Serralongue. Campfires, Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2010*.
© Bruno Serralongue.

immigrants, both legal and illegal.”²⁵³ This should be geared toward generating “new situations and performances” rather than creating “new icons.” This performative strategy of the visual work of art is one that Allan Sekula described as creating the effect of a disassembled movie.²⁵⁴ A key example is his daring presentation of *Fish Story* at Documenta 11 in Kassel (2002), an installation strategy to which the curatorial team of *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus* stayed true as much as possible when installing four chapters from *Fish Story* at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies.²⁵⁵ (see figs. 1.5–6, 1.2, and 3.8) The alternation of high- and low-hanging images and their French *Salon*-like presentation—avoiding viewing everything at eye level—are two similarities that are shared with how Serralongue exhibits his pictures. Although it is possible to take in the work all at once, this way of viewing it is not what creates a decisive impact on the visitors. Sekula’s intention was that the images and their captions should inflect their spectators’ minds. One needs to walk from photograph to caption panel to understand the deeper meanings of each image—and Sekula provided quite some text materials to be read along with them.

Mitchell went as far as to suggest that the political message to be taken from observing such works may imply that we will have to reinvent a new form of Rawls’s veil of ignorance. Both Mitchell and Martin Jay have referred to France as the cradle of an enlightened liberalism that took the impartiality of jurisdiction as one of its core concepts. This very impartiality, Jay explained, was “required by the new urban, secular, bourgeois culture of the early modern period.”²⁵⁶ In a time that individuated bourgeois culture, to refer to Sekula once more, finds itself in a profound crisis, a thorough reconception of the veil of ignorance may be necessary, as Mitchell argued, “in order to suspend the divisive forces of identity politics, racial, ethnic, and religious schisms typified by that other veil, the one worn by women that has been so toxic within French political culture.”²⁵⁷ Jay, who built his argument on Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, brought to mind how the blindfolding of Lady Justice has implied that justice becomes reduced to law. As a result, justice is denied a specific freedom, which is that of “the ability of the particular, the unique, the incommensurable, the improper to escape from the dominating power.”²⁵⁸

To produce this reduction, Lady Justice must be veiled. If not, she will never be able to make her judgment, nor will she be able to subsume each individual case presented to her under a general principle. Instead, she will base her judgment on immediate visual perceptions of irreducible singularities, and possibly even rush headlong to her judgment, thus preventing her from walking cautiously into the future. The fool who blindfolds the goddess Justice in one of the illustrations included in Sebastian Brant’s *Das Narrenschiff* (1494) “may have known what he

was doing,” as Jay wrote.²⁵⁹ Still, a Justice that relies too exclusively on her own blindness, and who is too keen to enforce it via the cut of her sword—which Jay connected to the martial, patriarchal aspect of the allegory of Justice—forgets that she has a female body blessed with a softening, nuancing gaze. The ideal goddess, Lady Justice, said Jay, has two faces at the same time. From time to time, she lifts the blindfold, and registers what she sees. She quickly puts the fold back in place, and then she judges only. Perhaps, in early-twenty-first-century Western political culture, Justice has kept her veil too firmly tied to her face, and, consequently, she lost her sense of nuance. In Mitchell’s view, the presently swiftly unrolling global “road of militarization and racist schemes of national security is a one-way street to global fascism and anarchy.”²⁶⁰

How to try to counter collectively such a doom scenario is a key question of the highest urgency. The challenges are huge (23#). During my numerous travels to this home of enlightened liberalism, France, I was struck by what I encountered one early morning in the port of Noirmoutier in the early summer of 2018. Local fishermen had installed a range of banners protesting the imminent arrival of an environmentally destructive wind farm consisting of sixty-two turbines. The French state had endorsed the project, even though the French *Caisse des dépôts* only holds 10 percent of the shares. Largely financed by the French taxpayer and French consumers, the project is to the larger financial benefit of the French semipublic ENGIE (47 percent of the shares) and EDP Renewables (43 percent), a worldwide leader in the sector of renewable energies. EDP Renewables’ main shareholder is *Energias de Portugal SA* (EDP), of which the Chinese public consortium China Three Gorges is the principal shareholder.²⁶¹ Amid the desperate resistance of the local communities to the larger forces of the global economy, which are completely out of their control and from which the state authorities do not appear to protect them, I observed an extremely skillful fisherman, unmistakably of sub-Saharan descent, unloading his boat’s catch. Of the numerous photographs I made of him, I share one taken at daybreak, when the rusty boat was about to leave the harbor for its home base, Lorient. As Mitchell wrote lucidly: “the objective will not be merely to change the way people see immigrants, but to change the way they see themselves.”²⁶²

Fifth Deadly Sin: ENVY or VAINGLORY (*acedia, id est anxietas seu taedium cordis, et conodoxia, id est jactancia seu vana Gloria*). This is Mr Everybody, the man in the street, the perfect citizen of a democracy, the man who wears mass-produced clothes, eats mass-produced food, kisses by the clock and owns a little 5 h.p. car with a registered licence-plate. He is undistinguished and indistinguishable in every way. He votes. It was Gogol who identified him as the latest personification of the Devil, who tries to pass himself off as your fellow creature, your brother. He is the cuckold of the twentieth century! He is universal, he says. And that is the danger. Watch out, Blaise, there is a lot of talk of making a United States of Europe and Soviet of the East, and they will not want any more free citizens of the world, like you.

Blaise Cendrars, *Planus* [1948], ed. and trans. Nina Rootes (London: Peter Owen, 1972), 116. Original emphasis.



The Search Project (Continued)

5:21 a.m. #fishing #boat leaving #port of @l'Herbaudière @Noirmoutier-en-l'Île after having finished unloading the catch of the night, for immediate #sale at the #fishmarket [la criée] on the quay.

#AlmostBastilleDay #AnnaMammMariLorient #handsomeman

Chapter 8

Fools & Rights: Leaves for an Illustrated Reader

In the aftermath of striation, the sea reimparts a kind of smooth space, occupied first by the “fleet in being,” then by the perpetual motion of the strategic submarine, which outflanks all gridding and invents a neonomadism in the service of a war machine still more disturbing than the States, which reconstitute it at the limit of their striations. The sea, then the air and the stratosphere, become smooth spaces again, but, in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980], trans. Brian Massumi [1987] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 480.



Main entrance hall of #hotel Le Meurice @Calais
Framed engraving of an imagined fixed #link by @HubertClerget (1818–1899),
based on the project by @AiméThoméDeGamond
#winter #fadedglory #dirt #mold



Fig. 8.1.

Left wall: partial view of Allan Sekula, *Crew, Pilot and Russian Girlfriend (Novorossiysk)*, 1999–2000/2010, a sequence of ten framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm; together with *Good Ship (Limassol) 1* and *Bad Ship (Limassol) 2*, 1999–2000/2010, a diptych of two framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm; all photographs part of Sekula's *Ship of Fools*, 2010, and combined with A2 pink wall text no. 4, saying "The *Global Mariner* had to be a real ship functioning in an exemplary way, to be the Good Ship that social justice demanded other

ships should and could be, but it was also an empty vessel carrying nothing but ballast and a message."; and with selected "objects of interest" from Sekula's *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013, installed in three vitrines. Back wall: partial view of Bruno Serralongue's *Carnival of Independence, Juba*, 2011. Installation view of the exhibition *Oceans and Campfires: Allan Sekula and Bruno Serralongue*, San Francisco Art Institute, 2011–2012. © Photo: Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Bruno Serralongue and Allan Sekula Studio.

A good decade into the new millennium—while working on his uncompleted *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013)—Allan Sekula came to reconsider *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* as a key work of reference within his oeuvre. With Bruno Serralongue, he realized the exhibition *Oceans and Campfires* in San Francisco (winter 2011–2012), curated by Hou Hanru. (fig. 8.1) Both artists, as mentioned, opted for an intermingled display of their works. Sekula presented the totality of Part Two, "Ship of Fools" from *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* together with a small selection of items from *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum*, which he positioned in specially constructed glass cases. For the Part Two, "Ship of Fools" pictures, he opted for a wall presentation in the form of a smoothly unfolding sequence. (fig. 8.2; see also fig. 3.3) Alternation of



Fig. 8.2.

Foreground (left): Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," 1996/1998. Partial view: ten Cibachrome photographs, framed measures 28×36 cm. Foreground (right): Bruno Serralongue, *Cahiers (août–septembre 2003)*, *Carquefou* [*Notebooks (August–September 2003)*, *Carquefou*]. Lower level (background): partial view of Sekula's *Crew*, *Pilot and Russian*

Girlfriend (Novorossiysk), 1999–2000/2010, a sequence of ten framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm, part of *Ship of Fools*, 2010. Installation view of the exhibition *Oceans and Campfires: Allan Sekula and Bruno Serralongue*, San Francisco Art Institute, 2011–2012. © Photo: Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Bruno Serralongue and Allan Sekula Studio.

two photographs placed slightly higher with two in a switched position just below created the effect of a moderate sea's regular wave rhythm.

This way of proceeding is reminiscent of Marcel Broodthaers's *Bateau Tableau* (1973), a sequence of eighty color slides that is part of a larger group of works also comprising the film *A Voyage on the North Sea* and a booklet bearing the same title (1974). *Bateau Tableau* contains images depicting eighty fragments or different views of the same anonymous and unsigned late-nineteenth-century painting that was in the artist's possession.²⁶³ Broodthaers reproduced the same images in the booklet, which he subsequently filmed and projected as a silent movie lasting four minutes. By multiplying the reproduction of reproduced realities, he generated an allegorical reflection on the impossibility to grasp reality empirically from one single, overarching angle. Broodthaers's complex

way of representing reality in this montage was intended to make the viewer understand that reality itself is always multidimensional, and that this explains why different people may have a very distinct take on the same reality.

Broodthaers forced us to experience the work as if we were sailing on a ship, going up and down on the waves, and for that reason always having different parts of the scene in or out of view. Much like his fellow artist, whom he considered a key reference, Sekula encouraged the viewers to experience Part Two, “Ship of Fools” as if they were aboard the *Renoir*, softly going up and down with the ferry’s pitching as it traverses the Channel’s waters. Like Broodthaers, Sekula also wished to imply that spectators of the work become aware that specific parts of the photographically constructed scene inevitably either enter or disappear from view. The result of this perception exercise is a viewer’s contemplative experience that involves a heightened self-consciousness—that of an embodied spectator (verticon), as Wesseling would say.

The inherent darkness of the *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* pictures, which is a logical visual effect of the Cibachrome print, adds an enigma to the images. This mysterious aura is enhanced further by the mirror effect of the glass in which they are framed, and which makes them difficult to photograph in an installation context, because the viewers always find themselves reflected in the photographs. As spectators unavoidably seem to be involved in a process of coping with the dynamic mirror impact of their own gaze, Sekula appears to have suggested that there is no bodily escape possible from the subject matter of Part Two, “Ship of Fools.” Metaphorically, viewers who engage with this work find themselves *aboard* the ship of fools. All are implicated in securing its safe passage at Dover harbor, as indicated by the final photograph of the sequence, entitled *Sea France Renoir* [Engine room video, approaching Dover] (33). The only imaginary way out would be to metaphorically jump over the railing by prematurely breaking off the viewing experience of this group of images—with the likely fatal consequence of, virtually, drowning.

As became clear from his reinstallation of Part Two, “Ship of Fools” in San Francisco (2011) and in Vancouver (2012), Sekula wanted the audience of his works to keep this sequence in mind as a set of pictures that he liked to reuse in new constellations. (see also fig. 3.4) The San Francisco hanging differed from its previous installments in Calais and Valence (1998), where he had opted for a more *striated* sequence—to borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology as mentioned in the quotation that accompanies the opening doodle of this chapter (24#).²⁶⁴ In 1998, Sekula felt inspired by the imaginary suggestion of a more agitated Channel crossing. (figs. 8.3–4) Both in Calais and Valence, the display suggested abrupt waves of varying intensity. In the 2017 Barcelona

presentation, we as curators opted for this original striated wave, thus visualizing a rather rough and less accessible sea. (see fig. 3.2)

More than just corresponding to Sekula's initial plan, we felt that it better reflected the challenging political and social momentum that France and the United Kingdom—and with them, the entire European Union—was, and is, facing. In Chapter Five, I already mentioned Sekula's boundless fascination for border zones, as may also be deduced from a published page of his notebooks, in which he reflected on land borders as binary and sea borders as, inevitably, multiple.²⁶⁵ Seen in that light, the present problem with the Channel border is that France and the United Kingdom have wanted to pretend that or act as though the border is no more than just an issue that can be dealt with in a binary way—by making bilateral agreements between the two nations. But the



Fig. 8.3.

Partial installation view of Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, 1996/1998. Left wall: detail of the edge of *Dockers loading sugar ship, Calais*, framed triptych, 51.8×200 cm, part of Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme"; followed by the third bilingual text panel, which introduces Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous"; underneath: chair with public library copy of French edition

of Katherine Anne Porter, *La nef des fous*. The sequence continues with the first seven photographs of Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," framed measures 28×36 cm. As presented at the exhibition *Voyage, de l'exotisme aux nonlieux*, Musée de Valence, summer 1998. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Photo by Allan Sekula. © Allan Sekula Studio.



Fig. 8.4.
Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, 1996/1998.
Two partial views of the work's first installation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Calais, fall 1998. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Photos by Allan Sekula.
© Allan Sekula Studio.



Brexit saga, once again, has made visible how much the so-called English Channel is embedded in a larger area covering multiple actors, such as Belgium and the Netherlands. These are countries from which not only the traffic in persons expanded exponentially over the past several years, but which are also likely to suffer greatly from the economic consequences of Brexit.

Compared to his later photographic sequence *Ship of Fools* (2010), Sekula saw Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” somewhat elusively, as a *previous iteration* of this newer work.²⁶⁶ In an email to Vancouver curator Cate Rimmer, he explained that the older sequence, bearing the same title,

combined very well with this more recent piece. He concluded his message that he felt it was timely to reshow this older work now, “especially in light of [Jean-Luc] Godard’s ‘Film Socialisme.’” This film, released in 2010, ends with the following sentence: “Quand la loi n’est pas juste la justice passe avant la loi” [“When the law is not fair, justice passes before the law”].²⁶⁷ This call for civil disobedience, containing the idea that some laws cannot help but be broken, no doubt must have appealed to Sekula. As argued by Herman Asselberghs, Godard’s pedagogy is a dogged one, which wags a finger without explaining what the lesson is.²⁶⁸ Sekula’s work frequently received irked reactions, much like, it seems, Godard’s later work.

More interesting, however, are the content-related similarities between both their bodies of work. *Film Socialisme*, as Asselberghs explained, pairs two words. Put together, they account for an elusive correlation—or a possible association.²⁶⁹ For Asselberghs, film and socialism are two nineteenth-century inventions sharing some inherent similarities: they appeal to the individual, they have the potential to mobilize the masses, they project a potential world, and they strive for a transformation of reality. They also share a sense of past glory and illusions squandered. For *Film Socialisme*, Godard selected two central locations to start with, a cruise ship (the *Costa Concordia*) and a gas station, thus staging a dialectics of sea and land that came close to Sekula’s own interests. Godard further put into question the issue of providing English subtitles for his film. He rearranged the English subtitles in such a way that the entire subtitling has become inaccurate: they are fragmentary, and sometimes start only before or after a character has spoken.²⁷⁰

Godard spoke about this use of English in terms of the “Navajo, Comanche, Cheyenne (etc.) English translation,” putting into question the imperialist predominance of the English language in our present-day world.²⁷¹ The subtitles thus come to function as “free” and “poetic echoes” of the original dialogue. To this programmatic statement of creating a stammering and stuttering echo of the original dialogues, Godard added a quotation from Stendhal (dated November 26, 1834) on the back cover of his book *Film Socialisme*: “Dialogue, foutre!” [“Dialogue, fuck!”]. The book includes the alarming phrase “Quo vadis Europa” [“Whither are you going Europa”], followed by a sarcastic reflection on fraternity, liberty, and equality.²⁷² Gilles Deleuze described Godard’s way of proceeding in terms of “the method of BETWEEN, ‘between two images,’ which dies away with all cinema of the One.”²⁷³ As he added, “it is the method of AND, ‘this and then that,’ which does away with all the cinema of Being = is.”

Cryptic as this may seem, it is Godard’s method of *between and* that I want to take with us to build up to the final chapters of this book. Some elements of this approach are reminiscent of what Joseph

Kickasola called Krzysztof Kieślowski's aesthetics of intersection.²⁷⁴ Achille Mbembe's summary of the Dogon Cosmogonies also proved helpful for grasping, even if only tentatively, what Godard is after. In these African cosmogonies, movement, flows (of people and nature), and crossroads are what matter most.²⁷⁵ The intensities of these flows, so Mbembe said, intersect and interact with other flows, while also taking on new forms as they intensify further. Thus, movement generates diversions, conversions, and intersections that are more important than points, lines, and surfaces. The latter, the cardinal reference for Western geometrics, represent separatist power relations that we have come to understand as problematic. A political geometry built, instead, on intersecting flows would bring about very different conceptions of borders. According to Deleuze, Godard's method is grounded in always bridging the interstice between one image and another—as in weaving. That approach proves inspirational for thinking and inventing new social patterns for a Europe that does not interest Godard any longer, as he stated in an interview.²⁷⁶

*

The well-hinged connection between Sekula's two sequences *Ship of Fools* (2010) and Part Two, "Ship of Fools" obviously finds itself reflected in their identical title choice. But Sekula intended to build an even larger historical arc leading not only much further back in time but also to other writers and artists. Choosing this title was, first, a tribute to Sebastian Brant's *Das Narrenschiff* (1494).²⁷⁷ In addition, Sekula may have had several other references in the back of his mind, including Plato's *The Republic*, Josse Bade, Ted Kaczynski, and Léon Degand. Much closer to home, however, as well as to Sekula's own world of thought, the title "Ship of Fools" enabled him to key *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* to the controversial novel *Ship of Fools* (1962) by the American author Katherine Anne Porter. Sekula fondly admired Porter's book, and often referred to it in conversation in the later years of his life as he remained impressed by its topicality. The novel focuses on a rather heterogeneous group of ship passengers who have in common that they all "believe that they are going home"; instead, as it turns out, they are sailing toward "the near-collapse of modern civilization."²⁷⁸

One of Porter's biographers has described *Ship of Fools* as "a variation on *The Odyssey* and a classic satire in the spirit of Erasmus, Swift, and Laurence Sterne."²⁷⁹ Building on that tradition, Sekula even proposed that we should look at *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* as "a hypothetical suite of illustrations" for new editions of both Porter's *Ship of Fools* (Part Two) and Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791–1792) (Part One).²⁸⁰ "This is the idea," he wrote,

Imaginary editions of *The Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine (1791–92) and *Ship of Fools* (1962) by Katherine Anne Porter, each illustrated by a set of photographs that would be kept separate from the text. The two books would be slipcased together, thus changing the usual association of each of these books with another prior book. Porter’s novel would replace Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), the royalist polemic that had prompted Paine’s republican response. And Paine’s book would in turn substitute for the woodcut-illustrated book that had inspired Porter, Sebastian Brant’s *Narrenschiff* of 1494.²⁸¹

Sekula thus proposed a spiraling chain of books to build on, either as sources for inspiration or as containers of ideas to which one could react. Like Sekula, both Porter and Paine possessed intimate, firsthand knowledge of the sea. All three shared a fascination for its irresistible power to attract and were aware of its bewitching capacity, which they feared. In the introductory text that he wrote to this work (which is also the first wall text of the exhibited version of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*), Sekula quoted Porter from a letter to Caroline Gordon, dated August 28, 1931.

I used to swim about two miles out in the Gulf of Mexico near Corpus Christi, and whole schools of porpoises used to dive by, parting and sweeping around me and out to sea, and suddenly I would feel under me the awful waters and the unknowable life in them, and it seemed I would surely die of terror before I could get back to land [...] It was as dreadful as if you might be set down suddenly in a preglacial age in a wilderness of monsters [...] I love the sea, but as an old-fashioned Christian loved God—with fear and trembling.²⁸²

Sylvain George, in *Les Éclats*, also gave the word to an anonymous man who we first observe while he is busy burning his hands. (fig. 8.5) After having calmly explained the reasons why this is necessary, he also shared with the cinematographer what he experienced while crossing the Mediterranean. His boat capsized, and rescuers saved him from the water just in time. He “saw different things inside the water.” “You just see the water as a mountain,” he told George, “coming, coming in front of you.” “Before you realize, the water lifts you out of the boat.” The water that lifted his boat and turned it upside down, and which, in his recollection, continuously changed color (from “blue” to “green”), seemed higher than a ten-story building. He also suggested that everybody saw “a very big snake,” although it was difficult to describe what it looked like exactly. It was coming to their boat, and everybody was saying their last prayers. The snake, he continued, “could have swallowed

everybody.” “It just banged to the left side of the boat.” “It was nearly touching it and that,” he concluded, “is what I will never forget.” At that moment, when he felt that he was three to five minutes from dying, the Italian coast guard picked them up out of the water. Had he not been such a good swimmer blessed with a solid dose of luck at that *kairotic* instant, he “wouldn’t have been alive anymore.”



Fig. 8.5.
Sylvain George, *Les Éclats*
(*ma gueule, ma révolte, mon nom*) [*The Outbursts*
(*my fucking face, my revolt, my name*)], 2011.
Video, black-and-white and color, 84 mins. Two
stills. © Noir Production
and Sylvain George.

Sea snakes (actually, conger eels) play a key role in the final chapter of *Ground Sea*. Here, the significance of Paine and Porter first requires more detailed investigation. Before becoming a political activist, Tom Paine had been an “ordinary seafarer” during his young life.²⁸³ He knew the infernal, delirious dangers of the sea by heart. With respect to Porter, Sekula sketched a profile that could readily apply to himself, identifying her as a “swimmer, passenger, and astute physiognomist.”²⁸⁴ Set on the North German Lloyd S.A. *Vera*, sailing from Veracruz, Mexico, to Bremerhaven in the late summer of 1931, Porter’s *Ship of Fools* is a sharp analysis of the “irrational, mindless, dangerous nature” of a well-to-do group of upper-class Germans who display mounting prejudice not only toward citizens of almost any other nationality on board but also toward a particular kind of fellow citizens: German Jews.²⁸⁵

Porter completed the manuscript in the summer of 1961 at the Yankee Clipper Inn in Rockport, Massachusetts. By then, it had taken her no less than twenty years of much duress to write a magnificent text that resulted in three failed attempts by Yale University professor Cleanth Brooks to nominate her for the Nobel Prize. The book raised much dispute over its sharp, confrontational satire. In her detailed psychological elaborations of the various principal characters, Porter had not eschewed sketching rather clear-cut stereotypes, such as the Jewish pariah or the German ship doctor with a perfectly shaped *Mensur*. In a fragile, still very taboo-loaded, post-Holocaust international sociopolitical climate, this was cause for both public consternation and mixed reception of the novel.²⁸⁶ Sekula, a sharp physiognomist himself, left no opportunity unused to confirm how highly he esteemed Porter’s character descriptions for being subtle, audacious, and uncompromising. Both as a writer and photographer, he felt methodologically close to her style—even if this implied the risk of, at times, verging toward caricature.

On the *Renoir*, he took pictures of the engine room with its machinists and of various members of the crew, both off and on board or while busy mooring the lines (14–18, 28). Other pictures provide touching photographic portraits of several passengers on deck (19–20, 22–23). As a result, the overall atmosphere of Porter’s novel, with its brilliant analyses of prototypical behavior of passengers during ship voyages, is produced masterfully in Sekula’s pseudo-illustration of her work. Although by no means making point-by-point connections to the characters in Porter’s book, the sequence generously proposes its audience a superb “exercise in ‘street photography’ aboard a ship intended to see the ship as a model of society.”²⁸⁷ That a ship is a micro version of human society is a conviction Sekula shared with Porter, as is clear from a statement included in the front matters of her book.

When I began thinking about my novel, I took for my own this simple almost universal image of the ship of this world on its voyage to eternity. It is by no means new—it was very old and durable and dearly familiar when Brant used it; and it suits my purpose exactly. I am a passenger on that ship.²⁸⁸

Allan Sekula obviously connected with Katherine Anne Porter's ideas on many levels, and he did so most directly by quoting the following passage from her book as an opener to his text accompanying Part Two, "Ship of Fools":

He knew well what human trash his ship — all ships — carried to and from all the ports of the world: gamblers, thieves, smugglers, spies, political deportees and refugees, stowaways, drug peddlers, all the gutter-stuff of the steerage moving like plague rats from one country to another, swarming and ravening and undermining the hard-won order of the cultures and civilizations of the whole world.²⁸⁹

Sekula here chose to suggest a key passage from the third and last part of the novel. It describes the instance when the *Vera's* Captain, named Thiele—who rules the ship with arrogant authoritarianism as demonstrated, for example, by his refusal to tolerate the presence at the dinner table of a German non-Jewish man married to a German Jewish woman—is about to be tricked by a group of self-proclaimed Spanish zarzuela dancers. Thiele, who still appears to mourn the loss of the established social order and discipline under the German empire, finds himself in the strangling grip of this gang of petty criminals, whom he despises. As they mock his idleness by organizing a party in his honor, he somehow—and partly unconsciously—allows the festive events to run out of control during the night following the party. When, in its aftermath, disastrous events appear to have occurred on board, the captain barely manages to save his previously unshakable image.

Above all, the nightlong chaos on the *Vera* underscores that those stigmatized from the start do not always commit the greatest crimes. Suspicion for an attempt at homicide on a young American chemical engineer named William Denny falls on Pastora, an attractive member of the zarzuela company. The vicious crime, however, was committed with a women's sandal's metal-capped high heel. What is more, a masked woman had been spotted in the act by a low-ranking steward. But since she happened to belong to the ruling micro class on board, she managed to get away with it. The photograph, entitled *Rue de Venise, Paris* [Woman in red], is the closest Sekula comes to directly referring to a specific character in Porter's novel, namely the above-described

respectable middle-aged but nonetheless unexpectedly ravaging Mrs. Mary Treadwell, a US citizen (27). The novel thus ends by reminding its readers never to judge a person based on stereotyped features and prejudices.

When the *Vera* finally docks at Bremerhaven and all passengers have safely left the ship, the novel zooms in on an overlooked member of the band, a “gangling young boy” who “stared with blinded eyes” at the town he has never seen before and is about to discover.²⁹⁰ The voyage has come to a close. A new beginning, for better or worse, seems possible. Interestingly, the final photographic diptych of Part Two, “Ship of Fools” recalls this very scene. As we observe on a video screen in the engine room, along with Sekula and the cox, the SeaFrance *Renoir* is approaching Dover harbor, as if it were a passage through a birth channel or even a throat. A young boy on an abandoned quay in Boulogne is making faces at Sekula’s photographic objective (and therewith at the viewers of this work) (32). The boy’s T-shirt contains a print of a smiling and friendly-looking extraterrestrial figure, with his two gloved hands raised up in an open gesture as if to say hello. Accompanied by the moon and one star, he appears to jump out of a haloed spaceship belonging to a different planetary system. The boy himself, for his part, is lifting his two eyelids with his middle fingers in such way that his eyes look completely white. From a *kairological* perspective, *Boy on abandoned waterfront, Boulogne* appears to be an incredibly lucky shot. In fact, the extraterrestrial’s red helm with a double antenna provides a fine reference to one of Kairos’s principal attributes, his horns.

*

Horns reflect “foolishness” and “wild impulses.”²⁹¹ But they are simultaneously a reference to the wonder of creation. Kairos not only needs to be seized by his hair, tassel, or horns, but also “from the front, because he will disappear in an instant.” His forehead is the symbolic marker of his “procreative (phallic) locus.” When he can seize the opportunity at the right moment, Kairos can bring about something new, a real change. Yet at the same time, his front forms his weak spot, as it exposes the temple that a skillful archer can hit fatally with an arrow. In that case, Kairos will have been “plucked bald” and the occasion missed. In the first two instances of installing Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” Sekula chose to position the photograph with the boy making faces right below the one of the ferry entering the harbor—and this is also how we rebuilt it in Barcelona. (fig. 8.6) In *Oceans and Campfires*, however, he placed the boy on the left-hand side of the one showing the SeaFrance *Renoir*’s engine room.²⁹² (see fig. 8.2)



Fig. 8.6.

Allan Sekula, view of the two concluding photographs of Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous" from *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, 1996/1998. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. As installed during the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

Both presentation scenarios are interesting and that is why I described them at length. In both cases, Sekula offered the viewer a visual trajectory of arrows to follow. The boy's upper body creates a line completed by his two arms, thus forming an arrow that points upward. When observed horizontally, as in San Francisco or in the book, the game played seems rather formal. It is striking that each image contains a triangular motif, composed, respectively, by the boy's two arms and the ferry's prow steering right toward the quay inside of Dover harbor. In the vertical position of the exhibition installment, however, the diptych obtains a more performative dynamic. The boy appears to be almost dancing like a winged angel. His two legs, shaped like a spearhead, seem to jump up. Supported by the horned extraterrestrial figure, it is as if the young fool himself is about to fly straight into the picture above—into the ship that is about to dock. Kairos succeeded; he achieved the target. All arrows point toward the same upward direction.

There are more elements within the Boulogne photograph that point both toward Kairos's powerful creative force and to the possibility of missing capturing him. On the boy's colorful cotton pants, a repetitive pattern of shapes stands out, the one that Paul Vandembroeck identified as that of the "nameless motif."²⁹³ This nameless motif, according to Vandembroeck, is an "*energeticon*."²⁹⁴ Usually, Sophie Van Loo has added, it takes the shape of "a sphere-with-projections or a

spiny ball, but it also appears as a diamond shape with indentations or an egg-shape.”²⁹⁵ This specific motif refers to “the creation of the world.” Nameless motifs are “characterised by a *hard-to-define formal articulation, often featuring blots with bulges and indentations, extrusions as well as intrusions.*”²⁹⁶ Such textiles, produced by nameless persons, become triggers for something meaningful. Chapter Ten elaborates on the connection established by Vandebroek between the nameless motif and the pointedness of old weaving styles, which researchers have traced back to Neolithic times and which lead an afterlife in contemporary lacemaking techniques.²⁹⁷ The nameless motif, there, becomes a cataclysmic force for new, collective energies.

For Vandebroek, nameless motifs represent no less than the shuttering spasm of the uterus. They are stain-like spots that pulse in the fabric and represent the mother’s genital lips as embodying the source of new life or of a new beginning—a rebirth in the sphere of the *chora*. As the boy in Sekula’s photograph whitens his eyes, he disfigures and defaces himself. His laughing mouth almost disconnects from his face. All gaping mouth, he appears to be doubling the laughing mouth of his mother, as described above in the context of Sekula’s Kassel photograph of a mother and her premature baby. (see fig. 7.2) Visually, the boy’s mouth provides access to the space of *chora*—as argued by Kristeva and confirmed by Anca Parvulescu. We can occasionally access *chora*—or what we unconsciously remember of it—by means of laughter.²⁹⁸ As Parvulescu put it, “Laughter’s time is that of the force of *Kairos*.”²⁹⁹ “The agency of laughter,” she added, “is to be understood on the order of ‘participation.’” Another person’s laughter urges us to participate in it. That participation, for Parvulescu, “is also the order of our engagement in what we used to call ‘the revolution.’” Or, in other words, “passions like laughter signal the proximity of an anarchy-bound crowd.”³⁰⁰

As my argument proceeds from here on, I build on this fundamental idea that a community of laughers may precisely generate what Paul Vandebroek has called “the dolphin’s twist,” which, for him, contains a uterine association.³⁰¹ This twist, in his view, implies not only a visual image but also a mental one: away from a “male humour” that “tends to pursue a climactic punchline.” Instead, Vandebroek sought to revitalize a female type of humor, which, according to him, is geared toward this “subtle twist” that will “not elicit a burst of laughter” but rather “an ironic, alienating recognition” comprising the contagious germs for renewal and social change. As may be distinguished from a page in one of his notebooks, Sekula no doubt would have sided with Vandebroek’s take on the constructive force of such humor. (fig. 8.7) One joke prominently figures on that page: “all’s well that ends swell.”³⁰² And in another notebook entry, written in late January or early February 2001, he penciled: “groundswell against truck traffic.”³⁰³

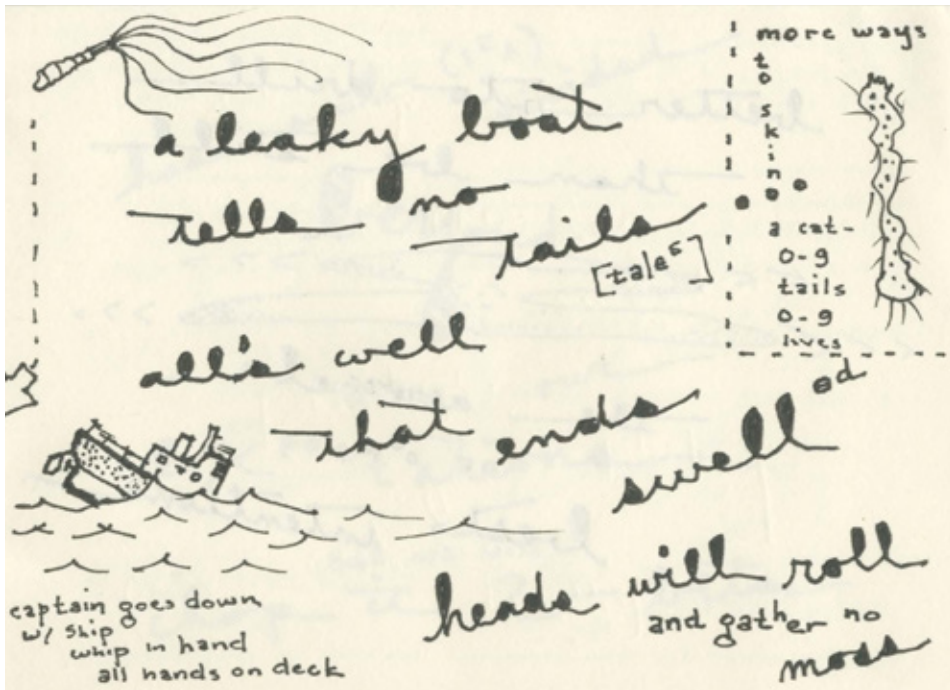


Fig. 8.7.

Allan Sekula, Notebook *Brazil* 07/23/2010, NB 120 (2010). Collection Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Photo by Ina Steiner. © Allan Sekula Studio.

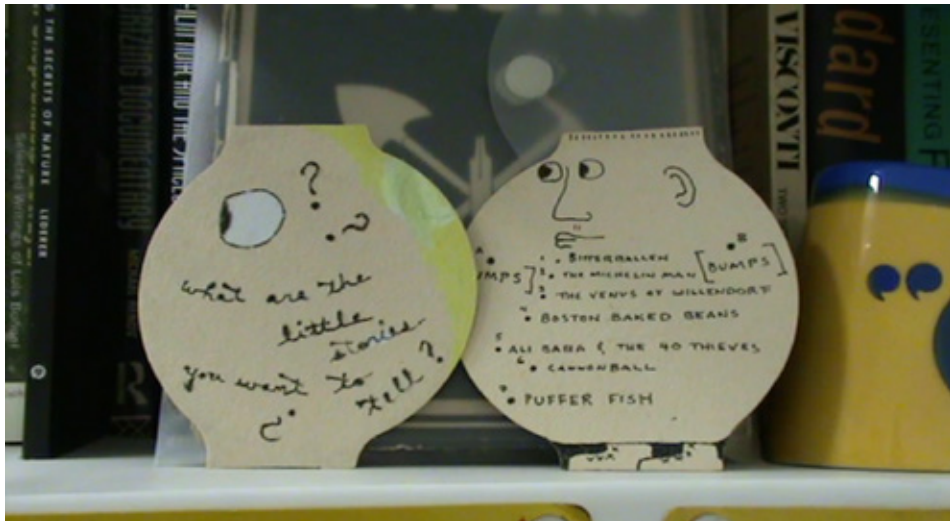


Fig. 8.8.

Still from video made by the author on June 3, 2013 in the clipbook room of Allan Sekula's Echo Park work studio, Los Angeles. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

What is more, during one of our visits to the artist's studio in early June 2013, I encountered a rather hilarious display on one of the shelves in his library. (fig. 8.8) Two beer mats transformed into odd figurines stood leaning against a vintage copy of Sir Walter Citrine's book, preserved in a plastic folder, on British trade unions. Facing one another, the left creature wondered, "What are the little stories you want to tell?" Gently bumping against him, the right manikin, firmly standing on his two feet, provided the seven following options:

BITTERBALLEN [PING-PONG BALL SHAPED CROQUETTES]
THE MICHELIN MAN
THE VENUS OF WILLENDORF
BOSTON BAKED BEANS
ALI BABA & THE 40 THIEVES
CANNONBALL
PUFFER FISH

The only serious topic within this range, strikingly, is the *Venus of Willendorf*—a small female fertility figurine in limestone, dating back to the Upper Paleolithic period.³⁰⁴ As much as laughter, the mother goddess symbol as good-luck totem is essential to my argumentation. But first, we need to linger longer on *Boy on abandoned waterfront, Boulogne*. It is striking that Sekula's camera zoomed in so much—and quite unflatteringly—on the boy's throat. Throat and mouth symbolize, according to Van Loo, the "dangerous passage" through the birth channel.³⁰⁵ As Vandebroek added, the analogy between the female sexual organs and the throat is present in the guttural, hampering sound of the word "gorge (g-r-g)"—the Gorgon.³⁰⁶ Claiming the right to be reborn can be an overwhelming, almost strangling experience. It is not coincidental that the boy's teeth are so prominently visible: there is always the risk that the vagina turns into a killing, suffocating vagina dentata. The throat, Sofie Van Loo wrote, is "an *in-between* zone, a passage that should not be blocked, for else death will follow."³⁰⁷

According to the Ovidian myth, death will follow by looking Medusa right in the eyes.³⁰⁸ When her eyes meet with a human's, she can transform that person into stone. It is with a strong dose of courage and blind confidence that Perseus, in an apotropaic gesture, managed "to glimpse her dread form" in an indirect way only, as "reflected in the polished bronze of a circular shield strapped to his left arm."³⁰⁹ Undisturbed by the mirror effect, he moved his right arm in the right direction, and cut off her monstrous head. In a playful way, the boy's bulging eyes, of which only the white parts are visible, suggest he also knows—like Perseus—how to fool such bad luck and to disarm Medusa: through jest, ridicule, and childish laughter. Roland Barthes assimilated Medusa to

the *Doxa*, which he defined as “current opinion, meaning repeated as if nothing had happened.”³¹⁰ Medusa/the *Doxa* will mercilessly petrify those who challenge this predominant social opinion, or the reigning bourgeois consensus.

Medusa/the *Doxa* is omnipresent in our world; she is “*evident*” without even being seen. She simply sticks herself as if with glue into the depths of the retina, from where she can only be eradicated through an act of detoxification, which Barthes calls “a little detergent discourse.”³¹¹ This “oppressive” *Doxa* pretends to be wise, yet she is no more than “a caricature of wisdom.”³¹² Medusa “*stuns*,” staggers, and stupefies.³¹³ She is the executor of “castration.” In the realm of the *Doxa*, one has no other choice but to stay “*behind the door*” and to hear a scene without succumbing to the seduction of also seeing it. Participating with the *Doxa* by entering its community of seers implies being trapped in its bleak discourse, where “former beauties are sleeping” and only “the memory of a once-sumptuous and fresh wisdom” can be found. While concluding his musing on the Medusa-as-*Doxa*, Barthes speculated on a very pessimistic outcome for societies that give in to its oppressive logic by asking whether the *Doxa* can become “repressive.” Penetratingly, he suggested the following:

Let us read this terrible phrase from a revolutionary sheet (*La Bouche de Fer*, 1790): “[...] above the three powers must be placed a censorial power of surveillance and public opinion which will belong to all, and which all will be able to exercise without representation.”

As demonstrated by Allie Barb, “older, more original conceptions” of the story of the Gorgon’s head as well exist.³¹⁴ They provide a less negative reading. Referencing a short note written in 1923 by the psychoanalyst Sandór Ferenczi, Barb brought to mind that there are archaeological clues suggesting an interpretation of the Medusa as a symbol, not of outer female genitals necessitating apotropaic deflection, but instead of a “*Matrix*-archetype.”³¹⁵ The representation of the beheaded Medusa then becomes a portrait illustration of the womb. In such a reading, Medusa’s beheading is a creative act, as new life is believed to generate from the blood of her severed head. Medusa’s decapitated head therewith comes to symbolize the “Primeval Womb (*Diva Matrix*),” which may be assimilated to “the Sea” since, as Barb reminded us, Medusa’s parents are reported to have been sea gods.³¹⁶

If Medusa’s head may well be understood as a “womb-symbol promising re-birth,” its frequent ancient representations on Roman and Etruscan sepulchral monuments fit well with other emblems similarly used for holding out the promise of a new life eternal, such as

amphorae (8#) and flowers—these ancient symbols of renaissance.³¹⁷ Barb referred to a certain type of Byzantine amulets that served to make the “womb [...], who ‘coils like a serpent,’ ‘hisses like a snake,’ ‘roars like a lion’ [...] settle down ‘like a lamb.’”³¹⁸ Such amulets served to exorcise the Gorgon’s head, “just as knowledge of his or her real name gives the exorcist power over the demon.”³¹⁹ If we are to follow Barb, understanding a potential defeater’s character and realizing this person’s true identity is what matters: “I know you—therefore you cannot evade or deceive me.”

In a fascinating reading of the Medusa motif as embedded in a richer and more ambivalent “Gorgo complex,” Emma Sidgwick has proposed a wise and productive interpretation of the Medusa motif. She reminded her readers that the Medusa was a later incorporation of the Neolithic goddess of death, birth, *and* regeneration altogether. The great Neolithic goddess embodied this insoluble duality of being the goddess of life and death at the same time. In Greek mythology and art, she had an afterlife in Hecate, the changing, bifacial goddess of the moon (in Orphism, this is a symbol of female periodicity and the laughing Gorgon).³²⁰ According to Sidgwick, “in Neolithic Europe, the notions of death and rebirth were indeed tied together in the image of the tomb functioning as a womb.”³²¹ Certain therapeutic rituals stage this reliving of the dangerous passage from illness (death) to healing (rebirth) by making the patient slither like a snake through a narrow passageway. As Vandebroek reminded us, renaissance or rebirth can involve oppressive passages.³²²

Medusa’s bleeding head therewith embodies “a promise to a new creation.”³²³ Once you realize that Gorgon’s head is no more than an “eerie prickly ball” that is nonetheless “an epitome of creative potential in ideas concerning the resurgence of life,” one can never be afraid of looking someone right in the eye.³²⁴ In ancient Greek art, the armed goddess Athena—with her shining gray-green-blue eyes (*glaukōpis*, Vandebroek reminds us) and accompanied by an owl with a penetrating gaze—embodied this terrifying, inviolable counterforce to Medusa’s destructive power.³²⁵ Together with his prominently long eyelashes, the boy’s almondlike eyes look like the imageless host embedded in the spiky aureole of a Catholic solar monstrosity. The monstrosity, according to Vandebroek, is “matrixial at its core: an *unknowable essence* surrounded by points/pins/rays.”³²⁶ This essence, he continued, “is the source of life (*fons vitae*).” The host, he added elsewhere, “is *not* a symbol; it is the actual *Presence* of a cosmic life-giving and recreational potentiality.”³²⁷

*

Playing the fool can thus be an ideal camouflage strategy when fighting for rights. From a retrospective point of view, Part Two, “Ship of Fools” bathes in a darkness that breathes an atmosphere full of menace. Back then, it was quite an abstract feeling of threat that the artist managed to grasp visually in a masterful way. It is as if Sekula felt the need to document for later generations something—a human scale—that was about to be lost. He anticipated that a younger generation would look back at these images with a strange, eerie gaze. Sekula’s short trips back and forth between Calais and Dover on the SeaFrance *Renoir* were excursions on what increasingly came to be perceived as an outdated mode of transportation—a ship of fools, so to say. For, who in heaven’s name, as it was generally accepted back then, would still feel like boarding a ferry when you could comfortably take a fast train instead?

To better grasp why the immemorial local ferry service really was not such a bad thing after all, I suggest investigating the principal issue at stake in the later *Ship of Fools* photo sequence, of which twenty-one photographs were shot on the abovementioned ship the *Global Mariner*.³²⁸ For Sekula’s day travels on the SeaFrance *Renoir* should now be viewed indeed as an immediate prefiguration of his longer journey aboard the *Global Mariner* (1999–2000). The *Global Mariner* was a former cargo vessel reconverted into a campaign ship financed by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF)—a worldwide union federation encompassing over seven hundred trade unions in the transport sector, representing dockworkers, seafarers, cabdrivers, truck drivers, airport personnel, and more.

In 1998, the ITF sought to commemorate its fifty years of resistance against the use of flags of convenience (FOC) in the shipping industry. The FOC system is a legal construction that permits merchant ships to sail under the flags of countries other than those of the ship’s beneficial owners.³²⁹ Shipping companies enroll their ships in international registers, or register in nations (or territories of certain nations with special legal status) that both have laxer policies on wages or worker safety and little or no government enforcement of existing regulations. Thus, these shipping companies evade the collective bargaining agreements of their country of origin. Panama or Liberia, for example, are a case in point. Closer to *Ground Sea*’s scope and focus, the Faroe Islands, the French International Ship Register, the German International Ship Register, Gibraltar and Bermuda, the Marshall Islands, and the Netherlands Antilles deserve explicit mention. The same is true of two EU member states, Cyprus and Malta, which have successfully adopted the system.³³⁰ On ships flying the flag of convenience, crews are more often subject to working on substandard vessels and under hazardous conditions, as well as to having inadequate wages and no social protections.³³¹

For activist purposes, the ITF refitted the holds of the *Global Mariner* with an exhibition that sought to inform both the ITF's local affiliates and the public of the vulnerable living and precarious working conditions of most seafarers under the FOC system. The *Global Mariner* circumnavigated the entire globe over a period of twenty months (1998–2000), calling at ports in approximately eighty-three harbor cities, where visitors could come aboard the ship and see the exhibition.³³² Allan Sekula met with the crew on several occasions when the ship docked in Los Angeles and Seattle.³³³ He sailed with them during different legs of the journey—from San Francisco to Portland, from Durban to Cape Town, from Limassol to Novorossiysk, and from Novorossiysk to Slovenia.³³⁴ From this voyage, as indicated above, Sekula drew the major part of the later *Ship of Fools* photographic sequence. He completed the work in 2010.³³⁵ By that time, *Ship of Fools* comprised the same number of pictures as *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*: thirty-three.

The *Ship of Fools* photographs are equally framed without overmat, yet they are much larger. (fig. 8.9) Their monumental dimensions ironically refer to the general choice of subjects in the celebrated *tableau*-size or “Pictures” genre in contemporary photography at the end of the twentieth century.³³⁶ Within the context of *Ground Sea*, however, another of Sekula's motivations for blowing up his photo formats is more pertinent. The monumental size of the more recent *Ship of Fools* group should be read as a formal tool to emphasize how profoundly the artist was scandalized by the fact that the international political community had allowed this infamous, exploitative system of social and economic deregulation called *sailing under cheap flag* to become such a tremendous and destructive common practice. His photographs paid tribute to those seafarers—sea lovers—who peacefully protested this system, and this is most clear from the group of ten photographs part of *Crew, Pilot, and Russian Girlfriend (Novorossiysk)*.

For the *Collective Sisyphus* exhibition in 2017, our curatorial team set Sekula's portraits of this group of *Global Mariner* crew members in a visual dialogue with two objects of interest from Sekula's *The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013).³³⁷ The first is a scale model of a container vessel, named *ZIM Virginia*, sailing under the flag of Israel.³³⁸ Following the artist's instructions given shortly before he died, we combined it in the same Plexiglas vitrine with a small Inuit object—a kayak made of wood, rope, and walrus tusk. On board the ship is an Inuit seal hunter who is about to hurl his harpoon. Sekula also expressed the wish to possibly juxtapose this second object in an installation with *Wooden Ship Model, Electric Fan, and Flags of Convenience*. (fig. 8.10) This is an abstracted, handmade model of a container ship that Sekula exhibited in different versions on the various occasions that he installed *The Dockers' Museum* during his lifetime.³³⁹ He always made sure, in those instances, to exhibit



Fig. 8.9.

Vitrine: Container ship/vessel/model/*ZIM/Virginia*/ shipping [as indicated on PayPal document], mixed media, produced by MYM [mengyanmodel (copyright holder and rights status unknown)], date of production unknown, 12.5×48×10 cm; purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on June 29, 2010. Glen O. (copyright holder and rights status unknown), "*Nanook*", *Inuit Walrus Tusk Carving of a Seal Hunter in a Kayak* [title given by Allan Sekula], wood, rope, and walrus tusk, production date unknown (the PayPal sales document describes it as "old"), 4.2×15.2×1.8 cm; purchased by Allan Sekula on June 21, 2010 [TDM 56]. Both "objects of interest" part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Wall: Allan Sekula, *Crew, Pilot and Russian Girlfriend (Novorossiysk)*, 1999–2000/2010, ten framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm, part of *Ship of Fools*, 2010; as combined with A2 pink wall text no. 1, saying "[...] the ship

was the brainchild of a group of German and British seafarer activists who also happened to be disaffected veterans of Greenpeace, interested in the problem of an international linkage of labor and environmental struggles. Their primary concern was the system of *flag of convenience* shipping, a lawyerly ruse invented by American shippers in the 1940s that allows wealthy ship owners to register their vessels in poor nations offering what is often termed *paper sovereignty: a flag for a fee*. The system is rife with abuses, and indeed its very purpose is abuse: shielding exploitative labor conditions and substandard vessels behind a bewildering legal maze." Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.



Fig. 8.10.

Plinth: partial view of *Wooden Ship Model, Electric Fan, and Flags of Convenience* [title given by Allan Sekula], 2010, ship model in painted wood (handmade by craftsperson, based on Sekula's instructions), 68.6 cm long; fan and flags in metal, plastic, textile (mass produced), variable dimensions [TDM 37]. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Combined with pink A2 wall text no. 5, saying "It is all the more profound that this ship should seek to represent the workings of empire at a time when the global economy is assumed to be entirely virtual in its

connectedness, magically independent of the slow maritime movement of heavy things." Left wall: Allan Sekula, *Crew, Pilot and Russian Girlfriend (Novorossiysk)*, 1999–2000/2010, ten framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm, part of *Ship of Fools*, 2010. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula: Ship of Fools*, M HKA, Antwerp, 2010 [in the building of the Antwerp Fotomuseum]. © Photo: Christine Clinckx. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio.

the ship model accompanied by a representative set of small flags of convenience that could optionally be set into motion by a fan.

In Barcelona, we opted for a slight shift of focus, combining “Nanook,” as the artist fondly named the miniature seal hunter, on his way to fight “Goliath” with the previously never exhibited *ZIM Virginia*. In combination with the ten crew portraits, the idea behind it was both to contextualize (and to visualize) another one of Sekula’s insights as developed in his writings about the *Global Mariner*, which he specified was equipped with onboard cranes that allowed it to load and discharge cargo at terminals without dockside equipment. It is, he added, the sort of vessel that, today, is only commonly encountered in more remote third-world ports. This made the *Global Mariner* function “in marked contrast to the specialized container and bulk ships of today’s shipping world, which only work by being integrated into a larger machine ensemble of dockside cranes and conveyors.”³⁴⁰ For Sekula, the functional autonomy and remarkable versatility of the *Global Mariner*’s holds allowed the ship to be turned into a large, mobile, and efficient art space for installing and displaying the exhibition it transported.

The FOC system as it is known today is generally referred to as having originated shortly after World War II. As far back as the Roman era, it has been a common practice to grant a state’s flag (read: nationality) to vessels owned by citizens of another state. This practice was not necessarily a bad thing in itself, as it allowed ship owners, for example, to prevent attacks on their ships during wartime. This is also why, during World War II, US ships sailed under Panama’s flag to Europe to support the United Kingdom in its efforts to resist the German invasion—until the German intelligence agency found out. This may be the reason why Allan Sekula sourced a reconnaissance photograph of a ship transporting dead load to Europe during that time. (fig. 8.11) What strikes the eye in this picture is the photographer’s focus on how the weight has been positioned on the cart. Although stabilized, its equilibrium is fragile, and it is not difficult to imagine that it could easily get out of balance. Remarkably, among other textual inscriptions, one also finds “Deep Six.”

“Hitting Germans on the snoot,” as written on the container, was the purpose that allowed for organizational scenarios at sea initially not meant to last forever. FOC nonetheless rapidly became more widespread outside of the military sphere in the postwar years after Liberia, a former US colony, introduced an open register for commercial ships in 1948.³⁴¹ In the growing Cold War climate, the United States had an interest in developing this special alliance with Liberia, and the system spread to other countries, which either aimed to evade trade embargos or just saw sheer economic profit in it. Since then, Liberia has developed a merchant shipping fleet that, at least on paper, is one of the largest in the world.



CVE-67 NO. 128 DATE APR 26 1944
UNIT.....
MADE FOR.....
SUBJECT *Deadload, closeup*
.....
.....
CONFIDENTIAL

Fig. 8.11.

CVE-67, NO: 128, DATE: APR 26 1944, SUBJECT: Deadload, closeup, CONFIDENTIAL [as indicated on reverse of photograph], black-and-white photograph, unknown photographer (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 20.6×25.2 cm. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).

Sekula, needless to say, was critical of this type of ship ownership that, in his view, is a system of “counterfeit, fraud and disguise.”³⁴² He saw in it a prototypical demonstration of how, also on a macroscale, power is “capable of masquerade.” For him, FOC shipping set a preeminent

example of transnational capital’s tendency to completely sever itself from any embeddedness in nation-states, using the nation-state only as a masquerade, as legal ruse, as a convenient formal legal legitimating basis, with absolute freedom of capital to move as it will.

As another brave David fighting a seemingly invincible Goliath, the reconverted *Global Mariner* intended to counterbalance this warped situation. For Sekula, the *Global Mariner* was “a real ship functioning in an exemplary way.”³⁴³ It was, he added, “the Good Ship that social justice demanded other ships should and could be.” However, from an economic point of view, “it was also an *empty vessel* carrying nothing but ballast and a message.”

This very “emptiness,” Sekula explained,

may have provoked the hostile captain of one substandard vessel targeted by the ITF to refer to the *Global Mariner* as a *toy ship*, as if it had been de-realized by the absence of heavy cargo. And yet this was a vessel of old-fashioned self-sufficiency.

It is striking that a ship making a point about providing fair labor conditions is disparaged as a toy ship. When we connect this statement with the subtitles of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, it becomes clear that, in contrasting the title of Part One, “The Rights of Man” to that of Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” Sekula obviously wondered why postwar society has focused so extensively on universal declarations with regard to human rights. At the same time, the issue of organizing a fair legal system at sea and on our oceans has been completely overlooked. Even today, around seventy percent of the world’s surface, all water, remains largely a lawless domain.

All of this is hardly the result of sheer recklessness and foolishness, however. This situation has served the establishment, fueling the economies of the planet’s wealthy nations. Yet this absence of a solid legal framework has fierce negative repercussions on the lives of those who work at sea, who often find themselves exploited. This reality even reached dramatic proportions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with four hundred thousand crew members stuck at sea on cargo vessels worldwide by September of that year.³⁴⁴ In the synopsis they wrote

for their jointly made film *The Forgotten Space* (2010), Sekula and Noël Burch thus emphasized:

75 years ago reformers and trade unionists dreamed that seafarers would soon achieve full recognition of their human rights, and no longer be treated as slaves and children. Today an earlier history of exploitation has returned with a vengeance. As with the travelling conditions of poor immigrants in search of a better life, so also the working conditions of those who work at sea are often no better than they were three centuries ago.³⁴⁵

*

Sekula's sense of sadness in relation to the SeaFrance *Renoir* may be better understood in this context. This ship served a ferry line operated by the French state, allowing its citizens to cross the Channel easily, and at a low price. Although perfectly suitable for its purposes, the *Renoir*, along with its sister ships, had to be replaced by a privately exploited fixed link.³⁴⁶ In Calais, it is common knowledge that the SeaFrance workers' union, in later years, became so corrupt that it contributed to ruining the company.³⁴⁷ Stories continue to circulate widely. One story goes that a crew member was thrown overboard during the crossing because he threatened to reveal the trade union leaders' shady dealings—they were pulling the strings of a mafia system, with vans going back and forth carrying hard drugs and other illegal goods.

Despite this dire situation, however, this type of petty mafia practice did not turn the SeaFrance *Renoir* into a bad ship, in the sense that Sekula associated with all the ships sailing under cheap flags. After SeaFrance went bankrupt in 2012 and its fleet was dismantled, two shipping companies took over the Dover–Calais ferry line: the private Danish company DFDS (2.4% Treasury shares in 2018) and P&O Ferries, since 2006 part of Dubai Ports World (a subsidiary of Dubai World).³⁴⁸ Until early 2019, DFDS ships sailed under the UK and French flag, and P&O vessels under the UK flag.³⁴⁹ On January 26, 2019, P&O Ferries announced that from that day, two of its flagships, *Spirit of Britain* and *Spirit of France*, would fly the Cypriot flag (1#).³⁵⁰ It was further indicated that, in due course, the entire fleet of six would have Limassol as its port of registry. The reason stated was that a review of the ship's flag status was necessary in anticipation of Britain leaving the European Union. The communiqué summed up the major advantages of the change, such as fewer inspections and delays, and significantly more favorable tonnage tax arrangements. It was added that the company made no further plans to implement changes regarding the terms and conditions of its seafarers.

The United Kingdom's National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) immediately expressed concern that P&O used the imminent Brexit as a pretext—a “smokescreen”—for the move, which would eventually come to involve the introduction of a deregulated, lower-cost crew model.³⁵¹ The union defined it rather straightforwardly as “rank opportunism from a company owned in Dubai.” P&O defended itself by stating that the Cyprus flag is on the so-called white list of both the Paris and Tokyo Memoranda of Understanding.³⁵² However, ITF continued to blacklist Cyprus in 2019, the simple reason being that the organization and implementation of labor law and social rights within the EU member states remains a matter of national sovereignty. Differences between EU countries in this domain remain substantial, and both Cyprus and Malta have remarkably loose legislation.

In the light of these developments, in which the European Union has found itself incapable of or unwilling to prevent numerous shipping businesses within its member states from scrubbing labor laws, it is relevant to bring to mind that the production files of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* preserved in the archive of the Calais Museum of Fine Arts contain a petition document from 1996. (fig. 8.12) Entitled “Comité pour l’avenir du pavillon français à Calais” [“Committee for the future of the French flag in Calais”], the petition targeted the replacement of the publicly funded shipping company (SeaFrance–SNCF) sailing under the French flag by ships owned by a publicly funded British company sailing under the British flag (Brittany Ferries). Given the present-day situation, with almost no public investment in the world’s two largest passenger ports (if we are to believe the petitioners), and with the impending disappearance of the French and British flags from all of the P&O passenger ferries, time appears to have caught up with the petitioners in question.

When selecting the miniature flag for *Wooden Ship Model, Electric Fan, and Flags of Convenience*, Allan Sekula decided on—in order of appearance from top to bottom and from left to right—Bermuda, Marshal Islands, Panama, Malta, Cambodia, Cyprus, Bahamas, Bolivia, and Liberia. (see fig. 8.10) Looking back from today’s perspective at the images taken aboard the *SeaFrance Renoir* and those of the *SeaFrance Manet* in Sylvain George’s *Les Éclats*, they provide much food for thought. (see fig. 1.1 middle right image) How much and what, exactly, have we gained and how much have we collectively sacrificed in our desire to make the world a smaller place and to travel faster by racing through the Channel Tunnel? Before I address the views of Julian Barnes and Allan Sekula on this matter, let me start with considering two preliminary reflections.

COMITE POUR L'AVENIR DU PAVILLON FRANCAIS A CALAIS

Grâce à sa situation géographique privilégiée, à l'argent public (Etat, Région, Département, Chambre de Commerce, Ville) investi dans des installations portuaires performantes, grâce à la présence du service public et du pavillon français (S.N.A.T. – S.N.C.F. hier, SEAFRANCE – S.N.C.F. depuis le 1er Janvier de cette année), **CALAIS est aujourd'hui le 2ème port de passagers au monde après DOUVRES.**

Serait-il admissible dans ces conditions que le pavillon français disparaisse de CALAIS au détriment du pavillon britannique et ce grâce à l'argent des Calaisiens ? Car le risque est bien réel de voir très rapidement se réaliser une telle situation, faute pour SEAFRANCE – S.N.C.F. de disposer d'urgence d'un car-ferry supplémentaire et d'accords commerciaux efficaces avec la S.N.C.F. et l'autre armement national transmanche, public lui aussi : BRITANNY FERRIES.

Les conséquences en seraient dramatiques. En effet, SEAFRANCE – S.N.C.F., c'est :

- 1) 700 emplois directs, près de 2 000 emplois au total sur CALAIS et le CALAISIS, près de 1 500 000 passagers transportés en 1995 : un rôle de première importance dans l'économie et le commerce locaux,
- 2) Liée au caractère public de l'entreprise SEAFRANCE, au statut et au haut degré de qualification de ses personnels, la garantie d'un transport des passagers et des marchandises en toute sécurité, sur le Déroit le plus fréquenté du monde : chaque jour, près de 500 navires, des milliers de passagers, des dizaines de véhicules transportant des produits dangereux,
- 3) Un patrimoine humain et culturel important, profondément ancré dans l'histoire et la mémoire collective de notre Ville.

C'est pourquoi, nous, Calaisiens de souche ou de coeur, nous nous refusons à accepter une telle éventualité sans réagir et nous nous tenons prêts à nous mobiliser à l'appel du Comité pour l'Avenir du Pavillon Français sur CALAIS.

NOM – PRENOM	ADRESSE et N° de Tél. <small>pour être tenu(e) au courant des initiatives du comité</small>	PROFESSION RESPONSABILITES	SIGNATURE

Fig. 8.12.

"Comité pour l'avenir du pavillon français à Calais" [Committee for the future of the French flag in Calais], petition document, 1996. Preserved in the archive of the Calais Museum of Fine Arts. Copyright holder and rights status unknown. Photo by author.

The first is a philosophical consideration by Peter Wollen, who shared the following impression of a private tour in the Tunnel on February 10, 1994 (before it opened to the public):

The Channel Tunnel's single stretch of half an hour in darkness is nothing compared with what we are already used to from airplanes. It is really no more than an empty interlude, a stretch of blank pages between two discontinuous chapters, a kind of darkened entr'acte between the two scenic spectacles of England and France, at most a pleasantly elongated border crossing during which we can muse at our leisure on the future of a hybrid and heterogeneous Europe. The idea that the Channel Tunnel will be seen as a "link" has been much exaggerated. It is the vertical aspect that will strike imaginative travelers, rather than the horizontal: the fantastic fact that it goes deep into the earth and runs beneath the sea rather than its practical function as another connection between two areas of land. Tunnels are features of a mythic underground world – the realm of hell, of caverns and grottoes, of mines and of catacombs and, of course, of tombs. Tunnels can easily turn into tombs. Historically, they often have.³⁵³

The second is a more humorous note and concerns a wonderful postcard of the shuttle train by French cartoonist JER. (Plate 14; fig. 8.13) JER, pseudonym of Jean-Étienne Rousseau, was a bricklayer—an ordinary man—living in Pessac, France, and died in 2017. During World War II, the Germans forced him, given the expertise that he had learned from his father, to help construct the *Atlantikwall*. He escaped and went into hiding in the *maquis* as a resistance fighter.³⁵⁴ Rousseau's courage during the war contributed to the great freedom that the generation of his children and grandchildren came to enjoy during the second half of the twentieth century.³⁵⁵ Locals who were teenagers in the 1980s nostalgically bring to mind how they used to make one-day return trips from Calais to Dover, just to do some shopping and enjoy the English hospitality and the great views of the Continent. Now that security controls have become such a big deal and burden in the port, *Calaisiens* do not make the day trip just for fun anymore. There is much less charm and thrill in traveling on one of the present-day ferries. The best spaces are reserved for the numerous truckers, mostly from Central and eastern Europe, who need to eat, rest, and shower.

The underlying assumption is that travel and the movement of persons has become subordinate to a supposedly optimized traffic of goods. People, so it seems, are expected to take the fast train or book a cheap flight. That we may not have seen the end of this story yet became clear in July 2019, when the port authority of Ostend sounded

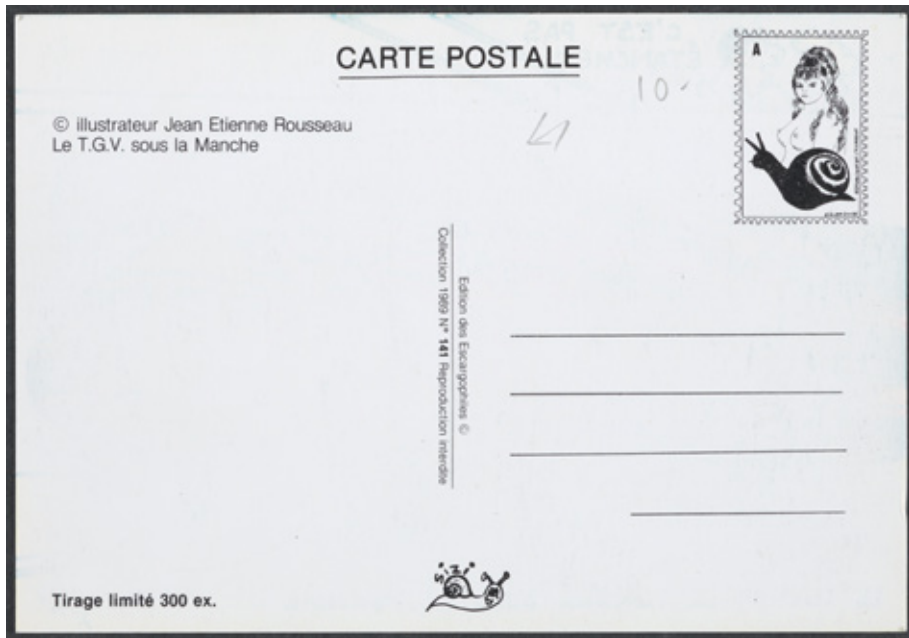


Fig. 8.13.

JER (Jean Etienne Rousseau), *C'est pas étanche! Le TGV et le Tunnel sous la Manche* [It's not watertight! The TGV and the Channel Tunnel]. Verso of illustrated postcard, black-and-white, 10×15 cm. Author's collection.
 © Postcard illustration Gilles Rousseau.
 © Postcard Édition des Escargophiles. Collection 1989 N° 141.

the alarm regarding a French plan to develop a wind farm close to the Belgian border.³⁵⁶ This project, if realized, would block the traditional sailing route between Ostend and Dover, as well as between Ostend and Ramsgate. Although there haven't been any passenger ferry services between Ostend and the United Kingdom since 2013, this may change again in the future. According to Dirk Declerck, CEO of the Port of Ostend, this is barely a concern to the French administrators planning the wind farm. As former communities, however diverse in culture and language, are sacrificed to the myth of global connectedness and drift farther apart, one feels tempted to conclude that Channel crossings, going with the flow of the sea on a relatively small ship, weren't so bad after all.

Sekula expressed to Pascal Beausse in 1998, during their abovementioned interview, that it was indeed his intention “to make a work against the Tunnel, a work of respect for the ferry crossing.”³⁵⁷ Arguably, Sekula, more than any other artist of his time, was aware that his artistic resistance against predominant socioeconomic tendencies would make him end up joining other artists who, in vain, preceded him in these efforts: the ones who are “made to stand in a corner, wearing a dunce cap.”³⁵⁸ But he was ready to endure the humiliation, as Sekula felt that

the superior wisdom of contemporary political and cultural elites, with their technocratic fantasies of the “information” highway, is

in fact a step backward from the eighteenth century, when, for example, the leaders of the American struggle for colonial independence shared a phenomenological sense of the arduous maritime passage of material goods between Britain and the colonies. We could call this the sympathetic materialism of the seasick.³⁵⁹

Porter and Paine, Sekula was fond of recalling, were experts on naval sea crossings. “Paine [...] was to cross the Atlantic four times between 1774 and 1802, and the Channel many more [times].”³⁶⁰ In Sekula’s view, any serious beginning of reorganizing human life on this planet in a more egalitarian way would need to embark from that point of departure, indulging in “a sympathetic materialism, born of seasickness.”³⁶¹ As the French translation of the term validated by Sekula for the bilingual wall text of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* further clarifies, this materialism is “affective.”³⁶² This materialism is emphatically concerned with the solidarity of the lifeworld at and within the sea. Going to sea, Benjamin Young wrote, reverses the perspective on the land. Seen from the sea, the landmass loses much of its stable status as “the static ground of life or politics.”³⁶³ However vast it may be in overall surface, even the Eurasian landmass becomes reduced to just “another island or ship floating alongside us” when we look at it from the ferry leaving the Port of Calais. Upon realizing this, one looks with different eyes at the same land—with the eyes of the sympathetic materialist who is aware that human solidarity and a shared sense of community matter more than anything else to surmount seasickness and bad tides.

At this point of the discussion, it is important to guide the readers’ attention to the typesetting and fonts used for the *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* exhibition wall texts, as reproduced in Volume I of *Ground Sea*. It is striking that the artist used not only different font types but also alternated regular, italic, and bold typesetting. This visual effect sought to provoke the feeling of nausea that comes with being seasick. In this context, it is also apt to refer to the longer list of titles used in Part Two, “Ship of Fools.” At the end of this list, the artist inserted the following sentence: “captions in brackets are given for descriptive purposes only and should not be considered the titles of the individual photographs. The complete title for all photographs listed as *Sea France* Renoir is *Sea France Renoir en route between Dover and Calais*.” This deliberate use of brackets is not coincidental and needs to be differentiated from parenthetical usage.

In general, a parenthesis frames that which one needs to set aside within the logic of a textual protocol but nonetheless wants to continue to mention as it is too important to delete and too intimately connected to the text’s author.³⁶⁴ Brackets, by contrast, point to an intervention that the author, as a rule, wants to remain external to the text, usually because

it is less essential to making the principal point. In the present context, Sekula appears to have turned that convention upside down. For, contrary to what he put between brackets (e.g. “Faux Kiss”), the real title (“*Sea France Renoir* [...]”) is straightforward and far more descriptive. It seems that what mattered most to him in the captions—their most affective or sympathetic aspect—can be found in the brackets. Sekula might have wanted to indicate here that his photographic materialism, his affection and sympathy, went to the everyday people that he encountered on this ferry.

In an unpublished document from 1998 that he titled “Deep Six (Notes),” Sekula included a quote from Paine’s influential pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), which was a guiding text for the American independence movement.

A few able and social sailors will soon instruct a sufficient number of active land-men in the common work of a ship. Wherefore, we can never be more capable to begin on maritime matters now, while our timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ.³⁶⁵

Sekula’s acknowledgment of this source demonstrates once again how much he—along with Paine—relied on sailors’ deep understanding of the realities at sea. Sekula drained to the dregs this effort of gathering empirical knowledge about how reality both at sea and on land really works. He spared no effort to ensure, for example, that his audience would become both knowledgeable and empowered about how to distinguish a “good ship” from a “bad ship.”³⁶⁶ Bad ships are those that sail under a flag of convenience, with the likely intention of reducing labor costs to a strict minimum.

In *Ship of Fools* (2010), Sekula included a diptych representing the *Global Mariner* as the good ship and a cruise liner as the bad ship. (fig. 8.14) Strikingly, the ships moored in the dock at Calais harbor today reenact that dualism as well: P&O represents the bad ships and DFDS the good ones. Over the past few years, I made all my ferry trips on DFDS vessels for two reasons. From the start, I was suspicious of the Dubai-based company behind P&O, and I quickly found out, as my dog always accompanied me, that DFDS is simply much more pet friendly. How many passengers, however, make this type of conscious choice when booking their trip? Maybe I am being too pessimistic in writing these lines. To Sina Najafi and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Allan Sekula suggested the striking hypothesis that he even imagined “the possibility of mutiny by old people on cruise ships.”³⁶⁷ In his wild imagination, these elderly passengers would eventually feel scandalized by the exploitative system of the deregulated and polluting shipping industry they sustain.



Fig. 8.14.

Plinth: *Wooden Ship Model, Electric Fan, and Flags of Convenience* [title given by Allan Sekula], 2010, ship model in painted wood (handmade by craftsperson, based on Sekula's instructions), 68.6 cm long; fan and flags in metal, plastic, textile (mass produced), variable dimensions [TDM 37]; Constantin Meunier, *Débardeur du port d'Anvers*, bronze, 1890, 48.5 × 22 × 18 cm, purchased in December 2011 by М НКА for *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, at the request of Allan

Sekula [TDM 40]; *Two Ceramic Heads of Dockers* [title given by Allan Sekula], each of whom has been titled "Longshoreman" by its producer P.A. McHugh for Masquerade Lakeland Studios (copyright holder and rights status unknown), handmade ceramics, 1998, each 21.7 × 14.4 × 7.6 cm. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on April 21, 2010 and on May 11, 2010 [TDM 5]; *Nautical Foghorn (Manufactured Japan, Salvaged Alang, India) with Wooden Storage Box* [title given by Allan



Sekula], produced by Tokyo Siren Co., LTD (copyright holder and rights status unknown), aluminum, 1981, 69 × 28 × 23 cm. Purchased by Allan Sekula, inside of its containing box, through eBay on September 6, 2010 [TDM 39]. "Objects of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Presented in combination with A2 pink wall text no. 5, saying "It is all the more profound that this ship should seek to represent the workings of empire at a time when the global economy is assumed to be entirely virtual in its connectedness,

magically independent of the slow maritime movement of heavy things." Wall: *Good Ship (Limassol) 1 and Bad Ship (Limassol) 2*, 1999–2000/2010, diptych of two framed chromogenic prints mounted on alu-dibond, each 101.6×149.9 cm, part of *Ship of Fools*, 2010. Far left wall: A2 pink wall text no. 7, "You can't send a postcard from the bottom of the sea." Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Installation views of *Allan Sekula: Ship of Fools*, Edinburgh, Stills, 2012. © Photos: Stills. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).

While traveling for a longer period on a ship, perspectives on the realities involved can shift abruptly. Sekula recalled this in another quote, included in his unpublished “Deep Six (Notes),” from the US poet Langston Hughes. After having abandoned his studies at Columbia University and deciding to accept a job aboard the freighter *S.S. Malone*, Hughes composed the unforgettable closing line “My soul has grown deep like the rivers” to his first poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* (1921). Yet this is not what Sekula referred to. In his notes, he included a passage from Hughes’s autobiography *The Big Sea* (1940), in which the poet described how he threw all his study books from Columbia into the water, “as far as [he] could out into the sea.” He added that it felt “like throwing a million bricks out of [his] heart.” As Sekula remarked while continuing his preparatory notes for *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, Hughes did, however, save his copy of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1855), “having no intention of throwing that one away.”

Whitman’s literary monument today remains generally understood as “a sensual declaration of love to life on Earth, a sexual tribute to the body, and a democratic manifesto.”³⁶⁸ In *Leaves of Grass*, the poet dreamed of “redefining man in society” toward that which binds us all together. Whitman expressed this idea through the metaphor of leaves of grass. Proclaiming “stern opposition to [slavery] which shall never cease till [slavery] ceases,” Whitman outed himself as an American poet using his words for political purposes.³⁶⁹ The word “leaves,” for that matter, may be understood as also containing the second meaning of “pages.” In the preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman urged his audience to “read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book.”³⁷⁰ Hughes took that recommendation seriously. He not only kept Whitman’s book but also continued to read books— not necessarily those assigned in school or college.

Sekula took their wise advice literally. While preparing the installation of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in the Valence Museum in the summer of 1998, he informed its curator Chrystèle Burgard that he would like to see “copies of the French translations” of the books by Paine and Porter installed in the space near his photographs and text panels.³⁷¹ (fig. 8.15) Moreover, he specified that he would like them to be “copies from the public library or a university library.” In addition to that, “two identical reading chairs from the same library needed to be provided,” so the books could be attached to the chairs, and visitors could take time to sit down and read them effectively. On the occasion of *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Carles Guerra, Anja Isabel Schneider, and I decided as a curatorial team to offer this opportunity to the public as well, as a tribute to Sekula’s precise thinking. Acquired by the Fundació Antoni Tàpies Library, both books were available in a Spanish version and in

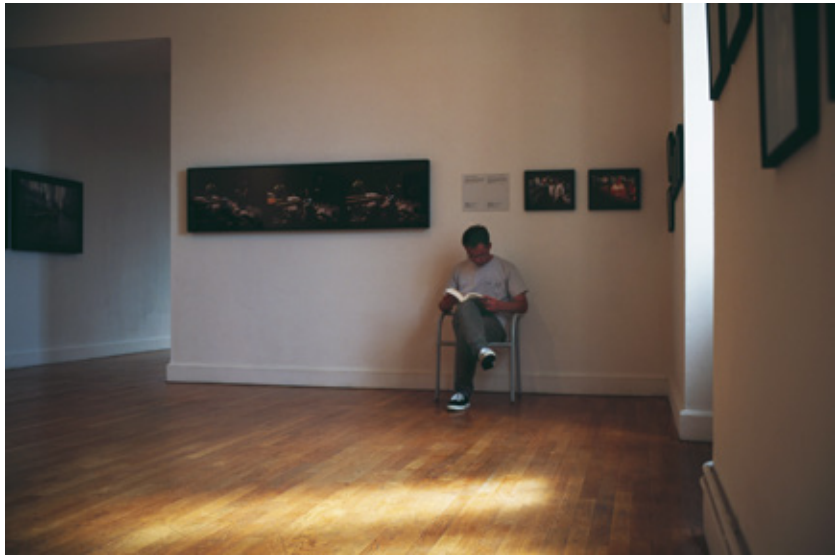


Fig. 8.15.

Above image: (far left) *Thomas Paine Park, New York City and Cod Fisher, Dover* [diptych], two Cibachrome photographs, framed measures 75×103.3 cm and 75.3×104 cm; foreground wall: *Dockers loading sugar ship, Calais*, framed triptych, three Cibachrome photographs 51.8×200 cm, part of Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme"; followed by the third bilingual text panel, which introduces Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous"; chair with man reading public library copy of French edition of Katherine Anne

Porter, *La nef des fous* underneath; and oblique view of eleven photographs from Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," framed measures 28×36 cm. Image below: detail view of chair with public library copy French edition of Thomas Paine, *Les droits de l'homme*. All elements part of Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, 1996/1998. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation views from the exhibition *Voyage, de l'exotisme aux nonlieux*, Musée de Valence, summer 1998. Photos by Allan Sekula. © Allan Sekula Studio.

the two language editions that Sekula originally used to accompany his work: French and English. (figs. 8.16–17) Catalan translations of the Paine and Porter books, unfortunately, do not exist. All books remain permanently available in the Fundació Antoni Tàpies Library, which is open to the public for consultation.

*

The concluding pages of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* inform the reader that Captain Nemo's precious container filled with his handwritten notes—which Pierre Aronnax is dying to discover but will never get to see—has likely disappeared with the *Nautilus* in the maelstrom near Lofoten. Even if Paine's bony remnants may not have suffered a similar dismal fate, the fact remains that they seem to be lost. As Sekula wrote: "Paine left no bodily trace on either shore of the Atlantic."³⁷² In his abovementioned unpublished preparatory notes entitled "Deep Six," Sekula relied on Raymond Williams's account of this "apocryphal story" from his book *Cobbett* (1983), of which he retyped a lengthy extract. (fig. 8.18) Williams described how Cobbett, after first having insulted Paine in writing for being "blasphemous," changed his mind on what there was to learn from him.³⁷³ He disinterred his bones with the intention to have them "affect the reformation of England in Church and State."³⁷⁴

Both Williams and Sekula sided with Lord Byron's indignation over the reckless, and useless, desecration of Paine's grave. They emphasized that, more than his bones, it is Paine's intellectual legacy that needs to be saved from Sisyphean loss. To do just that, Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* treats us with an immensely rich and dense yet varied study package. Only by drastically slowing down are viewers able to take in all the page leaves and properly digest them. At some point during my research for this book, I came across the following lines from Saint Augustine: "the bruised heart shall be healed, the puffed up heart shall be dashed down. For for this purpose perhaps it is dashed down, that being bruised it may be healed."³⁷⁵ Meanwhile, I had coincidentally come across a red stone in the shape of a heart, which I found at receding tide in the middle of the summer of 2017 in one of the most beautiful places on Earth: Sauzon, Belle-Île-en-Mer, France. "Stones replace bones," Barbara Baert wrote while commenting on the medieval Enclosed Gardens of Mechlin.³⁷⁶ Immediately, I wildly imagined it to be a remnant of Paine's desiccated blood solidified into stone.

In ancient Greek mythology, according to Emma Sidgwick, blood comes to possess a creative potential when drying. What has petrified from a fluid becomes "a subjective fixation of certain potentialities — thereby precluding any disappearance into invisibility."³⁷⁷ The summer



Fig. 8.16.
 Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme," 1996/1998. Partial view: six Cibachrome photographs, two text panels, one chair, and woman reading in one of two books, variable dimensions. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.



Fig. 8.17.
 Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 2, "Ship of Fools" – 2e volet, "La Nef des fous," 1996/1998. Partial view: fifteen Cibachrome photographs, one text panel, one chair, and man reading in one of two books, variable dimensions. Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Calais. Installation view from the exhibition *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2017. © Photo: Roberto Ruiz. Courtesy Fundació Antoni Tàpies and Allan Sekula Studio.

Deep Six (Notes)

[Draft 1]

This is the idea: imaginary editions of The Rights of Man by Thomas Paine (1791-92) and Ship of Fools (1962) by Katherine Ann Porter, each "illustrated" by a set of photographs.

Paine and Porter belong, respectively, to the first and last generations of American writers to have been formed by sea travel: Paine worked as an ordinary seaman in his youth and was to cross the Atlantic four times between 1774 and 1802, and the Channel many more. More than any of the other founders of the American republic, he partook of the sympathetic materialism of the seasick.

Variant:

Paine as an youthful ordinary seaman and then as a crosser of the Atlantic as immigrant and political exile; Porter as an adventurous swimmer in the Gulf of Mexico during her Texas girlhood, and then as steamship passenger, crossing the Atlantic eight times between 1931 and 1962.

[from "The Coffin Learns to Dance")

The superior wisdom of contemporary political and cultural elites, with their technocratic fantasies of the "information highway," is in fact a step backward from the eighteenth century, when, for example, the leaders of the American struggle for colonial independence shared a phenomenological sense of the arduous maritime passage of material goods between Britain and the colonies. We could call this the sympathetic materialism of the seasick. Indeed the most radical, democratic and now-neglected of these men, Thomas Paine, author of Common Sense and The Rights of Man, had been an ordinary seafarer in his youth. In the end, Paine left no bodily trace on either shore of the Atlantic: an apocryphal account has it that his all-but-forgotten bones washed overboard in a passage back to England in 1819.

Intrigue on trains is always bourgeois. On ships, intrigue moves between the lumpenproletariat and the aristocracy.

The subterranean train as mobile coffin roaring through an elongated grave. The ship plowing the surface. The train below the seafloor. Moving downward, diving: deck, hull, waves, depths, seafloor, rock, tunnel, carriage. A glass of wine above, a glass of wine below. Bubbles.

Paine thought practically about ships. His familiarity with the maritime world removed nautical metaphors from his thought. His chosen metaphors for politics were drawn instead from painting and theatre. Porter's ships were above all else metaphors for politics, for autocracy and male dominion over women.

Fig. 8.18.

Allan Sekula, "Deep Six (Notes)," 1998. Unpublished archival document. Part of the Allan Sekula Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Extracts

Paine:

[L]ittle more than sixteen years of age, raw and adventurous, and heated with the false heroism of a [school]master who had served in a man-of-war, I began the career of my own fortune, and entered on board the Terrible privateer, Captain Death.

Rights of Man, p. 455 [Book 2, Chapter 5, following note 24]

Porter:

I used to swim about two miles out in the Gulf of Mexico near Corpus Christi, and whole schools of porpoises used to dive by, parting and sweeping around me and out to sea, and suddenly I would feel under me the awful waters and the unknowable life in them, and it seemed I would surely die of terror before I could get back to land...It was as dreadful as if you might be set down suddenly in a preglacial age in a wilderness of monsters...I love the sea, but as an old-fashioned Christian loved God--with fear and trembling.

CAP to Caroline Gordon, 28 August 1931 in Letters, pp. 50-51.

An apocryphal story:

When William Cobbett set sail from New York for England on 30 October 1819, he carried with him in his baggage the bones of Thomas Paine. The precise moment in English history and the strange, elaborate tribute devised by one English radical leader and writer to another combined to make the event memorable. Just a few weeks before, Manchester had witnessed on its streets the Peterloo massacre, and the nation was gripped by the political debate which followed. Cobbett had chosen to cross the Atlantic months earlier to escape the clutches of the same persecuting, panic-stricken government. The memory of Thomas Paine figured prominently in his thoughts. No such intrusion could normally displace his own claims and pretensions; he had a reputation for being preposterously vain. But on this occasion, more notably, he wished the world to know what was his own considered verdict on his great forebear and exemplar. (Sadly, the body never had the memorial over it that Cobbet intended. It was washed overboard at sea.)

Michael Foote and Isaac Kramnick, "Editors' Introduction," Thomas Paine Reader, p. 29

Raymond Williams [✓] more accurate account-----

[On Cobbett's tumultuous return to England following the Peterloo massacre, follows a passage on his acceptance of an invitation to speak there, and his letter of response to threats from constables seeking to prevent his appearance:]

Raymond Williams, Cobbett, pp. 20-21:

In 1796 [Cobbett, then a Tory living in Philadelphia] had attacked the "infamous Tom Paine." He had concluded with these words:

Now Tom gets a living now, or what brothel he inhabits, I know not, nor does it much signify to any body here or

anywhere else. He has done all the mischief he can in the world, and whether his carcass is at last to be suffered to rot, or to be dried in the air, is of very little consequence. Whenever or wherever he breathes his last, he will excite neither sorrow nor compassion; no friendly hand will close his eyes, not a groan will be uttered, not a tear will be shed. Like Judas he will be remembered by posterity; men will learn to express all that is base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural and blasphemous, by the single monosyllable, Paine. (W IV 112-13)

Since this terrible expression of calculated abuse, Cobbett had read and learned much from Paine's Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance. He now discovered that Paine, as a Deist, had been refused burial in consecrated ground in America, and had been buried in a corner of his New Rochelle farm. It is difficult to know which is more extraordinary, the published abuse or what Cobbett now did: ^

a.
A

I have done myself the honor to disinter his bones...I have dug them up; they are now on their way to England. When I myself return, I shall cause them to speak the common sense of the great man; I shall gather together the people of Liverpool and Manchester in one assembly with those of London, and those bones will affect the reformation of England in Church and State. (L II 116)

Whatever his real hopes, the effect was very different. Hardly anyone would subscribe to a monument, and in fact he kept Paine's bones until his own death. Byron's squib was one of many:

In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,
Will Cobbett has done well;
You visit him on earth again,
He'll visit you in hell.

Again, from a less-skilled hand:

Why didst thou on the billows toss,
Or why thy native country fled,
Why thou the vast Atlantic cross?
Why, caitiff thief! to rob the dead.
Lay by thy pen, cork up thine ink
None read thee now but drivelling drones,
Thy boasted fame will end in stink,
So give me back my pilfered bones.

[This last the source of the text in a cartoon, reproduced in David A. Wilson Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection]

Paine,

"the Brito-American link-boy of rebellion"

Elliot, The Republican Refuted (cited in Wilson, p. 9)

of the next year, I packed the stone and took it with me on a flight to New York. A couple of days later, in New Rochelle, I placed it on the memorial plaque indicating where Thomas Paine's grave once was—at the end of the garden, not far from the cottage.³⁷⁸ We first had to search for it, as it was completely overgrown with wild green leaves. With the kind help of Gary Bush, board member of the Huguenot & New Rochelle Historical Association, we cut away with our hands the most invasive branches to read the text on the plaque (18#). This unforgettable moment happened just after my family and I had unexpectedly received the abovementioned expert tour of the house by Sydelle Herzberg, whose name literally translates to mountain of heart (19#).

What, then, resurfaces in our minds when pondering Paine's case? What messages are to be found from retrieving Paine's and Porter's ideas by rereading their books? As reflected by the conclusion of the text panel accompanying *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Allan Sekula seemed to agree with Katherine Anne Porter that we need to learn from the old passenger ships that they “were above all else metaphoric stages for politics, for autocracy and contested intimacy, and for the drama of a human nature less good than that imagined by Paine.”³⁷⁹ What Sekula appears to have suggested here is that Porter's sobering analysis of the rise of fascism in the 1930s needs to be balanced against Paine's resolute voluntarism. At the same time, Paine's constructive hopefulness can be inspiring material for countering Porter's more pessimistic cynicism.

Allan Sekula knew well that Paine was not as naïve as he has sometimes been disapprovingly regarded. Selecting a sentence from *Rights of Man* that appears to have lost none of its relevancy, he thus quoted Paine: “A vast mass of mankind are degradedly thrown into the background of the human picture, to bring forward, with greater glare, the puppet-show of state and aristocracy.”³⁸⁰ Whereas Katherine Anne Porter was proud to put her novel in the lineage of Sebastian Brant, the first part of Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791) was written in the form of a letter to George Washington, the first US president. Paine composed the text in reaction and in opposition to Edmund Burke's conservative pamphlet *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).³⁸¹ Contrary to Burke, Paine was a resolute republican, vehemently renouncing all forms of hereditary monarchy. Fundamentally inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau—in the context of whose writings the term *rights of man* first generated—Paine understood society in terms of an alliance between equals.³⁸²

Paine was aware that this ideal was hard to achieve. This was already the case in his own time, as he discovered when he was about to leave Dover to take up his function as French deputy for Pas-de-Calais, where he would receive a warm welcome. At the quay in Dover, a crowd

of outraged citizens shouted at him that it was irresponsible to see such a “dangerous fool” move about freely.³⁸³ Yet, Paine had visionary ideas, one of which I would like to quote at length from Part Two of *Rights of Man*.

Government ought to be as much open to improvement as any thing which appertains to man, instead of which it has been monopolized from age to age, by the most ignorant and vicious of the human race. Need we any other proof of their wretched management, than the excess of debts and taxes with which every nation groans, and the quarrels into which they have precipitated the world? Just emerging from such a barbarous condition, it is too soon to determine to what extent of improvement government may yet be carried. For what we can foresee, all Europe may form but one great republic, and man be free of the whole.³⁸⁴

Thomas Paine was hopeful that both the French Revolution and the American War of Independence would set a leading example to the rest of Europe and the world, to unite in one universal republic.

Sekula’s reading of Paine suggests we consider the likely more realistic characterization of the human condition sketched by Porter—namely, that man is not as good as Paine would have wanted him to be. Yet Sekula appears to have objected to Porter that we need to regain confidence in the shaping and normative capacity of human-rights declarations. Literature and visual art can be one among other key grassroots movements for (re-)imagining and relegitimizing fundamental rights. These grassroots movements are direly needed, not only along France’s Opal Coast, where basic humanitarian assistance is denied to substantial groups of people to this day, but also in Paris and numerous other cities and regions within the European Union. Between Calais and Brussels, and from the beaches of Normandy all the way up to Calais, several hundreds of persons live unprotected in the open air—often hiding in bushes near French and Belgian highway parking lots ever further remote from Calais and hoping to be able to access trucks that will take them to the United Kingdom.³⁸⁵ Violent confrontations with the police have become more frequent, and have even resulted in the death—by a police shot—of a two-year-old child, Mawda Shawri, on May 17, 2018.³⁸⁶

The leading French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that, even if President Emmanuel Macron spared no effort to brush up his image while developing a “humanist” discourse, repression by the authorities in the Channel cities has never been more violent than since he entered the Elysée.³⁸⁷ The regrettable outcome of this politics is that, in winter 2018, Calais experienced a previously unseen altercation among

persons involving the use of firearms, resulting in twenty wounded young men.³⁸⁸ The atmosphere continues to be tense and volatile. From May 2019 on, as amply elaborated in Chapter Two, the number of persons trying to cross the English Channel in dinghies has increased exponentially.³⁸⁹ In fall 2020, the Calais mayoralty started deforesting hundreds of trees and shrubs around the Virval Hospital and Fort Nieulay, a touristic site that had become pivotal for the construction of makeshift hideouts. Six surveillance video cameras are set to complete the new decor around the site.

This drastic erasure of large parts of grove has raised major concern with the *Europe Écologie – Les Verts Calais group*. Not only does it mark ecological disaster, as nature is replaced by gates and cameras, but it also results in a situation where persons on the move have nowhere left to hide anymore, and become *trapped in complete visibility*, out in the panoptical open—as philosopher Dénètem Touam Bona put it, while recalling Michel Foucault on the matter.³⁹⁰ Touam Bona went as far as to conclude that, exposing these people to the rains and colds of winter without sheltered lodging for the night, the state has “delegated to the elements of nature the work of death.” In his view, what is exercised in Calais now, is “an active but discreet necro politics”—ornamented by sixty-five kilometers of fencing, as in an open-air prison.³⁹¹

This infernal spiral will have to be halted somehow, in some way. Sekula continues to figure among those artists who tirelessly took up the challenge to contribute to reinventing mechanisms of solidarity, never losing hope or his good spirits. In the case of *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, it seems he was already trying to figure out how to solve the issue long before it presented itself. Ultimately, the spectral message reaching us from the deep six (and from Paine) indicates that we should prevent ourselves from collectively losing our sense of community and solidarity—our common sense. With *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, Sekula sought to indicate polyphonously that there is much common ground between the United Kingdom and France—first, a shared sea that is not to be fooled by a jointly operated tunnel.

In *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, Sekula connected concrete places on various sides of the crossing to one another, by means of objects and persons. He included a diptych containing, in its right panel, a flattering portrait of Marie-Thérèse Champesme standing in an abandoned marine station in Dover. She is wearing an elegant vermilion winter coat that becomes the red, white, and blue decoration of the corridor surrounding her magically well. The left panel shows the same corridor, empty. As a result, she conveys the impression to be some sort of apparition—a siren or water nymph just having arisen from the seawaters after an unnoticed submarine passage (7–8). Maybe she left her blue Citroën 2 cv behind on a beach in Dunkirk (5), to wash ashore on Mermaid Beach in

Folkestone and then moved on to Dover? We look at her like a precious surprise from across the Strait who, through her diversity, has potentially come to enrich the nearby country.

*

It will never be known whether Allan Sekula, in his choice of motif for *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, also intended to make a witty under-the-surface reference to the lifelong love story between Irish novelist Samuel Beckett and the French Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil. They married at the registry office of Folkestone in 1961, after having driven Beckett's 2CV to Le Touquet and from there taking a Silver City Airways air ferry plane that also transported his car.³⁹² Of course, Sekula was not naïve. The love and affection developed for this human person suddenly appearing on your shore, and not speaking your language, can turn electrifying to the point of electrocution. He seems to have suggested this by means of another photograph included in Part Two, "Ship of Fools," entitled *Sea France Renoir* [Electrical hazard] (26). But, in his view, that surely is not a reason to not be open to it. With a healthy dose of generosity and good agreements, this diversity is a richness and source of wealth. A generous society can mark solid beacons that help to establish ties between people. Sekula completed the Dunkirk triptych by including a photograph of a semaphore to illustrate this point (6). In this way, his only apparent reportage work turns out to extrapolate a much larger message to its audience, which is one of community, exchange, and bridging divides. In retrospect, it is as if he was establishing a connection to one of the opening quotes of Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, stating, after the Bajan poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite, that "the unity is sub-marine."³⁹³

If Paine's bones are irretrievably lost, as Sekula suggested, we should ensure that his ideas continue to resurface, to prevent haughty Captain Nemo's unsinkable coffin from floating up from the depths as an infernal menace. For, if the destructive vortex of Pandora's revengeful box wins out, Nemo's whirlpool will prove to be the abyss for all. When Theresa May handed over the United Kingdom's letter of withdrawal from the European Union to its then president Donald Tusk on March 29, 2017 by means of an envoy—and this is a photograph of which, I confess, I often felt tempted to make a doodle—she emphasized the "deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU." The phrase has been repeated frequently and has become a key element in both May's much-discussed Florence speech on September 22, 2017, and official UK government discourse ever since. The GOV.UK website has posted the speech online with the rather joyful heading that this speech outlines "how the UK will be the strongest friend and partner to the EU after we leave the EU."³⁹⁴ However, only days after May resigned from

office on June 7, 2019, Boris Johnson soberly and publicly announced that he would withhold any concession to pay the £39 billion Brexit “divorce” payment to the European Union if he were to become the next prime minister.³⁹⁵

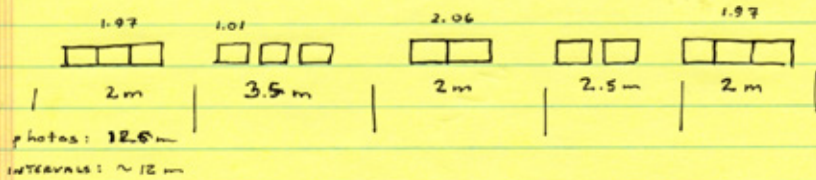
This statement immediately followed Donald Trump’s state visit to the United Kingdom, during which it was also solemnly communicated that both men spoke on the phone.³⁹⁶ As Arundhati Roy sharply observed, the US president tried hard to make the imposturous impression that he was “a monarch visiting one of his colonies” in the making.³⁹⁷ For the general sake of the British people and for the political stability of the European Union, one may only hope that such a rhetorical bluff turns out not to be a tall-tale-turned-nightmare scenario. No one knows, however, what will happen in the long run. Will the Irish border, for example, become a hot spot for smuggling goods into the European Union, creating unfair competition? The geopolitical situation of the internally divided island of Ireland, for sure, is explosive material. What is more, the experience with the Channel Tunnel has demonstrated that it is not self-evident how to create laws that work well for complicated border zones. The landlocked logic of the Tunnel continues to clash with the rhythm of the Channel waters themselves, which cannot be mastered so readily. Consider the following passage from Sekula’s abovementioned “Deep Six (Notes)” (see also fig. 8.18):

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-----  
Intrigue on trains is always bourgeois. On ships, intrigue  
moves between the lumpenproletariat and the aristocracy.  
  
The subterranean train as mobile coffin roaring through an  
elongated grave. The ship plowing the surface. The train  
below the seafloor. Moving downward, diving: deck, hull,  
waves, depths, seafloor, rock, tunnel, carriage. A glass of  
wine above, a glass of wine below. Bubbles.  
----
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When I interviewed Sekula at my former Brussels home in 2005, he explained that he was keen to use font styles, in this case Courier New, which made his texts look as if they had been written on an old typewriter. Such a choice can’t be explained by pure nostalgia. Instead, it is rather meant to be understood in both an ironic and a reflexive way—to encourage us to keep thinking about the past, to remember what was good, and not to throw the baby away with the bathwater. Similarly, Sekula wished to stimulate reflection on the side of the spectators of

Computing wall lengths for Calais:

Part I: Rights of Man



Part II: Slip of Fools

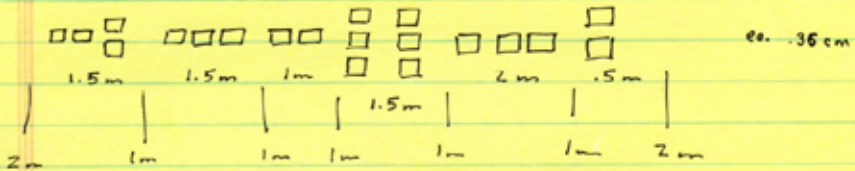


Fig. 8.19.

Allan Sekula, "Computing wall lengths for Calais," 1998. Extract from unpublished archival document, black marker on yellow notebook paper. Part of the Allan Sekula Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Deep Six / Passer au bleu through the various displays of the thirty-three photographs. (fig. 8.19) Part One, “The Rights of Man” needs to be hung as one horizontal line, which suggests travel by train through a tunnel. Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” as has been demonstrated, should always be experienced in terms of a wave. In Sekula’s letter to Annette Haudiquet dated March 22, 1998, he indicated that Part Two, “Ship of Fools” needs to be understood as a predella to Part One, “The Rights of Man.” Interestingly, this suggests that the smaller images typical of a predella provide a narrative context and point at what precedes submarine transportation by train—namely, ships that carry goods and persons.

Once more, the fact that Sekula herewith grants the most important place, that of the subject matter represented in the polyptych above the predella, to train transportation through the Channel Tunnel—as emblemized by the horizontal, rectilinear block presentation of Part One, “The Rights of Man”—is to be seen ironically. (fig. 8.20; see also fig. 3.1) Understood in this way, Part One, “The Rights of Man” photographs, which consist of eight separate frames positioned in five blocks, appear to figure as five heavy train wagons that somehow hover or float above the waves generated by Part Two, “Ship of Fools.” (see also fig. 3.2) It is as if they could sink into the rough seas at any moment. What exactly has been swallowed up by the waves in such dramatic circumstances is abundantly clarified by the title of Part One: nothing less than the rights of man themselves. More than anything, Sekula appeared to suggest, these rights need to be put on a pedestal. When “the coffin learns to dance” or, as in this case, to run at high speed across the bottom of the sea, things go wrong on a level no longer in tune with human proportions.³⁹⁸

To borrow from the vocabulary of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, we may say that the, apparently only, smooth line of the train is cause for much striation—stirring and upheaval, both in the literal and in the metaphorical sense of the term. The 2017 Barcelona installation of the totality of the two groups of photographs that make up *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, with a representative selection from *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, urged its spectators to contribute to reinventing a viable, more “smooth,” and solidary community instead of a “striated” and deeply divided socioeconomic reality. In this way, we as curators wanted to make the spectators reflect on how Zanny Begg concluded her analysis of Sekula’s *Waiting for Tear Gas*: “the ‘smooth space’ of Empire is also a striated space for those without cash who find the flow of life blocked at every turn.”³⁹⁹ In the concluding lines of her chapter on *The Rights of Man*, Hannah Arendt, back in 1951, expressed serious concern about the ever-increasing numbers of people who are forced to live “outside the common world,” lacking the opportunity to become citizens of some commonwealth and therewith to partake in the human artifice.⁴⁰⁰



Fig. 8.20.

Allan Sekula, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, Part 1, "The Rights of Man" – 1er volet, "Les Droits de l'homme," 1996/1998. Partial view: eleven Cibachrome photographs, one text panel, one chair, and public library copy French edition of Thomas Paine, *Les droits de l'homme*; as presented at the exhibition *Voyage, de l'exotisme aux nonlieux*, installation view, Musée de Valence, summer 1998. Photo by Allan Sekula. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Zanny Begg translated this preoccupation to contemporary times, when she pointed to "the cashless masses who are the subjects of globalization, struggling on welfare, forced to flee to refugee camps, laboring in the hulls of deterritorialized ships of convenience."⁴⁰¹ This indeed appears to confirm Arendt's concluding sentence: "the danger is that a global, universally interrelated civilization may produce barbarians from its own midst by forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages."⁴⁰² In the following chapters, I will focus on the question of who exactly the barbarians are. For if Cyclopes start to rule, most humans are reduced to frail and vulnerable "ordinary men," who need to become inventive. Inspired by the Seattle protests, Begg saw in these gatherings the embryonic genesis of a "multitude" who poses a "radically different form of globalization from below."⁴⁰³ "Their struggle," she concluded, "invites the possibility of a world becoming."

Similarly, Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, even twenty years after its completion, continues to trigger our politically conscious impetuses. It encourages us to move beyond a merely detached aesthetic spectatorship and to continue to find ways of not letting ourselves be divided and fooled—not even in societies that have democratic elections such as the United States and the EU countries, however difficult this may seem. In so doing, a solid dose of humor is required. I was reminded of

this, if only mildly, in the middle of summer 2018, when we—a small minority of Belgians—went to watch the World Cup soccer semifinals on outdoor television screens next to the harbor dock of Port Joinville, France. When the aggressively playing French team won against the valiant Belgians, a bunch of young, overjoyed people jumped from the quay into the water. We admired their spectacular dives and were happy for them, yet felt extremely uncomfortable in their midst, feeling unnecessarily treated as undesired outcasts—*les petits Belges*.

Yet there was one woman who made up for it all (25#). She, dressed up quite foolishly, made me feel reconciled with the situation. As she turned her face, she looked me *right in the eye*. She sent a sign of hope that I would like to describe with the following words from Blaise Cendrars: “And there I was! I recognized myself. A mirror was held up to me.”⁴⁰⁴ Cendrars provides the following description from Saint Jean Cassien: “there is no doubt that there exist, amongst impious spirits, as many diverse tastes as exist amongst men. In fact, amongst them is a type commonly known as Vagabonds — *Planos* — who are, above all, beguilers and clowns.” As the reader may discover hereafter, by the time this anonymous woman flashed me her pretty smile, I had become a *planus* myself in the sense, to quote Cendrars once again, given to this term by Pliny, a “buffoon,” a “vagabond,” an “adventurer”—a tramp or a vagrant.

At the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, there is a series of pictures painted by the so-called Master of Alkmaar. These are scenes of everyday life, people gathered together for reasons which change from picture to picture; in each group, there is one figure, always the same: lost in the crowd, which is represented as though unaware of being observed, only this person, each time, gazes at the painter (and hence at me) right in the eyes. This figure is Christ.

Roland Barthes, "Right in the Eyes [1977]," in *The Responsibility of Forms. Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 240.



#DeliriousFrench #woman attending the #worldcup #soccer semi-finals #game between #france and #belgium with her #TeenageDaughter outside a harbor pub @PortJoinville @lledYeu #summer #hot #party #community #segregation

Plates



Plate 10.

Slides no. 19, 45, 55, 59, 68, and 77 from Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]*, 1999/2000. 81 slides, 35 mm, color, and wall text, 13–16 mins. (depending on the selected interval within the allowed range of 10–12 secs.), looped. Sequence coeditor: Sally Stein.
© Allan Sekula Studio.



Plate 11.

Slides no. 47–48 from Allan Sekula, *Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]*, 1999/2000. 81 slides, 35 mm, color, and wall text, 13–16 mins. (depending on the selected interval within the allowed range of 10–12 secs.), looped. Sequence coeditor: Sally Stein. © Allan Sekula Studio.



Plate 12.

Allan Sekula, *Midwife and newborn, Kassel*, from *Shipwreck and Workers (Version 3 for Kassel)*, 2005–2007. Ink printed on vinyl (print system VUTEK), 26 impressions, 243×338 cm. Collection MACBA, Barcelona. Gift of the artist. © Allan Sekula Studio.



Plate 13.

Bruno Serralongue, *Ahmed, en route vers le centre de jour Jules Ferry, Calais, jeudi 16 avril 2015* [*Ahmed, On His Way to the Day Center Jules Ferry, Calais, Thursday April 16, 2015*], 51×63.5 cm. Part of the series *Calais*, 2006–. Inkjet on Canson Baryta photo paper, Plexiglas frame. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville and Baronian-Xippas, Brussels.

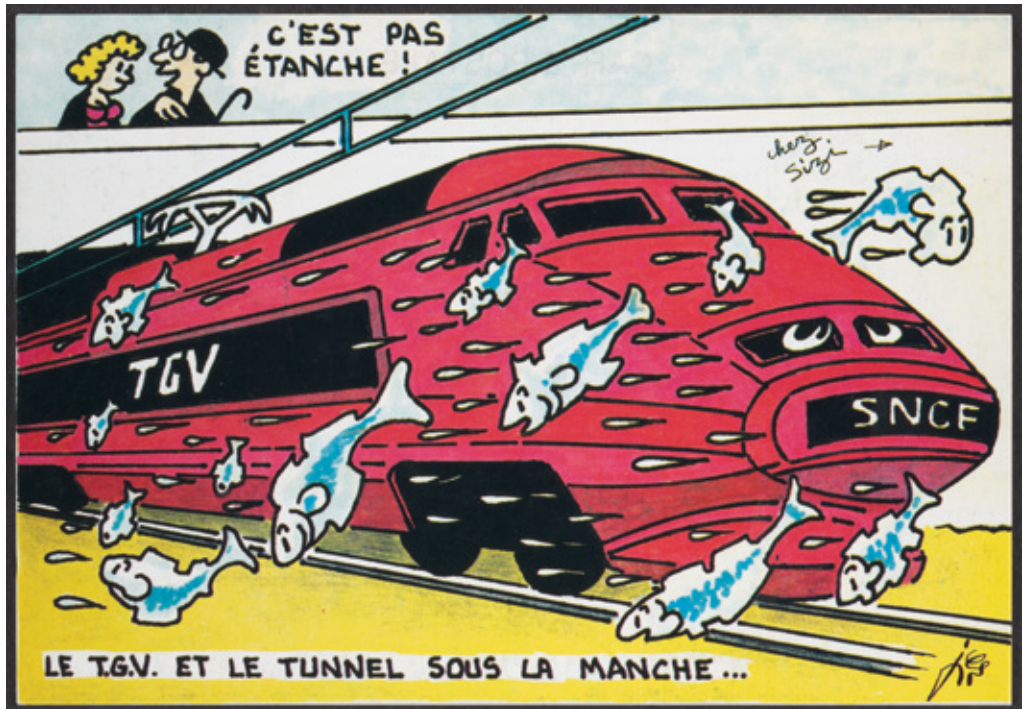


Plate 14.

JER (Jean Etienne Rousseau), *C'est pas étanche! Le TGV et le Tunnel sous la Manche* [It's not watertight! The TGV and the Channel Tunnel]. Recto of illustrated postcard, color, 10×15 cm. Author's collection. © Postcard illustration Gilles Rousseau.

© Postcard Édition des Escargophiles. Collection 1989 N° 141.



Plate 15.

Via Calais. Portable plastic case containing one big tray and one big poster with the same motif as the tray, fourteen blank writing cards (folded) with different motifs and four small posters in an illustrated folder, and twelve information brochures on the port and region of Calais, 1996. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Posthumous donation by the artist's widow, Sally Stein. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*). Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



Plate 16.

Tray from portable plastic case *Via Calais*, 1996. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



Plate 17.

Double page from an information brochure on the Port of Calais in portable plastic case *Via Calais*, 1996. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



Plate 18.

Seven blank writing cards (folded) with different motifs and one small poster from an illustrated folder in portable plastic case *Via Calais*, 1996. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



Plate 19.

Three blank writing cards (folded) with different motifs and two small posters from an illustrated folder in portable plastic case *Via Calais*, 1996. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



Plate 20.

One blank writing card (folded) with different motifs and one small poster from an illustrated folder, and the covers of two information brochures on the Port of Calais in portable plastic case *Via Calais*, 1996. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Design: Andrzej Malinowski. © SABAM Belgium 2021.



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August to September
and 10 h.00 to 18 h.00
October to March.



Plate 21.

Double page from an information brochure on the region of Calais, 1996. Copyright holder and rights status unknown. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Posthumous donation by the artist's widow, Sally Stein. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: M HKA, Christine Clinckx. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).



Plate 22.

Bruno Serralongue, *Paysage anti-intrusion I (les terrains autour du site du tunnel sous la Manche sont inondés afin d'empêcher les migrants d'approcher des clôtures)*, Coquelles, 25 janvier 2016 [*Anti-Intrusion Landscape I (The Fields Surrounding the Site of the Channel Tunnel Are Flooded in Order to Prevent Migrants From Approaching the Fences, Coquelles, January 25, 2016)*], 126×157 cm. Inkjet print on Canson Baryta photo paper mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame. Part of the series *Calais*, 2006–. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Air de Paris, Romainville and Baronian-Xippas, Brussels.



the puppet show
of state
and aristocracy

(T. Paine)

live cinders
carried across
the channel
from France
in flames



(H. Melville)

Plate 23.

Double page from Allan Sekula's notebook *Exit Book 05-03-2011 Madrid*, 2011. Collection Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Photo by Ina Steiner. © Allan Sekula Studio.



Plate 24.

Admiralty Chart 1406 North Sea, Dover and Calais to Orford Ness and Scheveningen (partial reproduction). Not to be used for Navigation. © Crown Copyright and/or database rights. Reproduced by permission of the Keeper of Public Records and the UK Hydrographic Office (www.GOV.uk/UKHO). Ornamented with pieces of woolen yarn cut and placed by author.



Plate 25.

Basic weaving loom with shuttle and woolen yarn (author's tapestry in process). Photo by Erien Withouck.



Plate 26.

Admiralty Chart 1406 North Sea, Dover and Calais to Orford Ness and Scheveningen (partial reproduction). Not to be used for navigation. © Crown Copyright and/or database rights. Reproduced by permission of the Keeper of Public Records and the UK Hydrographic Office (www.GOV.uk/UKHO). Ornamented with author's completed tapestry.



Plate 27.

North Sea plaice, 2019. Photo by author.



Plate 28.

Bronze Age Colinda harpoon, as preserved at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Norfolk, United Kingdom. January 31, 2020.
Photo by author.

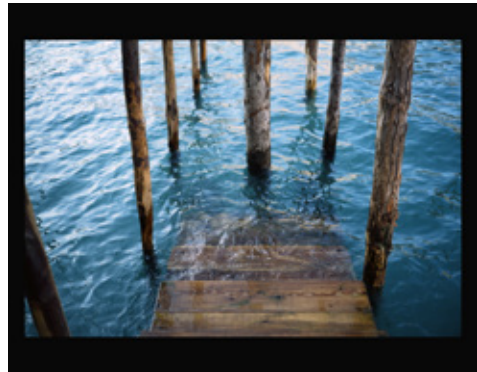


Plate 29.

Six untitled and unnumbered slides from Allan Sekula, *Reverse Magellan*, 2010. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. © Allan Sekula Studio.

Chapter 9

This Precious Jewel

“As long as we occupy Calais, we can console ourselves for the loss of Antwerp.”

Saying allegedly expressed by Lord A.J. Balfour to Sir Winston Churchill, then first Lord of the Admiralty, after the Fall of Antwerp on October 9, 1914; as cited in Jean Lulvès, *Calais sous la domination anglaise 1347–1558* (Bern: Ferd. Wyss, 1918), opening statement. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k56126361/f6.image>. Accessed April 2, 2021. My translation.



Joyride on the roundabout @DigueGastonBerthe @Calais
#autumn #fun #icecream #car #driving #love #sea #ferry #beach



Fig. 9.1.

Above: Allan Sekula, A2 pink wall text no. 5, saying "It is all the more profound that this ship should seek to represent the workings of empire at a time when the global economy is assumed to be entirely virtual in its connectedness, magically independent of the slow maritime movement of heavy things."; and *Engine Room Eyes, 1-3* (1999/2010). Installation view, *Allan Sekula: Ship of Fools*, M HKA, Antwerp, 2010 [in the building

of the Antwerp Fotomuseum]. © Photo: Christine Clinckx. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio. Below: Allan Sekula, *Engine Room Eyes 1*, 1999/2010. Framed chromogenic print mounted on alu-dibond, part of *Ship of Fools* (2010), 101.6×127 cm. Collection M HKA/Collection Flemish Community. © Allan Sekula Studio.

*From the engine room to the engine room, May 1996 – De salle des machines à salle des machines, mai 1996.*⁴⁰⁵ Allan Sekula inserted this line in the abbreviated list of captions accompanying Part Two, “Ship of Fools.” As his later *Ship of Fools* (2010) contains a triptych of photographs bearing the title *Engine Room Eyes*, my attention has been drawn to this phrase from *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* ever since I started working on the *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum* manuscript in 2013. (fig. 9.1) *Engine Room Eyes* is a group of images that inspired W.J.T. Mitchell to wonder at what point during his lifelong survey of the global ship of fools this artist-mariner turned critical historical-materialist in search of a radically egalitarian politics began “to notice that some of the ship’s equipment was starting to look back at him?”⁴⁰⁶

If we take this question from the author of *What Do Pictures Want?* (2005) to heart, what, then, is it that the engine room’s staring and glazy eyes want? What should we imagine that they see? What do they tell us when we, in turn, look back right into these eyes? Sekula must have asked himself that question numerous times, since a large print of *Engine Room Eyes I* occupied a central position on the principal wall of his Los Angeles Echo Park studio. (see fig. P.5) In May–June 2013, while visiting Sekula in Los Angeles, we held all our work conversations sitting in front of this piece. What struck me then, as it still does now, is that (using heraldry) the sinister, milky “eye” lights up. The dexter one, however, recedes into darkness. What is more, it seems cut through in the middle by a thick, brownish, oily tear.

I have often cursed myself for not asking Sekula the rationale behind his persistent fascination for the ship’s engine room in general and the insertion of the abovementioned phrase specifically.⁴⁰⁷ We cannot turn back time. What follows is therefore an attempt to figure it out from the rebus of visual and written indications given by the artist. In the English language, the prepositions *from/to* are most used for temporal expressions. They mark both a starting and a finishing time. Taken literally, the tautological phrase *from* the engine room *to* the engine room may thus suggest an ongoing, circular time in the engine room. The key word *room*, however, readily contradicts this exclusively temporal reading and brings in a spatial constellation: it anchors the temporality of the expression *from ... to ...* within the concrete spatiality of the sea crossing. When read out loud, as a phrase of concrete poetry (of which Sekula is known to have been fond), it is as if the artist suggested a spatiotemporal rhythm that repeats itself quietly, like a zooming sound accompanying an imaginary movement of smooth wavelets. In repeating the sentence a couple of times, the waves rolling toward the ship’s hull as it is steaming forward to the next harbor, in this case Dover or Calais, can be felt.

Upon closer observation of the longer list of titles used in Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” Sekula has provided a clue for such a reading. The first photograph of this sequence is entitled *Sea France Renoir* [Three engineers]. Although not articulated in the title, it is clear from the image that Sekula photographed the three mechanical engineers below deck, at work in the engine room. The caption for the closing picture of the sequence makes the connection explicit: *Sea France Renoir* [Engine room video, approaching Dover]. As already indicated, at the end of this same list, the artist inserted the following sentence:

captions in brackets are given for descriptive purposes only and should not be considered the titles of the individual photographs. The complete title for all photographs listed as *Sea France Renoir* is *Sea France Renoir en route between Dover and Calais*.

What thus appears a further central element in the analysis of this little riddle is the focus on the passage—being underway, en route back and forth, repeatedly, in a relational type of movement. With this idea of the ship propelling itself steadily through the mass of water, another rhythmical element comes to mind, that of the acoustic hum of its engine. That the engine keeps running is key to the ship’s operation—the engine is its beating heart. In 1997, Sekula once mentioned the ship’s engine room in the context of *Fish Story*. “What interested me,” he wrote, “was the association of claustrophobic maritime space—the waterfront slum, the hold of the slave ship, the shipyard, the forecandle, the engine room—with the potential for popular insurrection and mutiny.”⁴⁰⁸ The engine room, then, prominently figures within Sekula’s thinking as a crucial space—in other words, as the space that poses the ever-potential “threat of the revolt from below decks.”

Before elaborating further on this idea, let me first return to doodle 11#. All Saints’ Day 2017 was an unusually mild day for the time of the year. Most of the afternoon, I sat with my camera on the little hill near the cemetery of Vieux Coquelles. Local people, dressed up for the solemn occasion, came and went to visit the tombs of their beloved ones. Sitting there on the neatly trimmed lawn and surrounded by freshly installed, colorful pots of chrysanthemums, I spent time observing from afar the so-called *salle de “contrôle sécurité”*—the security control room put in place by the Eurotunnel group right at the tunnel’s entrance on French soil. In 2014, the company running this control room received thirteen million euros from the French and British governments jointly as compensation for investments made in building this center. Another 9.7 million euros followed in 2015, and ten million more flew in to prepare the computer system by January 2017.⁴⁰⁹

In this way, as reported by Jacques Toubon for the French association *Le Défenseur des droits*, a private company was given generous financial scope by means of government funding collected through public taxes.⁴¹⁰ Aside from this transfer from public funds to the private sector, questions may be raised, according to Toubon, with regard to delegating to the private sector such a regal domain as border control. The security system thus put in place is substantial: 570 cameras monitor the site, while images are recorded around the clock and analyzed in real time by the staff present in the security control room. From there, the activities of the various actors operating on the premises are managed and coordinated. As many as three hundred security agents, some accompanied by trained dogs, work on the site, and they receive support from officers from the French Gendarmerie dispatched in the area. Five persons permanently scrutinize smaller computer screens as well as one gigantic screen attached to a central wall. There is also a garage for the storage of drones, as well as a crisis room.

The general aim, as bluntly communicated in an official press release, is to “fight against migrant intrusions and to fight the risk of terrorism.”⁴¹¹ From the outside, the security control room, which is the white building with the large black window on the far right of the photograph used as doodle 11#, looks eerily similar to the pilothouse of a large ship, the only difference being that this control room is not moving. It is landlocked. Its concrete construction is safely anchored in the landscape, thus ruining its peaceful nature. Rigid and immobile, the control room just sits there, seemingly forever, to facilitate the scrupulous monitoring of every single train that passes. It is difficult not to compare this facility with the one-eyed monstrous Cyclops Polyphemus, villainously observing the entrance of his cave. A meticulously designed maze of impenetrable fences surrounds the security complex. When, on another occasion earlier that year, in March 2017, I parked my car as nearby as I dared to in order to photograph the image used for doodle 28# from my slightly opened window, I confess to have felt great unease. I was scared because, hypothetically, my car was within gunshot of the security control center.

So, what *do* the engine room eyes tell us? Sekula’s May 1996 exercise in *street photography on a ship*—to recall his words on Part Two, “Ship of Fools”—feature a strong connection between its first and last photograph (since both photographs were taken inside the vessel’s engine room). Combined with the phrase *from the engine room to the engine room*, this circular loop seems to suggest that, as far as the artist is concerned, the engine room of the ship both echoes and doubles the upper-deck control room of its commander. Located below deck, the engine room is monitored by those who walk closest to the water—beneath the waterline—and who, from there, return instructions to the

ship commander's room. Sekula's enigmatic phrase thus may be understood as urging us to perceive the engine room as the essential space to always return to. To put it differently, he fought for the preservation of the engine room as a privileged space of complementary *control*: it is the area from which to organize mutiny, should there be a need.

In the spatiotemporal constellation of a ship en route, passengers spend their travel time in the zones situated between the engine room and the control room: the indoor decks or outside on the deck terraces. The underwater train, however, has inverted this logical order of safety. The train has managed to *deep six* passengers to the bottom, underground, like rabbits caught in a pipe's passage. Its control room, for its part, is firmly bunkered on land, within the soil's surface—like a poisonous mushroom near a small cemetery. This setup has nipped in the bud any possible threat of a revolt from belowdecks. Employees working in this new type of immobile control room do not use video cameras to ensure safe entrance of the harbor dock, as in the ferry days of the SeaFrance *Renoir*. Rather, they use them to keep intruders from entering the tunnel complex.

*

During several other occasions in 2017, I also traveled to the Pale of Calais by car, on my own. In early January, my first trip to this region—of which I have the fondest childhood memories—caused a general feeling of shock. Over the past decade, as I observed firsthand, the previously rolling countryside between Calais and Wissant had changed into a desolate area. The green fields of French Flanders, once serving as the dismal theater of two world wars, again resembled a war zone, this time marked by countless fences, gates, and watchtowers. The saddening architectural transformation of this beautiful landscape easily competes with the ugliness of the Belfast area—this other fraught UK border zone in its far northwestern corner.

By March, however, I was already slightly better prepared for what I would come to find. Moreover, I had one specific target in mind, which was to approach the Channel Tunnel entrance—meaning the actual rabbit pipes—as closely as possible. Anyone tempted to repeat this experiment will rapidly notice that tourist maps of the area leave travelers clueless. Nowhere around town are there signs indicating where to drive to get to the pipes themselves. All available road marks are efficiently set up to facilitate swift access to the train terminal entrance, if entirely gated on both sides of the road. Consequently, I started to roam around with my car in an intuitive way near the railroad tracks. This led me to crisscross age-old, small country lanes now sometimes hardly accessible or even completely blocked and out of use. Trying to

spot the site where the tunnel opens its mouths as two black holes in the damaged landscape turned out to be as much a confusing enterprise as a disorienting one.

This experiment took place on a dark, rainy, and misty day (the day when I photographed doodle **28#**). I decided to keep driving as closely as possible to the coastline, somehow trying to grasp, and then read the logic of the overall structure of fences. At one point, I spotted the abovementioned small cemetery in the old hamlet of Vieux Coquelles, which is situated on the sunny side of a charming slope. Overlooking the ossuary in the direction of the gated infrastructure, I was finally able to figure it out. I needed to locate the railroad bridge near the, at that time, heavily guarded horse-riding school, *Écuries de la Beussingue*. It runs parallel to a much larger bridge on the A16 highway, permitting vehicles to pass over the train tracks. From that bridge, any possible panoramic view on the surrounding landscape has been completely blocked. Some decision-makers spared no effort to make sure passersby will *not* realize the Channel Tunnel is just *there*.

In times of massive city marketing to attract tourism, a mechanism on which almost any other western European town of comparable size has been trying to capitalize as much as possible, such covering up of the Channel Tunnel entrance is suspicious. Worldwide, after all, this tunnel is still the one with the longest undersea segment (thirty-eight kilometers), and, for this reason, is a most impressive piece of engineering. In this respect, the American Society of Civil Engineers declared the Channel Tunnel one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World.⁴¹² Quite an achievement indeed, and as many as fifteen thousand workers were employed on the construction site at one point. What is more, we should never forget that, between 1986 and 1992, eleven workers gave their lives during the tunnel's construction, as a commemorative plaque at Samphire Hoe reminds us.⁴¹³ The construction of the tunnel was the culmination of a doubtful balance between dreams and fears mutually shared by two nations that, almost seven hundred years ago, waged a century-long war. In fact, it was a miracle that consensus was finally reached about an underwater passage between France and the United Kingdom.

Why, then, this anxious hiding of such a unique human achievement? When I first crossed the small railway bridge on the Avenue Charles de Gaulle (the one next to the horse-riding school), I learned that, from there, I could still get a good view of the entrances of the two principal tunnel tubes. However, because this local stretch of road was guarded by numerous French Gendarmerie vans in various sizes and formats, it was impossible to halt my car anywhere on or near that bridge. On this first day, after having driven a few times back and forth rather slowly across the bridge, it was clear that I had been spotted, as was betrayed

by the increasingly agitated movements made by a gendarme, who until then seemed to be bored and comfortably dozing while sitting in his parked truck. Discouraged and, admittedly, intimidated, I gave up that day. The afternoon of the next day, however, I returned with a clear plan. Camouflage would do the trick. Counting on the fact that an informally dressed middle-aged woman driving alone in a not-so-fancy car with—more important than anything else—a *Belgian* license plate would make them believe that they were dealing with a rather ignorant fool, I gathered the courage to try again. I drove by while turning on the right indicator light, then pulled over and promptly halted my car on the strategic panoramic spot.

Without hesitation, I immediately pushed with my left hand the button to open the front right window while making sure my right hand simultaneously made a friendly hello sign. One of the gendarmes approached me kindly, but not without indicating that he had his impressive machine gun pointed at me. Simultaneously, one of the smaller vans—a slightly old-fashioned blue Renault Kangoo—discreetly parked on the left side of my car. Instantly, I was encircled on all sides by men in uniform, armed to the teeth. After the obligatory mutual exchanges of *bonjour*, I explained I wanted to ask a question. The guy with the machine gun still pointed right at me readily inquired if it was of a personal nature. As I had not expected this reply during my early morning rehearsal of the scene, I briefly hesitated before confirming that this was the case indeed.

While pointing his eyes at me, as if giving me the go-ahead, I began to unroll my tall tale, kindly informing him that I was a researcher working for a Belgian university—that part at least was true. In this capacity, I explained, I had been trying to gather information on the tunnel's infrastructure that I could not find in the published sources, and therefore I had decided to go and check out some things myself on the spot. By then, my fish story was about to enter a rather wild part, but the gendarme seemed on the verge of being mildly amused. Surprisingly, he appeared ready to investigate the matter a bit more. It must have been my stable, broad smile that disarmed him—I know how to keep a straight face from my experiences with synchronized swimming practiced in my youth. Briefly postponing my real question, I humbly conceded to have realized that simply parking my car around there and descending it like a tourist ready to take a look around would surely have made him and his colleagues *very nervous*—*très nerveux*, I said, as we were speaking in French. He approvingly nodded, and his curiosity was now sufficiently aroused to make him spontaneously reply what *exactly* it was that I wanted to know. I told him my question was as plain as it was simple: are the trains in the tunnel riding on the left, as they do in the United Kingdom, or on the right, as it is the custom in France?

Any skeptical reader will know that this was blunt bluffing, for such information is easily available online in both English and French.⁴¹⁴ Fearing immediate uncovering of my scheme, my heart began pounding more heavily, but I somehow managed to keep my outward calm. To my surprise, he seemed not to notice anything. As they had not allowed me to disembark, I was still sitting inside my car slightly less than two meters away from him. After this brief instant of suspense, his wait-and-see attitude transformed into a puzzled, yet sympathetic look. He smiled back and great-heartedly confessed he didn't know the answer himself. As he turned out to be a *nice* guy (and quite handsome too, I must admit), he seemed to take it as a little distraction on an otherwise all too boring day—as a minor mystery to be solved. In a rather self-confident, manly way he immediately proposed to find out for me, making clear he had all the necessary connections to do so in a short amount of time. A quick phone call, he assured me, would surely provide us both with a satisfying answer. Now it was my turn to nod gratefully. Kindly urging me to wait in my car and not to make any odd movement, because his colleagues, as he reminded me, were of the irascible type, he walked back to the larger *camionette*. Once there, he busily started operating the keys of his cell phone.

It was my good fortune that this intervention took him a little while. Although permanently watched by his grim-faced colleagues with their guns pointed at me on my left-hand side, the time this successful diversion granted me provided the once in a lifetime, best possible exclusive view of the tunnel entrance. I saw the *anti-Belvédère* par excellence—a sublime coastal landscape devastated by a double row of fences and barbed wire ending in two huge rabbit burrows intensively sucking in or spitting out trains that the railway management keeps out of sight as much as possible. Of course, I had taken care of hiding away both my camera and my iPhone. Had I dared, I would have taken the snap I was dying to make, to WhatsApp it home to my beloved ones only a few minutes later. Isn't this what today's tourists and vacationers do at any other vista of a similarly impressive nature?

Finally, the young officer came back proudly announcing he had found the answer for me. Thrilled and unable to hide a light chill in his voice, he started talking to me as if he were a wise man instructing a primary school child. Since, by then, he appeared to have spotted my inevitable Flemish accent, which for many Frenchmen automatically implies they start to talk slower while simplifying the phrasing of their sentences, he proclaimed in basic wordings: *Dans le Tunnel, les trains entrent et sortent par la gauche*. As if to make sure that I had properly understood it, he continued with a further explanation: *Ils roulent donc à gauche, comme en Angleterre!* The factual knowledge that the trains ride through the tunnel on the left seemed to satisfy this kind man entirely.

Awaiting some expression of gratitude on my behalf, he most surely was unprepared for my subsequent reply. Sincerely thanking him first, I could not but quietly add right away that I was *vraiment très déçue*—deeply disappointed by this information.

Slightly perplexed, he softly inquired why this was the case. Well, I replied, this means that the British have managed to negotiate implementation of their traffic laws not only on the seafloor of French territorial waters, but also on French continental soil.⁴¹⁵ That was cause for both puzzlement and immediate further reflection. It seemed as if this declaration somehow affected his feelings of national pride. Suddenly, he appeared willing to rapidly conclude the conversation, but not without adding—as if almost ready to laugh—that my question had been a *truly original* one. Gentleman as he was, he made a sign to his colleagues that they should remove their van. At that point, I was reminded of Louis de Funès's movies including gendarmes. He saluted, politely waiting for me to close my window and fasten my seatbelt. Upon that, he graciously brought to a halt all passing traffic on both sides of the busy provincial road, as if he was making way for a VIP who had just been given a private inspection tour. Faintly smiling, I drove off, somewhat triumphantly feeling like the queen of fools.

Years later, while visiting his exhibition *Calais – témoigner de la «jungle»* [*Calais, Testimonies from the "Jungle"*] at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Bruno Serralongue informed me that he had still been able to take photographs of that bridge in 2006. (fig. 9.2) On display was a table of carefully arranged small inkjet prints, three of which show the area described above, as seen by his small-format camera from behind chain-link metal fencing. All images on view on that table are part of a sequence of eighty-one slides, made in Calais, entitled *Risky Lines* (2006).⁴¹⁶ (fig. 9.3) The gendarmes, for their part, mysteriously left this spot in February 2018, the exact reasons why remaining unexplained to the public.⁴¹⁷ When I last went to verify the area in mid-February 2020, they still were no longer there. However, the gated environment appears so menacing that I did not risk halting my car once again (presuming the presence of hidden cameras everywhere). I felt no need to track how many minutes it would take before a van would appear.

The production and exhibition file of Sekula's *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* in the Calais Museum of Fine Arts contains a letter, addressed to the museum staff, and dated October 30, 2000. It was written by Alain Le Nouail, an artist-photographer based in Brest, France. Le Nouail, who appeared to be well informed about Sekula's works, expressed interest in the French translation of the text parts from *Fish Story*, realized for this body of work's Calais exhibition in 1995. Le Nouail concluded his short letter with a kind encouragement to the museum to continue pursuing this type of activity. He asked the staff to keep him informed



Fig. 9.2.

Bruno Serralongue, Agence France-Presse, Les Habitants [The Residents], *Calais, témoigner de la «jungle»* [Calais, Testimonies from the "Jungle"]. Installation view, at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2019) of *Passer en Angleterre, Accès terminal transmanche, Calais, juillet 2007* [Moving to England, Cross-Channel Terminal Access, Calais, July 2007], Ilfochrome mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 125×158 cm; *Feu de camp, Calais, décembre 2008* [Campfire, Calais, December

2008], Ilfochrome mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 51×63 cm; *Groupe d'hommes 2, Calais, décembre 2008* [Group of Men 2, Calais, December 2008], Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 126×157 cm; *Risky Lines*, 2006, 80 color photographs printed on adhesive paper, each photograph 18×27 cm, total dimension 92×473 cm. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Centre Georges Pompidou.

of any progress made on the, back then, still forthcoming publication concerning Sekula's newer work, which the author mistakenly identified as "Deep Sick."⁴¹⁸ I first came across this lapsus on the same day as my March 2017 excursion to the *anti-Belvédère*, as discussed above. That evening, recovering from the emotional experience, I esteemed that my encounter with such a magnificent Freudian slip in the morning couldn't possibly have been more apt.

*

On August 24, 2017, the newspaper *Le Figaro* published a list of 113 French cities online, ranking them according to their "economic vitality."⁴¹⁹ Calais, even in the 1980s still a flourishing seaside resort, was ranked the last of all—mostly due, it was reported, to its towering unemployment numbers. Invariably upon leaving Calais by car these days, it's curious how it is possible that this city, so well situated by the seaside and blessed with Dover's white cliffs on the horizon line, turned into France's sickest patient. Striking back in an interview with the local newspaper *La Voix du Nord*, Natacha Bouchart, the mayor of Calais, proclaimed that "Calais is not a dead city!"⁴²⁰ She regretted that this, admittedly tendentious, type of statistical comparison only adds to the vicious circle of an already disastrous perception of her town. Yet it cannot be denied that the old city center has a chronic lack of attractive squares, playgrounds, charming hotels, nice restaurants, good bars, bakeries, and so on.

If it weren't for the typical kindness of its residents, who continue to be proud of their city despite the odds, it might even be difficult to imagine that this is France. The sixty-four-thousand-dollar question then is: how to find the key to collectively unpack that positive energy and force again? Great Britain, for its part, has already made up its mind. In a referendum on June 23, 2016, 51.9 percent of British citizens decided to turn away from the Continent again.⁴²¹ Certainly, finding an answer to the above question has not become easier since this date. On March 29, 2019, Brexit, as the Leave project came to be called, should have been an accomplished fact.⁴²² The day itself, much feared in the weeks leading up to it because of expected chaos, turned out to be a nonevent. As a means of prolonged meditation on the situation, I spent that day, as mentioned in Chapter Four, completing my final doodle at home (30#)—working only with bronze, silver, and gold paints. The slightly memorable public instance with regard to the missed Brexit day only came the day after, on March 30, when Eurostar train service was disrupted at London St. Pancras station because a man had been waving the English Saint George flag while standing on the roof of the terminal.⁴²³



Fig. 9.3.
Sequence of four slides,
in double projection, from
Bruno Serralongue, *Risky
Lines*, 2006, 80 slides.
© Bruno Serralongue.
Courtesy Air de Paris,
Romainville and Baronian-
Xippas, Brussels.

In Calais, the local population observes the renewed manifestation of “Britishness” with a healthy dose of phlegmatic resignation. Since in France cars drive on the right, roundabouts in Calais are always entered counterclockwise (26#).⁴²⁴ In November 2017, I experimented with this myself on the Digue Gaston Berthe, and I found it striking how much it feels like driving straight toward the North Sea—never losing sight of the British island on the horizon, the city’s fascinating and always incomprehensible Other. Upon doing that, our party crossed a couple of locals eating ice cream in their car, looking slightly bemused with us. We also spotted two young men walking by not taking notice of our weird behavior. Their discussion seemed entirely focused on a P&O ferry entering the harbor fairway in the distance. A local bed-and-breakfast owner, whose opinion on the Brexit subject I asked, soberly summarized the Leave decision in one uncomplaining sentence: “Ah, les Anglais de toute façon tournent toujours dans l’autre sens” [“Oh, well, the British will always go the other direction anyway”].

On the British side of the Strait of Dover, with an internal political situation stuck in a whirlpool of colliding forces, more than just car drivers are now turning their gaze in the other direction indeed, away from the mainland, as I was able to observe near the Dover waterfront only a couple of months later (27#). How the future in the medium to long term will turn out is hard to predict. Do some British politicians silently dream of fully reconquering the Pale, as the Channel tunnel entrance is situated on this territory? As already advanced in Chapter Six, one can never be entirely sure what exactly the British may imagine themselves to be up to in relation to Calais—this town that the English king Henry VI, around 1436, in a letter to the sheriff of Southampton, significantly called “a precieuse jeuell [...] to [his] reame.”⁴²⁵

Various efforts aimed at reconquering it have ensued ever since. In 1694, 1695, 1696, and 1804, English vessels tried to take siege of the port, if unsuccessfully.⁴²⁶ Jean Lulvès has brought to mind the meaningful fact that, at the beginning of World War I, the British had taken advantage of the chaos and confusion to occupy Calais. They reinforced the town’s landward fortifications, and the troops transformed the fortresses to which they denied locals access.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, French artillery equipment was replaced with English canons. This, Lulvès wrote, caused “stupor” on the side of the French allies. Calais was in the process of passing once more into English dominion, causing so much concern on the French side that it “was echoed,” Lulvès pursued, in an interpellation by the deputy for Calais to the French National Assembly on March 21, 1916.

From a contemporary continental point of view, it seems easy to blame the British for their insular reflexes. Historically, however, a deep trauma of attempted invasions can be traced back at least to the Roman

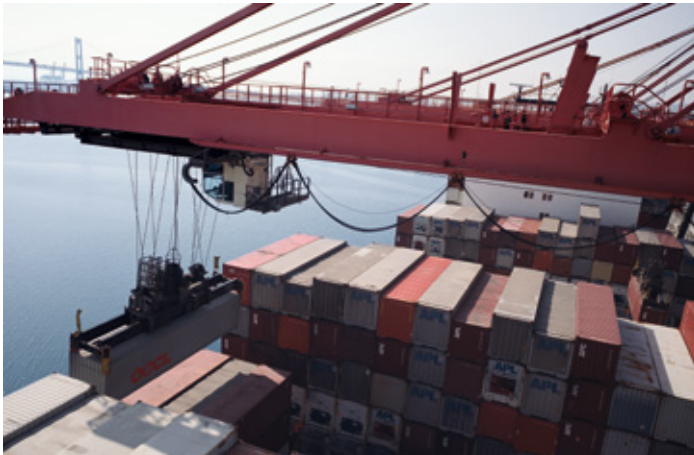
era. When Julius Caesar first tried to invade Britain in 55 BC, he sailed with around eighty ships to the cliffs at Kingsdown.⁴²⁸ Yet the local Cantii tribe, which engaged in trade with the Gauls in France, had been warned about the forthcoming enemy visit. As a result, on the beach at Kingsdown-Walmer, a battle ensued. The Celts struck back en masse, using war chariots. After a full day of fighting, the Romans beat them, upon which they established a defensive fort at Walmer. The Celts continued to attack the Roman fort with guerrilla tactics, and if these failed at first, after a while nature provided them a helping hand. A heavy storm grounded most of Caesar's fleet, anchored in the Downs. The Romans, both impressed by the nasty weather conditions and the harassing Celts, repaired their ships, and left—not without leaving some traces behind in the shallow waters, such as amphorae and other tools (8#).⁴²⁹

But they were to return the next year, in 54 BC, with six hundred ships and twenty-eight war galleons. This time, they met with little opposition and managed to move inland. The Romans went as far as Wheathampstead, north of the Thames. Yet again storms destroyed the larger part of the fleet, and as winter was approaching fast, Caesar decided to leave, never to return. The main Roman invasion of Britain eventually only took place in 43 AD, after which the Romans stayed for four centuries—until the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Ever since, the British have been fearful of invaders attacking the southeastern shores of England, which they consider the island's Achilles's heel. In Chapter One of *Fish Story*, entitled “Fish Story,” Allan Sekula included a photograph of the ancient Roman harbor near Minturno, Italy. (fig. 9.4) He juxtaposed this image with a detailed view of a dockyard hammerhead unloading containers coming from Asia in the harbor of Los Angeles, San Pedro, California.⁴³⁰ One cannot help but imagine that he encouraged his audience to ponder the consequences of expansive gestures of maritime imperialism, from the early Roman days until 1992, when the artist made both pictures.

Thus, the opening triptych of Part One, “The Rights of Man” takes on an additional meaning (1–3). Shot in the heavily industrialized dune plains behind the shorelines of Gravelines, Sekula sketched a visual map of the state of this bay as the year 2000 approached. The three photographs depict, as a tangle of lines that visually hurts the viewer's eyes, a damaged industrial wasteland. It includes an aluminum plant as well as the most important nuclear power station for electricity in western Europe, on the level of both production capacity and number of reactors (no less than six, just next to the beach). Fully operative since 1985, it is among the oldest in the country and has been the subject of complaints filed against it by concerned citizens, with the support of Greenpeace.⁴³¹ Regardless of the landscape's sheer ugliness, Sekula managed to photograph the subtle but dismal traces of a formerly strategic estuary. In these



Fig. 9.4.
Allan Sekula, "Remnants
of a Roman harbor
near Minturno, Italy.
June 1992" (above) and
"Hammerhead crane
unloading fortyfoot con-
tainers from Asian ports.
American President Lines
terminal. Los Angeles har-
bor. San Pedro, California.
November 1992" (below).
From Chapter One, "Fish
Story," of Sekula's *Fish
Story* (1989–1995).
© Allan Sekula Studio.



three photos, Calais reveals itself to be as much a downward crater of sorrow as it is a volcano from which hot flows of EU disintegration are erupting. In retrospect, his *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, building on the historical data available, anticipated this spectral return of the same imperial impulses—with the Brexit saga serving as their bleak and troubled swan song, at least for the time being.

Hinging together the two linguistic expressions “deep six” and “passer au bleu,” which from an auditive perspective could not sound more different, they nonetheless—as indicated in Chapter Three—mean the same in both languages. To illustrate the communicative misunderstandings between the two cultures on each side of the Channel, involved in a never-ending game of mutual attraction and repulsion, I suggest turning to the myth of Echo and Narcissus as narrated in the third book

of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁴³² Let us imagine the female writer's slightly frivolous switch to the story. Empowered by the #MeToo movement, she manages to partly break Juno's spell. She can endow the talkative Echo with one power, the capacity to translate. Once more, the nymph Diana personifies this role.

Narcissus is standing on the iconic Shakespeare Beach in Dover, cupping his hands around his mouth, and shouting the words "deep six" across the Channel's waters. This causes an echo to reverberate from the mythical Cap Blanc Nez. Not able to speak English well, the talkative nymph Diana believes it is wiser to translate what she just heard. In an idle attempt to impress her young suitor, she affirmatively talks back in her own language: "Passer au bleu!" What Narcissus on the Dover side—(what's in a name? Dover meaning "deaf" in Dutch)—believes to hear resonates from afar. Mixed in with the gusting wind, it sounds to him like "Oh! Blue!" He, all but fluent in French, thinks he has heard her say "eau bleue" [blue water]. He thereupon misinterprets the echo as a mere confirmation of what he proposed: indeed, let us trash any initiative to come closer to one another right away back into the blue cesspool. In a Babel-like confusion of tongues, Diana-Echo only causes an even wider wavelength of negative energy to resound. Once more, Narcissus betrays Echo and breaks her binding force. As if under a permanent spell, Echo appears only to hesitate, to stutter. Slowly but surely, her voice fades away amid the rustling sounds of the North Sea. Narcissus, meanwhile, has already turned his back on the Channel's waters and is walking away from the beach. Rejected, Diana cries until her exhausted body dissolves in the sea's glaucous, glittering waters, her bones rapidly petrifying and merging with the chalk marl. As her voice is sinking into the seafloor, however, it fuses with the stone and takes root there. From the depths of the seafloor, her voice continues to make a lasting impression, which sailors can hear with the roaring of each groundswell that arises from deep down.

Chapter Two drew a connection between a ground sea and the murmuring sea. It also discussed the association with marble and the suggestion of walking on seafloors in churches by means of the use of this

type of rock. In this context, Barbara Baert has proposed a hopeful, positive reading of the myth of Echo and Narcissus. She put forward this sea/marble conflation as a model of creative potentiality, reading it as a prominent example of a dualistic epistemology of the image: at the same time liquefying and solidifying.⁴³³ Echo embodies an aquatic paradigm typified by camouflage and matrixial merging. This paradigm resolutely distinguishes itself from Narcissus's ocular-centric projection upon the world.

Applied to the visual arts, the Narcissist conception of the artistic image is that of a preference for a finished and fully formed state. This is a model that we should no longer endorse. We should side with Echo's protocol of dissolution into the world. For Echo's dazzling operation of "merging, of regressing into the mineral world" through "marble-izing" and "staining" suggests an alternative scopic regime.⁴³⁴ The domain of Narcissus is obsessed with the visual medium as a mirror of reality. Within Echo's protocol, instead, a higher level of seeing and imagination becomes the standard, and it is one of cosmogonic involvement. Through her merging with the sea, Echo becomes a fertile force. Quoting Alexis Wick, Baert argued that because the womb is the ocean, the aquatic is female. Both are the motherly givers of life, the one ontogenetic, the other phylogenetic.⁴³⁵ She further connected this "glisteningly water-like," cosmogonic sphere of Echo's matrixial power "to the process of *empsychos*: inert materials that come to life and so appear to us to be mobile or fluid."⁴³⁶

Exactly these fluids, as argued by Sidgwick, have been attributed—since the time of Mesopotamian, Greek, and Egyptian cosmogony—an intrinsic creative potential.⁴³⁷ These liquid masses are an "original ground," a "generative womb" that is a repository of the potential to morphologies and to form substances.⁴³⁸ In early Christian thought, *empsychos* is the work of the Holy Spirit or the "*pneuma*."⁴³⁹ The medium of *pneuma* is "*fluxus*, and the sense experience that it is coupled with is glittering (*charis*)." Someone's eyes can glitter and then they provide insight into the expression of the soul. The waves of the sea glitter just as well. It is there, out on the water, that Echo hides. It is not only through sight (spotting the glittering) but also through listening that we may eventually hear her voice resonating from the darkest depths.⁴⁴⁰

The acoustic metaphor is extremely powerful here. In the installation context, it strikes visitors how much *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* as an artwork reverberates throughout the entire space. The four black borders that surround each image as well as the black wooden frames accentuate the extreme darkness of the photographs. The glass behind which the images are hiding will initially trouble the viewers, because they see themselves inevitably reflected in the glass—as in a mirror. Yet this impression soon fades and the color photographs start to glow from the

dark, as if they start to breathe, come to life, and glitter with a beautiful shine, visually simulating the experience of an echo that resonates from a deep darkness. From this watery darkness, that of the matrix or womb, a potentiality is born—even though it is one, as Baert argued, following Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, that can only be sensed at this liminal level of the borderline.

What arises from this linking and connecting with the border space is something that is quite “ungraspable,” “fluid,” and “foamy.”⁴⁴¹ What reverberates from the “silenced hole” is a self that has dissolved into the outside world, having sacrificed any phallogocentric subjectivity in favor of a boundless blending with the world. What we perceive is an echo of a silenced self—a self sacrificed to loss. Yet here exactly the power of Echo may be found in its search “for an alternative to the mirror paradigm.”⁴⁴² To be able to do so, Echo needs to disappear into a different visual scheme than that of the mirror: that of camouflage. Through camouflage, she will make herself be heard, and only barely seen. Yet, contrary to Narcissus (consumed by a slow, hidden fire until only a lonely flower with leaves surrounding a saffron center remains), it is from her watery, fertile foams and vapors that the force of new life will generate.

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The chalk marl that so richly makes up the seabed between Calais and Dover contains numerous fossils. Walking on water during a ship’s channel passage, one may imagine oneself to be walking *above* fossils and pretend to hear the mysterious murmuring of their echoes. Let us take this imaginative element back to one of the initial questions asked about *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*: where did Thomas Paine’s bones disappear? Maybe a fictive answer can be found here. What if Paine’s bones did indeed wash overboard and petrified, like Echo, into *terra creta*—where they dissolved into this soft, deadly pale mineral as can only be found as white near the shores of England and Northern France (even in 2018, as demonstrated by my example of a broken heart of stone gleaned at Botany Bay Beach)? (15#)

Was the cod fisher on the quay in Dover, at least metaphorically, angling for any such remains—in the hope of, finally, breaking an age-old spell?⁴⁴³ Chalk marl is extremely fertile ground; it feeds the fish—such as sole, plaice, and whiting (1#)—that forage on its sandy seafloors rich with shrimp, crabs, mussels, other mollusks, chaetopods, cephalopods, and little fish. The fish feed themselves amid the relics that have come to rest at the sea’s bottom. The sound of the fishes floundering on the line that has just been hauled in gives us a minuscule echo from the liquid depths they were forced to abandon. The allegorical power of this insight is enormous. Nicole Lapierre, while paying a moving tribute to

her immigrant father, urged each one of us to integrate this experience of another person's echo into any subsequent experience. Regarding the experience of welcoming those who newly arrive in our midst, it is of essential importance to learn to appreciate, Lapierre wrote, the echo of one language within another one. In their apprenticeship of the language of their new home country, they will likely continue to keep the accent of their mother tongue—like a “small, obstinate difference.”⁴⁴⁴

Bearing this wisdom—this call for generosity—in mind, let us observe one more time the complex linguistic interactions between the English and the French languages, respectively. Take *French leave*, in English, means “absence from work or duty without permission” (OED); it has an exact equivalent in French: *filer à l'anglaise*.⁴⁴⁵ It is striking to find that both cultures recognize equally bad manners on both sides of the Strait, as if they look in the mirror when mutually observing each other's behavior. That mirroring each other's rude attitudes is entirely unproductive, however, is another lesson to draw from *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*. Part Two, “Ship of Fools,” contains a photograph that Allan Sekula took in late May 1996 while observing a rally in favor of the French National Front Party in the streets of Paris (29).

Sekula's camera captured, in silence, a group of well-dressed and well-fed angry white people—a prototypical sampling of Gaulish, individuated bourgeois. In the backdrop of the scene, a French tricolored flag is discernable, while, in the foreground, a woman holds a bundle of pamphlets entitled “[PAR]IS L'ESPOIR” (which translates as [PAR]IS THE HOPE). That we may really expect no hope from this type of manifestation became painfully clear exactly twenty years later, when the United Kingdom voted in favor of a Brexit. With UK Independence Party's breakthrough in the political arena, both countries now have their separatist political parties. Each intends to create for the other an infinite hall of mirrors of distancing and exclusionism. Calais has become a bastion of the National Front Party, with 49.1 percent of the votes for Marine Le Pen in the 2015 regional elections in Nord–Pas-de-Calais–Picardie.⁴⁴⁶

The photographs included in *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* contain few such legible texts within the images themselves. Aside from this, admittedly Cubist, pun involving the word *Espoir*, only one other short word strikes the eye, in the picture made in Thomas Paine Park, New York (12). Closer observation of this photograph allows the viewer to distinguish that the trashed shopping bag is one from the clothing line AVIREX, initially a brand for military apparel. To various extents, however, most of the characters somehow dissolve behind the rhombic metal grid of the garbage bin. The only two characters that legibly resurface as an echo from the barred depths of the trash can are *US: us* followed by a full stop. This extremely short text, once more, is thought-provoking. What have we deep sixed in the process of flexibilizing and speeding up circulation

to globalize the world's economy? This is how Julian Barnes, referring to the cross-channel Tunnel, rendered it. "Nowadays," the protagonist of his short story "Tunnel" muses, "[...] yes nowadays, the journey was too swift across this new European *zollverein*, food was brought to you at your seats, and no one smoked. The Death of the Compartment Train and Its Effect Upon the Social Interaction of Travel."⁴⁴⁷ Although I, personally, do not mind that no one smokes on trains any longer, I agree with Barnes, and with Sekula, that what we let go of, is ourselves in togetherness—we, *us*, as a community of humans. What we have trashed, collectively, is solidarity and hospitality.

In July 2018, the French Constitutional Council delivered a decision that partly invalidated the so-called crime of solidarity, a term that, if it does not figure in any legal text as such, has become a powerful political slogan.⁴⁴⁸ One year before, in the summer of 2017, the farmer Cédric Herrou was condemned to four months in prison with a deferred sentence for having transported around two hundred persons on the move from the Italian border to his home, and for having set up a camp for them on his farmland.⁴⁴⁹ The council ruled that the constitutional principle of *fraternity* infers that it is legal to help others when a humanitarian goal is at stake. Assistance to irregular entry into French territory remains forbidden, as well as *indirect compensations*.⁴⁵⁰ This last term in particular is reason for much nervousness among associations assisting those who are on the move, because it subjects them to numerous forms of intimidation, notably from the police—as members from the volunteer association *L'Auberge des Migrants* in Calais have testified in a shocking report released in early June 2019.

In this text, they list no less than 738 forced evictions of informal settlements between August 8, 2018 and June 1, 2019.⁴⁵¹ The authors expressed their concern about infringement on these people's belongings, which are often damaged, confiscated, or destroyed. Yet, worse even, a soaring number of persons report to feel structurally unsafe in the area.⁴⁵² They furthermore report that, during police operations or while distributing food and other basic necessities, those working for the associations are systematically asked to leave the area of operation. They claim this to be random and paradoxical because joggers, groundskeepers, and dog-walkers are permitted access in the zones systematically scanned by the police. This has also been my experience in Calais and Grande-Synthe. By energetically walking around accompanied by my dog in all the delicate zones or, when alone, by pretending to be the prototypical middle-aged jogger, I found the perfect camouflage to see everything I wanted to observe. *Ground Sea*, as such, can be regarded as an echo of that undercover operation, and it serves to confirm the accuracy of the reports released by human-rights defenders about the situation of people on the move in the *Calaisis*.⁴⁵³

I had to gather courage to operate this way and I admit to having feared for my physical integrity on one occasion. This is peanuts, however, in the light of those human-rights defenders active in this area who stand up for their right to defend human rights, as recognized by article one of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.⁴⁵⁴ This article stipulates that human-rights defenders have the right to take peaceful action and speak out to prevent human-rights violations from taking place whenever they see them happen or fear the risk that they will happen. Human-rights defenders also have a right to support victims of human-rights violations, and to disseminate information regarding those violations of which they have knowledge. Human-rights defenders under international law, furthermore, have a right to monitor and criticize the activities of authorities and other powerful actors. They can demand justice and accountability for harm done. Following the same regulation, they should be allowed to act without fear of attack or retaliation. In its June 2019 report, Amnesty International has outlined, however, providing ample proof, that these conditions are presently not being met at all in the Calais region.⁴⁵⁵ The report includes testimonies by human-rights defenders who, while exercising their rights, have been both verbally and physically attacked by police officers.

Amnesty accused the French state for failing to comply with its international human-rights obligations, as defined under article two of the abovementioned UN declaration, which stipulates that states have a duty to ensure that everyone under their jurisdiction can enjoy all human rights in practice. In northern France, at present, human-rights defenders are subjected to unfair accusations and spurious prosecutions by the local authorities. On top of that, new legal and administrative requirements are put in place with the sole intention to render the work of civil society organizations incredibly difficult. For Amnesty, it is long overdue that both France and the United Kingdom “recognise that protecting the human rights of individuals, whatever their migration status, must take precedence over unjust laws and practices.”⁴⁵⁶ The authors of the report finally urged EU leaders to agree on a fairer system to regulate migration and asylum. But if this is not the case, Amnesty argued, France should not consider itself exempt from having to comply with its legal obligations as determined by international law. The report also urged the United Kingdom, for its part, to expand safe and legal routes for those who want to claim asylum and to accept a fairer share of refugees.

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At some point in 1995–1996, while visiting the city of Calais, Allan Sekula must have received a package composed by the local chamber of commerce. It is labeled *Via Calais, les mini-croisières pour l'Angleterre — just a*

short cruise away — die Mini-Kreuzfahrten nach England. (Plates 15–20) This container in transparent plastic can be closed and is to be carried by means of a handgrip, like a briefcase. (see Plate 15) The box is filled with a rich variety of promotional materials meant to attract both business investors and tourists to the area. The most eye-catching among these items is a plastic tray for serving drinks or food. (see Plate 16) Illustrated by the painter Andrzej Malinowski, the tray's colorful drawing represents six ferries jointly leaving the Port of Calais as seen from the stern of a seventh ferry.⁴⁵⁷ It is a sunny and almost cloudless day. The sea is calm, and a young couple is observing the armada of ships just behind them. The blonde woman, elegantly dressed for the summer trip and wearing a silk or cotton scarf to protect her neck from the breeze, appears slightly intimidated at the sight. Sleeves rolled up, she is accompanied by her companion, who holds her tenderly while he points with his right arm at the ships following in their wake. They offer the impression of an ideal bourgeois couple on their first joint Channel crossing, with jolly seagulls swarming around them. The overall color palette is predominantly white-red-blue, a playful reference to the flags of both France and the United Kingdom.

Other items in the plastic box communicate a similar message of a most agreeable, romantic crossing. (see Plate 19) On a practical level, the passage from Calais to Dover is also presented as smooth and comfortable. One of these illustrations even goes as far as to suggest that the highway readily transforms into, and continues with, the ship's churn in the North Sea waters. (see Plate 20) Compared to today's realities in the Port of Calais, the passage is presented as incredibly smooth indeed.⁴⁵⁸ The promotion for the industrial port terminal is framed in similar terms. (see Plate 17) Most striking here is the emphasis on Calais's geographical situation, described as *between* continental Europe and England [*Entre l'Europe Continentale et l'Angleterre*].⁴⁵⁹ Marked with a large yellow dot on a fancy map, Calais is promoted as an entity on its own, neither part of continental Europe nor of England—an extraordinary asset, one is made to believe.

A range of gift cards and brochures in the box must substantiate this magical location's aura. (see Plate 18) In a peaceful greenish-blue setting, the city hall of Calais is shown on a par with the Tower in London and the Eiffel Tower in Paris, while the Brussels *Atomium* is featured in one instance as well. Yet, from outer space, what is perceived first, is the connection *Via Calais!* Arguably the most astonishing item in the box is a short letter included in the tourist folder for the Opal Coast, addressed to the traveler. (fig. 9.5) Its anonymous authors find it necessary to emphasize that they have presented their region just as it is—without embellishment. In closing, they warmly invite the traveler to elect to stay in their region and to enjoy its sheer diversity allied with the depth

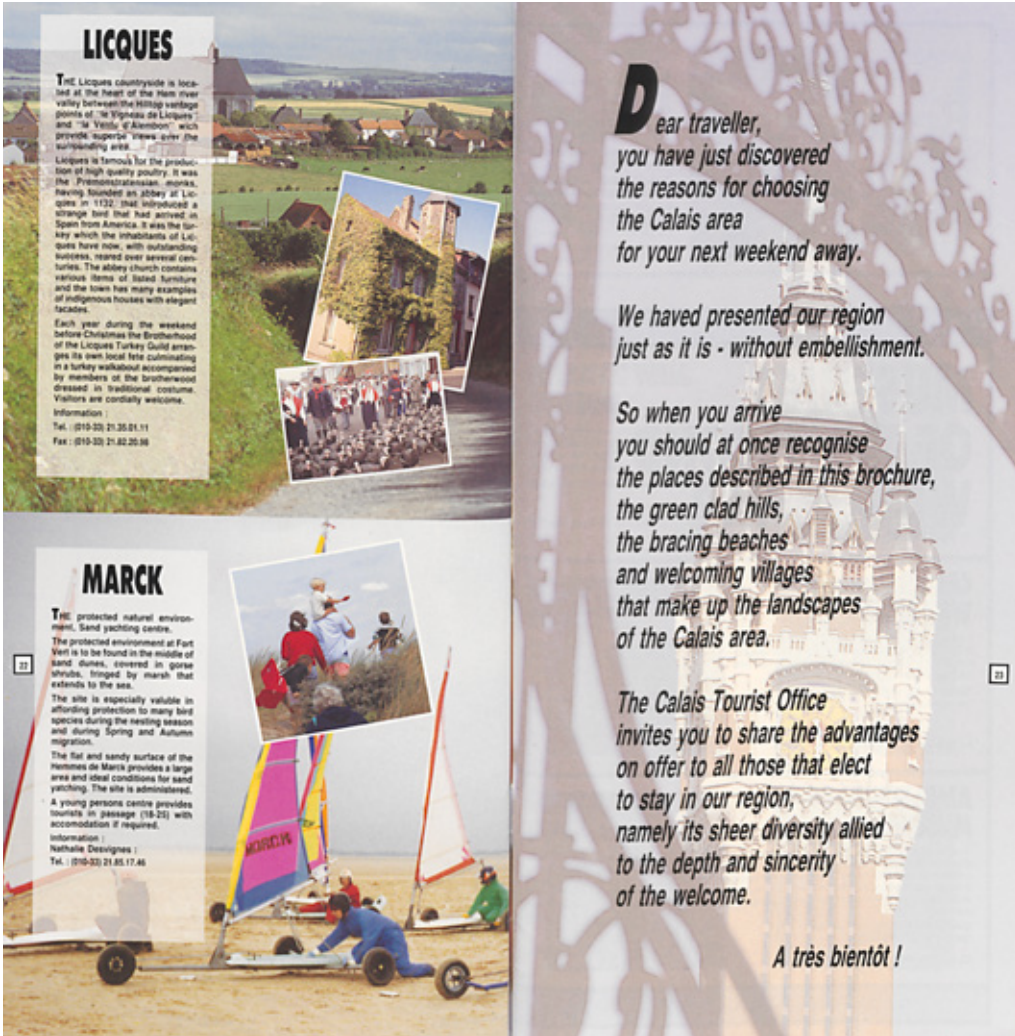


Fig. 9.5.

Double page from an information brochure on the region of Calais, 1996. Copyright holder and rights status unknown. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Posthumous donation by the artist's widow, Sally Stein. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).



Fig. 9.6.
Café du Minck, Calais,
France. February 15, 2020.
Photo by author.

and sincerity of the welcome. At the end of the brochure, a portrait of a rakishly smiling young woman, wearing a locally produced lilac-mauve lace dress, gloves, and hat, is added as means to decisively substantiate the region’s main attraction: female beauty. (Plate 21)

In February 2020, during my closing trip to Calais, I came across this material once again in Café du Minck. (fig. 9.6) This convivial bar is located just next to the fences preventing access to the canal—this wall of shame. (1#) I took it as a sign of hope. The wall standing all by itself in a landscape, Tim Ingold has argued, establishes no stable foundation upon which an entire structure can find support. It is no more than an unstable fold in the ground.⁴⁶⁰ The materials of the Earth will well up between the outward-facing surfaces of the wall and bond into the fabric of the brickwork as if through a fissure. Form is, in this case, imposed on the Earth’s materials—just as a clay potter, as if he were “a superior source in human culture,” imposes form onto the natural material of the clay.⁴⁶¹ For Ingold, such a clay potter embodies today’s hegemonic anthropomorphic model, which is, in his view, problematic.

What we should privilege instead, according to Ingold, is the genesis of a form that emerges within the field of human relations, rather than being imposed on it. Ingold called this type of process a *making-in-growing* anthropogenesis. Instead of creating a fissure in the ground, its model is that of knitting an item of clothing.⁴⁶² The shape of the clothing, he went on, arises from countless micro gestures of threading and looping that turn a continuous strand of yarn into a surface. From there, an analogy can be made with the body, and in this respect Ingold referred to the Book of Psalms: “For you created my inmost being [...] you knit

me together in my mother's womb." As a fetus can grow in a womb, an anthropogenic process of knitting lines and ties between human bodies can generate new relationships of kinship and affinity, even when those who grew in the same womb subsequently go their separate ways.

This formative perspective of making-in-growing is chronically absent in present-day Calais. In response to that terrible reality, a range of French authors have published texts that reflect on how to reinvent hospitality for today's world.⁴⁶³ At a time when hospitality has ceased to be a political value and instead has shifted toward the domain of the individual's personal ethics, as politics increasingly tries to make us believe, Fabienne Brugère and Guillaume Le Blanc have made a most interesting case. They defend a "realism of hospitality" geared at turning hospitality into a democratic political value again.⁴⁶⁴ Although Brugère and Le Blanc express admiration for Jacques Derrida's influential plea of a "right to unconditional hospitality," they feel that its voluntarist heroism makes it unsuitable for the contemporary realities.⁴⁶⁵ As for Derrida, their general framework of reference is Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), in which the Enlightenment philosopher defined hospitality in terms of a right that a stranger enjoys "in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another country, not to be treated by its citizens as an enemy."⁴⁶⁶ To prevent strangers from assimilating this to a "right to plunder," Kant set limits to this "Right of Hospitality."⁴⁶⁷ In his view, and within the limits defined by this very right, strangers should be allowed to enter into peaceful social intercourse with the inhabitants of a country, and publicly regulate their mutual relationship by law. Kant postulated that such relationships may bring humanity nearer to what he called a *cosmopolitical constitution*.

Brugère and Le Blanc put forward the interesting hypothesis that modern societies, in line with Derrida's model of a pure and borderless hospitality, may have gone so far as to have de-realized hospitality. Building on the work of Émile Benveniste, Benjamin Boudou also warned that a central ambition in defining the principles of hospitality is to avoid that hospitality itself turns hostile toward the hosts.⁴⁶⁸ In its report *Punishing Compassion*, Amnesty International has provided a clear overview how, within Fortress Europe (including Croatia and Switzerland), a mechanism of criminalization of acts of solidarity toward people on the move has been firmly put in place.⁴⁶⁹ While Kant proposed to install norms and criteria for making the universal right to hospitality operative, the same lesson may be drawn from the codified hospitality of the ancients. The key example referenced by numerous authors is, in various forms, Homer's *Odyssey*. In Book VI, Odysseus, after almost drowning at sea, washes ashore on the island Scheria—present-day Corfu, as tradition has it—through a river mouth. After a

regenerative sleep in the dense bushes near one of its banks, Odysseus is awakened by what he interprets as “an outcry of young women [that] echoes about [him], of nymphs.”⁴⁷⁰ Finding himself in the embarrassing situation of having to introduce himself naked, he breaks off a leafy branch from the dense foliage to cover his male parts.

This is how Nausikaa, the Phaiakian princess who, in a dream had been sent to the riverbank by the Goddess Athena with the urge to launder the festive clothes (“the sashes and dresses and shining coverlets”), encounters this lonesome man, who almost drowned with her homeland in view.⁴⁷¹ Upon meeting him, all the handmaidens fled in fear. Yet Nausikaa stood fast and unafraid and spoke to him with courage. After Odysseus begged her to give him some clothes and to show him the way to the city, she decided to welcome the nameless stranger with kindness, and therewith saved his life. Odysseus, who at that point remained unidentified by his hosts, became a protected guest in the palace of Alcinous, the island’s king and the young girl’s father. After this famous episode, Homer describes in detail how, within the Phaiakian palace, strict rituals, protocols, and rules apply regarding receiving guests. Odysseus, who soon displayed knowledge and respect for these laws, was well taken care of by the Phaiakians, and regained his strength. Mutual confidence grew. Alcinous eventually decided to ask the stranger to tell him his name, for “no one among all the peoples,” he urged the stranger, “neither base man nor noble, is altogether nameless, once he has been born.”⁴⁷²

Out of gratitude, Odysseus revealed his real identity to Alcinous, and herewith begins Book IX, in which Odysseus starts to narrate to the Phaiakians his dismal adventure in the cave of the xenophobic Polyphemus. The moral lesson is that, in an individuated bourgeois society, being able to pronounce your real name is inherently connected to the trust one can put in the interlocutor. As is well known, the Phaiakians reciprocated this trust, and thanks to one of their ships, Odysseus was finally able to reach Ithaca, his homeland. However, upon its return home and with the harbor already in sight, Poseidon—to avenge his son Polyphemus, who had been blinded by Odysseus—decided to turn the Phaiakian vessel into a rock. The Phaiakians felt punished for their unconditional hospitality and helpfulness to all men, and decided from then on to no longer convey every mortal who arrived in their city.⁴⁷³ From the perspective of the Phaiakians, for whom he first was a helpless Outis, Odysseus from then on came to be perceived as his negative Latin counterpart Nemo—the one who waved them goodbye in a ship that they loaded for him with their rich gifts, yet that, in its turn, did not return home.⁴⁷⁴

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Homer's *Odyssey* is the urtext in Western culture that illustrates both the established codes of bourgeois identification through a name that can be considered *safe* and the systematic silencing of women through the figure of Penelope.⁴⁷⁵ However problematic its status, further discussion of some of its aspects is still relevant here. In what appears to be a similar misconception as described in the above scene, numerous citizens of EU countries are presently scapegoating people in search of a better life for the disasters that strike their societies. They have tacitly allowed the construction of camps both within their territory or in states with whom their own states have partnered. Stronger even, they have—like well-behaved, obedient sheep following the trail of the herd—contributed to creating the situation by means of the taxes they pay each year. How could this happen? In addition to Calais, the example of the direst living conditions at present is experienced by people confined to the Aegean islands. Many people on the move traveling on that route are fleeing war situations. Still, they have been trapped, knocking in vain at the door of a so-called EU *hot spot*, such as Moria in Lesbos and Vial in Chios.

Too many of those on the move are not given a concrete perspective on the next step of their journey. Their desperate, prisonlike situation is the result of a controversial containment policy agreed upon between the European Union and Turkey in March 2016 that, contrary to its intentions, has not prevented the crossings from stopping.⁴⁷⁶ Whereas they initially extended a warm welcome to the boat people, the locals, many of whom depend on the tourism industry, not only feel abandoned by the authorities but also disillusioned and angry.⁴⁷⁷ Before a fire ravaged the entire camp in early September 2020, leaving more than 12,500 persons shelterless, testimonies circulated both on the internet and in public reports from nongovernmental organizations about unbearable housing and health conditions in Moria.⁴⁷⁸ In an analysis of March 2019, exactly three years after the EU–Turkey deal, the German NGO Pro Asyl labeled the islands Lesbos, Samos, and Chios as “open-air detention centres.”⁴⁷⁹

Later that year, Mohamad Alhussein Saoud and Marta Welander defined the situation of the fourteen thousand persons waiting on Chios for a transfer to the mainland as an example of an ever-wider spreading “model of protracted suffering,” contributing in its turn to “further feelings of hopelessness and despair.”⁴⁸⁰ Ever since the COVID-19 outbreaks in various camps from March 2020 on, the situation has become explosive, with riots in Lesbos and a new camp called Moria 2.0 built on former military grounds with toxic lead in the soil from bullet residue, as Human Rights Watch has reported.⁴⁸¹ Meanwhile, hordes of people continue trying to cross the border between Turkey and Greece, only to be brutally halted at the land border and pushed back to sea by the

Hellenic Coast Guard in inflatable, motorless rafts—while increasing evidence has grown of the complicity of Frontex in these operations.⁴⁸²

In 2017, a concise yet accurate publication urged the European Union to stop building camps, both directly, in the form of hot spots, and indirectly, by forcing people on the move to settle in informal camps.⁴⁸³ In reference to the concentration camps of World War II, Giorgio Agamben gave the following definition: “the camp is the place in which the most absolute *conditio inhumana* ever to appear on Earth was realized.”⁴⁸⁴ The camp is a piece of land placed outside the normal juridical order. It is a space of exception created by the normal juridical order and therefore, according to Agamben, is not to be understood as an external space. Included by virtue of its exclusion, it is exemplary of the current failure of the rule of law.⁴⁸⁵

The camp is the place where politics is reduced to the sheer biopolitics of naked life. As the camp has now become structurally integrated within the city—within the lifeworld of bourgeois citizens—it is the camp, Agamben concluded, that we now must understand as the “new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet.”⁴⁸⁶ Reduced to that state, the *homo sacer*, trapped in the camp, has to claim no less than a fundamental right to be reborn outside of the camp—in a shared collective reality that makes the camp-in-the-city evaporate once and for all. Instead of considering the “sacred man” as “the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime,” citizens should reach out to them.⁴⁸⁷ Citizens and sacred men share the territory that they inhabit. Consequently, solidarity imposes itself upon everyone.

In what seems a response to this open call, Manthia Diawara—a professor at New York University from Malian descent—traveled to Lesbos to make a moving tribute to all those who helped him to become the inspiring intellectual that he is today. For his *An Opera of the World* (2017), already mentioned in Chapter Two, he also interviewed the Senegalese French writer Fatou Diomé at her home in Strasbourg. Alongside her beautiful, determined voice, Diawara’s montage of images provides an alternation between close-ups of Diomé’s talking head and footage of small groups of individuals in Lesbos standing at the waterfront facing the Asian coast. We observe them, immersed in thought, while looking at the clearly visible houses on the Turkish shore across the small strait that is only five miles wide. Diomé said the following:

Leaving means having the courage necessary to go and give birth to oneself. Being born of oneself is the most legitimate of births. That is to say that going away is *to have the right*, or in any case *to take the liberty to be reborn*. That is to be reborn out of one’s own will. It means to go and become who you want to be. It is trying



to become, and therefore to evolve, to transform into something else than what one has always been. Namely by supplementing the innate with the acquired.⁴⁸⁸

Fig. 9.7.
Manthia Diawara,
An Opera of the World,
2017. Digital video, color,
sound, 70 mins. 22 secs.
One still. © Manthia
Diawara. Courtesy
Maumaus/Lumiar Cité,
Lisbon.

While these words sink in with the viewer, two women approach the seawater. (fig. 9.7) One of them touches the foam of gentle waves rolling ashore with both of her hands, as if to bless a sea that did not reject her, and that facilitated a safe crossing. All that the viewer learns about these individuals is that they belong to the nameless group of persons on the move, who have courageously managed to enter the Cyclopes' cave called Lesbos. As is well known, Odysseus, contrary to the advice of his fellow seamen with whom he later escaped from the cave to continue his voyage, ended up revealing his identity to Polyphemus. He thus shouted:

Cyclops, in the end it was no weak man's companions you were to eat by violence and force in your hollow cave, and your evil deeds were to catch up with you, and be too strong for you, hard one, who dared to eat your own guests in your own house.⁴⁸⁹

This episode took place while Odysseus and his men were busy with their escape after quickly having loaded the large, "fleecy sheep" underneath whose bellies they had managed to hide while lashing them together in threes by means of "pliant willow withes."⁴⁹⁰ Upon hearing that, Polyphemus is said to have become so upset that he broke off a peak

of a great mountain and threw it toward the fleeing vessel. According to Homer's epos, it landed in the water just next to the steering oar's edge. As the stone went under, the sea washed up next to the ship in a splash, and the tidal wave caused by this swept the boat ashore. By means of a long pole, Odysseus managed to push the ship clear again, and rowing hard with the oars, they escaped from the threatening evil. As they finally escaped to freedom, Odysseus is said to have told the Cyclops that it was he, Odysseus, who blinded him. Polyphemus, who wrongly believed himself to be invincible, thereupon responded that this caused a prophecy to come true. As he specified, however,

always I was on the lookout for a man handsome and tall, with great endowment of strength on him, to come here; but now the end of it is that a little man, niddering, feeble, has taken away the sight of my eye.⁴⁹¹

The Cyclops is said to have called upon his father Poseidon to take revenge, and to have once more thrown an enormous stone in the seawater. Once again, it fell very near to Odysseus's ship, and as the sea washed up again in the splash, the tidal wave forced them onto the island where the other ships along with their companions were waiting for them. The flocks of the Cyclops were unloaded from the vessel, and the sheep were sacrificed and shared as a meal for everyone. The next morning, the journey continued.

On August 18, 2011, Allan Sekula purchased via eBay a photogravure, containing an image on both the recto and the verso sides, which he decided to give a new life by including in his *The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013). (fig. 9.8) One picture is entitled "Sheeps in a boot [sic]," the other "Loading lambs." For several years, not much was known about the two anonymous prints, except that the PayPal payment file documenting its purchase by the artist provided the following information: *1927 Loading Sheep Lambs Halligen Island Photogravure*. Finally, in 2020, Maria Victoria Bas identified the two photographs as made by Albert Renger-Patzsch. They are included as page 37–38 in his book *Die Halligen* (1927).⁴⁹² These tidal terps, also named holms in English, are situated in the German Wadden Sea on the west side of the southern part of Danish Jutland. These knolls lie so low that, in winter, the highest tides bring in flooding. Tending flocks of sheep represents a typical activity for these largely uninhabited mounds (there are ten of them in total).

Like for many of the other hundreds of photographs included in *The Dockers' Museum*, one could speculate forever why Sekula decided to select these two pictures from the seemingly endless quantity of photographs available for sale online, waiting for their second birth to happen. Was his search term *sheep/lamb*, or was it rather *Halligen*? It is



Sheeps in a boat

Lämmer im Boot

Des agneaux dans une barque



Loading lambs

Verladen van Lämmer

Les agneaux sont embarqués

Fig. 9.8.

Anonymous [Albert Renger-Patzsch], 1927 Loading Sheep Lambs Halligen Island Photogravure [title as indicated on PayPal document], black-and-white photogravure [recto/verso], 19×16.20 cm. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on August 18, 2011. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*). Courtesy Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv/Ann und Jürgen Wilde. © SABAM Belgium 2021.

impossible to tell. Did he find inspiration in the phantasmatic dimension of former Doggerland—a landmass stretching as far as the peninsula of Jutland and connecting Britain to continental Europe until it was flooded by rising sea levels around 6500–6200 BC?⁴⁹³ Sekula and I never talked about Doggerland, and I have yet to find a document in which he mentioned it. What remains certain is that Sekula was profoundly acquainted with Homer’s *Odyssey*, which to him, as for so many artists, was a rich source.⁴⁹⁴ Odysseus and his crew managed to oar their boat away from the danger through the sea’s foaming waves. Although he had given away his name to the Cyclops, and although the defeated monster now knew that Nobody was not just anybody, their situation remained extremely precarious after that.

Nicole Lapierre’s *Changer de nom* [*Change Names*] opens with a “tribute to the anonymous.”⁴⁹⁵ For Lapierre, the point of departure is also the way Odysseus deludes the Cyclops by identifying himself as Nobody [*C’est Personne, mon nom*]. The French original mentions the following line: “*Il trompe le Cyclope.*” Throughout the years of writing *Ground Sea*, I have often thought of the then president of the United States—Donald Trump—as the prototype of a Cyclops. Strikingly, in the French wording for *deceiving* the Cyclops [*tromper*], President Trump’s name resonates (as if it were an omen). *Tromper*, in French, also means to betray, to lure, to mislead, to dupe, to fool, to baffle, and to cheat. Here’s another example of a continued dialogue with Allan Sekula. Had we been able to have this conversation at some point in time, no doubt his eyes would have lit up. As he would likely have responded: President Trump indeed was blessed with a name that entirely befitted him!⁴⁹⁶

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On Wednesday May 9, 2012, the Kadist Art Foundation organized an event at University of California, Berkeley Art Museum. *In Protest* presented eighteen posters, both placed on the floor and attached on wooden pedestals.⁴⁹⁷ (fig. 9.9) They had been printed by Horwinski Letter Press—a Bay Area printer known for its long-term expertise in printing protest and union posters. Meant as a gesture to connect with a long tradition of political activism by means of signs, banners, and posters, the protest posters were given away for free. Allan Sekula was one of the artists invited to participate.⁴⁹⁸ He composed a poster saying IF THE / RICH WIN / THE LIVING / WILL ENVY / THE DEAD. Each line alternated between red and orange, Sekula’s preferred hues when he sought to communicate a feeling of danger. Of course, he could not possibly have predicted any concrete future circumstance in which this phrasing would materialize as fitting the situation.



Fig. 9.9.
Allan Sekula, poster
contribution to *In Protest*
at the Berkeley Art
Museum and Pacific
Film Archive (BAMPFA)
in collaboration with
KADIST, May 9, 2012.
© Poster: Allan Sekula
Studio. Reproduced
by permission from
BAMPFA.

However, when in August 2019, Donald Trump announced on Twitter that he was *strategically* interested in a deal to buy Greenland, the poster (which, for many years now, has been hanging in my office, pinned on the writing board) suddenly came to life.⁴⁹⁹ Rereading the above lines from the perspective of the us Oval Office having expressed interest in a purchase of the Arctic territory felt as if a virtual layer of meaning was released in the present. Greenland, now an autonomous Danish territory, is one of the few remaining natural jewels of this planet not spoiled by industrialization and neoliberal capitalism's greed.⁵⁰⁰ As Phillip Inman has argued, the fact that Trump approached a potential purchase of Greenland as a "large real estate deal" says much about his view of the world.⁵⁰¹ Annexing a landmass a quarter of the size of the United States, which harbors untapped natural resources of rare metals, would bring the United States a huge competitive economic advantage. According to

Inman, “the mere fact of floating the idea shows how containing China is [Trump’s] obsession.”⁵⁰²

The short text that accompanies *Sketch for a Geography Lesson* (1983), a photographic sequence mostly produced by Allan Sekula near the internal German border around Fulda at the height of the Cold War era (and thus in a US-controlled area), ends with the following sober conclusion: “America’s borders are everywhere.”⁵⁰³ While its strategic discourse toward EU countries became more provocative, the US government under Trump certainly abandoned none of its imperialist attitude. While I was spending time in New York City during the summer of 2018, a press announcement was released (on August 9) that First Lady Melania Trump’s Slovenian-born parents, Viktor and Amalija Knavs, were sworn in as US citizens at 26 Federal Plaza in New York City. This is the federal building directly adjacent to Thomas Paine Park (discussed above). The square in front of this building bears the invisible scars of a painful legal battle that resulted in the removal of Richard Serra’s controversial thirty-seven-meter COR-TEN steel sculptural installation *Tilted Arc* (1981) in 1989.⁵⁰⁴ Throughout his career, Serra, an artist who openly claimed his Jewish identity, has demonstrated a strong commitment to human freedom of settlement.⁵⁰⁵

Baffled by this coincidence, I searched to come to terms with that reality through a bird’s-eye view of the city. This is how, at sunset of that strange day, I came to make doodle 17#. From the observation deck of Rockefeller Center, one building attracted even more attention than the Trump Tower: the Museum of Modern Art. Works-in-progress on the new \$400 million MOMA extension were well underway, but the United Auto Workers Union (representing more than 250 staff members) had been negotiating their contractual terms since May.⁵⁰⁶ On August 7, around two hundred museum employees had gathered in the main lobby to protest lack of payment for the extra hours work to meet the expansion’s opening the next year. The demonstrators held signs reading #MOMA Solidarity and #WeAreMOMA, and sang “Solidarity Forever,” a union anthem written by Ralph Chaplin in 1915, in front of hundreds of museum visitors.⁵⁰⁷

The Trumpian orientation of US imperialist foreign policy largely extended the authority of those in power to decide who is granted citizenship and who is not. Far more worrisome even was that French President Emmanuel Macron did not hesitate to declare the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to be “brain-dead.”⁵⁰⁸ Even though Berlin did not embrace this view, Angela Merkel also expressed concerns, on her part, albeit rather with respect to the political and socioeconomic direction that might develop in the United Kingdom after Brexit. In September 2019, she sent out a warning sign. Should the United Kingdom evolve into a “Singapore-on-Thames,” meaning a

low-tax and low-regulation state, this would pose a major challenge to EU social and environmental standards.⁵⁰⁹

In September 2015, I had the chance to spend extended time in Singapore, on the occasion of a symposium organized by Ute Meta Bauer, director of the Centre for Contemporary Art at Nanyang Technological University (where the exhibition *Allan Sekula: Fish Story, to be continued* was then on view).⁵¹⁰ My visit to Southeast Asia coincided with a major haze crisis. The air quality in Singapore was extremely bad. Even during the day, the sun hardly showed itself from behind a thick, gray curtain. Since I am, and have always been, a water-bound person, I investigated where on the island and how it would be possible to get to the waterfront of mainland Singapore. To my consternation, people kindly informed me that, due to real estate development combined with industrial activity near the sea, it had become very difficult to access a natural beach. A woman told me that dengue mosquitoes lived near the waterfront. She urged me, no doubt with good intentions, to avoid the entire area like the plague. At some point during my stay, I met the artist Charles Lim, who, like me, has been a passionate sailor from a young age. He kindly explained to me that, especially women in Singapore, rarely sail, for various reasons. As I did not easily recover from the shock of being so cut off from the sea while on an island, I did not give up and kept asking everyone I met.

Finally, I had the great luck to meet a fellow countryman, the photographer Kris Vervaeke. Kris is also one who is lured by the sea, and he knows Singapore by heart. He followed the slow but certain disappearance of the remaining villages (kampongs) near the seafront. To reclaim land from the sea, he explained, the city-state has turned away from it. We spent a full day driving by car around Pulau Ujong, during which Kris focused on showing me what he identified as *haunted Singapore*: roads to the beachfront that are blocked and turned into dead-end streets for as long as the city's outskirts continue. After that, the artificially reclaimed, soon to be industrialized, land starts. I videotaped most of the road trip. (fig. 9.10) The only housing projects in this desolate area are cage-like dormitories for on-site laborers.

From time to time, especially when my perspective tends to downplay the impression of what I saw, I watch the footage as a little treasure that reminds me of how bad the situation there was. We hardly saw any signs of wild nature left, and the small trees planted in orderly rows only served, as Kris explained, to legitimate its brushed-up image of *Garden State*: a manicured, perfectly cut, artificially created nature.⁵¹¹ When it seemed that we were at the end of the world (where there was hardly any daylight nor oxygen for breathing properly), we reached a small stretch of beach. Polluted and full of plastic waste, it provided only a glimpse of what nature once must have looked like there. While I was



Fig. 9.10.
Video footage made by
the author during a road
trip with Kris Vervaeke in
Pulau Ujong, Singapore,
September 30, 2015.



Fig. 9.11.
Kris Vervaeke, photograph
of Hilde Van Gelder
filming in Tuas, Singapore,
September 30, 2015.
© Kris Vervaeke.

filming in Tuas, Kris made a rather dystopian portrait of me—included here as an illustration that pays tribute to his generosity, but also as a warning sign to those who seek to downplay the disastrous ecological consequences that could follow in the wake of the United Kingdom following the economic example of its former colony. (fig. 9.11)

For the United Kingdom, it is already an acquired reality that its border really is in Calais or in the Brussels Midi train station, at Lille Europe or Paris Nord. As pointed out in Chapter Six, agreements on these matters regarding border controls have been concluded bilaterally. As a result, Brexit will not come to affect those deals, unless they are renegotiated (but that seems unlikely). Pondering these matters evokes a feeling of potential precariousness, even though this situation has not yet materialized on western European shores of course. A basic sense of extreme precariousness, however, does present itself to the spectators who watch the footage of those who made it to Lesbos in Diawara's *An Opera of the World*. One can only worry about the dangers awaiting them. And what a hubris it is to keep thinking that such a dismal fate would only be reserved for those who are not EU citizens, as if they live in a bubble that is forever exempt from such a dire life.

Of course, it is true that Fatou Diomé, today an influential public intellectual and a prolific novel writer, is living proof that it is possible to claim this right to be reborn and to achieve it as well. Still, the viewer leaves the movie theater with a great feeling of unease. Diomé, a native from the island of Niodior in Senegal, moved to France as a young woman in the early 1990s. Judging from her French Wikipedia page, life in

the European Union did give her a tough start, and she definitely knows from personal experience what she is talking about.⁵¹² However, since the time that Diomé left her home country, the situation has only worsened for people with similar ambitions, and this is outright worrisome.

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Nicholas Mirzoeff has published an exemplary book, entirely dedicated to claiming *the right to look*.⁵¹³ According to Mirzoeff, this right to look must be understood as equivalent to a “right for the real.” This right for the real claims a reciprocal exchange, without the creation of a surplus. It pertains to the right to “look into someone else’s eyes to express friendship, solidarity, or love.” If the look is reciprocated, each person will have the opportunity to invent the other. If the look is voyeuristic or individualist, it fails. Only this personally engaged, reciprocal look allows for the invention of the “common”—for a “political subjectivity and collectivity.” Mirzoeff wrote his text while “think[ing] with and against visuality.”⁵¹⁴ His book argues against the visuality of an authority that censors an individual’s justified wish to look at the real for what it really is. When we desire to see what a ruling authority is potentially willing to hide, we should always oppose situations in which this authority claims to possess the exclusive capacity “to tell us to move on.”

With this claim for a countervisuality, Mirzoeff’s approach is in line with that of Sekula, even though the former does not mention the latter in his study. In the early 2000s, Sekula planned to publish a book entitled *Do Not Trespass*. Although the project never materialized, he intended its title to mean exactly the opposite: disobey the sign, and trespass.⁵¹⁵ To reflect on the right to be reborn as claimed by Diomé, my argument has relied on photography’s capacity to materialize such a countervisuality. The more barriers the authorities erect, the more people will try to trespass. This is also what Diomé argued in her polemical *Marianne porte plainte! [Marianne files a complaint!]* (2017). As she put it bluntly: “In my crystal ball, the policy vis-à-vis migration will come to define our era either favorably or unfavorably. By increasing the difficulties of mobility for populations from the South, what choice beyond clandestine immigration are they left with?”⁵¹⁶ Diomé compared the xenophobes of our time to bulldogs, baring their racist teeth when they bark. “Had she known,” wrote Diomé,

Mamadou’s vain fiancée would not have requested dresses and jewels for her wedding, which may never happen. So many flashing lights in Calais, and yet woof, woof! The migrants’ meager legs of lamb are at the mercy of the fascists hungry for [a dish of] brain! Unjust, these humans, who gave up having feelings behind their

touchscreens! Those in the migrant camps are left to have caged dreams only. And yet woof, woof! What do the doomed migrants feel who wake up to the reality of their situation on European soil?⁵¹⁷

In Diomé's sharply realist view, Calais, that precious jewel, has now turned into a "human zoo."⁵¹⁸ Worse even, she emphasized, because not only those unfairly caged have to deal with the barbed wires and artificially created obstacles, but also the people living in Calais or passing by. In January 2016, Eurotunnel announced that it was flooding the marshy stretches of land surrounding the Channel Tunnel entrance to prevent people from approaching the barricades closing off the tracks.⁵¹⁹ This is a shocking announcement, if you ask me, yet it was a nonevent. The company's spokesperson did not shy away from perversely assessing that the flooded stretches would make the "natural environment [serve] as a layer of protection." Concerned citizens would be tempted to ask: "protection" for or, rather, *against* what and whom? How can we come to terms with what, at this very moment in time, is daily business in a region that, only a hundred years ago, could provide adequate housing and food for a far greater number of war refugees? What to think of the fact that, to set up this very type of so-called protection, 103 hectares of natural vegetation (trees, shrubs, hedges) was cleared? According to Eurotunnel's spokesperson, however, this operation of *clearing* [*défrichage*] was necessary in the name of general security. Yet ecological activists have remarked that Calais has now lost its green lung for decades to come.⁵²⁰

It is hardly a surprise, then, that Bruno Serralongue included a photograph of this "anti-intrusion landscape" in his *Calais* series. (Plate 22) Most people will hardly notice the artificial intervention in a marshland that is perfectly capable of absorbing the excess waters following from an exceptionally high tide or heavy rainstorms. This is cause for concern. Once aware of the deliberate flooding, it is disturbing to see the logic behind it. What becomes visible in Serralongue's photograph is what Mark Ledbetter has called "the *witness* of the image."⁵²¹ This type of imagery representing "waste" and "destruction" reveals that "the land"—just like the engine room's eyes—"look[s] back" at us in despair. "Without the tides," Fatou Diomé has written, "the deltas live in desolation. Being a daughter of the island Niodior, I assure you: cut off from the ocean, an inlet is merely a dry and sterile gully. France deserves better!"⁵²²

France deserves much better indeed. Just imagine that *Calaisiens* start fighting for a real rebirth of their city—that they have had enough of this life in the company of control gates and barbed wire. The claim for a right to be reborn then becomes the collective claim of a community of people—citizens and noncitizens together. They will demand to be reborn jointly in a different, fenceless city. The human right that

at present comes closest to this claim for such a rebirth is the right to self-determination. This right has been integrated in Part One, article one of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations and which has been in force since March 23, 1976.⁵²³ The current problem with this right is that the concept of a people is narrowly defined in terms of persons who share a language, culture, and history. Such a situation does not apply to all the persons who would need to team up to change the tide in and for Calais. According to international law, within which the logic of states prevails, they would never be more than an unlikely group of mutineers, who would not readily count in the eyes of the law. In international law, peoples who do not coincide with a state can only rarely claim self-determination, let alone sovereignty. There simply are no criteria available upon which a newly gathered *people* can rely to claim self-determination.⁵²⁴

On top of this, the individual right to self-determination, which is an element of personal integrity and freedom, is difficult to enforce as well. In 1776, the American Declaration of Independence proclaimed three inalienable rights: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.⁵²⁵ Article three of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights converted this phrase into: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”⁵²⁶ During the past several decades, the first two rights have continued to be strikingly vague in their concrete definitions. In many actual situations, it has proved difficult to transcend the level of grand declarations when it comes to helping people or peoples in need. The third one, sadly enough, has generated a negative interpretation because it has largely been employed to roll out a vast apparatus of security measures.

In line with their plea for a realism of hospitality, Fabienne Brugère and Guillaume Le Blanc have proposed to rehabilitate the notion of the “hospital.”⁵²⁷ “When seeking to be reborn,” they argued, “most of the time one ends up in an in-between space, in a life among lives where nothing is what it was like before and nothing new is in place yet.”⁵²⁸ To fill this gap, the authors have suggested to breathe new life into the medieval tradition of the so-called Hôtel-Dieu [Hospital], which, in those days, could be found in every French town.⁵²⁹ Aside from taking care of the ill, the proposed *hospital* should also provide room for those who are new to the community. As in the tradition of the ancients, such as the palace of the Phaiakians for Odysseus, the hospital has to be “a place for those who have no place.”⁵³⁰ It will have to be organized, as Brugère and Le Blanc insisted, on the level of the political apparatus, and thus a public institution needs to be created instead of leaving its foundation to the informal, private social contract between citizens of good will—in other words, those who volunteer to help.

Obviously, this calls for a transformation of the political climate in the Pale of Calais that is no less than a Copernican revolution. Having visited there several times over the past several years, I do not believe such a joining of forces is to be foreseen soon. Yet I certainly do not consider it unthinkable that it could eventually happen—that the engine, fueled by a spirit of mutiny or resistance, will eventually start running. As this jewel of a city becomes ever more mutilated it, someday, must rise from its ashes. Meanwhile, one may still express the hope that things will not need to reach that revolutionary stage. Both the European Union and its individual member states are not impotent in this respect. According to Henk van Houtum and Leo Lucassen, who advocate the genesis of a worldwide consensus about how to regulate flows of people on the move, it would help to set up a well-designed European social security system in which those who are new to the system go through various steps to gain access to it.⁵³¹

In the absence of any sign that EU member states have begun to reach consensus on these matters, we are forced to conclude that, yet, “dictatorship of the seven seas” prevails. As opening lines of the similarly titled text accompanying Chapter Seven of *Fish Story*, Allan Sekula used a citation from Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd, Foretopman* (1891): “Reasonable discontent [...] had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.”⁵³² It is a sentence that the artist repeated again in a drawing included in one of his personal notebooks. (Plate 23) Seen in the broader perspective of Sekula’s overall thinking, *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* may well be understood as a little gem or a perfectly shaped pearl made for a jewel case in decay. At first sight, it is tempting to think that this so carefully composed photographic sequence was simply wasted on this lot.

Yet in the long term, I do not believe this to be true. The courageous commissioning of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*, as initiated by Marie-Thérèse Champesme and seen to fruition by Annette Haudiquet with admirable dedication, may now seem like pearls cast before swine. (fig. 9.12) The Calais Museum of Fine Arts, where this artwork is now preserved, is aware of the treasure they own, and they are taking good care of it. Against the *longue durée* of the complex history of Calais, the museum staff is also confident that, one day, the odds for their city will change for the better. They are not alone in presuming this. In the “Author’s Note” at the end of his book-length study on the life of Dr. Samuel Jean Pozzi (1846–1948), Julian Barnes referred to the doctor’s maxim, which said that “Chauvinism is one of the forms of ignorance.”⁵³³ Someday, someone on the Kentish side of the Channel will shout “Mayday!” After which, in French, an echo will reverberate: “[...] aider”? Yes, *bien sûr*, we will come to your help!



Fig. 9.12.
 Invitation card to the inauguration of Allan Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* in the (then) Museum of Fine Arts and Lace, Calais (September 18, 1998). Author's collection.
 © Museum of Fine Arts, Calais and Allan Sekula Studio. Photos by Frédéric Van Cutsem.

The architects of the European project have fooled themselves into believing that avoiding mentioning the “D” word is a surefire way to prevent it from happening. For them, European integration was like a speed train — never stop and never look back. Making the European Union’s disintegration unthinkable was the preferred strategy over making integration irreversible.

Ivan Krastev, *After Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 3.



@Dover #uk @Banksy #BrexitMural observed from the highway intersection with the A20 at #orange #traffic #light
A #bird is flying by.
#streetart #wall #painting #seagull #peace #free

Chapter 10

Plotting

On 5 April [1982], the British Task Force left Portsmouth, cheered and waved off by a pugnacious and surprisingly bloodthirsty crowd, clamouring for a fight to restore their cheapened honour, a bit of a comedown in comparison with past epic deeds and struggles. After all, in the last long century and a half, this was a nation that had stood up against Napoleon, the Tsar, the Kaiser and Hitler, among others — far too many others.

Javier Marías, *Berta Isla* [2017], trans. Margaret Jull Costa (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2018), 296.



#view from the @CheminDesRougeCambres in the hamlet of @VieuxCoquelles
#winter #terror #sad #fences



Fig. 10.1.

Reproduced by permission from Kate Evans, *Threads from the Refugee Crisis* (London: Verso, 2017), splash page. © Kate Evans.

The splash page of Kate Evans's *Threads from the Refugee Crisis* (2017) confronts its readers with a splendid drawing of four women in traditional dress busy making high fences of bobbin lace that appear to spread out naturally along the highway leading to the Port of Calais. (fig. 10.1) The expression on their faces looks dazed and perplexed. They bear witness to a state of paralysis that somehow echoes a statement by an unidentified woman on the move recalled by Sylvain George in *Noir inconnu [wanderer]*. A short entry entitled "MORCEAU D'ESPACE FLOTTANT 25" [Piece of floating space 25] starts as follows: "She says: 'We didn't cross the border, the border crossed us.'"⁵³⁴ The date is October 1, 2015. All through Evans's militant graphic novel, in which she denounces the unbearable plight of people on the move in Calais's then "Jungle," lace designs weave the argument together. Strips of lace are key elements for the creation of two-page spreads as well as for structuring the gutters surrounding the panels as they unfold.

Evans's use of lace as a leading background motif for a book about present-day Calais is not a random choice. Throughout the entire city, there is one building that glistens more than any other. It is the home of the *Cité de la Dentelle et de la Mode*. Housed in the former Boulart Factory located in the heart of the historical Saint-Pierre district, the museum displays a fine collection of local handmade and Leavers mechanical lace. Traditional lacemaking—although characterized by flowing lines, curves, and smooth compositions from the seventeenth century onward—will always reveal the traces of its production. It is made by hand and with the help of "something sharp and pointed": needles.⁵³⁵ In several European languages, the word used to indicate lace still reflects this idea of pointedness: *Spitzen* in German, *punto (in aria)* [point/stab in the air] in Italian, *puntilla* in Spanish, *punta* in Catalan, and in certain regions of France *point* is used as an alternative for *dentelle* (e.g. *point d'Alençon*). The meaning of the English word lace, instead, connects to *fasten*, *tie*, *interweave*, and is a derivative from old Anglo-Norman *laz*, meaning *braid* or *cord*. French has a derivative of the same word, namely *lacs* or *entrelacs*, which connects to *interweaving*.

In lace, according to Paul Vandebroek, "there is no suggestion of depth, no high or low, no hierarchy. There is only the network."⁵³⁶ He therefore reads lacework as an abstract text about ungraspable connections, alliances, and cohesions for which, over the generations, there have been neither words nor images available. Lace, he pointed out, is an endless hooking together of affect-laden lines, crossings, and motifs. In certain traditions, such as in northern Italy, the threads of lace have been associated with worms [*vermicelli*] and the holes thus created with wormholes. Crawling and swelling have, since Neolithic times, been associated with fecundity and regenerative strength. Throughout history, for that matter, people have connected lacemaking to the creation of

alliances (brides adorned themselves with white lace on wedding ceremonies). Wearing lace on naked skin arouses prickly feelings. Listening to the rustling of lace when touching gives the sensation of a tinkling, often visually combined with a twinkling. Considered in this way, the decline of the lace business is symptomatic of Calais's present desolation and barrenness.

Leavers, for its part, is a mechanical technique initially developed and fine-tuned overseas, in the Nottingham area. In the early nineteenth century, some of these first producers from the United Kingdom clandestinely established themselves in the Pale. Soon after, the English lace industry dried up completely. The process nowadays bears the trademark of Calais-Caudry® Lace.⁵³⁷ The creation of the Museum for Lace and Fashion, whose collection was previously preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts (then named *Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle*), was not free from controversy. Still flourishing in the early 1990s, the lace industry in Calais was in recession by the time of the reconverted production site's pompous opening in June 2009. Attempts to create alliances between surviving factories had failed, often because of age-old rivalries between families or because of internal conflicts. These also resulted in strategical commercial errors. At the time of the museum's grand opening, critical voices questioned whether it would not have made more sense to invest the €27 million spent on its construction to help save some of the few remaining businesses.⁵³⁸

In the spring of 2016, when the economic situation became increasingly desperate, leading Chinese textile company *Yong Sheng* proudly announced it had acquired *Desseilles Laces SAS*, one of France's oldest lace producers, for the bargain price of €300 thousand. This take-over allowed *Desseilles* to survive imminent bankruptcy.⁵³⁹ The French plant privileged *Yong Sheng's* offer above others because the firm made a promise to preserve nearly the totality of the employees for at least three years to come. In the spring of 2019, this three-year term passed. *Yong Sheng* stopped paying the salaries of the employees and refused to further invest in the historical plant.⁵⁴⁰ As the newspaper *Le Figaro* reported, an underlying cause of the social conflict was a breach of confidence between employees and the management. Union representatives expressed concern that the Chinese industrial group might have plans to transfer the business to China after acquiring enough lace-working expertise on a Leavers loom. The union presumed that three years of access to the company's rich archives and the machines that accommodate the threads weaving the patterns on the basis of sumptuous historical drawings will have provided an adequate foundation for copying the technique in China at a level decent enough to explore new markets and audiences.⁵⁴¹

That not all of this might be a tall tale was suggested by an announcement in the newspaper *Nord Littoral* in late June 2019 in its *Échos* [Echoes] section.⁵⁴² It quoted Liu Feng, director of foreign affairs in the city of Datong, who on a visit to the *Cité Dentelle Mode*, communicated that a letter of intent had been signed with the city authorities of Calais for partnering up in an effort to produce lace in China. In response to questions from journalists, the mayor of Calais, Natacha Bouchart, declined to say whether she had any knowledge of this plan. She added laconically, in a spirit of resignation, that it might well be true that in the longer term the production of lace within the Calais region would come to an end altogether. Although *Nord Littoral* provisionally concluded that the details about the possibly secret deal might have been lost in translation, they had also double-checked the issue with the reporter from *France 3*, who interviewed Liu Feng for TV. She reconfirmed that this was what the interpreter present during their conversation had literally said to her: moving production to China. With a twist of irony, *Nord Littoral* expressed its consternation about why this announcement on French national television failed to have the explosive effect of a bomb, as no one seemed to mind, let alone worry about this.

The little attention paid to these developments during the summer of 2019 reminded me of a rather disorienting experience during my earlier travels in the region. On May 1, 2017, we decided to have lunch at Chez Nicole in the village of Wissant, one of our favorite eateries. It only serves two delicious dishes, *moules-frites* or *jambon-frites* [mussels and fries, or ham and fries]. This practical simplicity for the kitchen's organization normally accounts for speedy service. But that noon something unusual happened. We felt lucky to have been seated quickly by the waitress at the one remaining, small table. Subsequently, however, nothing happened for a while. Bored with the situation, we started to look around and to search for explanations why our meal did not arrive. Soon, we found out that we were surrounded on both sides by two long tables, occupied by mixed parties of local and Chinese persons. It was May Day, so they were celebrating their day off from work together. It turned out that they had made all sorts of special requests for deviations from the habitual menu—something we ourselves always considered out of the question and nonnegotiable in this typical café. This, of course, was the reason for the torturous wait.

Our mild complaints did not go over well with the server. She made it clear that the other customers were going to be served first. Since this episode in fact happened on the day after I observed the scene involving the white lorry on the *Aire de service de Saint-Laurent* in nearby Steenvoorde, I must have been slightly hypersensitive and her remark in turn did not go over well with me either. It seemed unfair that one group of foreigners received this type of privileged treatment, whereas others

camping out in the bushes quite close to that very tavern remained rejected as undesired outcasts. As I became increasingly annoyed, I took my Nikon camera out of its bag. Much to my party's embarrassment, I began to take pictures of the indoor scene. Aside from my companions, no one in that barroom appeared to give a damn. Most of the Chinese visitors were constantly busy with their cell phones anyway.

After leaving the eatery and walking over to the nearby sandy beach, fate turned out to have another surprise in store for us. We encountered the party that had exited the tavern slightly before us once more near the waterline, some among them observing and taking pictures of the many surfers. One man among the group of Chinese merry-makers, contrary to when they had been eating indoors, protected both his mouth and nose by wearing a dust mask (29#). Back in 2017, this was striking. In China, people were already used to wearing masks when they have a cold, in order not to infect others. In the north of France, however, beaches were then considered the place where those who are short of breath tend to come on Sundays or work holidays to feel—or at least imagine—their lungs slightly open. Knowing what happened two years later to the *Desseilles* company, it is puzzling what to think of the V-sign that this man was making to the companion who took his picture. Of course, it is impossible to substantiate that they must have had something to do with the lace business. Still, that flopped lunch continues to linger in my mind as an exemplary instant of that what Allan Sekula had recognized as behavior prompted by a long history of manic-depressive European geography.

*

Jules Verne, in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* (Part Two, Chapter Eight), made it clear from where Captain Nemo drew his inexhaustible wealth: a destroyed convoy of galleons sitting on the floor of Vigo Bay. The convoy once sailed to the Continent from the Spanish colonies with valuable cargo. This precious load was meant to support the investments of the king and the Spanish government in rearmament against a Dutch, Austrian, and English alliance aimed at weakening Spanish power. The French Admiral de Châteaurenault, whose fleet escorted the vessels, ordered their sinking near Vigo Bay to prevent the merchandise—including gold, silver, and jewelry—from imminently falling into enemy hands.⁵⁴³ While working on *Fish Story's* Chapter Five "Message in a Bottle," Allan Sekula commented on this episode in Verne's novel in one of his private notebooks. On May 19, 1992, he wrote the following lines, preceded by the title *Vigo Bay*: "Jules Verne places the submarine w/in [within] an economic regime of *primitive*

accumulation. Nemo's crews gather galleon's gold from the floor of the bay. This is the fundament of his enterprise."⁵⁴⁴

Sekula continued to explore the subject in the subsequent chapter of *Fish Story*. "True Cross," *Fish Story's* Chapter Six, consists of thirteen photographs made in Veracruz, Mexico through March 1994. (fig. 10.2) Its opening image represents a half-naked young waterfront vendor walking by a dockworker immersed in observing a shipping container floating on the crane of a forklift truck. The picture, taken from the shadow of a group of containers stacked on sandy soil, bathes in a rather otherworldly brownish-gray hue. Arguably, what is most striking is the strolling man wearing slippers, apparently pacing (or even fleeing?) through the photograph at the height of a yellow plaque bearing the mark "TRANS OCEAN." As if he is operating in a different segment of time, he faces straight ahead, decidedly on his way out of the picture again.

The man in white shorts also completely ignores a damaged (and folded-out) package from the dairy products company LALA de Veracruz lying on the soil right next to him, as if it were waiting for him to pick it up. On his left lies a printed paper in the form of a cocktail shaker. Together, this litter appears to provide the man a small, separate passageway through which he alone can walk. The wooden stick in front of him, almost planted into the ground, even separates him further from the seemingly theatrical decor in the background. The dock laborer, who in turn completely disregards the apparent wanderer, unintentionally almost takes on a ballet pose, as if doing a performance amid the whirlpool of zigzagging lines, container blocks, and textual information. Through his figure, an intriguing choreography further develops between the walking vendor (or is it his magical staff?) and the flying container. It almost seems as if the colossus is magnetically coming out of the background and moving toward the foreground, where it is about to drop down on the uniformed man's remarkably white security helmet. Sekula's choice to opt for a slightly tilted perspective when taking this shot even strengthens that awkward impression of imminently shifting sands.

As the chapter's title suggests, this crisscrossing of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines continues throughout the entire visual sequence. "True Cross" ends with an equally awkward photograph of three unidentified men (since Sekula only photographed them from their torso to their feet). They are standing next to a red plastic container of a white coral sample taken from the walls of the fortress in San Juan de Ulúa—"the first and last Spanish fortress in Mexico," as Sekula specified in the accompanying introductory text to this chapter.⁵⁴⁵ It was Hernán Cortés, the artist reminded his readers, who had this fortress built on Veracruz's sandy hills from *piedra muca*, locally available and hacked



Fig. 10.2.

Allan Sekula, *Waterfront vendor and docker in container storage area and Coral sample from the fortress walls, San Juan de Ulúa*. Opening and closing photographs of "True Cross," Chapter Six of Sekula's *Fish Story*, 1989–1995.
© Allan Sekula Studio.

from the reef by workers enslaved by Cortés's troops. "Thus," Sekula concluded, "the former living home of fish became a chamber for the inventory of primitive accumulation, temporary warehouse for the flow of Aztec gold to Spain."

Sekula drew a clear connection between the fortress of Veracruz and Vigo Bay in Spain. The link is "funny," he said, since it does not have so much to do with Vigo Bay being a point of departure for the conquest (which it was not), but with Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*.⁵⁴⁶ What interested Sekula was that he thus could make a connection to the colonial history of plunder by means of a fictional novel. According to him, such playful sets of associations potentially contribute to guiding the reader's attention to the topic and setting up a metaphoric game. The chapter's title, "True Cross," is a literal translation of Veracruz spelled as Vera Cruz, which equally refers to the True Cross in Spanish. Sekula's decision to spell this wording with uppercase characters seems a deliberate choice, which can now be creatively juxtaposed with the closing line from "Walking on Water": "*Crossing* the heaving Atlantic on the way to a new life, he drank himself into comfortable oblivion."⁵⁴⁷

In this last sentence, the artist paid tribute not only to the Atlantic passages of his grandfather Pawel, but also of all so-called ordinary people in search of work and a better life for themselves and their families—these, for him, were the *real* crossings, those that *truly* mattered. By contrasting this with the True Cross planted by Cortés and his Catholic entourage at Veracruz, it seems Sekula sought to ponder and accuse the treacherous approach of using religion for the purpose of colonial plunder under the guise of bringing "civilization" to the supposedly not-yet-civilized. In this context, the last slide of "Walking on Water," depicting Christ's feet nailed to the Holy Cross comes to mind once again as well, this time in connection to Shusako Endo's assertion that, during the Crucifixion, Christ's feet were attached to the cross with *two* spikes. As he added: "Religious artists often picture the feet of Jesus one on top of the other, transfixed by a single nail; but that is a mistake, for it was usual to have the legs extending down with feet apart."⁵⁴⁸ In what follows, I will build on the imaginative potential of a double, parallel line of Christ's feet as an alternative to the forever closed cross.

"True Cross" ends with a section rather dramatically entitled "Monument to the Drowned Republic." It opens with a quotation from Hart Crane's 1926 poem "At Melville's Tomb," which reads as follows: "The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath an embassy."⁵⁴⁹ After this moving tribute to the seafarers who gave their lives to the sea, Sekula turns his attention—in conclusion—to those with an even stronger moral claim to the Earth than can be made by any nation. The capacity for mutiny against the established orders that ruin our planet,

so Sekula presumed, will no longer come from floating nomads, ragged seafaring vagabonds, and cosmopolitans, but from the desperate acts of those who had first claims to the land unlawfully stolen from them—pillaged, polluted, and ravaged (32#). Sekula firmly believed that the Mayan peasants of the south could become the mutinous auditors of Mexico, as “flows” would become increasingly tracked not from the nation’s ports, but from their very sources in the ground. If only the stateless proletarian anonymity of the sea could come to join forces with the rebellion of those fighting to preserve the rain forest, Sekula sighed.

Today, this scenario seems even further removed from reality than twenty-five years ago, as an elite minority continues to accumulate ever more wealth to the detriment of the global poor. Sekula’s musing on the origins of Nemo’s wealth thus sharpens, once more, the distinction previously made between Nemo as the model of the plunderer and Outis as the stranger who merits our hospitality. Upon encountering strangers, it *does* matter whether one can estimate the real motivations and reasons behind their being there. When the anonymous Congolese young woman at Monieka decided to have her portrait made by Nat Farbman, she had every right to resist his offer, yet she did not. Was she naïve and flattered, just somewhat shortsighted, or possibly also slightly afraid?

Similarly, why did the employees at *Desseilles* eventually—and perhaps against all knowledge—put faith in their foreign investors, who turned out to be unreliable in the wake of their initial promise? Did they overlook certain details that they could, or should, have noticed? Alternatively, was it rather the larger picture of the present-day global economic realities that they failed to anticipate? Significantly, Sekula included a scale model of the Nautilus in his *The Dockers’ Museum*. (fig. 10.3) Attached to a metal bar that suggests the elegant flow of a smooth upward wave, the structure rests on a carved, varnished wooden base. It is not difficult to imagine that, from that tilted position, the screw propeller starts to turn around its axis, setting the submarine into upward motion. The enigma of the close connections that Sekula wished to establish between his *Ship of Fools* / *The Dockers’ Museum* and *Deep Six* / *Passer au bleu* returns. One wonders once more: what *do* trains in undersea tunnels and submarines have to do with the messy situation of Calais today?

In *Fish Story*, Sekula already outlined his general insights on the matter. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the panorama, “once the most geographically encompassing form of pictorial representation, became inadequate to a world of explosive long-range shells, smoke screens, torpedoes, and above all else, the submarine.”⁵⁵⁰ From then on, the submarine developed into the most threatening factor of military force. Contrary to the concreteness of the naval blockade, which was “visible and could be pictured in panoramic terms, as it was by Willem



Fig. 10.3.

Nautilus Jules Verne Ron Miller submarine model [as indicated on PayPal document], mixed media, manufacturer and date of production unknown (copyright holder and rights status unknown), 12.5×28.5×4 cm. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on July 21, 2010. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/ Collection Flemish Community. © Photo: Ina Steiner. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers’ Museum*).

van der Velde the Elder,” the submarine, according to Sekula, constituted an abstract, invisible menace. For representing the imagined view from the submarine’s periscope in pictorial terms, artists sought refuge in the creation of “aquarium-like” viewpoints, and Sekula took Edouard Riou’s frontispiece to the first French edition of Verne’s novel—as an emblematic example.⁵⁵¹ Sekula further defined this type of representation as “underwater tableaux,” in which the panoramic perspective has tilted ninety degrees and become vertical. Consequently, such representations, at their best, manage to suggest a “*faux* realism.” If none of the artists had ever seen such an underwater point of view for real, so the “undersea world” of the type described by Verne simply “never existed.”

What authors such as Verne, along with those who illustrated his books, asked of their readers, Sekula argued further, is “a bourgeois confidence” in the possibility of “conquering new frontiers” and “vanquishing more primitive enemies.” Yet the appeal that Verne’s “imperialist optimism” made to his French bourgeois readers is one intermingled with blind confidence in the capacities of a claustrophobic space commandeered by a specialized crew of trained inmates, who keep confidential information for themselves. As the panoramic surface of the old sea blockade, visible to every person who desired to observe it, made place for the detailed, closed-off space of the high-tech submarine, all possibilities of empirical verification with regard to the reality of warfare got lost. When we observe a submarine, our eyes are clueless about what exactly *is* going on inside or what its imminent plans might be. Sekula

lamented this loss of readability, which in his view led to an indulgence in blinkered navel-gazing. For Sekula, there is no doubt: the *Nautilus* symbolized that development more than any other submarine, since Verne connected the dangers of its nontransparency to mechanisms of “historic plunder,” or what Karl Marx indeed called “primitive accumulation,” as practiced by Captain Nemo himself in the first place.⁵⁵²

Selfishly, Nemo kept his privileged access to this inexhaustible wealth only for himself. As Sekula quoted from Verne’s novel: “It was for him and him alone America had given up her precious metals. He was heir direct, without anyone to share, in those treasures torn from the Incas and from the conquered of Ferdinand Cortez.” Verne, unconvincingly, tried to find excuses for Nemo’s greedy behavior by mentioning his patronage of revolutionary movements and other types of social commitment (which I further discuss below). Yet, as Sekula insisted, nothing can come to justify such a “magical fable of inheritance”—which is true for the “aristocratic nostalgia” or illusory belief in an “abstract and futuristic motto of perpetual flux within flux.” Sekula was satisfied to report that, upon searching the numerous outdoor bookstalls on Praza de Compostela in Vigo, he had not been able to spot a single edition of Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. At least, he wrote, Vigo’s late-twentieth-century inhabitants reciprocated the indifference of Verne and his hero Nemo toward those with whom they should have shared this wealth unconditionally. For the citizens of Vigo, he added, this very reciprocation was a “function of economic attitude,” and, as quoted earlier, he therefore encouraged those who work on the surface of the sea never to give up their distrust of submarines.

The expanded spectral zone of the submarine includes the underwater train (cf. Chapter Eight). At some point during its voyage, when the *Nautilus*, as Verne described it, found itself off Long Island and only “a few miles from the passes into New York,” a hurricane caused a major swell of the ocean surface.⁵⁵³ Nemo gave orders to sink the submarine gently to a depth of fifty meters below the surface of the agitated waves. Dr. Aronnax then reported to the readers that, as they went down, he saw “great frightened fish, passing like ghosts through the fiery waters. A few were struck by lightning in front of my eyes.”⁵⁵⁴ They, by contrast, were safe. “What calm there, what silence, what peace! Who could have thought that a terrifying hurricane was being unleashed at that moment on the surface of the same ocean?” How illusory and self-involved is this tranquility that Verne saved no efforts to sketch it for his readers. At the surface, the storm continues to rage yet Verne (through the character of Aronnax) suggested that we develop a certain admiration for mischievous persons who willfully manage to escape from all that without seriously solidarizing with anyone else around who might be in acute trouble.

As Sekula also reminded his readers, Aronnax, Ned Land, and Conseil's "floating prison" would soon after turn out to become a "deadly prison" for Nemo himself.⁵⁵⁵ For, not long after the scene just described, Nemo's submarine perished in the maelstrom near Lofoten. At that point, it became clear that his project turned out to be nothing more than fatally liable "to the charge of barrenness."⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, the fixed train link under the English Channel failed to bring real calm and democratic comfort for everyone; only the happy few who can afford it and are in possession of the right papers benefit from it. Would it be possible that, after twenty-five years of traveling through this underwater subway, its users have gradually given up their capacity for a panoramic, horizontal, and empirical understanding of the world around them? Much has been lost through this exclusive focus on a view that remains shrouded in darkness, only lit up by the artificial light of the train wagon (and, likely, the bluish light radiating from the surface of a touchscreen reflecting in our downcast eyes). So much even that, in late 2019, a *New York Times* front-page headline reported that the Eurostar had turned into the "train to disunity," because, ever since the Brexit vote, it predominantly transported experts back and forth between Brussels and London to negotiate the divorce.⁵⁵⁷

Would it be stretching the matter, then, to suggest that this very socioeconomic development, together with the political tensions that it created, might somehow, or at least partly, account for the *Calaisiens'* incapacity to resist the Nemos who bluntly came to steal their business secrets without giving much in return? How can we prevent the inhabitants of northwestern Europe from blindly constructing kinships and affinities, to recall Ingold's terms, or "to knit an item of clothing" (literally, here) with those who eventually might not have been worth it?⁵⁵⁸ How much do the citizens of Calais have to lose in trying to turn the tides, when the situation in the area has come to a point that a harassed person on the move testified anonymously to a journalist that "there is no law in Calais."⁵⁵⁹ Worse even, the laws that *are* presently in place are even misused to justify the policy of systematic evictions. The French criminal code provides a measure for when one is caught red-handed in committing a crime. It is called "flagrance."⁵⁶⁰ A division of the French police named CRS uses this measure to arrive on a site unannounced, and evacuate immediately (and speedily), leaving people no time to collect their belongings.⁵⁶¹

Imagine, for once, a different scenario. To revive the local lacemaking business as well as to revitalize other economic activities, the Calais mayoralty starts to conceive of the influx of persons as an opportunity for the city. With support from the state, it sets up an asylum office in town that offers transparent access to the procedures, and afterwards solid training and language programs.⁵⁶² Could this help shift the

balance and convince people not to risk their lives in crossing? Why does no one even try? The concluding paragraph of Sekula's *Fish Story*, if enigmatically, sent out the following warning to those blocked by hopelessness or indifference:

It is one thing to live ambitiously upon the land and imagine the panorama of the sea by building a small replica of a boat. It is quite another to remember the sea from the land by the same procedure, after the panorama has closed in, like a net.⁵⁶³

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Roland Barthes positioned the panoramic view as “on the side of the Neutral.”⁵⁶⁴ He inserted a parenthesis: “(= insofar as it is a position that baffles paradigms and that exerts a power of appeasement).” Barthes further elaborated that the word “panorama”—a term that came to us from the Greek “through the intermediation of English”—literally means “to see everything.” It is through the panoramic perspective that humans understand the world in terms of “surfaces, volumes, planes, and not depth.” Elsewhere, in his more personal confessions, Barthes therefore wondered: “[Is] Jules Verne a travel writer?”⁵⁶⁵ By means of a reply, he added: “Quite the contrary, a writer of clausturation.” As Dirk Lauwaert specified, for Barthes *the* symbol of modern bourgeois thinking since the 1950s—which, in Barthes’s view, was increasingly locked up in reductive binarism and paradigms—was “the divisive ‘/,’ not the conclusive ‘=’ or the ‘\.’”⁵⁶⁶

Barthes expressed his critical thoughts on this matter by means of the example of how modern societies construct gendered identities. “In *Sarrasine*,” he wrote,

La Zambinella declares that she seeks to be, for the sculptor who loves her, “a devoted friend” [*ami*], exposing, by this masculine form of the word, her true sex; but her lover fails to understand: he is abused by *the stereotype* (S/Z).⁵⁶⁷

Honoré de Balzac’s famous and much-discussed short novella *Sarrasine* (1830) tells the tragic story of the young artist-sculptor Sarrasine—a name with a decidedly feminine ending [-ine]—who falls in love with a prima donna named La Zambinella. Sarrasine first encounters La Zambinella performing in a theater, singing with “an angel’s voice.”⁵⁶⁸ Eventually, Sarrasine comes to learn that La Zambinella is not a woman. Despite this knowledge, Sarrasine nonetheless remains blinded by his feelings of love for a woman who only exists in the concoctions of his mind. He persistently continues to see La Zambinella as “a masterpiece,”

therewith suggesting that he rather imagines La Zambinella to be something like a living sculpture instead of assuming the reality of the situation. Sarrasine's imagination thus dramatically fails him. Stuck in his own mental projections of who he desires La Zambinella to be *for him*, La Zambinella—who would wish Sarrasine to love him/her as the non-binary person he/she is (“*more than a woman*”)—is not capable of rendering Sarrasine happy.⁵⁶⁹ The announcement of the tragic truth that he has fallen in love with a castrato in turn ruins Sarrasine psychically.⁵⁷⁰

Thus Sarrasine, according to Barthes, “contemplates in La Zambinella his own castration.”⁵⁷¹ Eventually, the only path Sarrasine can travel from there on is that of his own destruction. La Zambinella's protectors kill Sarrasine while he tries to murder La Zambinella. “Z,” Barthes wrote, becomes “the letter of mutilation: phonetically, Z stings like a chastising lash, an avenging insect; graphically, [...] like an oblique and illicit blade, it cuts, slashes.”⁵⁷² “Customary French onomastics,” he pursued, would rather expect one to write “*SarraZine*” instead of “*SarraSine*.” S and Z thus find themselves in a dialectical relation of “graphological inversion: the same letter seen from the other side of the mirror.”⁵⁷³ In the “S of *SarraSine* and the Z of *Zambinella*,” Barthes noted, it is the very form of “the slash (/)” that both characters have in common—if in the opposite direction, because in the S the slash is really a backslash or reverse slash (\).⁵⁷⁴ Barthes concluded that the slash, for that matter, accounts for the creation of a “specular surface [*surface spéculaire*],” by which he means a sort of slippery slant in which this castration anxiety obtains free play.⁵⁷⁵ When the slash thus obtains free play *within* a word itself, it becomes destructive. In this case, the slash installs “a panic function.”⁵⁷⁶ Therefore, and since “Z is the first letter of *La Zambinella*, the initial of castration,” the “orthographical error in the middle of his name, in the center of his body” causes Sarrasine to receive “the *Zambinellan* Z in its true sense”: “the wound of deficiency.”⁵⁷⁷

Bearing Barthes's sharp insights in mind, let us now return once more to the lace business in Calais. The collective deficiency or wound bleeding on both sides of the English Channel is profoundly connected to a historical rivalry between the cross-channel neighbors, which, in the year 1813, first resulted in English overproduction, then unemployment, and finally a workers' revolt (the Luddite Revolt) before the ultimate and inevitable decline of the lace industry on the British side. Will history now, two centuries later, repeat itself again—this time turning the former victor into a new, second loser—and *castrate* the painstakingly built-up tradition of lace production on both sides of the Channel? How, then, could one not be tempted to recall the age-old proverb, “When two dogs fight for a bone, a third runs away with it”?

Seen from this angle, it is even more striking that, between *Deep Six* and *Passer au bleu*, Allan Sekula decided to insert a slash; however,

with one blank space after and before each term. It was, beyond doubt, a decisive effort to break open the circular logic of binary pairs, characterized by the lack of blank space before and after the slash.⁵⁷⁸ There is no way to substantiate if or to what extent Barthes's *S/Z* was a direct source of inspiration for Sekula's choice of title.⁵⁷⁹ Still, there is no doubt that Sekula was attracted to the slash as a "very unambiguous mark of ambiguity."⁵⁸⁰ For sure, it is relevant to bring to mind his Polish roots and the first name of his grandfather, Paweł, containing a slashed *l*. Ryan Bishop and Sunil Manghani have proposed to understand the slash as a "'visual onomatopoeia' for the act of mark-making generally."⁵⁸¹ In line with their argument, I propose to interpret Sekula's decision to furnish the title *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* with a slash as an encouragement to read it in terms of a very specific energizing verbal and visual trope.

The ordering of the two languages, first English and then French, follows the geographical orientation of both countries when visualized on a map. Since the Mercator projection (1569) became the worldwide convention for composing maps, a nautical chart of the North Sea depicting the Strait of Dover will have the British islands on the left drawn manifestly higher in latitude than the Nord-Pas-de-Calais. Situated on the lower right-hand side, the strait runs as a diagonal between both shorelines from bottom left to upper right. The inevitable distortion of the size of objects inherent to Mercator's measuring system accounts for the fact that the landmass of the United Kingdom, however minimal it may be, appears slightly larger than it actually is compared to the landmass of France—the reason being that the latitude increases from the equator to the poles. As this politicized geometrical construction of the globe has now been generally accepted for almost five centuries, people's collective consciousness has simply come to be preconditioned to assume that how the United Kingdom and France look like on a map *is* how the shape of their territories actually look in reality. (see also fig. 3.7)

From that perspective, the comparably shorter English part of the title takes on an additional meaning. It makes its viewers aware that the two-word versus three-word structure of the title implicitly hints at the very fact that we are observing a conventional representation of space. Sekula's play with that cartographic convention in *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* further allows us to abstractly represent this title on a chart. (Plate 24) In the Strait of Dover, which is the busiest international seaway in the world, special international sea law arrangements apply. Because the territorial waters extend less than twenty-four nautical miles within the strait, the borderline between the two countries has been set to run exactly across the middle of the passageway, cutting it in two equal halves.⁵⁸² Sekula visualized this nautical border in the form of a slash. The two blank spaces before and after the oblique slanting

punctuation mark correspond to the two zones of water on each side. The first image of the iteration of illustrations that form Plate 24, shows how I have positioned a piece of yarn on the UK Admiralty Chart 1406, in the middle of the Strait. (see Plate 24 above left image) What is more, the two uppercase characters in “Deep Six” suggest an island, Britain, turning its face to the Continent high up on Dover’s cliffs. The uppercase “P” in “Passer au bleu,” in its turn, reflects this dimension of altitude on Cap Gris Nez and Blanc Nez. The lowercase characters that follow immediately suggest that “au bleu” unrolls like a carpet over the lowlands of northern France and Belgium.

As both expressions mean the same in the two historical languages used within each land, what pervades is the suggestion of a wiping out process on each side of the passage. The seawaters find themselves smashed—or should one say slashed?—amid it all, turned into a silent witness, a no-man’s-zone. According to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the slash is most used to signify alternatives (and / or). Sometimes, however, “a slash can be used to mean ‘divided by’ when a fraction bar is inappropriate or impractical.”⁵⁸³ Bishop and Manghani have added to this that the slash “is the *gramma*, which in Greek means ‘mark’ or ‘cut.’”⁵⁸⁴ The slash, they explained, is therefore both a “prolific mark-maker” and an “inventive cutter (and linker) of concepts and images.” Furthermore, the slash can also “stand in for the Latin preposition *cum*, which variously means ‘combined with’ or ‘used as’ or ‘additionally being.’” In its more recent use for constructing web pages, the slash has even come to indicate that something is contained within something else (e.g. www.groundsea.be/hilde-van-gelder/).

Thus, this humble mark simultaneously refers to what Bishop and Manghani called contradicting spatial, temporal, and conceptual qualities. It unites by dividing and keeping separate. According to Bishop and Manghani, it brings together, “to be viewed and considered together, two concepts (signs) that are held apart through the mark that joins them.” The slash therewith marks a bond between elements that it simultaneously appears to separate or divide. Finally, yet importantly, multipage documents often make use of the slash at the bottom of a page to indicate that the text continues the next page (... / ...). To conclude, the oppositional force between two elements divided by a slash is not absolute. Since the two elements are each other’s equivalent, their position on each side of the dividing line is interchangeable. When the division is “mathematic” rather than “existential,” as indicated by Dirk Lauwaert, the slash is “the fold upon which all decorative arabesques find support.”⁵⁸⁵

Below, I will return to the crucial connection between the slash and the arabesque. But let us first investigate the poetic capacities of the slash in greater depth. *The Chicago Manual of Style* recommends using “a slash, with one space on either side” for run-in poetry quotations within

texts.⁵⁸⁶ This allows lines arranged vertically in the original source to be presented horizontally. Once again, Sekula's experiments with concrete poetry seem relevant.⁵⁸⁷ The title's three components, the two lines and their slash, operate in a poetic and nonhierarchical relationship. This implies that the slash, as Roland Barthes had it in *S/Z*, potentially takes on the form of a panic sign indeed. It is the *sea*, as symbolized by the slash, which has the capacity to submerge its adjacent landmasses. Should that happen, such a catastrophe would only contribute to the already ongoing disappearance act, or laundering act, set up recklessly by the inhabitants of the landmasses.

This state of being slashed from the Continent has been of tremendous importance to shaping the collective identity of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, and particularly the English people. In the nineteenth century, as Eve Darian-Smith has brought to mind, even the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville, generally considered to have favored democracy, credited Britain's island isolation as the main reason for why it remained protected from the "new phenomenon of the Revolution," which, in his opinion, was a "virus of a new and unknown kind."⁵⁸⁸ During the first half of the twentieth century, the irrational British fear of all things French persisted. Keith Wilson has reminded us of the straightforward xenophobia that, consequently, went hand in hand with resisting any attempt made to launch a serious construction plan of the Channel Tunnel before this was finally successful later in the century. He quoted the Earl of Crawford, who, when asked to express his opinion on the matter, categorically declared that France was a corrupt country, exercising a "corrupting influence" on his fellow citizens.⁵⁸⁹ The creation of a land frontier would only generate, in his view, "undesirable reactions of a social and moral kind."

Sir Maurice Hankey summarized the matter as follows:

I think a good many people feel that living on an island we have been able to take from the Continent what we think best in the Continent without getting too much of it, to develop on our own lines and what we think are better lines all round.⁵⁹⁰

During World War II, Hankey's hostility toward the idea of constructing a Channel Tunnel even took on obsessive proportions, and this certainly helped to turn the channel waters into a demarcated geopolitical zone. Hankey chaired a panel of scientists and engineers charged with writing a report on how to tackle the presumption that the Germans were secretly busy constructing an underwater tunnel. The report in question recommended a "routine listening along a ten-mile stretch of the South Coast" of England.⁵⁹¹ As a result, "a handful of Royal Engineers spent a part of the Second World War burying microphones

in sand and chalk” in an area that stretched five miles to the east and to the west of Shakespeare Cliff.

*

The only Englishman who seemed to have been in favor of the megalomaniac tunnel project was Winston Churchill. As early as in 1920, Churchill emphasized the “commercial advantages” that would come with its creation.⁵⁹² When the Channel Tunnel eventually saw the light of day, it had become a key realization within what is called the Trans-European Transport Network, funded through different EU programs and implemented by the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency, established by the European Commission. As reported by Eve Darian-Smith, authorities on both sides of the Strait of Dover announced—in what now seems a utopian spirit—that the tunnel project was but one precursor of what was to follow rapidly thereafter, at the latest by the year 2010: a tunnel under the Strait of Gibraltar, a tunnel linking Scotland to Northern Ireland, and a fixed link between Sicily and the mainland. Several others were under investigation for the Scandinavian countries, the Greek Peloponnesus, and even the Bosphorus in Turkey.⁵⁹³ In this optimistic climate, Article three of the 1986 Treaty of Canterbury was implemented. The new land frontier between the United Kingdom and France was determined to be exactly in the middle of the tunnel. From there, a vertical projection was drawn all the way up to the surface of the sea.⁵⁹⁴ In both directions from that point, the new border became “an imaginary line out at sea midway along the line of the Tunnel.”⁵⁹⁵

To visualize the completion of the tunnel project connecting the mainland and Britain, I have indicated an additional line on the sea chart, on the exact spot where the Channel Tunnel finds itself embedded in the seafloor. Like the upward movement of the Nautilus scale model, it runs from the lower right to the upper left, thus taking the shape of a backslash (\). (see Plate 24 above right image) What is more, three tunnel pipes now connect these two very different, yet so closely interrelated shores (\\\). (see Plate 24 middle left image) All around this area, the channel waters continue to flow, the tidal streams and currents determining whether the waters move toward the Atlantic or up north. As if these seawaters were no more than a thick, solid mass (similar to a motorway), they have been subjected to what is called a Traffic Separation Scheme, which means that two ship traffic lanes run through the Strait of Dover: one for inward- and the other for outward-bound traffic (///).⁵⁹⁶ (see Plate 24 middle right image)

Vessels entering the strait from the North Sea toward the English Channel must steer close to the English coast. Ships approaching from the south are obliged to keep within the zone of the traffic lane on the

side of the French coast. This type of transit traffic is privileged. Vessels less than twenty meters in length or any type of sailing vessels are not allowed to impede the safe passage of a power-driven vessel following a traffic lane. What is more, as far as practicable, crossing traffic lanes must be avoided. “If obliged to do so,” such as is the case, for example, for ferries between Calais and Dover, it is mandatory to cross at a heading as near as practicable to right angles to the general direction of the traffic flow.⁵⁹⁷ Thus, a couple more imaginary vessels sailing across the strait amplify the lines of this intersection (|||||). (see Plate 24 below left image) Finally, the internationally determined regulations allow vessels with a length of less than twenty meters, sailing vessels, and vessels engaged in fishing to use the inshore traffic zones on both sides. Imagine a couple of ships busy doing just that, and another range of small wool fibers may be added to our linear scheme (/////). (see Plate 24 below right image)

This generates a lattice that appears to have been placed on the sea’s surface, as if it were indeed possible to turn the strait into a smooth turnpike of highway traffic lanes for large motor ships. But it is not possible for a sailing vessel to navigate in the pseudo-landlocked way that a big engine-driven ship can. Let us focus on the example of a sailing vessel with Dunkirk as its home port that wants to go and greet friends who have Lowestoft as their yacht’s port of registry. Inevitably, the ship will be *obliged* to cross the traffic lanes. The idea of trying to make a course good at the ninety-degree angle to the traffic scheme serves two purposes: trying to guarantee the shortest crossing time and make readily apparent to other vessels using the lane that this is what your ship is busy doing. With a good breeze and when the ship doesn’t have to beat up (fight) against the wind, it is faster to sail the track than to turn on the engine. But leeway (the effect of wind) plus set and drift (the effect of tide) will somehow exercise their impact. To work toward meeting this perpendicular course over the ground, therefore, the sailing vessel’s water track or wake course will deviate from it.

Contrary to the meandering trajectory of the sailing vessel, the fixed underwater link—the point of departure for my complex intersectional scheme of traffic directions—inscribes itself inside this now predominating logic for organizing traffic within the Strait of Dover. Furthermore, in retrospect, its creation has also come to mark what has always remained deeply anchored within the English imagination. Darian-Smith wisely reminded her readers that “railways historically symbolized England’s imperial power, and the EU’s role in promoting the fast train thus suggests England’s potential colonization by the New Europe, echoing the nation’s past.”⁵⁹⁸ She connected this anxiety to a heightened fear of disease and a further irrational linking of this to “foreignness”—meaning an imagined “high-speed penetration of English

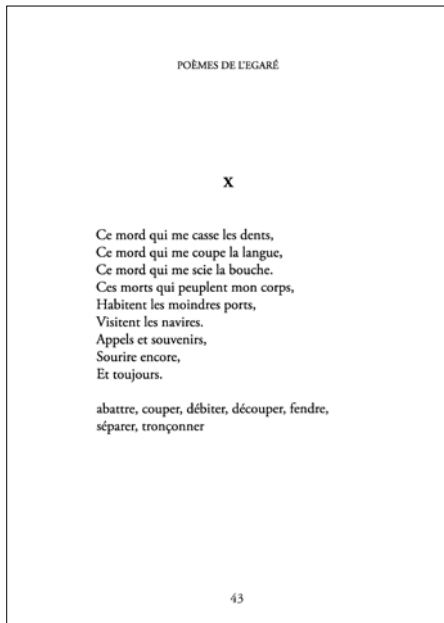


Fig. 10.4.
 Reproduced by permission
 from Sylvain George, *La Vita
 Bruta. Une adresse à Pier
 Paolo Pasolini* (Paris: NP
 Editions, 2016), 43.
 © Sylvain George.

territory by people formerly colonized.” The prophetic value of these words can most aptly be illustrated with reference to the already mentioned small booklet published by Sylvain George in 2016, entitled *La Vita Bruta*. This is an expression that—as the already discussed “(Brief) Notes of the Haggard” [*Notes (brèves) de l'égaré*] informed its readers—Temesghen Berhe was fond of using.⁵⁹⁹ Stronger, he is said to have exclaimed, “*Brutissima, la vita, brutissima!*”⁶⁰⁰

La Vita Bruta also includes a sequence of twenty-six “poems of the Haggard” [*poèmes de l'Égaré*]. (fig. 10.4) Poem number X (ten) goes as follows:

This bite that breaks my teeth,
 This bite that cuts my tongue,
 This bite that makes me silence myself.
 These dead who inhabit my body,
 Dwell in the slightest ports,
 Visit the ships.
 Pleas and reminders,
 Still smile,
 And always.

to tear down, to cut, to withdraw, to cut up, to cleave,
 to separate, to crosscut.⁶⁰¹

As a sign, the X is a cross. The Dutch language has the expression “to make a cross over something,” which means to put an end to a situation. The cross cuts, eliminates, erases, and, in the worst case, it kills. As pointed out in Chapter Six, “(Brief) Notes of the Haggard” reveals fragmentary elements of the life story of John Yihaish who, in tears, spoke haltingly about Louam, a nineteen-year-old woman from his village (Makouka). Yihaish witnessed how, in Calais, she was hit by a car during the night of July 7 to July 8, 2007. In a small group, they were running away from the police near the highway that leads to the docks. The driver fled the scene. She died on the spot. The man who ran her over eventually turned out to be a locally well-known medical doctor. “*Can you believe that? A famous doctor,*” Yihaish reported to George in awe.⁶⁰² This short text ends with George referring to a few desperate lines scribbled in turquoise ink in Yihaish’s old school notebook, which he kept with him at all times together with two books that he loved to read. Its pages’ edges, according to George, had become “irregular, thick, blunt like old toothless knives.”⁶⁰³

“*Life. | Life after death.*”⁶⁰⁴ As also indicated in Chapter Six, those were the concluding lines of this breathtaking text. It is now time to ask ourselves the fundamental question raised by James Elkins when he organized his important weeklong research seminar at the Art Institute in Chicago on “What Do Artists Know?” (2009). Aspects of the discussion among participants focused on the central question of artists possessing “*tacit knowledge.*”⁶⁰⁵ Although this knowledge remains very hard to define (is it nonverbal, implicit, intuitive, or, on the contrary, procedural and methodic?), the consensus reached involved an agreement on the fact that this type of knowledge adds different insights to the present-day hegemonic “*knowledge economy.*”⁶⁰⁶ Tacit knowledge is intimately connected with the artist’s hypersensitive ways of being in contact with empirical reality. I want to argue that tacit knowledge contains both abovementioned aspects: it is as much intuitive as this nonverbal type of pursuing research is methodic and needs to follow strict, if rather idiosyncratic, protocols. It can be anticipatory and predictive of realities that do not yet exist, but which may happen in a not-so-faraway future.

One photograph included in Allan Sekula’s *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* illustrates this more than others. Part Two, “Ship of Fools” opens with a portrait of three engineers in the engine room (14). The man in green coveralls standing closest to the photographer holds his hand on one of the engine’s control levers. Its rearward position matches the form of the slash. While studying this photograph, I have been puzzled by the fact that the joysticks are all in the rearward position, even in full astern. This contrasts sharply with the very relaxed attitude of the three men. I decided to investigate the matter with a sailor friend, whom I’ve

known since we were teenagers, Jan Meulemeester, and who now works as a pilot on container ships in the Port of Antwerp. This is what he answered via email on August 22, 2019:

You rightfully point out that a “full astern” may well be ground for concern. It would be truly a coincidence, then, when it’s also the case in the picture. However, they do not always know in a machine room how risky the situation “upstairs” is. The full asterns that I requested in my career as a pilot number at most a handful, while I have never seen the interrelated reactions in the machine room. So, in my view it was photographed in a non-operating machine room by the quay.⁶⁰⁷

Whether this photograph of the engine room was made while the ferry was docked at Calais or Dover, we will never be able to trace. However, given the present focus on Sekula’s use of the slash, it is striking to realize that Part One, “The Rights of Man” also includes the already discussed picture of the cod fisher on a pier in Dover sitting behind his rod, which is leaning against a fence. From a phenomenological-formal point of view, the shape of the rod is that of a reverse slash (`()`), or possibly even a full-width reverse solidus (`\`). On a computer keyboard, as is well known, the backslash performs the function of an escape character or sign. Still, and perhaps more pertinent to the present discussion, the reverse slash has also been used in theoretical discussions about how to build “agonistic” democracies.⁶⁰⁸ Coined by William Connolly, this agonism of the reverse slash pleads for a democratic society that affirms “the indispensability of identity to life.” According to Connolly, individual identities are not constructed by means of dogmas. Instead, he wanted to see agonistic democracy to care for diversity. Out of the “relational heterogeneity of existence,” interdependent networks of identity and difference can arise. In a provocative way, Connolly spoke about the relation between the individual self and the other in terms of having a mobile boundary. What is more, the action of either self or other can put that already mobile boundary further into question, thus provoking a continuous need to both redefine the relationship and the identities that result from these multiple shifts in relationships. This ongoing dynamic is foundational to a well-functioning agonistic “network of identity\| difference,” as Connolly called it.

As observed by Martin Coward, the use of the reverse slash in political-theoretical discussions about how to shape democratic identities is fruitful since it indicates that “identity does not just lean over difference, as people tend to assume.”⁶⁰⁹ Rather, difference “both helps to constitute and recoils back upon identity.” According to Coward, the reverse slash makes clear that identity and difference are not a forced

opposition, but instead operate in a mutually constitutive relationship. The backslash therewith obtains a meaning opposite that of the forward slash, “used in either/or binary pairing,” which—as for Roland Barthes—suffers from “a semblance of closure.” It generates an identity that is incapable of thinking and integrating vital differences. Of course, when Allan Sekula photographed Marie-Thérèse Champesme visiting the abandoned ferry terminal in Dover, he could not possibly know how rapid collective British castration anxiety (corresponding to a society within which a small majority appears profoundly stuck in a divisive and nativist identarian logic) with regard to the continental neighbors would manifest itself once again.

*

*Sleeping anticipations.*⁶¹⁰ Thus Pierre Bayard described a firm sense of premonition, such as breathes from almost every photograph in *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*. In his remarkable book, whose title translates into English as *The Titanic will be shipwrecked*, Bayard takes as his point of departure a novel published in 1898, which he saved from oblivion. In the book, entitled *Futility, or the Wreck of the Titan*, its author Morgan Robertson sketches the story of the ocean liner *Titan* sinking in the North Atlantic Ocean after hitting an iceberg. Works of art and fiction do not exactly predict the future. Yet some among them *have* indeed anticipated historical events before they happened. The principal importance of such hypersensitive works lies, according to Bayard, in the fact that they “help *thinking the unthinkable*.”⁶¹¹ That one day the human corpse of a desperate swimmer from a faraway country would wash ashore on a North Sea beach was still unthinkable in 1996, when Sekula created his sequence. From the summer of 2015 on, this hypothesis gradually grew more realistic, and the above-discussed news item in *The Guardian* openly expressed that fear in late 2018.⁶¹² Then, on August 23, 2019, a dead man was fished from the water near the wind farm constructed on the Thornton bank in Zeebrugge, Belgium.⁶¹³ The Flemish newspaper *De Standaard* reported the incident on Monday, August 26, and *BBC NEWS* picked it up the same day.⁶¹⁴

Although the reporters seemed to know that the rescuers had found the corpse of a forty-eight-year-old Iraqi man, his name was not mentioned. However, and this was arguably the only positive element about the news item, at the bottom of the report, *BBC NEWS* added the following disclaimer:

A note on terminology: The BBC uses the term migrant to refer to all people on the move who have yet to complete the legal process of claiming asylum. This group includes people fleeing war-torn

countries, who are likely to be granted refugee status, as well as people who are seeking jobs and better lives, who governments are likely to rule are economic migrants.⁶¹⁵

While this tragic event made few headlines in the United Kingdom, *De Standaard* added a shocking black-and-white photograph to the news report. It invited readers to look at the man's corpse lying on the loading platform, his torso facing the ground. It was possible for everyone to see that the drowned body carried a small backpack and that one flipper was still attached to his right foot. Buttoned to his back was a fishing net filled with twelve plastic bottles. As if this was of any relevance, almost as if they had been looking at a picture of a crime scene, the reporters informed their readers that the net used for fabricating the improvised life jacket was a green color. All I could think of when taking this disturbing information in was that the panorama on the English Channel had now, indeed, finally closed in, like a net. What was more, the frontispiece of Allan Sekula's *Fish Story*, representing the handmade fabrication of a fishing net as reproduced in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1771), took on a dramatic additional meaning. (fig. 10.5)

Two days later, a rather complete biography of the desperate life story of Niknam (or Nicknam, depending on the sources) Masoud was released.⁶¹⁶ His unbelievable odyssey colored the dismal reality of his insanely unrealistic attempt. Masoud, so it was presumed, had left Iraq in 2003 and had, in the meantime, applied for asylum in the European Union five times, beginning with Rome in 2004. There, for the first time, he had given his fingerprints for insertion in the EU databases. This very event haunted him for the remainder of his profoundly lamentable existence. On August 18 or 22, 2019 (again, depending on the source), a Belgian sailor spotted him alive, twelve nautical miles off the coast of Dunkirk. He tried to lift him onto his boat but failed to do so. Next, he alerted the French coast guard, but, unfortunately, the search for him proved in vain. A couple of months later, it turned out that Belgian camera operator Daniel Demoustier had been as shocked as I was that summer. Together with news reporters from ITV, Demoustier attended Masoud's funeral near Bruges, where he was buried as a "war refugee."⁶¹⁷

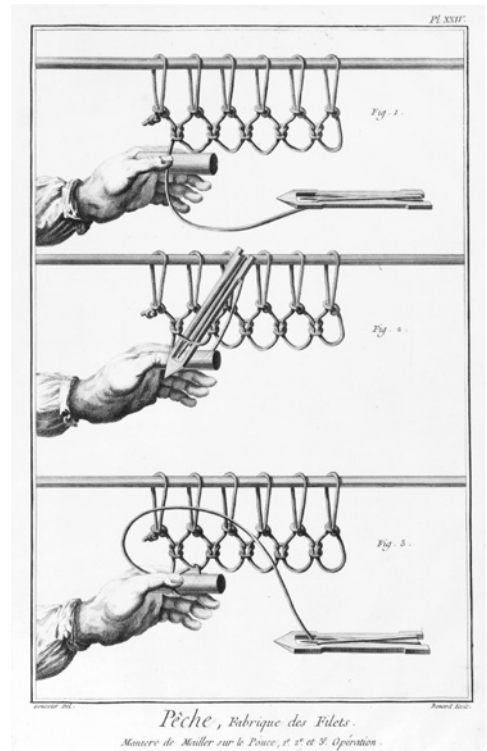


Fig. 10.5.

Reproduced by permission from Allan Sekula, *Fish Story* (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995), frontispiece. Handmade fabrication of a fishing net as reproduced in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1771), public domain. © Allan Sekula Studio (for *Fish Story*).

From his remaining possessions, Demoustier discovered that the man was from Iran. They made a moving reportage in tribute to his trek, with the intention to return his human dignity to him.⁶¹⁸

This fatal sequence of events sheds a completely different light on the portrait of the cod fisher included in Sekula's Part One, "The Rights of Man." The photograph obtains a phenomenological meaning that I want to define in terms used by Joseph Kickasola for key cinematic, liminal images in Kieslowski's films: it carries a meaning "beyond words," which appears to crystallize a "fleeting pre-reflective stage of perception."⁶¹⁹ This perception embodies "the concept of possibility (and potentiality)." Sitting down, bent on his knees, the angler fully concentrates on measuring his line, which he holds in his two hands as if he were a male version of one of the Moirai—pondering fate itself. The line intersects with his rod. This rod—in the shape of an escape sign—seems to indicate that, in case the divisions and binaries become too strong, we should try, with all the force we have, to turn the tide and change destiny. Once the viewer notices this meaning—which was always already contained within the image but submerged until one sees through the motif—a process of transformation takes place about the image's connotations. Somehow, in the Brexit era, the gear countering dogmatic and divisive identarian dynamics symbolized by the forward slash will have to be found; even if radical Brexiteers appear to have successfully managed to put the joystick in the position of a scaring full-width solidus (∕). Since 2016, the spirit of the times has been: to the hell with parliament and, if necessary, navigate full speed to a no-deal exit from the European Union!⁶²⁰

Visually combined, the control stick in the engine room, as seen in the full astern position, and the fisherman's rod depicting the full-ahead navigation direction movement thus make up for an intersection that takes the shape of a large diagonal cross (×). In everyday reality, the saltire is the warning sign that indicates the point at which a railway line intersects a road. How will it ultimately be possible to traverse the level crossing without getting stuck in the junction? Once again, I want to push the reader's imagination by suggesting that it is from the very heart of this complicated node that a solution will have to come. According to Dirk Lauwaert, the moderns have been obsessed with their anxiety of mixing and multiplication, and with their urge for purity.⁶²¹ If this is true, all that remains for us to do now is to unlearn how to be modern in that specific sense of the term.

One more time, I want to comment briefly on the white rag hanging on the railing. Tied in a loop, it symbolizes a knot that requires further disentangling toward an eventual dénouement. But this handkerchief simultaneously looks like a scarf hanging around one's neck, or a sash. In the chapter "Slashing Toward Diaspora," as published in *American Exposures* (2005), Louis Kaplan established a connection between the

slash and the sash, in the sense that, for him, the slash has the potential to transform into a sash. Through its circular shape, which allows it to take on multifarious forms, the sash in his view is the element that “announces the formation of community.”⁶²² Likewise, for him, the sash embodies the name of this community formation, which he identifies as a hybrid diaspora and which through—or regardless of—its immense diversity gives rise to the invention of a communal way of living. The concrete form of the sash that Kaplan had in mind is that of a closed ring, a festive ribbon with tassels. As I argue below in this chapter, however, the dirty rag in *Cod Fisher, Dover* may also recall other uses of the sash in the channel waters, where the utopia of connectedness was certainly within reach, even though it failed to materialize, for the time being at least.

The St. Andrew’s Cross is also a multiplication sign. Let us then engage in multiplication and start with imagining that the cross is multiplied by four, until it transforms into a hashtag (#). For Jeff Scheible, the hashtag characterizes how, in today’s world, the “horizontal of human languages” interacts simultaneously with “the verticality of computer languages.”⁶²³ In his view, the intersecting horizontal and vertical lines of the hashtag symbol visualize this very condition. The hashtag references an everyday reality within which “an overwhelming number of Internet users know how to use the mark.” Simultaneously, however, it refers to computational processes that remain largely invisible. This is the case because, for many internet users, these very processes are simply too difficult to understand—or at least they are not deemed worthy of the time needed to understand them.

What is too easily forgotten by such users of the hashtag, as argued by Scheible, is that the sign’s surface image (its *scripton*) permanently interacts with the sign’s *texton* or underlying digital code, which, for its part, is inevitably ideologically inscribed.⁶²⁴ This, as he warned his readers, we should never forget. Any type of digital text always contains “an added, ‘deep’ dimension of code” inscribed “*within*” it. This is what differentiates the digital text most from the printed pages of the old days. For Scheible, the hashtag, more than any other punctuation mark, has made this clear in today’s world. As such, it has become a “pure reflection of ideology.”⁶²⁵ According to him, we can therefore also read the hashtag as a warning sign of its own, signaling the very danger that it performs in the context of an Instagram or Twitter message, which is to obliterate this inevitable and intrinsic interaction between deep dimension and superficial surface.

The hashtag is therefore a meta sign, which can bring to light the darkest operations that it can perform. For Scheible, this comes with an advantage. Since we can become aware of this, we can decide to multiply the hashtag into a new semiotic lattice. It departs from the following

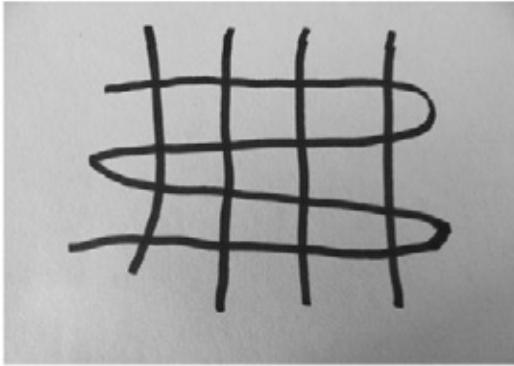


Figure 28. Semiotic lattice

Fig. 10.6.

Reproduced by permission from Jeff Scheible, *Digital Shift. The Cultural Logic of Punctuation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), fig. 28, "Semiotic lattice." © Jeff Scheible.

combination: "(###)," and thus comes to counter the harmful "logic" of "binary" and divisive "suppositions."⁶²⁶ Scheible has structured this newly proposed lattice as a range of four vertical lines intersected by four horizontal lines that weave their way through the vertical lines in the form of a snake. (fig. 10.6) At the end of his book, he kindly encouraged his readers to deform the traditional semiotic square in his wake: "I invite you, the reader, to draw in it and use it to visualize the dynamics of punctuation marks."⁶²⁷ Scheible's suggestion is one I have taken to heart. In response to the range of options he provided for doing so, I tried to answer the following of his questions: "Is the grid itself punctuation, mapping out nonsemantic relations of thought?"

Eric de Bruyn's insightful study of how constellations of lines can map out various non-semantic relations has been of tremendous help. Building on the influential analyses of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, De Bruyn has made a distinction between two types of "segmentary" lines.⁶²⁸ Both types involve lines that mark boundaries and delineate contours. Yet one type, the one that makes the territorial area become measurable, is "rigid," whereas the second one is the "supple" line—even though it is entangled within the metric dimension of the rigid linear pattern.⁶²⁹ These lines, more fluid in shape, "coexist with" the rigid lines. They also "cross over into" them, thus creating a "micropolitical realm of 'fine segmentations.'" Thus, these supple lines "deterritorialize" the "totalized space of rigid segmentation" at its angles or interstices. Placed on Scheible's new semiotic lattice, the rigid lines correspond to the vertical ones, and the curved horizontal lines to the supple ones. Connected to the situation in the channel waters as mapped out above, the vertical lines correspond to the fixed link, and the horizontal lines represent the various ferry crossings. (see Plate 24)

There is more. As specified by Deleuze and Guattari, there is always a third line that might enter the game: the already discussed line of flight. De Bruyn has connected this dynamic line to Paul Klee's "active line," which is a mobile, free line taking the form of an arabesque, and which can easily be accompanied by a wide range of complementary lines.⁶³⁰ Before developing the arabesque's imaginative potential further, let us connect this maze of lines back to Calais. For there is a striking resemblance between this scheme and how Leavers lace is fabricated. In its exhibition spaces, the *Cité Dentelle Mode* shows various videos, one of which is of importance. This video explains to viewers how the tissue is woven. On a Leavers machine, between eight thousand and ten thousand threads need to be attached to obtain the fine quality typical of Calais lace. The crossing of threads on the machines' beams, meaning the specific way a thread is caught by another thread, is essential because it accounts for the lace's ultimate design and various motifs. I would like to invite the reader to observe my gouache painting of the video still that explains how this magic of weaving on a Leavers loom works (30#).

*

On a Leavers machine, the weaver stretches four types of thread. First, there are the weft threads, which are always positioned parallel to each other. In doodle 30#, there are four (the vertical lines). Secondly, there are the warp threads, which either twist with the bobbin around one weft thread or continue transversally to the next, parallel weft thread to form a transparent ground net. In the example given, a warp thread encircles (like a snake), from top to bottom, four times the left weft thread before it continues to encircle the second one twice. Then there are, thirdly, the gimp threads. They form the patterns, and in the present case, they do so by encircling, first (again from top to bottom), five times three weft threads. Finally, the liner goes around the thus created motif and outlines the pattern to make it stand out visually from the ground net: it is the large circle in the drawn example, which separates the pattern from the fourth weft thread on the right.

The correspondence between Scheible's semiotic lattice and the Leavers drawing scheme is quite striking. Technically, one may reread the scheme now as a combination of weft and gimp threads. As these supple lines weave their way around the straight ones, they suggest an active, linear development of lines of flight. According to Deleuze and Guattari, lines of flight have "neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination."⁶³¹ Since the line of flight is a processual "line of becoming," it only has "a middle." It is a line that is not stable as it has no coordinates and "does not go from one point to

another.”⁶³² The line of flight “runs *between points*.” It thus establishes a vital “*correspondence of lines*.”⁶³³ This correspondence of lines, I argue, while building on Scheible’s suggestion that the new lattice connects to non-semantic relations, reveals an entirely different underlying reality, even if an equally obscure one—yet, this time, generative of new life. It is this matrixial reality that, according to Peter Sloterdijk, only shows itself at the surface in terms of foam.

Spheres III reads like a long, speculative analysis of the question whether foam is “the third factor through which binary ideology could be overcome.”⁶³⁴ Sloterdijk takes a similar point of departure as Scheible when arguing with Richard Saul Wurman that we—“denizens of the age of information”—presently see “a tidal wave of unrelated, growing data formed in bits and bytes” coming our way.⁶³⁵ These data, for Wurman, take the shape of “an unorganized, uncontrolled, incoherent cacophony of foam.”⁶³⁶ Sloterdijk, like Wurman, is not exactly an optimist. His *Spheres* trilogy sketches a dim image of contemporary reality. Over the past 2,500 years, according to Sloterdijk, humanity has found itself under the spell of ever-expanding globes, until it ended up living in a fully globalized globe that exploded, like a bubble, into foam.

Although, we believe to be happily globalized on what we presume to be a solid earthly planet, for Sloterdijk we have already entered the era of foam—under the ominous spell of ecological and immunological disasters. As a result, and since we have no choice left, he proposed to give a positive reading of the foam metaphor. Foams, intrinsically marked by continuous “stirring,” for Sloterdijk represent our shared “co-fragility” in this world.⁶³⁷ Foam, in its chemical composition, is a “co-fragile system in which a maximum of interdependence has been achieved.” Therefore, when we want to build a story that deals with immanently growing spaces of inclusion, according to him, we need to refer to the processual dynamic of foam formation as its empty, initial form. As a result, Sloterdijk is convinced that the twenty-first century will be the “century of foam.”⁶³⁸

Concretely, this means that present-day societies will need to opt for a way of life that resembles *being-in-foam*.⁶³⁹ Every point in the foam, in Sloterdijk’s view, offers glimpses of the bordering ones, but never is a comprehensive view available. Present-day peoples, to more peacefully live together on this planet, will have to invent a “more fluid, hybrid, permeable and promiscuous constitution” of their “societies” than those that we have known until now.⁶⁴⁰ For further explanation of the thought-image how foam is generative not only of form but also of life itself, Sloterdijk referred to Hesiod’s tale, from around 700 BC, of the birth of Aphrodite as the result of the castration of the Titan Uranus. Uranus’s genitals, when thrown on the waves, generated a fertile, white foam out of which “beautiful, attractive and perfect things” came to see

the light of day.⁶⁴¹ Aphrodite symbolizes love and solidarity. As pointed out by Sloterdijk, in the ancient Indian myths, the deities stir up the milky world of the ocean into foam to produce the nectar of immortality or the elixir of deathlessness.⁶⁴²

This leads the discussion back to Calais. In the spring of 2009, the city of Calais gave a commission to the artist Maria Dompè to cover the building of the about-to-open *Cité Dentelle Mode* in colorful bands of lace. (fig. 10.7) For *La mer-La dentelle, La dentelle-La mer* [*The sea-The lace, The lace-The sea*], as the installation was baptized, Dompè selected hues ranging a wide variety of blues and deep purple, based on a dominant indigo. Like a huge tidal wave overflowing the new construction, the lace disseminated itself, as it were, into the public space. Here, the selected color palette for the fabric established quite literally the connection between how, at transitional moments of day and night, the hue of the sky in Calais merges with the reflections of the water. As may be observed from an installation view of his 2019 exhibition at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Bruno Serralongue's *Calais* series contains numerous large and small photographs bathing in a purplish or bluish atmosphere, taken around morning or evening twilight. (fig. 10.8)

People have always considered purple—that intermingling of red and blue, possibly lightened up by mixing in some white—as the noblest of all colors.⁶⁴³ In classical antiquity, in Scandinavian myth, as well as in the Old Testament, the activity of spinning on the distaff has been a motif meant to visualize what takes place invisibly inside a woman's womb: the growing of new life.⁶⁴⁴ From Christianity on, this force has made itself felt through the figure of Mary, who is reported to have been spinning purple wool at the time of Annunciation and who wove the curtain of the temple. Purple thus becomes the color that symbolizes the transition from an invisible God toward a God who wishes to humble himself by being born in the visibility of human flesh. Would it be a coincidence, then, that one of the concluding sentences of Fatou Diomé's *The Belly of the Atlantic* is: "I prefer mauve, that temperate colour, a mix of African red heat and cold European blue."⁶⁴⁵

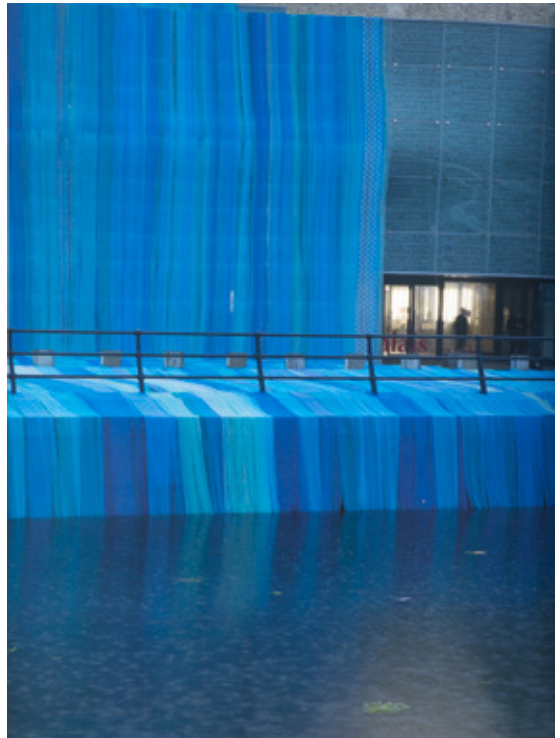


Fig. 10.7.

Reproduced by permission from Maria Dompè, *La mer-La dentelle, La dentelle-La mer* [*The sea-The lace, The lace-The sea*], Calais, Museum for Lace and Fashion, 2009, 102. Exhibition catalogue. Installation view. © Maria Dompè (www.mariadompe.com).



Fig. 10.8.

Bruno Serralongue, Agence France-Presse, Les Habitants [The Residents], Calais, témoigner de la «jungle» [Calais, Testimonies from the "Jungle"]. Installation view, at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2019) of *Passer en Angleterre, Accès terminal transmanche, Calais, juillet 2007* [Moving to England, Cross-Channel Terminal Access, Calais, July 2007], Ilfochrome mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 125×158 cm; *Feu de camp, Calais, décembre 2008* [Campfire, Calais, December 2008], Ilfochrome mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame,

51×63 cm; *Groupe d'hommes 2, Calais, décembre 2008* [Group of Men 2, Calais, December 2008], Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame, 126×157 cm; Bruno Serralongue, *Chemin à l'aube 1, Calais, juillet 2006* [Path at Dawn 1, Calais, July 2006], 126×157 cm, Inkjet print mounted on aluminum, Plexiglas frame; *Risky Lines*, 2006, 80 color photographs printed on adhesive paper, each photograph 18×27 cm, total dimension 92×473 cm. © Bruno Serralongue. Courtesy Centre Georges Pompidou.

Purple, however, as John Akomfrah reminded us, is also the color that has come to symbolize (more negatively) human domination of natural habitats.⁶⁴⁶ Yet more powerfully, perhaps, purple is the color of the substance that the murex snail secretes when it senses danger or feels threatened. I want to keep holding on to this warning potential from the animal world, to what I imagine to be the snail's attempts to neutralize symbolic purple with real, material purple. This dark, slightly smudgy purple allows us to stay in the imaginative realm of Barthes's Neutral. That is also why I used yak wool in this very color to compose the transversal patterns spread out on the nautical chart of the English Channel. (see Plate 24) Although I must add that I also want these threads to refer to the dark brown tints of chorda filum or sea lace, algae which typically grow in the North Sea waters. They are also named mermaid's tresses, dead man's rope, or mermaid's fishing line.

Tim Ingold is the one who has indicated most insightfully how to conceive of this type of transversal "between-ness."⁶⁴⁷ He did so by building on Hannah Arendt's emphasis for the need to create an intangible, subjective "between" that can relate people and bind them together—a "web" of human relationships.⁶⁴⁸ According to Ingold, the maturation process of these relationships, which he defined elsewhere in terms of kinships, are "generated in *midstreaming*."⁶⁴⁹ Ingold used the example of a ferryman who crosses a river with his boat to explain what he meant. The waters of the river, he wrote, flow "*in-between*" its banks.⁶⁵⁰ They never flow from bank to bank. As a result, they inevitably separate both banks. When, by contrast, we join the ferryman in rowing across the river, "between" takes on a resolutely different meaning: it becomes a state of being in "a transitory moment of the passage," "in the midst" of "a liminal space."

When we board a ferry, we behave like the ferryman, who "joins his life with the river, submitting in every crossing to its flow." This liminal space, midstream, is yet "un-destined." For Ingold, this very space full of potentialities is the model for a space of "becoming of persons and things within the midstream of correspondence": "the labyrinth."⁶⁵¹ Just like for Roland Barthes, for Ingold the voice through which the lines of correspondence will eventually speak is that of the "voice of the middle." What is more, in the "immanent life lived midstream," subjects and objects have been replaced by "verbs": humans are busy "humaning," or "humanifying." Ingold therewith encouraged his readers to see lines as if they were persons, as "kinspersons," interrelated through a linear "mesh" thanks to which they "*attend* to one another."⁶⁵²

According to Ingold, this linear meshwork, to be successful, is continuously embedded in "a process of correspondence," meant to establish an "ecology of correspondence."⁶⁵³ Correspondence means "answering and being answered to."⁶⁵⁴ It involves a "responsiveness" that goes

hand in hand with taking up responsibilities. Durable systems of law and ethics, in his view, are founded on the correspondences established midstream. They are the codification of a shared responsibility, which involves complying with rights and obligations that follow from it. This collective responsibility is historical. What humans are is what they have made of themselves. Ingold drew on an “oceanic metaphor” to sustain his argument.⁶⁵⁵ Building on Marcel Mauss’s influential *Essay on the Gift* (1925), Ingold suggested that, to generate more successful forms of communal life, human beings should behave more like “*octopuses and anemones in the sea.*” Whenever they need to resist heavy currents that would otherwise sweep them asunder, they send out tendrils that they can bind to those of others. They hang on to one another without aggregating or fusing. They only “interpenetrate” with the constructive intention that their “many tendrils and tentacles interweave to form a boundless and ever-extending meshwork.”

I will return to the octopus-anemone metaphor in due course. For Ingold, this connection meshwork provides an extremely powerful metaphor, provided it is well used. Interpenetration can become a durable condition if the gift of becoming interwoven is reciprocated by a counter-gift, so the relationship can endure and lives really are bound and drawn together. For when you “draw a line of flight,” Deleuze and Guattari argued, “there still is a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions.”⁶⁵⁶ How then to ensure that a line of flight can indeed be a line of escape, or a “line of resistance,” as Eric de Bruyn had it?⁶⁵⁷ In Javier Mariás’s novel *Berta Isla*, the main protagonist-narrator, Berta Isla, ponders her life as follows: “sometimes you have to tie a knot very tightly before you dare untie it, if it comes to that.”⁶⁵⁸

*

In Brexit-era Calais, things have come to this dire point. Here, the weaving metaphor is of help for imagining lines of escape, lines of resistance. On ancient Greek looms, which were designed to stand upright, the lower rod that both held and weighted the warp threads was named *kairos*.⁶⁵⁹ Building on the work of Richard Broxton Onians, Barbara Baert used this deep phonetic relationship between weaving jargon and the god Kairos to elaborate further how “the act of weaving is an act of cosmogony and procreation.”⁶⁶⁰ Kairos is the one who creates an opening and symbolizes “‘opportunity,’ like the loophole or the flight forwards.”⁶⁶¹ The action of the god Kairos is analogous to the action of the weft on the warp: as the shuttle needs to make its passage through the warp, it

is in search of “openings.”⁶⁶² Since ancient times, the action of weaving through the warp threads therewith reflects “the human person’s fate, the length of the threads representing the duration of time.” Kairos *finds* the perfect intersection in the knot opportune for intervention, and change. It is he who senses the only possible occasion for the favorable “*Wendepunkt*” to manifest itself.⁶⁶³

Kairos, who symbolizes “cosmic perfection,” determines how exactly new connections and correspondences will be established. In any case, the warp threads are “the *axes mundi*,” and it is a matter of weaving the weft threads optimally through it.⁶⁶⁴ If, at one point, the need arises to disentangle a knot, the threads need to be cut through at certain points. This may be an opportunity. “Cutting” may then be “compared to birth”: to the cutting of the umbilical cord. The result will be a genesis of “hems and fringes,” which should not be considered “neutral *loci*: they embody the transit and the most magical of powers — *dynamis* (δύναμις) — accumulated in the edges.” The hem’s materiality embodies the vital principle. The hem “delimits and constitutes a transition. It is a liminal zone. Its fringes vibrate and come to life, so that an association is established with vegetation and growth.”

On the chart of the English Channel, I have therefore spread out the ends of the threads (I imagined them to be mermaids’ tresses) that I have woven on a basic loom with a wooden shuttle in yak wool of a dark purple color in four directions—as if they were fringes of hems, about to be cut open. (Plates 25–26) With this, I want to express the hope that a *kairologically* more favorable connection might soon be established between the two banks of the English Channel. The composition takes on the shape of a central tangle with four edges (hems) whose curves develop in the shape of arabesques. Thus, a pattern of linear connections becomes visible, forming a superimposed composition. In Vilém Flusser’s prescient view, a combination of line—which represents a “historical” being-in-the-world—and surface—which implies an “unhistorical” being-in-the-world—results in a radically new structure that involves a “posthistorical” being-in-the-world.⁶⁶⁵

What this maze loses in linearity and its potential for being read as a text, it gains in visual potential of being seen in terms of an image. For Flusser, the future is to be found in what he calls “*imaginal thought*.”⁶⁶⁶ This is a thinking that has “absorbed” and integrated both “linear” (historical) and “surface” (unhistorical) thought. It is through imaginal thought that humans will be capable of transforming concepts into “objects” that, in their turn, can be conjoined in a creative relationship to reality, which allows for a rediscovery of that same reality in a different way. Flusser was optimistic. Should this indeed materialize, no less than a “new civilization” might be the outcome.⁶⁶⁷ This is a bet, however, that will not be won automatically. Imaginal thinking may fail, and this could

lead to “a generalized depoliticization, deactivation, and alienation of humankind.”⁶⁶⁸ From this grim perspective, consumer society would be generally vindictive, together with the totalitarianism of the mass media.

But there is an alternative possibility for imaginal thinking to succeed. In this version, the knot may open itself up somehow, or its edges may fan out in various new directions. This would create a situation within which mankind consciously assumes the reality of the new structure created. In such a world, “science would have recourse to imaginal models.” In addition, art, in this reality, would “no longer work at things (‘oeuvres’), but would propose models.” Politics, finally, would focus on the elaboration of “manipulable hierarchies of models of behavior.” All of this, Flusser was the first to confess when he wrote these lines in 1973, is utopian. But, he added, it is not fantastical, since all the ingredients for the creation of such a reality are readily available. They exist, and it only “depends on each one of us which sort of posthistorical future there will be.” Let us observe in greater detail the structure created on the chart. Suddenly, it doesn’t seem coincidental at all that Sylvain George marked in his reflection on John Yihaish’s notebook that it is filled with drawn arabesques.⁶⁶⁹ In poem number V of the Haggard, George integrated the following lines:

Fine and elegant arabesques,
Of an abandoned diary,
By an author of talent,
Tracing his lines of flight,
Far from the nascent day,
And the story’s given.⁶⁷⁰

Besides cutting the tangle at the favorable intersection for doing so, the arabesque motifs provide a second option, which consists of picking up one of the hems and removing the knot as a whole—like destroying a spider’s web all at once.⁶⁷¹ To color and substantiate his proposal to cancel the semiotic square, Jeff Scheible made reference to a common legal practice in ancient Rome. When a law or other type of legal document needed to be officially canceled and annulled, the civil servants (i.e. notaries or *tabelliones*) employed in the chancery would draw a lattice with crisscrossing lines over the document.⁶⁷² Although the canceled text remained legible underneath the lattice that came to erase it, the file upon which the mark was superimposed was effectively and irreversibly deleted. Only after this act of “canceling” or crossing out could the new law be written.

Referring to Cornelia Vismann’s insights, Scheible pointed out an interesting paradox: it is by means of obliteration that the very thing erased ultimately becomes fully legible.⁶⁷³ If the lattice worked

properly, then, it would make the canceled document ultra-legible before simultaneously accounting for its full disappearance. It was this very operation that allowed for a clean document to emerge publicly, which in turn established a new written law that could subsequently be enacted. The latticed prescript thus authenticated the new law. According to Vismann, this newly written law therewith put an end to all previous, chaotic babbling of voices and established a new, stable “zone of silence.” To substantiate the argument, she reproduced in her book the conventional sign for “scripsi” (Latin for “I have written”).⁶⁷⁴ (fig. 10.9) This age-old abbreviation delivers a figure that displays a striking resemblance to the above-discussed drawing of how Leavers lace is woven (30#).

RADIX – SOLDI		411	SOLDI – SEXTANS	
✓	radix		qβ	<i>a soldi</i> XVI p.
℥	Recipe (abbr. med.) XV		η	<i>soldi</i> XVI p.
♄	Saturni [signum] XIV f.		♄	<i>soldi</i> XIX
♏	Scorpio		☉	Solis [signum] XIVf.
scripsi	XIII m.		☉	<i>segno della staffetta</i> (im Briefe) XV f.

Fig. 10.9.

Detail from page 411 from Adriano Cappelli, *Lexicon abbreviatarum*, first published in 1899, as freely available from Cappelli Online, <https://www.adfontes.uzh.ch/en/ressourcen/abkuerzungen/cappelli-online?characters=scripsi&category=&transcription=&language=> (accessed December 9, 2020).

What is most elementary within this entire process is the act of crossing out. Radical deletion is a *conditio sine qua non* for producing and establishing a new symbolic order of the law. “The cancelled signs,” according to Vismann, “are *signifiants barrés*” [barred signifiers].⁶⁷⁵ Through the act of canceling, the deleted text is reduced to a no longer relevant “*ur-text*.”⁶⁷⁶ Although it does not literally become unreadable, it does become symbolically illegible, for the urtext has become null and void. The act of cancellation therewith creates a “legal twilight zone,” which “opens on to a real that resides behind the threshold” of this very twilight zone.⁶⁷⁷ In other words, the lattice contains a transcendental potential. However paradoxical this may seem, it *weaves* in the sense that it metaphorically suggests the possibility of a complete reset. A comparison with coastal sailing navigation is useful here. Any set course on a yacht will likely depart from a sufficiently confident fix. But to keep this course, a rapid plotting further positions is needed.

With a pencil, the navigator will draw intercepting position lines on a sea chart. This will generate intermediate estimated positions ($\square EP$) along the trajectory to follow. The vessel will find itself somewhere inside a cocked hat that marks the triangular zone on the chart where three position lines (determined by plotting three bearings) intersect. The navigator could also work with calculating running fixes ($\otimes RFix$).⁶⁷⁸ Determining reliable cross bearings through dead reckoning—finding approximate positions by projecting an ordered course and speed of advance from a known position—may be lifesaving. This presupposes drawing a few lines on the chart. Fancy penciling in tidal vectors ($\triangle EP$), a calculation of leeway, ground track lines and course steered lines. Certainly, then, before reaching the next harbor or anchoring-ground, the chart looks like a page in a notebook containing a crisscross of multiplied lines and other marks—as if it were a mesh. Once moored up or lying to an anchor, this lattice (the result of all the plotted lines tracing the past journey) must be carefully erased so as to start all over again for the next trip.

In a similar vein, a complete reset urgently imposes itself for the entire navigation zone of the Strait of Dover and its adjacent lands. How exactly this reduction of complexity and opening of new possibilities will be performed will be decisive for the quality of life on both sides of the English Channel. In 2021, we appear to find ourselves far from home. According to Abby Innes, for the Leave camp no less has been at stake than the complete obliteration of the postwar democratic welfare state, which, in previous decades of neoliberal government policies, has already been “cut and asset-stripped to the bone.”⁶⁷⁹ Similarly, Innes argued that “to sustain a cabinet of climate change denying neoliberal hardliners who reject the rule of law [...] is the very height of folly.”

The only possible outcome of such a policy, if successful, is the “constitutional nihilism” of Trump or a previously unseen European variant of the Chile of Pinochet. For those who still feel tempted to minimize the reality of that scenario, it suffices to consult Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) to no longer wish for such a disaster. So how *are* we going to face, and eventually *cancel*, the monsters? To develop this point, let us turn to a slightly lighter note. In 1855, Aimé Thomé de Gamond effected three inspection visits of the channel seabed with the intention of obtaining geological evidence that the construction of an underwater tunnel bored from the bottom’s chalk would be possible. His designs inspired artists to produce fascinating drawings of the channel’s seabed, as I was able to witness in the entrance hall of Calais’s *Le Meurice* hotel, where I stayed on one of my research visits to the adjacent fine arts museum (24#).

Thomé’s preparations for the dives were meticulous, and his recollections from them are a recommendable read, as they demonstrate

both the extraordinary courage and the sheer recklessness of his undertaking.⁶⁸⁰ For the descent, which he always performed soberly after a solid dose of black coffee, he carried eighty kilograms of black pebble stones, dispersed over the various parts of his body. To facilitate the ascent, and for buoyancy, he wrapped ten pigs' bladders around his waist. On his head, he put a cotton cap stuffed with linen and held together by a chin strap. This sash also kept together two large buttered compresses, which were positioned on his ears that were filled up with lint mixed with butter. He filled his mouth with olive oil, so that he could expel air without water being forced into his lungs, and as such, was able to reach depths of nearly thirty-three meters.

During his third and last dive, Thomé was violently attacked by a group of predatory fish, most likely conger eels, which bit him in the arms, legs, and chin.⁶⁸¹ For a brief instant, he recalled, it seemed as if these animals had tried to drag him toward the bottom. His throat, luckily, was protected by the thick handkerchief. When Thomé gave the one fish that was biting him the most violently a big blow, he let loose immediately. He managed to keep his mouth closed despite the fear of death, so he made it up again after having been underwater for fifty-two seconds. His companions, who had to pull hard on the safety rope to rescue him, saw the “monsters” swimming away.⁶⁸² Thomé counted five injuries, caused by the sharp teeth of these horrible would-be sharks, as if someone had pushed forks into his skin.⁶⁸³ He concluded that he had been attacked by five fish at the same time. Thomé then went on to explain that, to recover from his ordeal as well as from his vision troubled by the extreme fatigue of the experience, he turned on his back in the seawater with his face turned up to the sky. While his lungs were recovering, he opened his arms and legs in the form of a St. Andrew's cross.

Thomé's tale is of an apotropaic character. The position he spontaneously adopted on the water's surface is arguably that of the most ancient representational motif known to have existed at least since the early Stone Age: that of the so-called birth symbol. (fig. 10.10) This visual motif can be characterized as a diamond-shaped figure with projecting arms and legs. The central lozenge often further materializes as a



Fig. 10.10. Purse for personal adornment, Central Asia, Afghanistan, late twentieth century (1970–1980), glass bead and silk (beadwork; plain woven; machine-sewn), 22×12 cm. Maker unknown. From the Opekar/ Webster Collection. Collection Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto (public domain).

pregnant torso enclosing a “fetus”-like figure.⁶⁸⁴ For Paul Vandebroek, however, an interpretation of this motif that remains restricted to understanding it as the stylization of a pregnant body is too limited.⁶⁸⁵ The diamond-with-hooks depicts a collective experience, familiar to all women who have given birth and to any person who has witnessed it: of opening (up) and bending toward the outside, which metaphorically translates into a more general experience of blossoming, of coming into bloom. Although it exists in quite a few variants, my interest in the present context is mostly in the explicitly four-cornered diamond-with-protrusions, which experts also call a “flower.”⁶⁸⁶

*

Max Allen, who profoundly researched the birth symbol subject for a landmark exhibition that he made at the Museum for Textiles in Toronto (1981), has further identified the birth motif as the world’s oldest religious symbol representing an abstract depiction of “the cosmos as the Mother-of-Us-All.”⁶⁸⁷ It is the symbol of life itself. Crucially, these earliest religious practices involved the veneration of the female principle as responsible for periodic regeneration (birth-death-rebirth) as well as for the creative and fecund powers of nature. “In the beginning, God was a woman,” so Allen reminded his readers. In the symbolism of ancient Europe, as observed by Maria Gimbutas, this Great Goddess of Life and Death was intimately associated with the moon cycle.⁶⁸⁸ The birth symbol, which in the late twentieth century was still the most frequently occurring iconic motif in Eurasia and Indonesia, thus offers a woven and embroidered memory of the ancient high status of women. Although largely ignored by art historians, this symbol, according to Allen, is the female counterpart of phallic symbolism and, as such, a symbol not of male power but of life itself.

What is more, objects bearing a birth symbol often have the status of connectedness to “an essential spirit.”⁶⁸⁹ Any offense of this very spirit is sacrilege, and to ignore it leads to catastrophe. Even though textiles served as its most frequent carrier, especially rugs, the birth symbol has figured prominently on other supports as well. A fine example of the festive Flemish Twelfth cake in this very shape is found in Peter Snijers’s painting *Aquarius* (1727). (fig. 10.11) The Catholic tradition considers the holy water blessed on the vigil of Epiphany, mixed with exorcised salt, to be the most potent. Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season and announces the decisive beginning of a new year-cycle. The feast builds on fertility ritual celebrations traced back to the Neolithic era. In Bulgaria, a variant of this persists, during which the three eldest women of the family plea for future prosperity by thrice raising the trough containing the sacred New Year’s bread dough.⁶⁹⁰



Fig. 10.11.
Peter Snijers, *Aquarius*,
1727, inv. no. 5103, oil
on canvas, 84×68 cm.
Antwerp, Royal Museum of
Fine Arts (CCO).

Traditional societies understand the Great Goddess of Life, Death, and Regeneration represented through this motif to be the goddess of destiny, who weaves the web of life and spins the threads of fate—not only the fate of humans but also of the world. Since time immemorial, various animals have been associated with the fertility goddess or the mother goddess. Her attributes have been, among other things, splitting eggs and snakes—water snakes for their obvious association with the regenerative force of water. Even if the goddess has often been depicted accompanied by her associate the primeval serpent, her principal animal has always been the dog—the howler by night, barking at the moon.⁶⁹¹ In this capacity of protector of the nightmarish side of the moon goddess (whom the Greeks came to identify as Hecate), the dog was considered dangerous, nocturnal, and ferocious-looking. Given their menacing powers and intimate knowledge of evil forces,

however, dogs at the same time became protectors against them (an old Macedonian belief sees them as the enemies of vampires, and northern Europeans, especially Germans, have venerated corn spirits in the shape of dogs or wolves for centuries).

Furthermore, the goddess as life-giver found one of her most fascinating animal epiphanies in the toad.⁶⁹² Neolithic humans held toads responsible for causing pregnancy: they thought them capable of crawling into a woman's womb, and for that matter also of causing it to travel or wander through the lower part of the female body. Visually, these representations take the shape of a two-month human fetus, which indeed can easily be assimilated to the form of a toad. When we look back at Allan Sekula's *Boy on abandoned waterfront, Boulogne* while bearing this knowledge in mind, it is striking how much his bulging eyes resemble those of a frog (32). There is more that can be linked to this same photograph. Numerous antique Greek sources make mention of the bee as a symbol of regeneration, most probably for its antennae that resemble horns, and for its wings that take the form of a lunar crescent.⁶⁹³ Both these elements are present in the sci-fi creature represented on the boy's T-shirt, which sheds, once again, a very different light on this apparently rather documentary image.

Another example involves Neolithic peasants, who venerated the deer as a double of the Goddess of Regeneration in her capacity as moon goddess. They did so in connection to the cycle of regeneration and growth of its antlers. Their semicircular curve has generated circular-shaped representations from that period, the waxing antlers intermingling with crescent moons that resemble snakes. In connection to the birth symbol, it is now relevant to bring in Max Allen's reference to the fact that birth symbols in Turkmen carpet patterns are believed to represent "the double-headed *sun bird*," and that their makers commonly name them "*ram's horns*" as well.⁶⁹⁴ Possibly this provides a speculative explanation of why Allan Sekula at one point purchased a photograph of a raw shofar for his *The Dockers' Museum* collection.⁶⁹⁵ (fig. 10.12)

One may recognize in its elegant form a slash turned into a spiral. The spiral is a figure to which Roland Barthes also referred in the concluding lines of his last class (on February 23, 1980). Just after having quoted Kafka that you need to "destroy yourself [...] in order to make yourself into that which you are," he continued that, following this thought would imply engaging with "the path of the spiral marked out."⁶⁹⁶ In the Jewish ceremonial tradition, the shofar has been used both as a sign of victory and of warning. This double meaning hardly comes as a surprise, of course. Through the example of the visual motif of the Salomonic columns (popular during the Baroque era), Paul Vandebroek has brought to mind how two diametrically opposed spirals, twisting in the opposite direction, placed next to each other, embody a fundamental sense



Fig. 10.12. Arie Meiseles (copyright holder and rights status unknown), *Manufacture of Shofar-2, Raw Shofar* [as indicated on backside of photograph], black-and-white photograph, 1960s, 16.8×22.2 cm. © Keystone. "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).

of paradox inherent to “primordial energy” and “the generation of the cosmos.”⁶⁹⁷ The shape of the birth symbol is equally marked by this insoluble tension between concave and convex lines.

Bearing in mind that the islanders of Sumba, again following Allen’s report on the subject, identify the birth symbol with “lizards” or “frogs,” this allows a further connection to the abovementioned fetus-as-toad shape.⁶⁹⁸ Fish that turned into ferocious water snakes attacked Thomé de Gamond during his Sisyphean efforts to explore the channel’s soil. Still, his risky undertaking succeeded in proving, for the first time, the presence of the same Weald clay on each side of the Strait of Dover, and this would provide the basis for all planning pertaining to the construction of the underwater tunnel.⁶⁹⁹ In the final years of the past millennium, the construction of the fixed link eventually became a reality. Thomé, who neglected all warnings from nature to leave her in peace, could still rescue himself from the monsters and afterward warm up his body and chest in the clear sunlight. But there is a direct connection between him and, nearly two centuries later, the fatal drowning of Niknam Masoud. The press photograph of his corpse turned face down on that rescue platform will likely continue to haunt our collective thoughts as a panic sign for a long time to come.

Thomé, however, will not have imagined such remote future disasters. Focused as he was on his dives, he discovered more and more of the sea ground with each attempt. The seafloor itself, he reported, had a “very deep colour.”⁷⁰⁰ Thomé wrote, “*une couleur très foncée*,” so it

definitely concerned a very dark color too.⁷⁰¹ However, when the sun was shining out over the sea's surface, which happened during his first and second dives, the waters surrounding him while he was holding his breath nonetheless assumed a rather milky appearance, which endowed them a mysteriously transparent shine. Thomé esteemed that this effect was due to the numerous remains of white shells, amply strewn across the dark bed of the sea.⁷⁰² There was more to report. "I even saw spotted bodies pass with a rapid movement, and these I judged to be shoals of flat fish of the sole or skate family, disturbed by my presence."⁷⁰³ What Donald Hunt has translated as "spotted" bodies actually involved "shimmering" bodies as well [*des corps miroitants*].⁷⁰⁴

This may speak to our imagination. Soles and skate can be distinguished by their brownish spots. Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), which are typical North Sea flatfishes, have asymmetric bodies. (Plate 27) Plaice are white on their left, which is also their blind side because their eyes sit on the right side, which is marked by a smooth brown skin that comes with magnificent and distinctive orange-red spots. Since Thomé spotted so many flatfishes, he likely also found himself amid their egg cases (*Chondrichthyes*), which are small fertilized capsules containing embryos that the fishes deposit on the seafloor for further gestation. Usually, these have a rectangular shape with four projections or tendrils, called horns, at each corner. In popular language, these typically shaped cases, often also from dogfish, are called mermaid's purses.⁷⁰⁵ (fig. 10.13) The formal resemblance between a mermaid's purse, containing a newly beginning life, and the birth symbol is striking indeed. What is more, its shape is awkwardly reminiscent of the octopus or the anemone, as well as of the vertical part of a hashtag (with only two horizontal lines to be added).

"If the lattice works properly," as observed by Jeff Scheible, "it obliterates itself. The canceled document disappears."⁷⁰⁶ The empty mermaid's purse, which can occasionally be found on the beaches of southern England (and more easily in Flat Pund near Burwick on the Shetland Islands), might be seen as such a lattice that obliterated itself, and therewith made possible the genesis of new life. Seen from this perspective, the hashtag, the preeminent emblem of the digital era, becomes a very old symbol. We encounter a birth motif in its digitally transformed afterlife. Scheible suggested the following: "in reviewing the various historical trajectories of the # symbol, one could consider how it in effect writes over itself, renamed and reprogrammed again and again." Aside from its "ongoing shifting status in technological contexts," then, he acknowledged the symbol's "mysterious and debated history."⁷⁰⁷

I want to build on one final element from Scheible's analysis, which will lead me to the core matter of my conclusions. Much of the mystery surrounding the hashtag symbol has to do with the fact that some



Fig. 10.13.

Mermaid's purse, gleaned by Inne Withouck at Flat Pund, Burwick, Shetland, 2019. Author's collection. Photo by Erien Withouck.

writers have persistently claimed that the proper name for the hashtag, sometimes also called “number sign,” is actually “octothorpe.”⁷⁰⁸ Some have argued, according to Scheible, that its etymology is linked to the fact that “*thorpe* means village, and the symbol visually represents eight (*octo*) fields surrounding a village.”⁷⁰⁹ For a native speaker of Dutch, it is not strange at all to see the term *thorpe* become associated with “village,” as in this language the word *dorp* means village. The hashtag, then, may come to visualize a grid of eight zones or *thorpes*. Placed on the sea chart of the Strait of Dover, it takes on an additional meaning. The hashtag can be used to guide the imagination to the submerged settlements on the sea floor, which have been obliterated by the sea’s forces, but which can also be magnetically drawn back up to a dreamed-up surface by the purple tapestry’s pregnant powers. (see Plate 26).

That this is all but a delusion may be demonstrated as follows. In 1191, Giraldus Cambrensis reported that, following an extraordinary violent storm, several sandy shores of south Wales, which had been covered for many ages, had come to the surface again. What thus

became visible to the bare eye was a range of submerged tree trunks.⁷¹⁰ For centuries, numerous British folk references tended to link these mysterious trees to the biblical flood. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, one geologist nearing retirement shifted our perception of these, until then unloved and neglected, “Noah’s Woods” forever.⁷¹¹ That man was Clement Reid, who in 1913 published a small book, which he entitled *Submerged Forests*. As an opening illustration, Reid included a black-and-white photograph of a forest swallowed by the violent encroachments of the sea on the Cheshire coast. (fig. 10.14) He thus provided visible evidence for a major plot point of local indigenous tales told in the western parts of the British Isles across the centuries: that important parts of land were lost to the sea at one point in time. Reid put forward the hypothesis that this was also the case for the North Sea, yet he had not been able to find evidence to substantiate it. Furthermore, and strikingly, comparable magical tales are not found in the east of Britain.

Vincent Gaffney, Simon Fitch, and David Smith have argued that this might be due to a disruption of regional myth cycles by the repeated invasions of the east coast during the late Roman and early medieval periods, which led to the eventual loss of these tales.⁷¹² However, here one surely may find a solid point of connection to the colorful stories as narrated by Erasmus and Balzac: these might be examples of how Celtic culture transformed and became integrated within Christian continental ideas. Indeed, one night in September 1931, something occurred that would alter our perception of the seawaters situated east of Britain for good. The fishing trawler *Colinda*, which had sailed from Lowestoft (Britain’s most easterly point), fished a large piece of peat out of the waters near the Leman and Ower Banks in the southern North Sea, from a depth of 19–20 fathoms. Usually, the fishermen would immediately throw overboard such flotsam (also called *moorlog*) drifting in their nets, since they would consider it useless ballast.⁷¹³ Yet, this time, Skipper Pilgrim E. Lockwood, for reasons unexplained, felt impelled to inspect it with a shovel. When the shovel hit something hard, he decided to take the log of about four feet square by three feet deep inside for closer investigation. What he found in the middle of the block, upon cautiously breaking it open, was an object that he wiped clean. He then saw that it was “quite black.” This very object, miraculously retrieved from the depths of the seabed, turned out to be an elegantly shaped prehistoric artifact.

Soon after, experts identified it as a stag’s horn (actually, a red deer antler). Oval in section and carved on one margin with a range of seventeen sharp recurved barbs, its first inspectors considered it must have been a harpoon. After the British Museum declined the proposed gift, Harold Muir Evans donated it to the Castle Museum



Buried Forest seen at low water at Dove Point, on the Cheshire coast

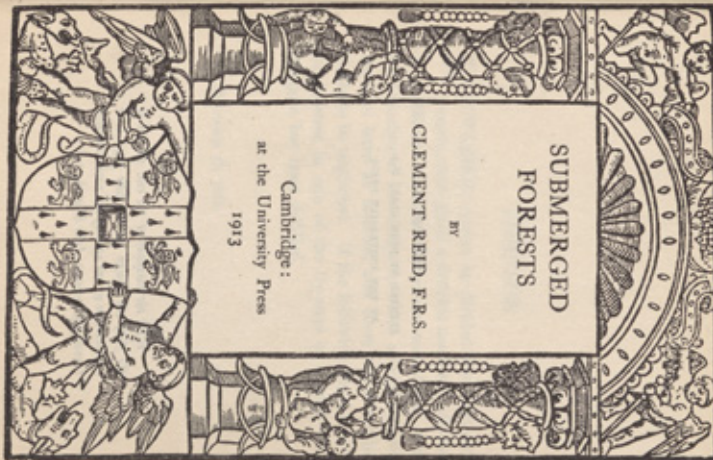
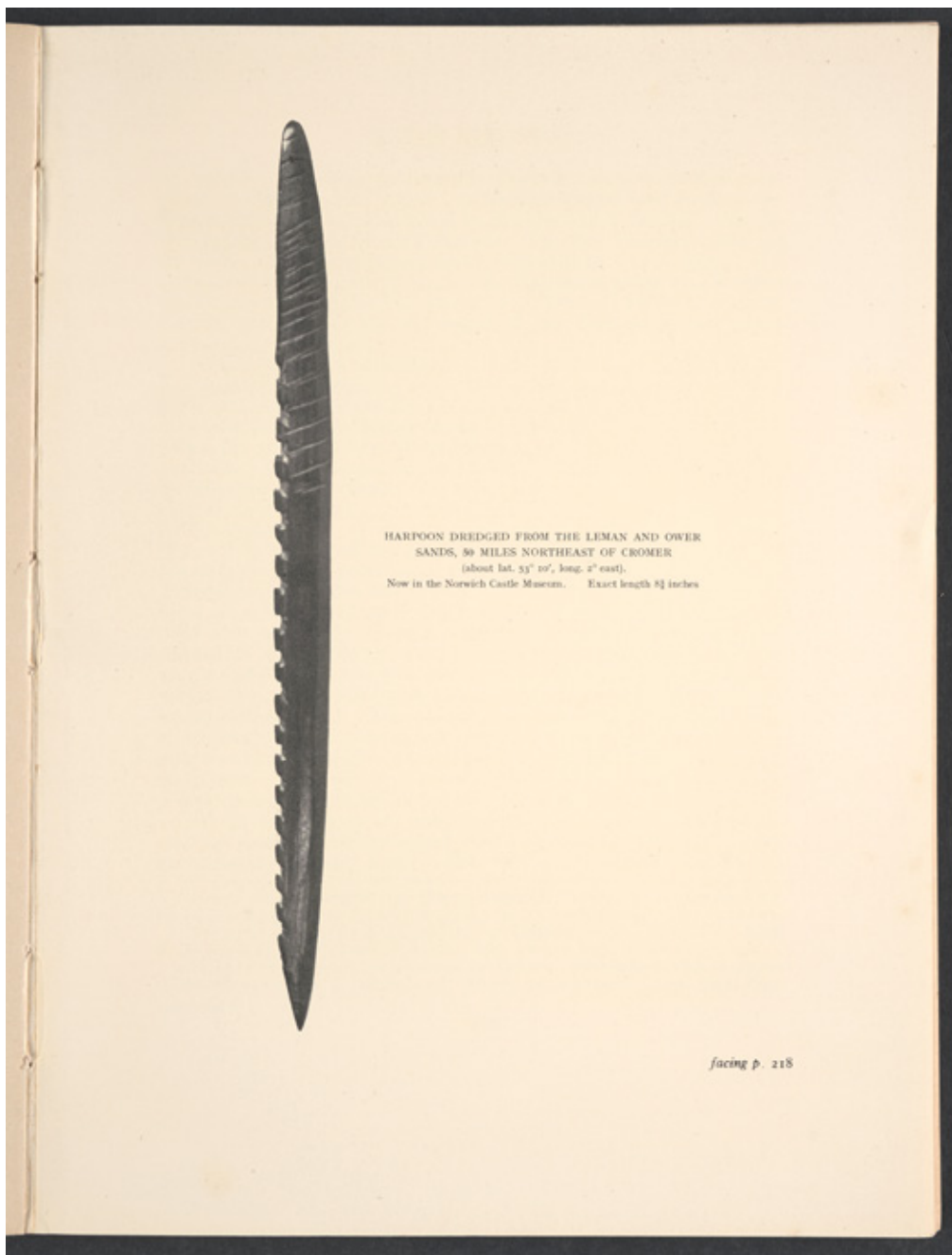


Fig. 1014.

Opening illustration from Clement Reid. *Submerged Forests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1913; entitled "Buried Forest seen at low water at Dove Point, on the Cheshire coast."

in Norwich. The museum still preserves it today at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, where I traveled on the last day of January 2020 to study and photograph it. (Plate 28) A first photograph of the so-called Colinda or Dogger harpoon was published in the June 1932 issue of the archaeological journal *Antiquity*. (fig. 10.15) Eventually, experts further identified the object—measuring overall some 21.5 cm (and the row of barbs measuring approximately 16 cm)—as rather being a bone “point” belonging to the Maglemose people, who once lived on the western coast of the Danish island of Zealand and elsewhere. These points, singly or tied together, were used as a leister, eel, or fish spear.⁷¹⁴ As for substantiating the hypothesis of how the man using this tool could have gotten there, in an area now many fathoms below the surface of the sea, the anonymous author of the short note accompanying the photograph registered soberly: “the answer to the question is that he walked across either what is now the North Sea or the English Channel.”⁷¹⁵



HARPOON DREDGED FROM THE LEMAN AND OWER
SANDS, 39 MILES NORTHEAST OF CROMER
(about lat. 55° 10', long. 2° east).
Now in the Norwich Castle Museum. Exact length 8½ inches

facing p. 218

Fig. 10.15.

First photographic illustration of the Colinda harpoon, published in *Antiquity* (June 1932): 219.

And under the oppression of the silent fog
The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers, older
Than time counted by anxious worried women
Lying awake, calculating the future,
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future,
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
The future futureless, before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending;
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,
Clangs
The bell.

T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," l:35–48, in *Four Quartets* [1943],
ed. Herman Servotte (Kapellen: Pelckmans and Baarn: Ambo, [1983]
1996), 76.

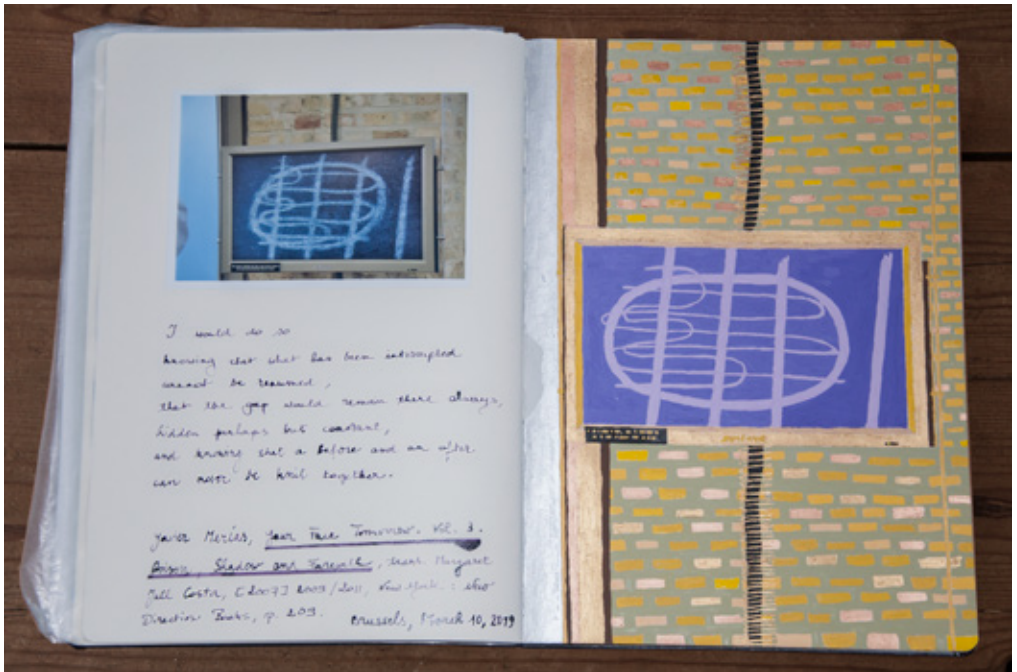


@Wissant #LaborDay #snaps #white #sand #peace #breathe #shoreline #foam

At Anchor
Pearl Diving

“I would do so knowing that what has been interrupted cannot be resumed, that the gap would remain there always, hidden perhaps but constant, and knowing that a before and an after can never be knit together.”

Javier Marías, *Your Face Tomorrow. Volume Three. Poison, Shadow and Farewell* [2007], trans. Margaret Jull Costa [2009] (New York: New Direction Books, 2011), 209.



I would do so
knowing that what has been interrupted
cannot be resumed,
that the gap would remain there always,
hidden perhaps but constant,
and knowing that a before and an after
can never be knit together.

James Merles, Dear This Tomorrow, Vol. 3.
Amber, Shadow and Sunlight, Dear Margaret
Jill Carter, Dear 73 2003/2004, Westwind: also
Dear 73, p. 203. Brussels, March 10, 2019

Failed #brexitday

#success #thread #shuttle #weave #shine #glow #alliance #solidarity

#BrexitDoodle #theneutral

The concluding short story in Ernst Bloch's *Traces* bears the title "The Pearl." It tells the legend of an Indian king, who lost a beautiful pearl. Even though he ordered the entire land to search for it, no one was able to find the gem. One day, however, the king found it back himself—"as we said, on the path of unintentionality."⁷¹⁶ Bloch used this metaphor of the pearl to teach his readers a moral lesson at the very end of his book: the pearl functions like a pair of eyeglasses. It prevents us from taking our world for granted as a monolithic unit. The pearl is "the cutter of multiplicity"—a secant agent instigating diversity. Though Bloch's description remains abstract, much can be taken from his encouragement to keep searching, in this somehow unintentional yet conscious manner, for what he elusively defined as "the goal" or the "Ultimate"—by which he understood a "hospitable Becoming."⁷¹⁷

Earlier on, Bloch recalled a story from *The Thousand and One Nights*, about the turning of fates like "a crest that breaks."⁷¹⁸ While reality appears to consist in a measure determined by a sequence of instances of good and bad luck, a point may suddenly be reached that this measure is full. No ration has apparently been exceeded, yet a formal limit has been transgressed. Then, even the smallest thing suffices to cause the measure to overflow. Bloch hints at a "qualitative kind of smallness," which may send this sign—the sign of rococo, the sign of running out, of coming to an end.⁷¹⁹ It appears "at the *end of the course*," at the very end of a journey. With the smallness of the crest that breaks, one series merely shifts to another, nothing more. There is no indication that all misfortunes have finally come to a true ending. But as a person, or a society, shifts out of one series, it may be led into another one that works better. Bloch suggested that such a turn of tides, though it leads to "somewhere almost unknown," is never far away. It lures behind the corner and is within reach, if only one wants to see its signs for what they are.

Louis Marin, who ended his essay "Frontiers of Utopia" with a recollection of this particular tale from Bloch, entitled "The Rococo of Fate," indicates that these signs of the infinitely small, of the infinitesimal, signal us the fact that we are on the verge of "entering into the possible."⁷²⁰ This narrow—*kairotic*—space-time zone of "the unfated [*Schicksallose*]," provides an opportune moment in which fate can be modified. Marin illustrated his argument by discussing the frontispiece to the 1518 edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* (the Basel edition). (fig. A.1) This fantasized representation of the island of Utopia contains an almost hidden image of a skull, mostly recognizable through one detail that stands out: the so-called "ship of teeth."⁷²¹ Here, I want to associate the toothlike shape of the Colinda spear with Holbein's *memento mori*—produced by Ambrosius in close concertation with his younger brother Hans, this other great master of a sequence of woodcuts representing the *Dance of Death* (1523–1525).⁷²² As the vessel in the Basel edition

frontispiece, with its grimly smiling range of white teeth, the Colinda spear's dark brown teeth become the present-day symbol sending us a "terrible warning"—as Marin wrote about the 1518 woodcut.⁷²³

Totalitarian powers will always attempt to recuperate utopian freedom, Marin reminded his readers. Limits will always need to be set to the state's desire for absolute power. The Utopia frontispiece, at first sight only showing an idyllic island, simultaneously makes us see the "unfigurable"—that is, impossible—"figure of Infinite Liberty." This spear, the pearl that I came to find as my *Ground Sea* journey neared its ending, made the warning sent out by Holbein, More, and their close circle—among whom, prominently, Erasmus—five hundred years ago seem topical for today's predicament. A shared belief that they will one day find *the pearl*, so Ernst Bloch wrote, endows humans collectively with the power to search and find the way forward, always already preserved within the goal itself. As we have only vague traces of this imagined ultimate better life at our disposal, there is no straight path toward achieving it. However, Bloch postulated (admittedly, again rather cryptically) that we *do* have "imprints of a Going that must still be gone into the New."⁷²⁴

The only way humans can try to discover it is by looking around "here and now, with actively set time in actively reconstructed space." He added one last sentence, which is also the concluding line to the entire book: "Only very far beyond will everything that one meets and notices be the Same." Bloch based his philosophy on a shared human belief that, however utopian, there is a better world at hand—even if it only appears within reach in a much too far away future. He urged everyone to keep working toward that collective aim. This sharply contrasts with Captain Nemo's selfish enterprise. Chapter Three of Part Two in Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*, entitled "A Pearl Worth Ten Million," opens with the Nautilus finding itself to the west of the Gulf of Mannar. There, beneath the dark waters, lay a bank of pearl oysters over twenty miles in length. From there, Captain Nemo and Dr. Aronnax embark



Fig. A.1. Woodcut of the Map of Utopia as it appears in Thomas More's *Utopia* printed by Johan Froben in Basel, March 1518. Collection Universitätsbibliothek Basel. Reprinted here under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_More_Utopia_1518_March_VTOPIAE_INSVLAE_TABVLA_\(Universit%C3%A4tsbibliothek_Basel\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_More_Utopia_1518_March_VTOPIAE_INSVLAE_TABVLA_(Universit%C3%A4tsbibliothek_Basel).jpg).

on a diving excursion at dawn, accompanied by Ned Land and Conseil. All men take a sharp blade with them, and Ned even carries an enormous harpoon. Bewildered and bewitched by the wealth of the oyster supply beneath the gentle waves of the bay, Aronnax comes to the strikingly naïve conclusion that “nature’s creative power is beyond man’s destructive bent.”⁷²⁵ This is how Nemo comes to show the group the gigantic *Tridacna*, whose financial value, as Aronnax concludes, must be inestimable.

On their return trip, they spot a local pearl diver, a poorly equipped man whom Verne personified in racist wordings. When a shark attacks the fisher, Nemo speeds to his help with his dagger. As the fisher is losing the battle, Ned in turn comes to his aid with his harpoon. They kill the shark and save the Sinhalese diver. As a supposedly generous gesture, Nemo offers the man a string of pearls that he takes out of the pocket in his diving suit. Thus, this pearl diver, “inhabitant of an oppressed country,” receives alms from a man of whom the reader knows that he is secretly accumulating immense wealth beneath the water’s surface.⁷²⁶ It is a questionable generosity that Verne is praising here through the blind admiration of his novel’s protagonist Aronnax.

To recover a huge pearl worth a fortune from the depths of the seas, or from the ruins of history, will not save humanity nor repair our ecosystems. For lack of workable solutions in view, it is a fascinating exercise to connect Bloch’s dream of a utopian, more harmonious world far beyond the present-day reality all the way back to a long-forgotten era—Neolithic times, when the Dogger Bank was the northern limit of the land surface linking Britain to the Continent. Maglemose seafarers’ coastal navigation from Denmark around what was then the North Sea gulf would have provided immediate access to northern England without having to cross a deep-water passage. Today, the Leman and Ower shoals are only twenty-five nautical miles away from the Norfolk coast.

The harpoon (or point) that was recuperated from these banks—without looking for it—certainly carries a unifying force. Its shape resembles that of a weaving shuttle. For that reason, I want to argue, it carries the metaphoric potential of a small, precious *pearl* that requires further nurturing—not in the depths of the sea, but in the here and now. During all these years of research, no object has come to embody this regenerative potential more than the Colinda spear. Looking more closely, it much resembles a comb as well. Combs and ribbed shells are a recurrent motif in Neolithic art. Pecten and scallops have been associated with the Goddess of Regeneration, and from there on with Aphrodite in antiquity, and with Melusina in the Middle Ages.⁷²⁷ As attributes of the Goddess, they symbolize a rebirth of the soul. From the comblike structure, it is but a short imaginative step back again to the weaver’s loom—that wooden device with two pointed ends holding

a bobbin, used for carrying the weft thread between the warp threads in traditional weaving.⁷²⁸ (see Plate 25)

Accordingly, the Colinda spear has enabled us to imagine how one and the same blade, once it has found its way through, can transform into a shuttle that weaves new relationships. When *tabula rasa* will thus have been created or when the obliteration of the present desperate political situation will finally have become a fact, the legibility of the very thing that has been erased will become possible again—to bring to mind Cornelia Vismann’s words once more. The focus and attention will then become turned to the sea floor itself, as a surface for reading age-old connections and a ground for building new intersections. This connection is not entirely far-fetched, when pondering as a further consideration that, in the old languages spoken around Doggerland, a firm connection existed between blade, harpoon, and shuttle. In the online version of the OED, the archaeological meaning of the entry *blade* reads as follows:

A long, narrow flint-flake, used esp. as a tool in prehistoric times [...] **blade-axe, blade-culture, blade-tool** [...] chisels, spear-heads [...] 1943 J. Hawkes & C. Hawkes *Prehist. Brit.* i. 21 The late Palæolithic hunters had a much more delicate and specialized equipment than their predecessors, that is distinguished from the core and flake forms by the general name of “blade” culture.⁷²⁹

The paper version of the OED gives as the origin for the term shuttle,

ORIGIN Old English *scytel* “dart, missile”, of Germanic origin; compare with Old Norse *skutill* “harpoon”; related to **SHOOT**. Sense 1 and the verb are from the movement of the bobbin from one side of the loom to the other and back.⁷³⁰

*

In her introduction to *Illuminations*, a collection of essays by Walter Benjamin that she edited, Hannah Arendt made ample use of the pearl metaphor. She developed an important analogy between Benjamin’s thought and the working methods of a pearl diver. Arendt, famously, based her analysis on a citation from William Shakespeare’s second scene in the first act of *The Tempest* (1611). It concerns a fragment from the following song by Ariel, the ghost who, at the order of Prospero (the exiled, rightful Duke of Milan), transformed into a nixie only visible to the eyes of Prospero. Together, they attempt to guile Prince Ferdinand, son of Alonso the king of Naples, whose ship has run aground in a storm. Ferdinand falsely presumes he is the only survivor of the shipwreck,

finding himself on a rather desolate island (where Prospero and his daughter Miranda live). Ariel thus sings to Ferdinand about his father who has drowned (even though this is not true):

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made,
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell

Burthen Ding-dong

Hark! Now I hear them, --Ding-dong, bell.⁷³¹

Arendt's interest was not so much in the sea-nymphs (and it is probably for that reason that she eliminated this part of Ariel's song from the quotation). Instead, she used this extract to outline Walter Benjamin's search for new literary ways of dealing with the past and for breaking the spell of a tradition that, in his opinion, no longer worked—by means of quotations.⁷³² Quotations, so Benjamin believed, could tear the present out of context. For him, Arendt reminded her readers, this use of “thought fragments” served to obtain greater focus on the essence of the materials presented.⁷³³ He used them to interrupt the flow of argumentation with a “transcendent force,” a lightening potential with regard to how to move forward from that point on. Concretely, and here Shakespeare's *The Tempest* obtains its full meaning in Arendt's line of argument, Benjamin did so by cutting out “the ‘rich and strange,’ coral and pearls, from what had been handed down in one solid piece.”⁷³⁴

According to Arendt, Benjamin saw quotations as spiritual essences from the past that had suffered the Shakespearean “sea-change” from living eyes to pearls, from living bones to coral.⁷³⁵ The use of these quotations enabled him to name the essences that Benjamin wanted to retain from the past. To avoid creating misunderstandings, Arendt specified that this prying loose of what is valuable to retain from the depths of the past should not serve to resuscitate the past the way it was or contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guided Benjamin's thinking is that the pearls and corals from the past, which are worth retaining for the present and the future, crystallized in the depths of the sea. But we continue to hear, or at least sense, their echo from underwater. What is more, those precious values and constellations that were once alive sink into the sea and “suffer a sea-change” there.⁷³⁶ Their essence, however, remains immune to the elements. When finally, one day, a pearl diver

comes down to discover them and brings them up again into the world of the living—as “thought fragments,” as something “rich and strange”—we may come to perceive them “even as everlasting *Urphänomene*.” It will then be up to us to discern new meanings in them.

In the fifth and final act of *The Tempest*, Prospero feels confident that he can finally repair the harm that has been done to him through the force of the love that has grown between his daughter Miranda and Ferdinand. Upon that, he decides to break his magical staff, and to bury it “certain fathoms in the earth.” As for the book from which he was able to dig his “rough magic,” he says he will drown it in the sea, “deeper than did ever plummet sound.”⁷³⁷ Walter Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, specified that his “method of literary montage” consisted exactly in putting such “rags” and “refuse” back on display.⁷³⁸ His intention was not so much to describe them or “say anything” about them, but rather to “merely show” them so they could start to speak for themselves.⁷³⁹ To that extent, he added that it was not his intention to inventory them, but instead to allow them, “in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.”

Benjamin’s bets on letting rediscovered *pearls* from the past speak for themselves have been described as both brilliant and as suffering from methodological chaos.⁷⁴⁰ His elusive approach of “the critic as alchemist” (again, according to Arendt) suffers from serious methodological limitations, as it requires thinking “*poetically*” and therefore it is especially hard to teach or pass on to others.⁷⁴¹ Nonetheless, Benjamin’s disorderly ordered method, in its explosive creativity, has its own validity. It requires discipline, and perhaps a certain maturity (always at the risk of making mistakes) to decide what is worth saving, what is to be highlighted from the past, how it should be done, and for what reasons and purposes. Benjamin firmly believed that the materials dug up by means of pearl diving, and thus saved from oblivion, could and should not only have a redemptive relation to the past, but also through their afterlife bear a constructive influence on the present and future through changing the expected course of history or setting the course of reality into a different mechanism of motion.

This leads the discussion back to Benjamin’s dialectical image, as already introduced in Chapter Five in relation to Barthes’s Neutral. Convolute *N* of *The Arcades Project*, entitled “On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress,” opens with a similar line of argument as Barthes: in the fields that concern philosophers and historians, “knowledge comes only in lightning flashes” (in glimpses, if you want).⁷⁴² The surrounding text, so Benjamin says, is no more than “the long roll of thunder that follows.” He then continued his musings on the theory of knowledge by comparing his working methods with those of a sea voyager on a ship. Inevitably, the magnetic North Pole draws the ship off

course from what is lined up on the sea chart (which references the true North Pole). Instead of attempting to correct these variations, Benjamin wanted to work himself through them as useful data for discovering “*this* North Pole,” he insisted. What for others are mere disturbances in the main lines of the inquiry, Benjamin saw as the fundamentals of his dead reckoning: “the differentials of time.”

According to Benjamin, these differentials of time never deliver the observer “great” contrasts but only dialectical ones, “which often seem indistinguishable from nuances.”⁷⁴³ These small, shimmering elements of nuance are the ones that really matter. For it is from them and from them alone, “that life is always born anew.” For the *Ground Sea* book, the Colinda harpoon has become the ur-historical object that was reborn into the present day capable of receiving it. This spear revealed itself as a key figure of the Neutral that had been drifting my way. I first encountered a drawing of it in a more contemporary archaeology book, and then searched the online academic databases. There, researchers can only consult the scanned text of the June 1932 issue of the journal *Antiquity*. Since I wanted to see the image accompanying that description, I searched online for an available paper copy, and found one for sale quite easily at a reasonable price. When (in the summer of 2019) it eventually arrived at my office in Leuven, I indeed immediately spotted in the image of this ephemeron what Benjamin famously named the “now of its recognizability.”⁷⁴⁴

Such an experience bears the character of a lightning flash, and renders a tangible sense of a lost time, deeply embedded within the very realm of this object itself. Benjamin powerfully argued that certain objects manifest their full meanings only to a quite specific epoch, namely “the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes, is capable of recognizing just this particular dream image” for what it is.⁷⁴⁵ It is at this moment, according to Benjamin, that the historian must take up the task of “dream interpretation” regarding that image. In 2019, with a European Union and United Kingdom embarked on seriously deviating compass courses that would inevitably lead to the Brexit disaster, the harpoon photograph as dialectical image indicated sharply for the present epoch the “what has been from time immemorial.” It was literally the “antediluvian fossil” that Theodor Adorno alluded to in his study on the work of Søren Kierkegaard, and from which Benjamin inserted a quotation in convoluted *N*.⁷⁴⁶ For contemporary observers, the Colinda harpoon may provide the *amazement* of the dialectical image that Benjamin was so fond of describing. Such an image, according to Benjamin (again building on the quotation from Kierkegaard as quoted in Adorno’s book), suggests “another form of existence.”⁷⁴⁷

For Hannah Arendt, Benjamin’s tactic of repeating quotations in loops that turn them into some peculiar form of montage enables these

words to transmit “a truth that concerned a secret.”⁷⁴⁸ Quotations, rather than structured speech, could *name* that very truth by bringing it to light only as a sudden revelation or flash, as a dialectical image that is no more than a *word*, and never a full sentence.⁷⁴⁹ It emerges “suddenly, in a flash.”⁷⁵⁰ What is *rescued* from this truth is immediately lost after the flash has faded. Still, what stays is the brief memory of it; and then follows the dream about this briefly revealed, immanent secret of a nature that is intimately connected to a “nucleus of time” that lies “hidden within the knower and the known alike.”⁷⁵¹ Anything that may be known about the eternal, in any case for Benjamin, could be no more than “a ruffle on a dress,” and certainly not a clear idea. For that reason, dialectical images must be considered as “wish symbols.”⁷⁵²

These wish images, according to Benjamin, contain within themselves both their origin and their inevitable decline. Although they only briefly shed light on a more ideal or imagined more optimal reality in which the collective could *overcome* and *transfigure* “the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production,” they are responsible for making us endlessly wish for it, long for it, and dream of it.⁷⁵³ Dialectical images, at the same time, also remind us that there exists a “nature as primal history,” as Benjamin called it, that is always stronger than any other elemental force, including human force.⁷⁵⁴ For the present-day situation at Calais–Dover, blocked as one solid piece of seemingly endless *pile of debris* growing skyward in the storm that we are instructed to name as progress—to paraphrase Benjamin from the “Theses on the Philosophy of History”—the metaphor of the Colinda harpoon as dialectical image serves us well.⁷⁵⁵ It is an instrument to cut loose or recover the forgotten pearls and corals that we need to unblock the situation and to disrupt the hegemonic narratives that dominate the debate. This exercise requires a rather wild and daring “tiger’s leap into the past.”⁷⁵⁶ That this jump can only take place under the very eyes of the ruling class, in *their* arena, where *they* continue to give the commands, is something Allan Sekula also pointed to when he included in *The Dockers’ Museum* a wolf elegantly jumping over a hole in the ice. (fig. A.2)

*

There is consensus among scientists today that, during the Mesolithic period (10,000 BC to 4000 BC), a vast plain filled with a multitude of human settlements—some of which were possibly even permanent and included domesticated dogs—made sure that Britain was part of the continental mainland.⁷⁵⁷ In 1998, scientists granted this area the name Doggerland, after the submarine bank that Clement Reid identified some eighty years earlier.⁷⁵⁸ Nowadays, this, until recently, entirely



forgotten land is considered one of the largest preserved prehistoric landscapes in the world, even if it remains terra incognita, and underwater archaeological exploration remains extremely risky and costly.⁷⁵⁹ Since the end of the last Ice Age (ca. 18,000 BC), the sea level has risen a staggering 120 meters. From then on, Doggerland had to give up parts of its plains to the sea.⁷⁶⁰ Around 9500 BC, with the start of the Holocene, temperatures rose exponentially (a jump of 20°C), resulting in a rapid meltdown of the ice sheet. Doggerland was reduced to an archipelagic area filled up with one large island, Dogger Island (i.e. what remained of the Dogger Hills), and a range of smaller islands. Around 6200 BC, the so-called Storegga Slide tsunami came to accelerate the flooding process, and most likely by 5500 BC, all parts of land were completely lost to the sea.⁷⁶¹

Although much of the research on Doggerland is nascent, additional study on the underwater site at Bouldnor Cliff near the Isle of Wight has already demonstrated that, back then, close connections with what is now France existed before sea-level rise finally breached the land connection between the two regions.⁷⁶² Amid a network of rivers, a “mature landscape” existed, “rich in resources before it was drowned and the ensuing coastal squeeze forced its inhabitants to retreat upslope or migrate

Fig. A.2.

Rick Denomme, untitled photograph. Taken in Montana, United States [as confirmed by the photographer via email]. Signed color photograph, framed, undated, 25.5×20.4 cm (framed), 17×12 cm (unframed). © Rick Denomme. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers’ Museum*).

elsewhere.”⁷⁶³ Clive Waddington, basing himself on a case study pursued at Howick, put forward the hypothesis that the requirement to establish a degree of ownership over land, which appears to have simultaneously generated with these climatic changes, was a social response to the unfolding drama.⁷⁶⁴ As huge groups of people were forced to migrate away from Doggerland to the newly constructing coastal regions on all sides of the former plain, those already living there felt the need to assert an already established strong relationship to their land. Accordingly, social concepts such as sedentism and land ownership, including, most likely, all the tensions these generate, are much older than had been estimated before these recent studies were pursued.

The Colinda harpoon, as mentioned above, was fished out from the sea floor by sheer coincidence. Its unexpected floating on the North Sea’s surface has set into motion a whole new dynamic. Today, submarine archaeologists are more intensively and deliberately pearl diving the mysterious bottom of Doggerland. No one knows what else they will eventually find. Yet whatever these materials may be, they will only demonstrate further proof of the lost ties once there. For this reason, I want to propose to understand the harpoon’s positive message as an anticipatory object for a much larger societal breakthrough than just the further, fascinating discovery of Doggerland. Its deep, dark glow strikingly resembles the purple that Roland Barthes had in mind as the color of the Neutral. The Maglemose spear, therefore, is a third element, a special tertium that, at least at the level of our collective imagination, contains the potential to force a breakthrough. Metaphorically, it may be perceived as the *kairotic* knife that the seawaters decided to render to help remove the cobweb that has now so destructively been woven across the North Sea waters—in dialogue with Polanski’s already mentioned cult film, it may be understood as the knife unleashed *out* of the water.⁷⁶⁵

Here, I want to hinge the analysis on a discussion among French linguists, who have sought to give a name to the hashtag in their own language (for the sake of preserving their language’s purity). According to Jeff Scheible, “the recent decision by the French government to replace all official mention of the word *hashtag* with *mot-dièse* [...] presents a provocative continuity with concerns over uses and naming of the symbol favoring English-language operating systems.”⁷⁶⁶ As he added: “what might seem to be trivial worries over naming the symbol in fact channel broader concerns over what could be viewed as the spread of Global English that accompany the expanding empires encompassed by American technological services.” This is certainly true.⁷⁶⁷ However, I want to shift the focus slightly to an entirely different element contained (literally) within the meaning of the term *mot-dièse*, as also put forward by Scheible: “sharp word.”⁷⁶⁸ On the internet, a discussion circulates

about why this choice of wording by the French *Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie* [General Commission of terminology and neology] seems to be ill-chosen.⁷⁶⁹

In fact, the *dièse* is a graphic symbol within solfège indicating that a musical note should be raised a semitone above natural pitch. In the English language, the name of this symbol, typified by two horizontal bars that are slightly elevated, is a sharp (#). In French, the sign that visually corresponds to the hashtag (#), of which the two horizontal bars really are horizontal, bears the name *croisillon*. Literally, therefore, as these internauts have argued, a better way to translate the term hashtag into French would be as *mot-croisillon*. At the basis, *croisillon* is an architectural term, meaning transept, crossbeam, cross brace, or simply crosspiece. Architects use transverse beams to provide support to a structure, such as rods for stabilizing window glass. Finally, the term *δίεσις* [diesis] in ancient Greek means, aside from “moistening” and “wetting,” “sending through,” “discharge” (“of a liquid”), “letting through,” “release.”⁷⁷⁰

Once again, the metaphoric potential of what initially seemed to be only a linguistic confusion is huge. Reconsider the shape of the Colinda harpoon. In 1931, the seawaters released this sharp bone spear, for no other apparent reason than, possibly, to symbolically allow for cutting away the spiderweb that has troubled the smooth passage of the Strait of Dover. Consider once more the title *Deep Six | Passer au bleu*, and how it visualizes on the chart of the Strait of Dover. (fig. A.3) When we position the spear on it, one can imagine the spear to transform into a chest bone connecting two lungs (Britain and France). Once the two lungs are attached to a bone, they can finally start to breathe again within their mutual intersection and connection. The stripes on the spear create crossbars, which will only come to strengthen the breathing process of these reconnected relationships. Ultimately, then, the waters, which came to submerge the now lost but originally shared land, will also have become a safer place to dwell on. Never will a single living being be able to forget what once *was* underneath the sea surface: the villages, estuaries, hills, and rivers of Doggerland.

When I was investigating the Kentish coastline throughout 2017 and 2018, I had not yet heard of the existence of Doggerland. Thus, when I made doodle 31#, I was solely focused on presuming that this would be an ideal spot for a dinghy landing—and pondering my chances from where exactly I would give it a try if I was to leave the shores where I grew up and which I know so well. In retrospect, I understand that my travel companion (my dog) was already looking out over the waters in a direction that I did not yet grasp, that of Doggerland. At the time, I was quite intuitively following W.G. Sebald’s methodological recommendations as to how to manage a topic of study that is extremely difficult to



grasp. In an interview shortly before his sudden death in 2001, Sebald shed light on how he pursued research: in a diffuse manner. Proudly, he clarified that, for refining his approach, he had been contemplating at length how dogs run through a field. His was a way of proceeding exactly as a dog searches: to and fro, back and forth, sometimes slowly and at times fast until, eventually, there is a find.⁷⁷¹

This way of searching for the unknown should not be mistaken to be marked by chaos. On the contrary, it requires precision, focus, patience, perseverance, discipline, and skill. “As a Dog finds a Spoon” is the title of the abovementioned conversation between Sebald and Jean-Pierre Rondas. The outcome of the yearlong search for ground sea is that I did not find a spoon but a spear instead. After this had happened, I finally understood why I had been returning repeatedly to the typical shingle beach in Deal, and spent hours sitting on these heaps of little stones inspecting the dynamic waters of the Goodwin Sands. These shingles had been conceived in that very womb of the Earth covered by the North Sea. While I was thinking through what this idea of desiccation of matter into stone actually means (Walter Benjamin spoke of “*einer antediluvialen Versteinerung*”), I came to feel that these shingles possess the energetic potential to generate further—something which the antique authors also strongly believed in.⁷⁷²

I have sat for long hours on the beach at Deal, at every possible moment of day and night and under various weather conditions. One early

Fig. A.3.
*Admiralty Chart 1406
 North Sea, Dover and
 Calais to Orford Ness and
 Scheveningen (partial
 reproduction). Not to
 be used for Navigation.
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 (www.GOV.uk/UKHO).
 Composition by author.*

morning, the rising sun colored all the seafront houses of the village in a magical, purplish red. It was an unbelievable sight to my eyes. A local angler on the pier, who was up as early as I was, did not even seem to notice. When I questioned him, however, he showed me a range of snaps on his cell phone: he *had* been photographing this mysterious scene on repeated occasions. From my window in Clarence's room at the Royal Hotel (where parts of this book have been written), I observed at length this pier that sinks deeper and deeper into the water with each passing year. In my mind, this slow observation gave birth to, first, harboring an entirely different imaginary conception of what our reality could look like. Secondly, there was the will to contribute to help generating it further.

Ground Sea actively dreams of a worldly reality that is not divisive but instead resolutely inclusive. In the five-plus years of writing this book, the urgency to come up with solutions hardly diminished. In the light of the following sentence—astoundingly topical—written by Thomas Paine to M. De la Fayette on February 9, 1792, this should perhaps not come as a surprise:

I do not believe that the people of England have ever been fairly and candidly dealt by. They have been imposed upon by parties, and by men assuming the character of leaders. It is time that the nation should rise above those trifles.⁷⁷³

On September 11, 2019, the UK government reluctantly released a five-page document, which had been leaked, entitled “Operation Yellowhammer.” It summed up the “reasonable worst case planning assumptions” should a no-deal Brexit have happened on October 31 of that same year.⁷⁷⁴ Entry nineteen reads,

Up to 282 EU and EEA nations fishing vessels could enter illegally, or already be fishing in UK waters (Up to 129 vessels in English waters, 100 vessels in Scottish waters, 40 vessels in Welsh waters, 13 vessels in Northern Irish waters) on day one. This is likely to cause anger and frustration in the UK catching sector, which could lead to both clashes between fishing vessels and an increase in non-compliance in the domestic fleet. Competing demands on UK Government and DA maritime agencies and their assets could put enforcement and response capabilities at risk, especially in the event of concurrent or cumulative incidents, which are likely to include; illegal fishing, borders violations (smuggling and illegal migration), and any disorder or criminality arising as a result, e.g. violent disputes or blockading of ports.⁷⁷⁵

Shortly before the government released the report under pressure, John Lichfield, a commentator for *The Guardian*, soberly presented the issue like this: “One man’s fish is another man’s *poisson*. Not for much longer, it seems.”⁷⁷⁶ Irish, French, Belgian, Dutch, Danish, and German fishermen have always shared the fishing grounds that the British now claim as their exclusive fishing waters—with “happier fish,” if we are to believe the leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg.⁷⁷⁷ As Lichfield reminded his readers, the nets of the United Kingdom and its maritime neighbors have been inextricably tangled for centuries. Cutting these ties is calamitous, both ecologically and for the workers involved in the fishing business. Lichfield thus quoted a British inshore fishing industry leader:

If Brexit happens, there will, eventually, be a few people who make a lot of money. But they will probably be the big-scale skippers and industrial-scale companies who are already rich. I don’t see much for struggling coastal communities or smaller fishermen. Those who depend on the EU market could be wiped out.

As a conclusion, he added, “You can win a political argument with lies and myths. Governing or negotiating with them is as useful as fishing without nets.” But whatever will come from it in the longer run, as Lichfield cited Olivier Leprêtre—the president of the Northern France Fisheries Committee—in any case “Fishermen have always followed the fish.”⁷⁷⁸

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Brexit carnage. That was one among other slogans attached to protesting trucks near Downing Street 10 in London on Monday, January 18, 2021. The small fisheries on the Scottish west coast were so desperate that, to avoid transportation of salmon and shellfish via the English Channel, they had started to allow their fishermen to immediately unload their cargo for auction in Hanstholm, Denmark instead of the usual hall in Peterhead. DR Collin & Son supplier reported that, since Brexit materialized, they had been selling more to China and the Far East than to the European Union.⁷⁷⁹ Solving such unseen situations will require empathy. The British do not want to hang on to the lifeline of the Continent (and, for many, the tunnel symbolizes that umbilical cord). If the Continent boasts too much that the two big lungs are western and eastern Europe, with Germany as the chest bone, the United Kingdom gets nervous. Winston Churchill’s speech from June 4, 1940 still resonates for many.

We shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until in God's good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.⁷⁸⁰

During World War II, the United Kingdom was solidary with the Dutch, French, and Belgian resistance to the German invasion. As historians have argued, this (at least initially) was mostly out of self-interest, because the British wanted to keep their diversified neighbors instead of one German monolithic block, which would come to isolate them.⁷⁸¹ It also should not be forgotten that France contributed much to funding the American fight for independence against the British, to the point that it almost ruined the finances of the French state. Within the United Kingdom, the specters of this deep mistrust haunt collective memory. There even circulates an Indian story that the British installed a secret panic button on their side of the Channel Tunnel, which allows them to quickly flood it at the time of an invasion from the Continent.⁷⁸² When former EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said theatrically in his State of the Union Address, delivered in the European Parliament on September 13, 2017, “*Nous le regretterons toujours, vous le regretterez bientôt*” [“we will always regret it, you will regret it soon”], the British delegation smiled politely, but the expression on some faces betrayed their low opinion of what they must have perceived to be his continental pedantry.⁷⁸³

On this very same day, European Parliament member Guy Verhofstadt posted an item on his Facebook page that remains memorable. Accompanied by a photograph that showed five men in business suits, wearing ties and leaving a meeting room, with Verhofstadt among them pointing at the name of the room, the “Salle Margaret Thatcher,” it said,

The meeting room of today's Brexit Steering Group reminded me of this Thatcher quote: “Just think for a moment what a prospect that is. A single market without barriers — visible or invisible — giving you direct access to 300 million of the world's wealthiest and most prosperous people. Bigger than Japan. Bigger than the United States. On your doorstep. And with the Channel Tunnel to give you direct access to it.”⁷⁸⁴

This gigantic economic prospect is surely what convinced Margaret Thatcher to go for the tunnel project. She gladly left the grand version of the story—say, the somewhat woolier language of symbolic

reconciliation and finally creating peace in western Europe between age-old sworn enemies—to François Mitterrand. Whatever will happen in the future, France and Britain will always remain intrinsically connected. To illustrate this further with a certain degree of absurdity, I want to refer to a news item published in *Le Monde* on March 22, 2018. Its author, Philippe Bernard, reported that post-Brexit Britain would reconquer its sovereignty by returning to the somber blue passport of before. He added, however, that a French company, Thales, had won the open call launched by the British government. The new British passports—with their Royal coat of arms in old French wordings—which have come to replace the hated “Bordeaux emblems of EU-submission,” are therefore produced in Poland by a French group.⁷⁸⁵ Fate here, no doubt, also wanted to have its fair part of the Brexit debacle’s irony.

What does all this leave us to think of the Channel Tunnel? In 1907, a cartoon circulated, entitled “Hands beneath the Sea.” It depicts Father Neptune standing on the Dover cliffs, looking angry at Lady Britannia coming out of the sea. It went as follows:

Father Neptune: “Look here Madam. I’ve been your protector all these years, and now I hear you think of undermining my power.”

Britannia: “Well, the fact is I want to see more of my friends over there, and I never look my best when I’ve been sea-sick.”⁷⁸⁶

The opening shot of Krzysztof Kieślowski’s *Red* plays with a similar feeling of sea-related nausea. A telephone and a drink positioned next to Valentine’s portrait and a copy of *The Economist*, and then a man who picks up the phone to push some buttons to dial her number in Geneva provides the starting point for a dazzling tracing by the camera of the electronic pulse of this call through the telephone cable. As we follow abstract color patterns and then the open-air deep-sea cable going underwater, we observe a diffuse environment, in which a couple of mysterious creatures appear to be floating. While observing them numerous times and at length, I have come to freely imagine them as *canes marini* [sea dogs], such as have been depicted so magnificently in a Latin manuscript of Ptolemy’s *Geography*, made in Florence around 1455–1460 and now preserved at the Bibliotheca Nacional in Madrid. In it, the *canis marinus* is represented as a “furry dog in the sea,” and this “in accordance with the medieval theory that each land animal has its equivalent in the sea.”⁷⁸⁷

I bring this up first to pay tribute to the dog that always accompanied me on this journey. If water-bound researchers find their encouraging counterparts in open-water swimmers, as I indicated in the preface to this book, the same may be true of water-dwelling dogs. For Joseph

Kickasola, the abstract images so typical for Kiesłowski's films perform the role of "metaphysical fingerprints," which suggests the importance Kiesłowski attached to creating abstractions of time and space at key moments within his films.⁷⁸⁸ These images, according to him, symbolize something very deep: that there is a vital "subterranean bedrock to life." Of course, at a more superficial level, the suggestion is that technological networks of communication today bear a heavy influence on our lives. Still, the idea of cables disappearing underwater at rocket-like speed, as if railroad tracks to an unknown universe situated at the sea's bottom, point at a deeper, underlying existential matrix where certain life forms can exercise influence over others without necessarily a conscious awareness of it. We may have connections, even vital connections, with people that surround us yet never make our acquaintance. When we accept that not only our own story but also the stories around us are intricately bound up in the stories of others, we realize the importance of enforcing that we take care of one another—call it solidarity, fraternity, or siblinghood.

This is far from self-evident. The deep-sea cables, as Rudyard Kipling wrote, spread "the words of men." But, as Kipling reminded us, they are also a "Power" that has come to trouble the "Still" that, until not so long ago, reigned in "the womb of the world."⁷⁸⁹ In this sense, it remains a striking fact that, on January 31, 2019, a new submarine power cable between Richborough Energy Park in Kent and Zeebrugge became operational, which was baptized Nemo Link.⁷⁹⁰ One wonders who invents such names. For sure, it was likely not someone who had read Roland Barthes's sharp critique on autarky, for which he provided the example of Nemo and the *Nautilus* as illustrating his argument. For Barthes, a group in a state of material autarky indulges in "a sort of smug pride, a self-satisfaction."⁷⁹¹ In *How to Live Together*, Barthes rejected the treacherous feeling of plenitude typical for autarchies priding themselves on their self-sufficiency.⁷⁹² Although he understood why it "glittered" and drew people in with fascination, he deemed it to be a dynamic marked by a "vertiginous vacuity."

Numerous are the authors who have used the metaphor of trains to describe a similar ambivalence. There has been Nicole Lapierre, whose moving publications I have discussed earlier on, and who has written subtly on how thinking about trains can make one both experience a feeling of free wandering in one's thoughts as well as in real life. Yet, at the same time, trains are also the tool that the Nazi executioners used for deportation of unlawfully captivated persons.⁷⁹³ In *The Emigrants*, W.G. Sebald also influentially conveyed, based on the tragic life story of the narrator's primary school teacher Paul Bereyter, the double feeling that train tracks can saddle you with: it can be both the road to freedom and the road to hell—to death, to the end.⁷⁹⁴ In *Red*, Kiesłowski paid

attention to showing to the viewers the fact that the metaphorical railroad tracks (actually, the cables) come out of the water in France and subsequently reach their final destination by tunnel: Valentine.

To round up my discussion of the question of the fixed channel link, I want to build on this positive imagery, by which Kieślowski conveyed a message of hope. I will do so by drawing a link to the already discussed opening triptych of Part One, “The Rights of Man” from Sekula’s *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* (1–3). To open the sequence representing this devastated, dystopian landscape, Sekula chose to make the viewer reflect on a range of, most likely immobile, unloaded freight wagons. As empty recipients, they are waiting to be filled with something new. Michel de Certeau has argued that, for him, the railway train is a “slender blade” making a “straight line that cuts through space,” and thus inverts the stability of inside and outside.⁷⁹⁵ He perceived there a chiasmic potentiality and openness. The “endless line” drawn by the train may, in his view, come to stand for an “injunction to pass on,” or “to *move through*” without stagnating. Within the context of the fixed channel link, this has proven to be a very difficult exercise, as we have seen over the past twenty-five years.

Still, it is not impossible. Given how a rail joint is anchored in the soil, there is even reason to be more cheerful. Because it involves a solid maze of rails and sleepers, which endlessly develop further into a multiplication of crossbeams by means of cleverly installed railroad switches, one may conceive of the rail track components in terms of it being a *croisillon* (a favorable intersection).⁷⁹⁶ In that case, the Eurostar train can continue to be this “tireless shifter, producing changes in the relationships between immobile elements,” to use one of de Certeau’s train metaphors one more time; firmly entrenched in the sea bottom of what used to be Doggerland, this train track can happily stay there.⁷⁹⁷ The Channel Tunnel, situated at 115 meters below sea level at its deepest point, then serves to remind us that humans can never eliminate or dispose of the sea without eventually being thrown in by her at the deep end. It is the slowness of sea that matters most, and not the high speed of tunnel traveling. At this symbolic depth, some of the still relatively few divers who have made it there and survived have been reported to mistake large fishes, such as dolphins, for sirens.⁷⁹⁸

*

Now that *Ground Sea* is reaching its end, let us reconnect the discussion to photography theory, more specifically to James Elkins’s polemical book *What Photography Is* (2011). In it, Elkins famously compared photography to a selenite window: translucent as it is, it lets through light, yet at the same time bends it in ways that make it impossible to see what

is really situated behind it. Photography, for Elkins, does just that. “It promises a view of the world, but it gives us a flattened object in which wrecked reminders of the world are lodged.”⁷⁹⁹ Elkins proceeded to develop his analysis by bringing in another example, that of a sheet of black lake ice. In his book, Elkins reproduced a photograph of such black ice as formed on Lake Bonney, Antarctica, around 2005. In the accompanying text, he described from personal experience how frightening it is to walk on it, as it fractures with each footstep taken in squealing breaks that spread out on all sides. This indeed brought back fond childhood memories of winters in the later 1970s, when the communal pond in the village where I grew up froze from a sudden deep drop in temperatures. As children were less surveilled back then than they are now, we would play on it and indeed peer through the branching fractures just beneath the ice’s surface into the dark, silent depth of the still liquid water underneath—where, occasionally, a fish would swim by.

“Black ice,” according to Elkins, “is a horizontal window that looks down onto nothing visible. You see into it as if into a thick deep darkness.”⁸⁰⁰ This very obscure place beneath admits light, “but it does not give back any image.” Over the years of studying photographs for this book, this is often how I have felt. For *Ground Sea*, I specifically observed *pictures* as replacements or stand-ins for the surface of the English Channel waters that so many persons on the move would want to walk over, if only this were possible. Not as mirrors, but in terms of windows that required peering through, however damped at times they initially were. I have tried to look at all the cracks, fractures, and ridges from as many angles as I could imagine.

The inevitable conclusion is that only profound despair, only that and nothing else, can account for the drastic decision to risk crossing—often fatally—these thirty-three kilometers in a dinghy or a in sealed freezer truck. All I have had to propose as a counterbalancing element, is a metaphor: a serrated bone point dug up from these abysmal depths. Given the sheer coincidence of having been born from a family that provided me a passport that the United Kingdom finds suitable for accessing its territory, I was able to take a ferry from Dunkirk and drive a long stretch from Dover to admire it at the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse in the absurdist of absurdist gestures I could possibly come up with to keep me busy on that absolutely absurdist day. Waiting in the backseat of my car (since he was not welcome inside) was my dog, who had entered the country thanks to his Dutch pet passport. Looking back, I realize that I still have to come to terms with the fact that we arrived just in time—although I was still blissfully ignorant of it; only six weeks later, COVID-19 would have prevented us from traveling at all.

Toward the end of his provocative study, in which he did not spare his readers, James Elkins recalled Margaret Iversen’s influential analysis

of what a photograph is (in the journal *Art History*, 1994): it displays the “unrepresentable Real” (referring to Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of that term).⁸⁰¹ From our understanding of that unrepresentable Real, that unspeakable truth, we will need to depart again to find a new balance. For Nicole Lapierre, this involves not only accepting that we “exist collectively in the space of displacement,” but also understanding that the “social force of our imagination” can be found inside this collective shifting.⁸⁰² The future following from this is uncertain. To get there, we will have to see ourselves through transitional, liminal moments, through instants that will provide us small glimpses of understanding about where to go next.

Let us call them purple instances of the Neutral, such as Bruno Serralongue’s camera so magnificently captured early one morning in the summer of 2006 in Calais. As may be observed on the cover of Volume I, he photographed violet heather flowers in full blossom. Louis Marin connected this type of path or passageway between two fields to its Latin etymological origin, *limes*. “The *limes*,” he wrote, “is the distance between two edges, like those ‘chemins creux’ passing in Brittany without trespassing on the enclosures of their hedges.”⁸⁰³ The limit conceived in terms of a *limes* is an interval. It thus consists both of an opening—a gap—and a path between two frontiers. For Marin, such a passageway uses the extremities of its frontiers “to make *its way*.” When traversed as such, these extremities become a “*selvage*,” an “*edge*,” or what in French is called a “*lisière*”: the fringes of a wide-open gap, with only “a wild or an undetermined space” in front of it.⁸⁰⁴ Within such a “fringe structure,” according to Marin, one encounters a “neutral place.” The frontier, “*polemical notion*” as it is, is therefore nothing more than the “*locus of the neutral*.”⁸⁰⁵ And the name of this neutral is “*Utopia*.”⁸⁰⁶

Marin saw an intricate connection between the concepts of “*utopia*” and “*horizon*.”⁸⁰⁷ Both words, in his view, share the same radical: “*ne-uter*.”⁸⁰⁸ Utopia, he added, can therefore imply “*potentia*.”⁸⁰⁹ But this potentiality of utopia reveals itself only “*at the horizon of a voyage (travel)*.” In its static form of visual representation, utopia “always takes the figure, the form, of a map.” Well organized as it is, the map presents us no more than the “unity of its ensemble” and the coherence of its exact coding (names, numbers, colored fields, ...). All voyages, journeys, itineraries are potentially already contained within it. But the map, spread out on a table in all its perfection, implicitly negates them. That is why, according to Marin, there exists a tension between the map as a totalitarian and perfected whole—a “*formal*” and “abstract power”—and a person’s concrete use of that very map.⁸¹⁰ Our journey, whether real or only “imaginary,” “projected,” “dreamed,” always constructs a narrative—with points of departure and arrival, on some occasions “a happy coming-back,” but in other instances “a final permanent exile.”

Such travels and voyages, because of their intricate movements imagined or real, locate themselves right “in the gap of the limit, on the *limes way* and trespassing over its double edge.” Travel then, according to Marin, is the “‘work’ of the horizon, the neutral space, the space of limits and frontiers it traces or demarcates while crossing them.” That, for him, marks the “typical form of the utopian process,” which many writers also pursue. *Ground Sea*’s journey along the horizon, which now reaches its point of anchoring, has situated itself within this very order of “transcendental imagination,” as Marin also called it.⁸¹¹ It is there, navigating through the utopian process, that the nascent idea of a right to be reborn obtains its most tangible force. That “neutral space, one that is absolutely different” and for that matter a “utopian space (or the utopian *chora*, as Plato would have said),” Marin concluded, can “make the seashore appear at dawn,” and “welcome the human castaway.”⁸¹²

The three stages of dawn, as Javier Mariás powerfully revealed, form a very particular momentum within the day-and-night cycle. For Mariás, it is then in the “advancing light of day that blinds or half-blinds the thirteen streetlamps that are still lit as a testament or reminder of the night that is already past and lost,” that one can get most closely in contact with the already mentioned *dark back of time*.⁸¹³ At this transitional hour, “the night still impregnates us and isn’t always easy to shake off, just as it isn’t easy to shake off the time that has disappeared, our time or other people’s time or time that has never come.” It is at dawn as well, during civil twilight or shortly after sunrise, that one has a chance to catch a glimpse of early morning dew.

Strikingly, as Paul Vandebroek suggested, dew is an old female-related trope, charged with positive, fructifying affect.⁸¹⁴ Vandebroek recalled the Andalusian Virgin of the Dew (*Virgen del Rocío*). Although she symbolizes the cooling and refreshing forces related to dew, she also carries a salamander as an attribute on her shoulder. Like many other fertility goddesses, she thus unites opposing principles, since popular belief holds that a salamander can live in fire. Dew scintillates and sparkles. It is the ultimate image of mysterious incarnation, of coming light, of the commencement of the sun’s warmth, and of a new beginning. It does not fall from the sky but instead comes into shape as imperceptibly and noiselessly as it disappears again. Since it lets itself be discovered as a discrete, fleeting presence translucently covering wild-growing flowers, dew heralds the clarity of a new day.

In medieval culture, Vandebroek reported, perceptual dew was compared to the lustrous gleaming of pearls (e.g. by Amadeus of Lausanne, twelfth century).⁸¹⁵ Pearls, in their turn, thus symbolically stand for (female) generative power. Conceived through the contact of opposite forces (the intrusion of an, at first, extraneous object to the oyster), the pearl symbolizes the magical contact of light and dark, and

of fire (lightning) and water (sea). Mysteriously conceived as coming “from elsewhere,” the pearl was believed to be able to fill humankind with higher knowledge.⁸¹⁶ Calais, that damaged pearl, has come to fulfill that role throughout the writing process of this book. I now understand Calais as an elsewhere within the here and now—in possession of a higher knowledge, and mourning humanity’s impotency through the revelation of “microstories.”⁸¹⁷

During my numerous visits to the city of Calais, I always tried to purchase fresh fish at the vendor stalls on the Quai de la Colonne. Although I had purchased delicious goods there quite a few times already, it was only in early 2020 that Myriam Pont—also named *La Paysanne des Mers* [*The Peasant Woman of the Sea*—and I engaged in a more personal conversation. She informed me of her lifelong expertise with fishing on foot, and how this age-old knowledge that she inherited from her ancestors had almost gone extinct in the *Calaisis*. With the help of her two sons, she has now written down all her knowledge. She also gives outdoor courses during which she teaches people how to pick wild mussels or how to fish for shrimp from the shoreline.⁸¹⁸ She moves around on a bike, and self-assuredly remarks that respect for the environment has always been a completely natural thing for her and her fellow fisher(wo)men.

Myriam Pont alone will not be capable of creating the more favorable social conditions that can lead to a collective revolutionary moment of “*kairos*,” as Cornelius Castoriadis hoped for.⁸¹⁹ Castoriadis knew that democracy is a tragic regime. Democracy will always be under threat from within, since humans tend to over-boldness (*hubris*), which can create entire societies that succumb to selfishness and greed. Within democratic societies, the people ruling as a group constantly need to review their self-limitations by implementing appropriate laws.⁸²⁰ Help for saving a democratic system cannot come from outside. Democracy needs to institute and aspire to safeguard the radical promise of people living in equality and respect (the *dēmos*). This requires the presence of pearls, such as Myriam Pont, who remind us of her importance—even if numerous, supposedly more successful, contemporary people will continue to downplay her as just an ordinary, irrelevant fisherwoman.

Pont may appear to be a detail in the larger constellation. However, as Glissant believed, it is only by means of paying attention to minuscule details that one can discover a poetic depth. In his view, it is by allowing the poetry buried in a collapse of the Earth to emerge in the full daylight of a renewed space that cosmic vision can be turned into political ideas.⁸²¹ Over the years that I have been writing this book, I often observed the photograph of this magical image of the breaking of prismatic light on the tiles in the bathroom of the hotel room where I stayed in Deal. Every sunny morning, this phenomenon repeated itself. When I made doodle **33#** in the fall of 2018, the Colinda spear had not yet crossed

my path. I realized later that this symbolic detail (is it a fish, a bomb, a submarine, ...?) anticipated and announced my imminent acquaintance with the floating harpoon from 1931.

Krzysztof Kieślowski decided to leave the end of his *Three Colors* trilogy indeterminate. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes reported about a “dis-course [that] declares the enigma it has proposed to be unresolved.”⁸²² “In the hermeneutic code,” Barthes added, “this is jamming (frequent in detective fiction).” *Ground Sea* ends with jamming, instead of dénouement. It reaches its closing moment like a story whose plotlines developed into an increasingly harder-to-disentangle knot without a recipe yet for untying it. Somehow, this Gordian knot will need to be cut, so something new can start to grow. As argued in the previous chapter, the reliability of each temporary (running) fix within this process will depend on determining, as precisely as is possible, angles of cut between intersecting plotted lines. Allan Sekula also believed that people will need to be inventive, use their brains wisely, and not let themselves be fooled by anyone. The concluding page of his fortieth notebook is a transcription from a wall inscription that he encountered at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

“We were on two sides of the artificial wall, yet we had the same goal [...] It was our common effort. It was our common contribution to reunite Europe. On the Western side there was you, Mr. President. We did not use weapons or physical violence. Instead there was the power of the idea which unties people above all frontiers.”

[sic]

President Lech Walesa, Sept. 1990
Gdansk Shipyard.⁸²³

In his final project *The Dockers' Museum*, which at all times, has been on the horizon of writing the present book, Sekula sought to bring to the surface what Orhan Pamuk identified as “the secret center.”⁸²⁴ Like some novelists who die before they were able to determine the overall shape of their novel (as Pamuk described them), Sekula did not live to see his *The Dockers' Museum* enterprise come to a satisfying completion. It had to be this way. In its chaotic state, the collection exists for us to nose out as time continues to pass. It will be the pleasure of later generations to discover further—“sentence-by-sentence,” Pamuk would say, and object of interest-by-object of interest in the case of *The Dockers' Museum*—its secret center or deeper meaning.⁸²⁵ Pamuk reminded his readers that, although they might presume for a long time that *Moby Dick* is a novel about, among other elements, “the lives of the harpooners,” it is essentially a matter of eventually understanding that Melville’s

book unveils an underlying story about this mysterious center, which grows page by page “until it takes on the dimensions of the cosmos.”⁸²⁶

*

Let us then turn our attention to the small metal “bonbon” box introduced as a tool kit for Diana during *Ground Sea*’s embarkation. We can now imagine that she, while underway with the water-bounds, discovered in it a couple more photographs. The first two pictures are objects of interest from *The Dockers’ Museum*. (figs. A.4–5) I invite readers to investigate them slowly, and to muse on the precious, mindful activity of digging out cockles with your toes in warm, wet sand.⁸²⁷ What such photographs have brought *me* while studying them over the years is an understanding of Allan Sekula’s plea to urgently revisit and become acquainted again with age-old water-related practices—not as charming tourist attractions, but for the fundamental knowledge that they generate. Ultimately, meticulous attention for the slightest details and the intricate connections between them may perhaps deliver only intangible precision. I mean by this that the precision about which one obtains certainty does not allow empirical verification. Its substantiation can only be found within this cosmic mystery that rises to the surface, but that will never prescribe how exactly people can generate relevant connections leading to a healthier way of harmoniously living together.

If this instruction inevitably sounds somewhat romantic or even cryptic, I propose to give up resisting that and instead to briefly indulge in it for the sheer pleasure of thinking about what knowledge such a way of proceeding may generate. We can then combine this exercise in photographic observation of selected items from *The Dockers’ Museum* with a small set of pictures that are part of the unordered 147 slides that Sekula created for *Reverse Magellan*—a sequence he conceived as an integral part of his *Ship of Fools | The Dockers’ Museum* project.⁸²⁸ (Plate 29) I want to bring in from *Reverse Magellan* a photograph of a cloud on the horizon line, awkwardly shaped like a harpoon emerging from the water surface. (see Plate 29 above left image) Next is a close-up of the *Global Mariner*’s ground tackle under tension from the anchor. (see Plate 29 above right image) These mysterious pictures serve to illustrate how the center, or the “deepest thing” there is to know, as both Pamuk and Sekula each in their own way have pointed out, is not made up of a hard shell or nut.⁸²⁹ Instead, it consists of a mobile tissue, which can take on an endless variety of multifarious shapes. Therefore, it always slips away at the very moment you thought you were able to grab or grasp it.

Pamuk recognized an egalitarian and democratic kind of hope emerging from this dream of attaining the deepest, dearest knowledge



Fig. A.4.

Cockle Kids [as indicated on backside of photograph], black-and-white photograph, undated, Katagai, Japan, 20.5×25.4 cm. Unknown photographer (copyright holder and rights status unknown). © Keystone-France/Gamma. Part of Allan Sekula,

Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).

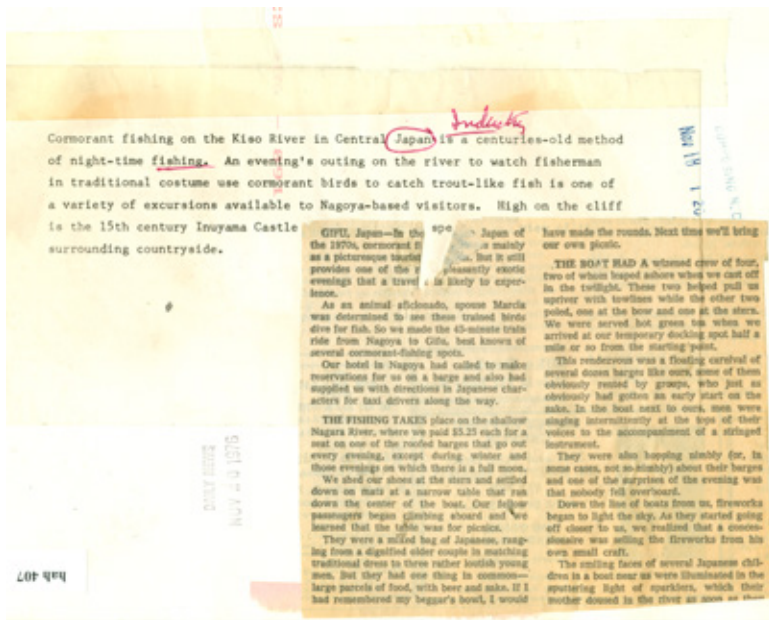


Fig. A.5.

Cormorant fishing on the Kiso River in Central Japan is a centuries-old method of nighttime fishing [as indicated on backside of photograph], black-and-white photograph, possibly published in *Daily News*, November 18/20 (?), 1976, 20.4×25.8 cm. Photographer unknown (copyright holder and rights status

unknown). "Object of interest," part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 2010–2013. Purchased by Allan Sekula through eBay on May 27, 2012. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers' Museum*).

of the world and of life. For him, the way forward with this search would be to use, before anything else, our own experience and our own intellect. Taking this back to the dramatic closed-border situation in Calais, we can muse about the fundamental question that Bruno Latour put forward. “How can the feeling of being protected be provided without an immediate return to identity and the defense of borders?”⁸³⁰ He envisaged the following answer: “By two complementary movements that modernization has made contradictory: *attaching oneself* to the soil on the one hand, *becoming attached to the world* on the other.” This somehow appears to correspond with what Jules Michelet already had in mind in 1861. In the chapter on “Shells, Mother of Pearl, and Pearl,” he spoke of a world to come as marked by the “harmony of double forms, their equilibrium, the gracefulness of their oscillation.”⁸³¹ These two corresponding halves, he rather cryptically added, would not make up a *unity*, but a *Union* instead.

As an animal metaphor for the one who has constructed the most perfect system of defense—a citadel—Michelet put forward the urchin. No shell compares to that of the urchin’s perfection. The urchin represents, according to Michelet, therewith the “completion of the first world.”⁸³² The reason why the first world has shifted from a state of perfection to one of completion is because the urchin has constructed for itself a “master piece” that has transcended what was strictly necessary. The miracle of its defense has made it a prisoner inside its own cuirass. The sea urchin has dug its own grave and has become not only shut in but also buried. The perfection of its own isolation at the same time banished and deprived it of all connections, and consequently of any possibility of realistic progression.

Michelet warned his audience that it will take loads of courage to reconstruct a new type of more regular ascent, from a low and embryonic stage onward. For him, the new type of creature, at the outset, will have no other movement at its disposal than that of the elements themselves. It will be the complete serf of the planet itself, and even in the egg it will need to turn as the Earth turns to survive at all. Ultimately, when emancipated from the egg, it will need to find its way for growing up further with no more shelter than the fragile shape of a soft mollusk. One trembles, Michelet shivered in all sincerity, at the sheer thought of how a *creature so weak* is supposed to survive and grow. He developed the example of abalones (also named ormer, sea-ears, or ear shells). To live, the mollusk cannot isolate itself (contrary to the urchin). A mollusk needs to create shelter and safety while remaining connected with the outer world. For that purpose, mollusks are incredibly inventive, and gracious. But, he added, they cannot succeed without the nurturing environment of the deep ocean, their loving mother, while at the same time receiving their chief ailment, sunlight.

Patently growing in the quietude of love and light, willing nothing, and doing nothing but enjoying that warm love, some mollusks even develop pearls. The pearl, as Michelet warned his readers, can only generate as the consequence of a wound—a continued suffering by the mother of pearl, a nurturing that generates the pearl’s divine poetry. Allan Sekula owned a copy of this book. It is therefore tempting to connect Michelet’s ideas to a black-and-white photograph within *The Dockers’ Museum* collection linked to the theme of the pearl. (fig. A.6) It represents a Japanese woman working at Mikimoto pearl factory in Ujiyamada, who is in the process of drilling a hole in a pearl, so that a worker in precious metals could use it for jewelry or other decorative purposes. Its reverse side reveals the name of the picture’s author, Peter L. Gould, and a tentative date sometime during the 1970s.⁸³³

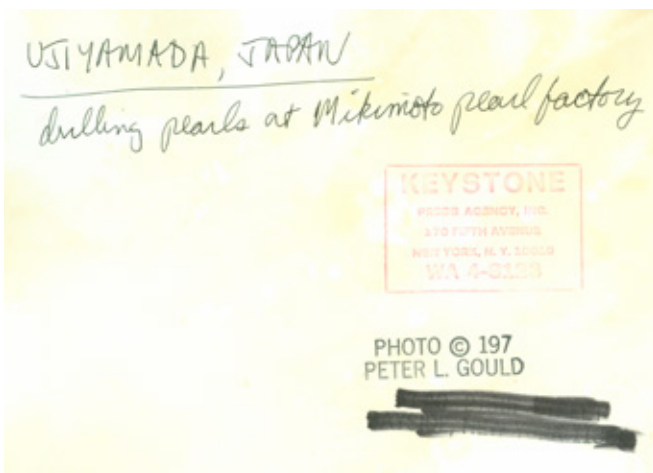


Fig. A.6.
Peter L. Gould,
UJIYAMADA, JAPAN,
drilling pearls at
Mikimoto pearl factory
[as indicated on backside
of photograph], black-
and-white photograph,
1970s, 20.5×25.3 cm.
© Keystone. “Object of
interest,” part of Allan
Sekula, *Ship of Fools /*
The Dockers’ Museum,
2010–2013. Date of ac-
quisition by Allan Sekula
unknown. Collection
M HKA, Antwerp/
Collection Flemish
Community. Courtesy
Allan Sekula Studio (for
The Dockers’ Museum);
Images Press [Peter L.
Gould], ARP:996319690
Pearl Jewelry Production
– *Mikimoto*, color photo-
graph, [1970s].
© Getty Images.

When I found out that Getty Images could clear the rights of an anonymous photograph obviously from the same shooting session (as only minor details are different between the two images), I was surprised to learn that the original is a color image. The strikingly purplish (neutral) overall hue of the photograph that became the cover image of Volume II, combined with the theme of the pearl, connects this picture to the idea of a rebirth as explored throughout *Ground Sea*. Before Mikimoto Kōkichi invented cultured pearls in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, this was understood to be biologically impossible.⁸³⁴ Mikimoto, a marine biologist, enjoys an impeccable reputation for his ecological and ethical approach to culturing pearls, with which he was much ahead of his time. Imagining the right to be reborn, and then afterwards realizing that successful rebirth, requires much nurturing, helping hands, and access to training and precision instruments too.

Yet, when pearls are skillfully cultured, much is possible. In Sekula's *The Dockers' Museum*, one photograph magnificently demonstrates the metaphorical potential of this idea when transposed to human persons. (fig. A.7) It is a still from the cult camp movie *10:30 P.M. Summer* (1966), filmed in dictatorial Spain.⁸³⁵ The set photograph that Sekula purchased online features Melina Mercouri during the film's closing scene at a flamenco performance in a Madrid theater. Just before, the viewer witnessed the Greek actress, in her role as the main protagonist Maria, informing her husband Paul in their luxury hotel room that she no longer loves him. Paul, the prototype of the successful, self-oriented bourgeois man racking up female conquests, refuses to believe her; and even more given her financial and emotional dependency on him—especially since they have a young child, whom Maria loves deeply.

As the photograph from *The Dockers' Museum* displays as well, however, for Maria (who suffers from an alcohol addiction), the glass of endurance is literally completely empty. Toward the end of the passionate flamenco scene, she faces Paul and their mutual lover Claire, who accompanies them/him to the performance. All the set photographs that I was able to source manifest the same, rather contradictory, combination of informative material: although laughter and amusement appear prevalent, Maria's glass, strikingly, remains unfilled. (fig. A.8) In the last picture, Maria extends her right arm. With her index finger, she points into the direction of the cheating, selfish duo across the podium.⁸³⁶ The colorful brooch pinned to her white dress near her left shoulder cannot be missed—as if it endorses her decision, like a divine eye. Encrusted with precious and semiprecious stones in the shape of a flower, it unmistakably resembles the birth motif.

The set photograph that Sekula selected for *The Dockers' Museum* shows people laughing loudly together. In the end, it is this edgy



community of laughers that gives Maria the final encouragement to escape from the golden cage that her life had turned into. Here, I want to refer one more time to language: the Dutch word for lace is *kant*, meaning edge, border, side.⁸³⁷ In French, *dentelle* is close to *dent*, meaning tooth. Maria, strikingly, displays her wonderful teeth (and so does the man next to her, though his are less charming, but he clearly does not care at all). Through laughing and having fun together with these unknown people, bonding by means of an age-old tradition of music-making, singing, and dancing, Maria experiences a feeling of togetherness that she lacks in her alienated bourgeois life. Sekula, as has been discussed, for his part, hated masculine isolation, individualism, and narcissism. What it brought to social life, he believed, is the miserableness of an “ethical wasteland.”⁸³⁸

As if anticipating the #MeToo movement, the spectator watches Maria leave the room, never to return. The film ends on a suggestive note near Madrid’s Viaducto de Segovia. But, as we watch *10:30 P.M. Summer*’s closing scene, the director somehow makes his viewers presume (through views from a blind-spot mirror and a long final pan shot) that Maria is still living somewhere around town, to return revived at

Fig. A.7.

[D. La Badie (copyright holder and rights status unknown)], set photograph from *10:30 P.M. Summer* (1966), feature film directed by Jules Dassin, black-and-white photograph, 20.2×25.7 cm. “Object of interest,” part of Allan Sekula, *Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 2010–2013. Date of acquisition by Allan Sekula unknown. Collection M HKA, Antwerp/Collection Flemish Community. Courtesy Allan Sekula Studio (for *The Dockers’ Museum*).



Fig. A.8.

Above image: [D. La Badie (copyright holder and rights status unknown)], *MPX:121638391 Melina Mercouri in '10:30 P.M. Summer,'* [1966]. © Archive Photos/Getty Images. Middle image: [D. La Badie (copyright holder and rights status unknown)], black-and-white set photograph from *10:30 PM Summer* (1966), directed by Jules Dassin. Source: <https://www.zeusdvds.com/10-30-pm-summer-1966-dvd/> (last accessed April 1, 2020). Below image: [D. La Badie (copyright holder and rights status unknown)], *ULB:537161601 Melina Mercouri,* [1966]. © ullstein bild Dtl./Getty Images.

a later moment in time. This atmosphere is also present in Sekula's *Reverse Magellan*. The artist, as described in Chapter Seven, was fond of calling his artworks disassembled movies. He also suggested that, in his oeuvre, "there is a larger montage principle at work than that internal to any single work, or even book."⁸³⁹ As he added: "any retrospective look allows for that larger montage to emerge." Indeed, this retrospective look provides ways to connect the enigma that is *Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum* to Sekula's other works, and to grant it further meaning—even if only speculatively.

*

In one of the slides from *Reverse Magellan*, Allan Sekula invited the viewer to follow, along with him, two women walking down a staircase in a park. (see Plate 29 middle left image) Elsewhere in the sequence, we discover another bird's-eye view of a wooden pontoon leading our imaginative gaze further down, underwater. (see Plate 29 middle right image) From these two slides, combined with the set photograph from *10:30 P.M. Summer*, it is possible to construct an amalgam of connections to another Dassin movie, *Never on Sunday* (1960)—also starring Mercouri. This conflation is all but random, for it builds on Sekula's inclusion of three short excerpts from this film in his epic quasi-documentary *The Lottery of the Sea*. Sekula did so with the purpose of livening up the shots of his visits to the legendary birthplace of democracy: Athens. *Never on Sunday* takes its spectators back to an era when the city still was a rather idyllic place, even though large-scale economic speculation involving its port of Piraeus was already underway.

Twice in *The Lottery of the Sea* Sekula integrated fragments from the opening scene of *Never on Sunday*, in which Illia, a jolly prostitute, runs to the waterfront on her way to her daily swim near a shipyard, undresses in haste, and jumps in like a siren.⁸⁴⁰ As she is playfully waving to boat workers, trying to lure them, no boat worker can resist her call, and they all leave behind their work to join her. As we watch them plunge into the harbor basin, their supervisor (captain) remains calm and patient, granting them this short moment of distraction. Hearing generalized laughter and watching splashing water everywhere, we see them having fun, as if they are a bunch of landlubbers that can fluidly transform into sea mammals at any time.

There is more. Illia, so it turns out, is a fan of Greek tragedies and of *Medea* in particular, which she has seen performed on fifteen occasions and about which she likes to tell to her admirers during Sunday gatherings at her kitschy home (when she is off from work). In her view, the play does not grant much compliments to men, since *Medea* is "about what a woman suffers for a man." On one of these Sunday gatherings,

Illia invited the American tourist Homer Thrace (who, so he had previously confessed to her, came to Greece to find “the truth”). To his great consternation, Illia adapts the end of the tale. In her happier version, Medea does not murder her children but instead protects them. As a result, there is no need for her to escape in her chariot drawn by winged dragons.⁸⁴¹ Instead, so Illia concludes, they all get on a wonderful chariot together and go to the seashore for a swim!

We can only hypothesize what was on Sekula’s mind when he decided to include in *Reverse Magellan* two photographs of a wallpaper poster representing Juno flying through the air in a chariot drawn by peacocks ornamented with the eyes of slain Argus, just after she concocted with the old Ocean her revenge plan concerning the nymph Callisto.⁸⁴² (see Plate 29 below images) Through the heart of this representation, someone cut a hole. As Sekula gives us two versions, one with a blurred background and the other with a vague foreground, the viewer can perceive through this would-be keyhole a graffiti painting displaying the bent-over buttocks of a woman. From behind her spread-out legs, a tiny man with a mustache is peering at us (or is it rather her own face upside down, looking back at us provocatively?). *The Dockers’ Museum* contains a wide variety of *objects of interest* representing women in similarly provocative poses (forming the cluster of the so-called “Glam Girls”). In Sekula’s wild imagination, such figures represent contemporary tropes of twinned mermaid tails.⁸⁴³

This leads the discussion back to Illia, the autonomous sea woman. Homer promises Illia that she will be reborn after a rigorous educational program of the mind, which will take him two weeks. She accepts his offer to attempt to metamorphose her. Together, they listen to classical music; she reads philosophy books, exchanges her dolls for a globe, and hangs a Picasso poster on the wall... Toward the end of Illia’s intellectual training, Despo (a prostitute friend of Illia), coincidentally discovers that Homer receives money from the Mafioso pimp nicknamed No Face, who exploits Despo and who wants to see Illia out of business. Despo then comes to warn her, who at first leaves her no space for talking and happily proclaims: “I died, and I was born again.” When Illia asks Despo if she knows Homer, she replies that she does indeed. Slightly later, Homer walks into the room. Despo continues the conversation with Illia in his presence: “You died, and you were born again? Well, make a deep breath because you are going to die again: he works for No Face.” Upon that, Illia throws all the modern decoration and books that Homer brought for her out of the house again. Relieved of an enormous burden, she resumes her former life as a happy whore.

The moral lesson of the movie is that Homer, who pretends to know “the law” (of bourgeois society), which he desires to impose on Illia, is overruled by the law that Illia knows: the law of the sea, which is the law

of love (of *Union*, as Michelet had it). As the boatyard's captain points out to Homer at the end of the film, possibly the only law that Illia would consider giving up her present lifestyle for is that of a true love into which she can be reborn. Illia, eventually, does not surrender to the vain efforts of her inadequate teacher and categorically refuses to be reborn as a pseudo-intellectual bourgeois woman. What is most impressive about the film's closing scene is that, once again, it ends in a party. All protagonists sing and dance together, and Homer is generously forgiven for what they consider to be his delusions. When he amicably shouts at Illia: "I wanted to save you!" she immediately asks him: "Why don't you save No Face? He needs it more than me." When Homer next replies, saying "because you were the symbol" (of happy ancient Greece), Illia's special boyfriend Tonio objects that Illia is not a symbol, but a woman. Laughter is the basis of their shared feeling of community. The community, without exception, laugh themselves through any sorrows by proclaiming aloud the simple phrase, "and they all go to the seashore!"

In relation to this movie, so poignantly present as a constitutive ingredient of *The Lottery of the Sea*, it is now possible to shed further light on the Juno–Glam Girl diptych from *Reverse Magellan*. With it, Sekula may have suggested that only a free union of skillful sirens and mermen can break Juno's spell. This is how we can now read the set photograph of Maria bursting out in laughter just before she leaves Paul and Claire behind as the instant when she decides to shake off the role of a revengeful Juno. She sets herself free and rejects the abominable position of the betrayed, jealous wife, waiting for her adulterous man to turn a bit of his perverse attention to her. As she walks out, we imagine her (as in Illia's version of Medea) to first have gone to pick up her child and have taken the little girl with her to the seashore (in a wonderful chariot). There, they joined the other water-bounds who have been waiting for them—lovers of life, of each other, and of the reviving nourishments of the sea.

If the outcome of many years' struggle with Sekula's *The Dockers' Museum* is that, possibly, its creator desired that a form of quasi-fiction needed to generate from the puzzle pieces that he scattered and left behind, then I propose to guide Maria and her young daughter back to 1927 Föhr Island. (fig. A.9) In the harbor of the small town of Wyk, they board a sailing vessel owned by a family from Ketelswarf on Hallig Langeness, who has come to their encounter. As the book's ultimate psychical object, I imagine Diana—in a previous life, as an older woman, before she was reborn in Monieka sometime during the 1930s—to figure among this company. After they have all patiently waited until the ship at anchor safely stands clear of the water in the holm's nearby tide-land, they wade barefoot further, homeward. There, while spending their free time enjoying watching birds, they will regain forces by the hearth and wait for their next, *kairological* opportunity to be reborn. In David



Fig. A.9.
 Reproduced by permission from Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Die Halligen* (Berlin: Albertus-Verlag, 1927), 110–112. Courtesy Albert Renger-Patzsch Archiv/Ann und Jürgen Wilde. © SABAM Belgium 2021.

Grossman's novel *Life Plays with Me* (2019), the narrator recalls a poetry verse by Motti Baharav: "Before you are reborn, verify carefully where you are finding yourself."⁸⁴⁴

In one of the most dystopian texts he ever wrote (a proposal for an opera to be performed in 2033, accompanying his photographic sequence *Black Tide/Marea negra* from 2002/2003), Allan Sekula anticipated that humans (citizens and noncitizens alike) will—in a world replete with calamities, diseases, and disasters—have to stand up against their dysfunctional states, in a time when there will be no democracies left. THE SONG OF SOCIETY AGAINST THE STATE, to be performed at the end of the opera by the chorus, should include, somewhere, a passage from Albert Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*: "**But when he had again seen the face of this world, enjoyed water and sun, warm stones and the sea, he no longer wanted to go back to infernal darkness.**"⁸⁴⁵ Whereas Krzysztof Kieślowski's films were full of "transcendent optimism," as Joseph Kickasola had it, Sekula here rather displayed a cosmogenic optimism despite everything, since he loved the sea, the sun, and warm stones so very much.⁸⁴⁶ May the lowly crew, with their skill, competence, and team spirit, seize the helm.⁸⁴⁷ Then, when water and sun, warm stones and the sea will find harmony, finally, "the swelling mask-muffled dirge of a collective Sisyphus" can be halted.⁸⁴⁸

Apparently

the red spots
on Jupiter are
centuries old
hurricanes

W.G. Sebald, *For Years Now* (London: Short Books, 2001), 18.



The Search Project (Meditative Pause)

Inspecting #submerged landscape @Doggerland from the #british side of the @DoverStrait

#winter #AustralianLabradoodleDog #beach #dawn #shingles #calm
#DoggerlandDoodle #np #PerfectDay

Notes

1. The term *uncanny* references Anthony Vidler's use of it in terms of an *unhomely* feeling, as connected to the nostalgia of a forever lost birthplace. See Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny*, 1992, 64–65.
2. Le Gros, "Sylvain George, réalisateur," 2015, n.p.
3. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1080.
4. Before it developed into a humiliating label, the term "jungle" did not possess this negative connotation. Debarati Sanyal has explained that it stems from the word *janqal* in Farsi, meaning forest. See Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 2017, 1.
5. See also the cover image to Volume I, Bruno Serralongue's *Chemin à l'aube 1, Calais, juillet 2006* [*Path at Dawn 1, Calais, July 2006*].
6. For the French translation, see Benjamin, *Œuvres I*, 1971, 148; for the English version, see Benjamin, *Reflections*, 300. The English translation in this book differs slightly from George's phrasing of the sentence: "Divine violence, which is the sign and seal but never the means of sacred execution, may be called sovereign violence."
7. Cockburn et al., *5 Days That Shook the World*, 2000, 117. The following quotation is on the same page.
8. *Ibid.*, 118. The following quotation is on the same page.
9. Allan Sekula provided this information standing inside the projection room of *Waiting for Tear Gas* [*white globe to black*] during the guided tour of his Budapest exhibition, as may be observed from the earlier mentioned longer version of the recording now preserved in the archive of the Ludwig Múzeum.
10. Sekula spoke of the Seattle protest as inspired by Mahatma Gandhi during the guided tour in Budapest; the second part of the quotation is from Sekula's untitled preface to his photographic sequence *Waiting for Tear Gas* [*white globe to black*], in Cockburn et al., *5 Days That Shook the World*, 122.
11. Sekula, "Allan Sekula. United States," 2002, 47.
12. Sekula, as quoted from the guided tour in Budapest. Further quotations are from this same recording. Toward the end of the visit, he remarked to the audience: "when curators in the United States show this work and refer to the 'riot' in Seattle I know they are on the side of the patrons of their museums."
13. Young, "On Strike: Allan Sekula's *Waiting for Tear Gas*," in McLagan and McKee, *Sensible Politics*, 149.
14. *Ibid.*, 154.
15. Benjamin, *Reflections*, 294. The following quotation is on the same page.
16. *Ibid.*, 295.
17. Young, "On Strike," 179n33.
18. See Oldham and Wilma, "After protestors fill the streets," 2009.
19. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book VI, verses 163–354.
20. Young, "On Strike," 179n33.
21. Sekula, "Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]," in *id.*, *TITANIC's wake*, 87. The text was written in September 2000. The following quotation is on the same page.
22. Young, "On Strike," 158.
23. Steve Edwards interpreted this crowd emerging as a "horizontal social form united [...] in difference": Edwards, "Commons and Crowds," 2009, 455.
24. I draw this connection from conversations and from email correspondence with Sylvain George in 2016–2017. We discussed the example of the Administrative Tribunal of Lille that had used this article as a basis to condemn the French government for not installing adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions at the then Calais camp on November 2, 2015, after a case was introduced by the Association Médecins du Monde et al. See <http://lille.tribunal-administratif.fr/content/download/50062/438918/version/1/file/1508747%20V3%20anonymis%C3%A9.pdf> and <http://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/case-law/france-administrative-tribunal-lille-2-novembre-2015-association-medecins-du-monde-et-al-no#content> (accessed October 20, 2020).
25. With the kind permission of Sylvain George, I have made this fragment available for viewing/listening on my website groundsea.be.
26. Kuehner, "Welcome to Calais," 2011, n.p. The following quotation is from this text as well.
27. Lemièrre, "Calais. Qu'est-ce que filmer la barbarie," 2011, 32. My translation.

28. Sarmiento and Delgado, "Q&A: Sylvain George," n.p.
29. This singing is included in the abovementioned film excerpt available for consultation on groundsea.be.
30. See George, "Burning Fingers," 2012.
31. Ibid, n.p. The text continues as follows: "To burn your body. To char your identity. This is no longer just about an image. An image? To mark yourself with a red iron. An image? The policies of immigration mark the foreigners by means of a red iron? This no longer concerns a metaphor. // To burn the bodies. To char the identities. To burn off the simple fact of being there: bare life. // Having written these lines, I see Temesghen smiling again at my shocked expression. Temesghen whom I have known for five months. Temesghen, whose name means: 'Thank God.' // Ashak, for his part, will say, he who gave me permission to film his burning fingers, // Ashak, for his part, will say, 'Fucking Europe.' // Ashak. // Ashak. // Not a single person will ever be able to escape from him anymore." My translations.
32. For more information, see the ECRE weekly bulletin of June 26, 2015, entitled "ECRE expresses deep concerns over EU Commission's fingerprinting guidelines," <https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=8e3ebd297b1510becc6d6d690&id=e19ce63f4d#fingerprinting> (accessed October 20, 2020).
33. See the information provided by the European Union on its website, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/identification-of-applicants_en (accessed December 3, 2020). There, it reads that, since the enormous influx of new arrivals in 2015, the fingerprint system appears not to have been entirely reliable. Attempts are made to find consensus on new regulations that would allow fingerprint data to be complemented with digital photographs of newcomers and facial-recognition technology.
34. See <https://righttoremain.org.uk/resources/toolkit/dublin.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2020).
35. Louarn, "UK border police start," 2020, n.p.
36. See Amnesty International, *Report 2017/18*, 167. In violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*, the principle according to which states are obliged not to return any person to a country where they would risk being subjected to human-rights violations, France returned 640 individuals to Afghanistan in 2016.
37. Toubon, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 42. My translation. See as well Baumard, "La promesse faite," 2017.
38. See Baumard, "Migrants: la charge de Macron," 2018.
39. As a result, France counts numerous undocumented persons on its territory. On July 12, 2019, hundreds of them protested the conditions they are facing by occupying the Pantheon monument in Paris. The movement under the name "Gilets Noirs" asked for regularization for all. The police brutally intervened as protesters were leaving the building. At least six persons were arrested, and several people were injured. See Bock, "'Gilets Noirs' protesters occupy Pantheon," 2019.
40. See Le Blanc and Brugère, *Fin de l'hospitalité*, 2017, 174. The following quotations are on the same page. My translations.
41. Ashley Binetti Armstrong has made a convincing case that there is a direct link between the failure of the Dublin system and the construction of walls on European soil. The one catalyzed the other. See Binetti, "You Shall Not Pass!," 2019.
42. Ibid., 88. The following quotations are on the same page. My translations.
43. See Diken and Bagge Laustsen, "Zones of Indistinction," 2003, 45.
44. See Agamben, *Means without End* [1996], 2000, 139–140. The following quotation is on p. 140.
45. Asselberghs, "Capsular," 2007, 16.
46. A height of six meters doesn't stop people from trying. On the contrary, it has only made the situation worse, as people started trying to storm the barrier collectively (hundreds at the same time), using tools harmful to themselves and to the guards, leaving many injured as a result. See the AFP/*The Local's* press communiqué, <https://www.thelocal.es/20180726/violence-as-migrants-storm-morocco-spain-border-fence> (accessed October 20, 2020). On April 6, 2020, a group of around 260 people tried to jump the fence together in Melilla, at the height of Villa Pilar. The attempt was successful for fifty-five of them. See Martínez, "Un total de 55," 2020, n.p.
47. Asselberghs, quotation from a conversation with Mieke Bleyen and Hilde Van Gelder, in Van Gelder, *Bruegel Revisited*, 2006, 31.
48. Asselberghs, "Capsular," 17.
49. Security measures both at the border of Ceuta and its sister enclave, Melilla, are draconic—including barbed wire and blades (the so-called *concertinas*). See Lefebure, "Nouvelles cameras et système," 2019. The effects of this policy are deadly, because people have taken more and more risks, and have nonetheless jumped over the fence. See <http://amdhpairs>.

- org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/rapport-migration-18.pdf; and <https://www.ecre.org/52-people-jump-fence-into-melilla-while-40-arrested/> (accessed October 20, 2020) They have also become ever-more inventive and have tried to hide inside the car glove boxes of vehicles or attempted to access the enclaves through sewer tunnels. See Mee, “Refugee found hiding,” 2019; and <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/28349/four-migrants-die-trying-to-reach-spanish-enclave-in-africa> (accessed November 30, 2020). From October 2020 on, the old fence at Melilla has been replaced by one that is ten meters high. Although the infamous *concertinas* have been removed, the metal rollers that replace them (in combination with the overall structure of the fence) provide a clear impression that it is impossible to climb over, let alone storm it. In due course, a similar fence is to be completed at Ceuta. See Martín, “Interior ultima la construcción,” 2020, n.p. For a profound investigation and clear overview of the pushback situation at Melilla, see <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/pushbacks-in-melilla-and-nt-vs-spain> (accessed October 20, 2020).
50. Asselberghs, “Capsular,” 18.
 51. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-and-france-to-strengthen-joint-action-against-small-boats> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 52. See De Bouw, “Franse marine begeleidt,” 2020.
 53. As reported in *The Guardian*, the British Home Office released some tough talk about ending family reunions for children after Brexit, mandatory under the Dublin regulation. See Grant, “Home Office Planning to end,” 2019; and <https://www.ecre.org/uk-proposal-for-system-of-reunification-for-unaccompanied-children-rejected-by-eu-while-government-deploys-military-drones-to-patrol-the-channel/> (accessed October 20, 2020). As I was closing the manuscript for publication, however, this seemed confirmed, although much uncertainty continues to reign now that the Dublin III Regulation no longer applies in the United Kingdom. See Oberti, “Brexit: what changes,” 2020, n.p.
 54. Kobelinsky and Le Courant made mention of private companies, which concluded contracts to deliver arms to North African and Middle Eastern countries, as well as to build security equipment along the European Union’s external borders. See id., *La mort aux frontières*, 21–22.
 55. See Rotolini, “Exclusive: Italian doctor,” 2017. Another source is the report released by Amnesty International in the summer of 2017, *A Perfect Storm*.
 56. An example of this evidence can be found via a short video clip that circulates in the margins of Taylor, “Most refugees in Libyan,” 2019. Doctors without Borders has reported severe malnutrition conditions in the Sabaa detention center. See https://prezly.msf.org.uk/libya-alarmering-rates-of-malnutrition-and-inhumane-conditions-in-tripoli-detention-centre?utm_source=NEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=1st+section+1st+story+msf&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_therefugeebrief_external_20190321&utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=6dbcd80edb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_21_02_30&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-6dbcd80edb-422323141# (accessed October 20, 2020). Al Jazeera released a similar reportage regarding the Abu Salim detention center in southern Tripoli. See Hayden, “As Tripoli conflict continues,” 2019.
 57. See Huet, “Amnesty warns against,” 2017.
 58. Amnesty International, *Libya’s Dark Web*, 2017, 6.
 59. See Taylor, “Asylum seeker to sue,” 2018.
 60. See <http://www.migreurop.org/article2915.html?lang=fr> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 61. See <https://www.amnesty.be/infos/actualites/libya?lang=fr> (accessed October 20, 2020). The title says: “Libye et Union Européenne: Une collaboration criminelle.”
 62. Amnesty International, *Libya’s Dark Web*, 54. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page. Similar accusations have been uttered about Malta. A Maltese military aircraft is reported to have been escorting the Libyan coastguard to a vessel carrying some one hundred persons to bring it back to Libya. See https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/malta-denounced-after-assisting-libyan-coastguard-to-intercept-migrant-boat-1.856853?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=32501e01fa-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_05_06_12_56&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-32501e01fa-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). Malta also deploys private vessels for pushback operations. *Alarmphone*, an NGO that manages emergency phone calls when people find themselves in distress in the Mediterranean Sea, reports that there is a European refoulement industry active at sea. See https://alarmphone.org/en/2019/03/20/the-european-refoulement-industry-at-sea-alarm-phone/?post_type_release_type=post&utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=6dbcd80edb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_21_02_30&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-6dbcd80edb-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
 63. For more on this topic from the perspective of legal theory, see Sands, *East West Street*.

64. Vidal, "Bekroonde vluchtelingenarts slaakt nooddreft," 2017, n.p. See also Morgan, "EU obsessed with cutting migration," 2018.
65. See Amnesty International, *Libya's Dark Web*, 59. "Concentration camp" was also employed in reference to the Libyan detention centers in an opinion column published in *The New York Times* on July 5, 2019; Stephens, "An Immigration Policy," 2019, n.p.
66. See Tondo, "Sicily's 'doctor of migrants,'" 2019.
67. For a range of case studies describing how the Libyan coast guard and the Italian authorities boycott rescue operations, see <https://forensic-architecture.org/category/forensic-oceanography> (accessed October 20, 2020).
68. See https://www.dw.com/en/eu-to-suspend-ship-patrols-on-mediterranean-migrant-mission/a-48071670?utm_source=ECRE+News-letters&utm_campaign=f77b91b4ae-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_27_11_41&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-f77b-91b4ae-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
69. See Tondo, "Mediterranean will be 'sea of blood,'" 2019.
70. On January 17, 2020, the Italian Supreme Court of Cassation rejected the Agrigento prosecutors' appeal against a ruling from July 2019 that released German captain Carola Rackete from house arrest. Rackete, sailing on the *Sea-Watch 3* (flying the Dutch flag), was put under arrest after allegedly hitting a police vessel (part of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which employs a militarized fleet of boats) as it defied a ban to disembark forty people, rescued off Libya, on the island of Lampedusa. The vessel had been at sea for seventeen days. See https://www.ansa.it/english/news/2020/01/17/supreme-court-rejects-appeal-against-rackete-release_e062cfa1-386b-443e-8665-8765787a24c0.html (accessed October 20, 2020). For an interview with Rackete, see Hornig, "We Were All," 2019; and an online panel made for the first anniversary of the events is available via YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-Z3QztOssJE&feature=emb_title (accessed October 20, 2020). On the German captain Pia Klemp, see https://www.dw.com/en/german-boat-captain-pia-klemp-faces-prison-in-italy-for-migrant-rescuers/a-49112348?utm_source=ECRE+News-letters&utm_campaign=f3cdaef8e4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_06_11_11_55&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-f3cdaef8e4-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). Klemp has rejected a prestigious French civilian award, the Grand Vermeil Medal. She criticized French authorities for their undignified treatment of persons on the move, and for their criminalization of those who support them. Klemp faces up to twenty years in prison in Italy for assisting illegal migration. Her ship, the *Iuventa*, was impounded in Sicily in August 2017. See <https://www.dw.com/en/german-captain-of-migrant-rescue-ship-turns-down-paris-award/a-50119037> (accessed October 20, 2020). In August 2020, Klemp embarked on the *Louise Michel*, a vessel sponsored by the artist Banksy. See Davies, "Street artist Banksy," 2020. On Captain Tommaso Stella and the sailing rescue ship *Alex*, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/06/second-migrant-rescue-boat-defies-salvini-and-docks-in-italy> (accessed October 20, 2020). For an impressive civilian movement countering these policies, see the *Seebrücke* initiative, <https://seebruecke.org/en/we-create-safe-harbours/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
71. See Jones and Awokoya, "Are your tinned tomatoes," 2019.
72. See Jamieson et al., "UK lorry deaths," 2019. One month later, a similar container was discovered on a freighter that had departed from Rotterdam, and another one arrived at Rosslare Europort, Ireland. See JVT, BBD, "Zowat 25 verstekelingen," 2019; and WLE, "Zestien verstekelingen," 2019.
73. See Vidal, "Ik dacht dat," 2019.
74. In September 2020, four persons were convicted and jailed in Hà Tĩnh, Vietnam. On December 21, 2020, four more smugglers were sentenced in a UK trial; one month later, the criminal court ordered solitary confinements for these smugglers of up to twenty-seven years. The British, French, and Belgian authorities keep searching for accomplices. See Gentleman, "Essex lorry deaths," 2020, n.p.; Termote, "Celstraffen tot 27 jaar," 2021, n.p.; and https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20201222_96057696 (accessed January 6, 2020). For an insightful overview of the smugglers and their methods (in Dutch), see Termote and Woussen, "Wat kon ik doen?," 2021, n.p.
75. See Vanhaelemeesch, "Tracing borderscapes," 2018, 69 and 73.
76. On the topic of racism and her experiences with the Spanish immigration office, Daniela Ortiz, who is Peruvian, has published two polemical artist books (both without a publisher, and undated): *The ABC of Racist Europe* and *There is a Monster under my Bed. A Tale about the Beast of the Immigration Office*.
77. Demos et al., "Rights of Passage," n.p.
78. For more (technical, legal) information why this attempt is likely to fail, see the op-ed by Dieckmann, "EU at the Dock," 2019.
79. The term was first coined by Alessandra di Maio in 2012. See <https://international.ucla.edu/africa/event/9457> (accessed October 20, 2020). See also Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

80. See https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-deadly-migration-strategy-leaked-documents/?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=5faabfd5a2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_03_04_03_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-5faabfd5a2-422323141 and <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/09/26/eunavfor-med-operation-sophia-mandate-extended-until-31-march-2020/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
81. George, "Burning Fingers," n.p. My translation.
82. Burke, "Congo mission," 105. In what follows, I quote and paraphrase from this page, also to convey a sense of the vocabulary and tone of voice used.
83. In one of the photographs reproduced on p. 111 of the reportage (upper right), representing a woman receiving a shot, such decorative scars on her lower back near her spine are clearly visible. See https://books.google.be/books?id=UkgEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&redir_esc=y#v=twopage&q=farbman&f=true (accessed October 20, 2020).
84. *Ibid.*, 109.
85. Sloterdijk, *Spheres III*, 721.
86. *Ibid.*, 715.
87. Schaeffer, "Du portrait photographique," 1997, 25. In what follows, I summarize Schaeffer's argument.
88. Here, once again, the reference is to Azoulay, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*. Of specific interest are the opening pages of the first chapter ("Unlearning Imperialism"), on the various uses of the shutter and photography's deep, problematic complicity in imposing the imperialist world order (pp. 1–13).
89. Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 20. The rest of the quotation is on the same page. Original emphases.
90. Le Gros, "Sylvain George," n.p. My translation. On the genesis of a line of flight whenever segmentary lines explode as the consequence of a rupture within the rhizome, see also Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* [1980/1987], 2007, 9.
91. De Bruyn, "Beyond the Line," 2014, 43. See also Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 32n38.
92. Sekula, "Polonia and Other Fables 2007–2009," 65.
93. Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 22. The following quotation is on the same page.
94. *Ibid.*, 2.
95. Id., "Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]," in id., *TITANIC's wake*, 87.
96. See Stumpf, "Crimmigration Crisis," 2007.
97. Aliverti, *Crimes of Mobility*, 2013, 3.
98. *Ibid.*, opening statement, n.p.
99. *Ibid.*, 2.
100. *Ibid.*, 4. Aliverti here builds on Franko Aas, "Crimmigrant' Bodies," 2011, 336.
101. Aliverti, *Crimes of Mobility*, 4. See, as well, Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity*, 1994, 189.
102. Aliverti, *Crimes of Mobility*, 81. The following quotation is on the same page.
103. See Reidy, "Refugee, volunteer," 2019, n.p. Amnesty International has launched a petition on her behalf and on behalf of Seán Binder, who was arrested together with Mardini. See <https://www.amnesty-international.be/sarah-sean> (accessed December 3, 2020).
104. The term was used in an EU press release entitled "Towards a sustainable and fair Common European Asylum System," published on May 4, 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1620_en.htm (accessed October 20, 2020).
105. Tulinus, "So What's This Asylum Tourism," 2013, n.p.
106. See, for example, Anonymous, "Markus Söder," 2018.
107. Anonymous, "Horst Seehofer," 2018, n.p. The newspaper, tentidiously, illustrated the article with an opening photograph of three women observing a small ferry sailing under the French flag. Two of them are wearing a hijab. The caption states: "Muslim women in the harbor of La Rochelle, France." My translations and emphasis.
108. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 6.
109. *Ibid.*, 7.
110. *Ibid.*, 6. The following quotations are on the same page.
111. *Ibid.*, 17.
112. Derrida, *On the Name*, 1995, 82. Original emphasis.
113. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 9 and 26.
114. Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 22. The following quotations are on the same page. Sanyal is quoting from Papadopoulos and Tsianos, "Autonomy of Migration," 2007, 227.
115. Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 174–175. Original emphasis.
116. *Ibid.*, 175.

117. Sarmiento and Delgado, "Q&A: Sylvain George," n.p.
118. Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 23.
119. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 379.
120. George, "Notes (brèves) de l'égaré," in id., *Vita Bruta*, 2016, 29. My translation. My emphasis.
121. Sanyal, "Calais's 'Jungle,'" 22. Hereafter, I paraphrase Sanyal. My emphasis.
122. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 376.
123. Ibid., 377. The following quotation is on the same page.
124. Moix, *Dehors*, 86. My translation.
125. See, for example, Tétény et al., "Refugees, not Economic Migrants," 2018.
126. Toubon, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 67. My translation. See also Broomfeld, "Calais Jungle Wall," 2016.
127. Toubon, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 67. My translation. A confrontational website is "Fifteen Years Fortress Europe," which, on a daily base—starting in January 2000—provided an overview of the death toll of persons on the move on a blind map of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. On April 20, 2016, the known death toll was at 32,040. See <http://15years.morizbuesing.com/> (accessed April 2, 2021).
128. See Moix, *Dehors*, 59.
129. Ibid., 85. My translation.
130. Fouteau and Confaveux, "Jacques Rancière," 2011, n.p. The following quotations are from the same unpaginated text. My translations.
131. Moix, *Dehors*, 27. My translation.
132. Ibid., 29. My translation. Original emphasis.
133. See Agence-France Presse, "'Boat is full,'" 2015. As Ulrike Guérot has reminded us, this expression was also picked up by Thomas Piketty. See Guérot, *Why Europe Should Become a Republic*, 2019, 36.
134. For more information about this controversy, see Press Association, "Facebook removes," 2018.
135. Snyder, *Road to Unfreedom*, 2018, 198.
136. See Ibid, 103–104.
137. Newspapers have been fond of sketching disaster scenarios, such as potential food and drug shortages. See O'Carroll, "Calais after Brexit," 2018. But, even as there are indeed some challenges for the supply chains, the Britons appear to manage. See Wood, "Tesco hails record Christmas," 2021, n.p.
138. See the opinion article by the then Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi, "Mediterranean migrant emergency," 2015.
139. See Van Houtum and Pijpers, "European Union as a Gated Community," 2007.
140. See Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDDH), "Opinion on the situation of migrants," 2015, 2.
141. Ibid. Original emphasis.
142. Ibid., 19. For an overview of the various treaties and bilateral administrative agreements relocating British border controls to French port and rail zones, and vice versa, see *ibid.*, 1–2.
143. See Morris, "Theresa May admits," 2017.
144. Theresa May almost said as much when she declared, on Emmanuel Macron's symbolic visit to the United Kingdom in January 2018, that the "UK is investing in the security of our border": Bernard, "Au sommet franco-britannique," 2018, n.p. My emphasis.
145. See Asthana, "Emmanuel Macron: I'll renegotiate," 2017.
146. See Bernard, "En dépit du Brexit," 2017; and Bernard, "Célébrée par Theresa May," 2018.
147. CNCDDH, "Opinion on the situation of migrants," 2.
148. Ibid., 17. The following quotation is on the same page.
149. My translation.
150. My emphasis. This term implicitly refers to the identical title of a 1949 play by Albert Camus, translated into English as *The Just Assassins*.
151. Moix, *Dehors*, 70. My translation.
152. Moix, *Dehors*, 17. The following quotation is from the same page. My translation.
153. Fouteau and Confaveux, "Jacques Rancière," n.p.
154. See Beck and Witte, "Germany's refugee intake," 2019. On February 4, 2020, the news site *DW* reported that half of the refugees that the country takes in find jobs within five years. See <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-half-of-refugees-find-jobs-within-five-years/a-52251414> (accessed October 20, 2020).
155. See De Coninck, "Barst in Fort Europa," 2019.
156. Ibid. My translation.
157. See Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1077.
158. See <https://www.focus-wtv.be/verkiezingen-2019/Middelkerke> (accessed October 20, 2020).
159. Sanyal, "Calais' 'Jungle,'" 6. Sanyal borrowed this

- concept from Hirsch and Spitzer, “Small Acts of Repair,” 2016.
160. Moix, *Dehors*, 185. The following quotations are from the same page. My translations.
 161. Hanks, “Forgotten Problem,” 2019, n.p.
 162. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 1987, 194–195. Original emphasis.
 163. *Ibid.*, n.p. (preface). The following quotation is on the same page.
 164. In May 2019, a video clip was released that was recorded during a meeting of right-wing Flemish N-VA party members. To the great amusement of the audience, Bart De Wever explicitly targeted illegal criminals and explained how the system of repatriation by air works. It could be viewed online (with French subtitles) https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail_bart-de-wever-et-air-francken?id=2499961&jwsourc=cl (last accessed May 27, 2019); and is still available for consultation with French dubbing: https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/bart-de-wever-evoque-des-razzias-et-des-arrangements-avec-son-ami-francken-l-enregistrement-choc-d-un-journaliste-infiltrer-a-la-n-va/video-rtl-1141545.html?cookie_check=1558951534 (accessed October 20, 2020).
 165. Ultsch and Nowak, “Boot ist voll,” 2015, n.p.
 166. See the entry “Hungary reverses suspension of Dublin Regulation,” *ECRE Weekly Bulletin* (June 26, 2015), <https://us1.campaign-archive.com/?u=8e3ebd297b1510becc6d-6d690&id=e19ce63f4d#Hungary> (accessed October 20, 2020). Ever since, the Dublin rules have created great stir among EU Member States. For a more recent analysis of the situation, see Catherine Woollard’s editorial “Trapped in Dublin,” *ECRE Weekly Bulletin* (February 21, 2020), <https://mailchi.mp/ecre/ecre-weekly-bulletin-21022020?e=0778a16b26> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 167. Pouilly, “UNHCR urges suspension,” 2017, n.p. My emphasis.
 168. A representative set of pictures of the Kelebia detention center area, on the Hungarian–Serbian border, is available online via Getty Images. See <https://www.gettyimages.in/photos/kelebia?sort=mostpopular&mediatype=photography&phrase=kelebia> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 169. See <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-09/cp170091en.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 170. See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-469_en.htm (accessed October 20, 2020); and Sandford, “Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic,” 2020.
 171. On November 3, 2019, *The New York Times* published a lengthy investigation about how Hungarian oligarchs and populist politicians abuse EU agricultural subsidies. See Gebrekidan et al., “Money Farmers,” 2019.
 172. See <https://www.helsinki.hu/en/hungary-unlawfully-detains-people-in-the-transit-zone/>; and <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=226495&text=&dir=&doclang=EN&part=1&occ=first&mode=DOC&page-Index=0&cid=16745812> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 173. See <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/6/5e-fa0f914/access-asylum-further-stake-hungary-unhcr.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
 174. For an overview of the interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights to the government of Hungary to ensure that all persons detained in the transit zones are not deprived of food, see https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/10V84xA-VREK5ScFwz4ME_2kfpBRV_CPqCr7SUKitE2o8/edit#gid=0 (accessed October 20, 2020).
 175. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/proposal-regulation-asylum-migration_en-1.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
 176. Woollard, “Editorial: RAMMING it Home,” 2020, n.p. The following quotations are on the same page. My emphasis.
 177. Baudrillard, “Please follow me,” in *Sophie Calle. Suite vénitienne*, 1988, 86. Hereafter, I paraphrase from the same page.
 178. *Id.*, *Perfect Crime* [1995], 1996, 58. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
 179. Sekula, email to the author, July 20, 2006.
 180. I discussed these topics at length in my “Allan Sekula: Documenta 12 Project,” 2007.
 181. Sekula, email to the author, July 20, 2006.
 182. *Id.*, “Bring me the Head,” 2007, 209. Original emphasis. The irony underlying this text has frequently been misunderstood. In interview conversation with Dieter Buchhart and Gerald Nestler, Sekula summarized its reception as follows: “More than once, critics leveled the reproach of ‘didacticism’ at me, even though the text was patently nonsensical, as if written by some professional museum person who wanted to keep his or her job. Please excuse me for my crossing the boundary between writing about art and making art.” See Buchhart and Nestler, “Lügen ist Heute,” 2010, 157. My translation.

183. See Kristeva, "Place Names," 1978, 103.
184. See also Parvulescu, *Laughter*, 2010, 15 and 162n54.
185. Kristeva, "Place Names," 107. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
186. See Derrida, *On Touching* [2000], 2005, 28–29 and 368n14; and Parvulescu, *Laughter*, 162n58.
187. Barthes, *Neutral*, 50. The following quotation is on the same page.
188. Derrida, *On the Name*, 56. Original emphasis.
189. Sekula made the photograph during the night of July 20, 2006. Sekula, email to the author, July 20, 2006. He confirmed later in conversation that she was an extremely experienced immigrant midwife from the Philippines.
190. Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2, 1999, 733. The following quotation is on the same page.
191. See Shachar, *Birthright Lottery*, 2009.
192. Krastev, *After Europe*, 30.
193. See Kobelinsky and Le Courant, *La mort aux frontières*, 28–29.
194. A selection of the group of images from 2006–2008 has been published in *Bruno Serralongue*, 2010, n.p.
195. Elements from this section of the present chapter, discussing the works of Bruno Serralongue, have previously been published in French as part of the blog I wrote for *Le Magazine du Jeu de Paume* under the title "Images Migrantes: Bruno Serralongue et son recours esthétique au civisme," 2011.
196. Hereafter, I abbreviate this title to *Deux hommes, zone des dunes*.
197. It is possible to obtain a good overview online of the series via <https://www.google.be/search?q=thomas+ruff+portraits&client=firefox-b&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi-jxdycufzVAhXMmLQKHjzAz4QsAQIJQ&biw=1680&bih=917#imgrc=3CnJZQgHPcwhhM>: (accessed October 20, 2020).
198. Sebald, »*Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis*«, 91. My translation.
199. In this sense, I argue that Ruff's "dialogical realism," as Jane Tormey identified it, moves beyond the minimal, bald presentations of just "faces." See Tormey, *Photographic Realism*, 2013, 60–61.
200. For a more extensive discussion of this topic, see Van Gelder and Westgeest, *Photography Theory*, 2011, 61–62.
201. Didi-Huberman, *Peuples exposés*, 2012, 257. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis. My translation.
202. I owe these ideas to W.J.T. Mitchell, who expressed them during the abovementioned lecture, which is presently no longer available, entitled "Migration, Law, and the Image: Beyond the Veil of Ignorance" (see Volume I, note 629). See also my abovementioned "Images migrantes: Bruno Serralongue et son recours esthétique au civisme (1)" (note 195).
203. Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 89–90. Original emphasis.
204. Baert, *Kairos or Occasion*, 7. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
205. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 178.
206. Homer, *Odyssey* [750–650 BC], Book IX, verse 408.
207. Weber, "In the Name of the Law," in Cornell et al., *Deconstruction and Possibility*, 1992, 252.
208. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1947], 2002, 47.
209. *Ibid.*, 53. The following quotation is on the same page.
210. *Ibid.*, 47.
211. *Ibid.*, 47–48.
212. Homer, *Odyssey*, Book IX, verses 266–271. The following quotation is from the same passage.
213. Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in Cornell et al., *Deconstruction and Possibility*, 57. Original emphasis.
214. See Derrida, *Force de loi*, 1994, 75. My translation of "donné" and "le pouvoir." Original emphasis.
215. Agamben, *Coming Community*, 76. Original emphasis.
216. Derrida, "Sauf le nom (Post-scriptum)," in *id.*, *On the Name*, 60.
217. On the ambiguities and complexity of translating "Sauf le nom," see also Dutoit, "Translating the Name?," in *ibid.*, *passim*.
218. Derrida, "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering,'" in *ibid.*, 13. Original emphasis.
219. Lapierre, *Changer de nom*, 1995, 11. My translation.
220. Homer, *Odyssee* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1939), 44, as quoted in *ibid.*
221. *Ibid.*, 12. My translation.
222. *Ibid.* My translation. My emphasis.
223. Cendrars, "Introduction," in Baudelaire, *Fleurs du mal* [1868], 1946, n.p. The following quotation is on the same page (final lines of the introduction). My translations.

224. Serralongue, “Calais (2006–08 and 2015–ongoing),” n.p.
225. Hereafter, the title of this work is abbreviated to *Ahmed, en route*.
226. See Salgado, *Migrations*, 2000.
227. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 70. The following quotation is taken from the same page.
228. Baert, *Late Medieval Enclosed Gardens*, 41. The following quotation is on the same page. Concerning the photographic image as a dormant absence, see also the analysis in Volume I, Chapter Four.
229. See Wesseling, *Perfect Spectator*, 2016, 233.
230. See *ibid.*, 238.
231. *Ibid.*, 239. Original emphasis.
232. *Ibid.*, 150.
233. Azoulay, *Civil Contract*, 2008, 14.
234. *Ibid.*, 16.
235. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
236. This is a poster released for the exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge* (2014), accompanying an installation work bearing the same title. Azoulay here focused on a selection of photographs representing people who struggle for the recognition of a wide range of rights and claims put under pressure by a new world order in which neoliberalism has merged with the sovereignty of the nation-state. The people who resist this logic stand up for a differential body politic, she argued. For an installation view of the work, now part of the collection of the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, see <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/body-politic-visual-universal-declaration-human-rights>; and <http://cargo-collective.com/AriellaAzoulay/The-Body-Politic-I> (accessed October 20, 2020).
237. Azoulay, “The Body Politic,” 2014, n.p. All further quotations are from this text.
238. For a good installation view, see https://static3.museoreinasofia.es/sites/default/files/obras/AD07182_0.jpg (accessed October 20, 2020).
239. See Eribon, *Returning to Reims* [2009], 2013. For a continued expression of belief in the revolutionary potential of the motley proletariat, see Edwards, “Commons and Crowds,” 464. For inspiring readings of how people in recent decades have aimed to invent new ways of living together, and cooperating, see Sennett, *Together*, 2012 and *Building and Dwelling*, 2018.
240. Azoulay, “The Body Politic,” n.p.
241. See Mitchell, “Migration, Law, and the Image,” in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 13–14.
242. Cole, *Philosophies of Exclusion*, 2000, 12.
243. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 176.
244. Below, I aim to hold on to the imaginative dimension of this idea of a “second birth.” I do so in full awareness of the criticisms leveled against Arendt’s conception of the event of natality, which, according to Julia Kristeva, lacked any connection to the psychological foundations of the political space. For a concise introduction to this topic, see Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 2006, 114–125.
245. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 177.
246. *Id.*, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 365. Arendt vehemently opposed the concept of genius, which she saw as a product of European bourgeois society. As an example of an aberration of this very social model, she recalled how elites came to formation in totalitarian concentration camps. The aristocracy, she argued, was composed of many criminals who bonded with a few “geniuses” among artists or entertainers of the imprisoned groups, who therewith often managed to save their lives—obviously at a huge moral price. See *ibid.*, 364–365.
247. George, *Noir inconnu [wanderer]*, 2019, 24. My translation.
248. *Ibid.*, 25. My translation of: “Supplique. / À toi le nom. / Supplique.” An alternative translation is: “Supplication. / Yours the name. / Supplication.” The phrase “No names in the streets” is in English in the original. Original emphasis.
249. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 341. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
250. Fouteau and Confaveux, “Jacques Rancière,” n.p. My translations.
251. See Rawls, *Theory of Justice* [1971], 199, 118–123.
252. Mitchell, “Migration, Law, and the Image,” in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 15.
253. *Ibid.*, 29. The following quotation is on the same page.
254. See Sekula, *Conversations with photographers*, 2006, 12.
255. These were Chapters One, Two, Three, and Five of *Fish Story*. See Guerra et al., *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, 2019, 140–149.
256. Martin Jay, “Must Justice Be Blind? The Challenge of Images to the Law,” in Douzinas and Nead, *Law and the Image*, 1999, 24.

257. Mitchell, "Migration, Law, and the Image," in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 29.
258. Jay, "Must Justice Be Blind?, in Douzinas and Nead, *Law and the Image*, 26.
259. Ibid., 32.
260. Mitchell, "Migration, Law, and the Image," in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 29.
261. For some time, information was available on the website of the Collectif Écologiste contre l'implantation de la Centrale Éolienne entre Noirmoutier et Yeu, <https://www.tpani-no-yeu.com/un-consortium-mouvant> (last accessed June 4, 2019). The collective still has a Facebook page: <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/pg/NonAuxEoliennesentreNoirmoutieretYeu/posts/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
262. Mitchell, "Migration, Law, and the Image," in Bischoff et al., *Images of Illegalized Immigration*, 29.
263. For a full overview of the work, see <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artworks/bateau-tableau> (accessed October 20, 2020).
264. Deleuze's concept of striation is discussed hereafter, in Chapter Ten.
265. See Sally Stein, "'Back to the Drawing Board': Maritime Themes and Discursive Crosscurrents in the Notebooks of Allan Sekula," in Zyman and Scozzari, *Allan Sekula: Okeanos*, 70–71. In an interview with Debra Risberg ("Imaginary Economies," 238), Sekula stated: "I came to insist on the simultaneous ideological and economic determination of various spaces—small crowded apartments, border zones, the meticulously landscaped public spaces of central banks—within the larger system of postwar development. Photography was a way of describing these spaces as sites of "official" ideology, but also as spaces of more idiosyncratic psychic investment, of actions and materialized memories that could be connected, for example, to 'biography.'" He did so by means of "chart[ing] a number of micro-histories" from the Cold War period on.
266. Sekula, email to the Vancouver exhibition curator Cate Rimmer, October 11, 2012. The following quotation is from the same email. For more information on Sekula's *Ship of Fools* (2010), see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*.
267. My translation. See also Godard, *Film Socialisme*, 2010, 94.
268. See Asselberghs, "Late, Latest, Last," 2011, 89.
269. See *ibid.*, 90.
270. See Bréan, "godard english cannes," 2011.
271. *Ibid.* The following quotation is from the same text.
272. See Godard, *Film Socialisme*, 42–44. My translations from p. 42 and from the back cover.
273. Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image* [1985], 1989, 180. The following quotation is on the same page.
274. See the discussion of this concept in Chapter Three; and Kickasola, *Films of Krzysztof Kieslowksi*, 302–303.
275. See Mbembe, "Idea of borderless," n.p.
276. See Bréan, "godard english cannes."
277. See Sekula, "Deep Six," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. Within the present book, the totality of this text is reproduced on p. 320 of Volume I, since it opens *Deep Six / Passer au bleu*.
278. Harbour Unrue, *Katherine Anne Porter*, 2005, 256. Original emphasis.
279. See *ibid.* Harbour Unrue mentions the fact that Katherine Anne Porter was so fascinated by the work of Erasmus that she considered writing his biography.
280. Sekula, email to Cate Rimmer, October 11, 2012.
281. *Id.*, "Deep Six," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. See also Sekula, "Deep Six," in *Voyage de l'exotisme*, 1998, 66. See also Volume I, p. 320.
282. *Id.*, "Deep Six," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. Once more, see also Volume I, p. 320.
283. *Id.*, "On 'Fish Story,'" 56.
284. *Id.*, "Deep Six," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. See, again, Volume I, p. 320.
285. Givner, *Katherine Anne Porter* [1982], 1991, 453.
286. For more information, see Harbour Unrue, *Katherine Anne Porter*, 236–264.
287. Sekula, email to Cate Rimmer, October 11, 2012. When interviewed by Pascal Beausse, Sekula said something similar: "Each book seemed to dictate a different photographic rhetoric: for Porter, the physiognomic agility of a kind of maritime 'street photograph'; for Paine, a more solemn tableau of labor and landscape." Beausse, "Critical Realism," 26.
288. Porter, *Ship of Fools* [1962], 1984, opening statement, unpaginated.
289. Sekula, "Deep Six Part 2: Ship of Fools," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 50. See also Volume I, p. 354. In Porter's *Ship of Fools*, the quotation is on p. 425.
290. Porter, *Ship of Fools*, 497.
291. Baert, *Kairos or Occasion*, 27. All further quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.

292. This is also how he included both images in the *Calais vu par Allan Sekula* publication. See Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 48–49.
293. Vandebroek, “Nameless Motif,” 2010, 114.
294. *Ibid.*, 174. Original emphasis.
295. Van Loo, *Gorge(l)*, 2007, 113. The following quotation is on the same page.
296. Vandebroek, “Nameless Motif,” 114. Original emphasis.
297. See *id.*, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 379–380.
298. See Parvulescu, *Laughter*, 15.
299. *Ibid.*, 16. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
300. *Ibid.*, 41.
301. Vandebroek, “Solomonic column,” 136. The following quotation is on the same page in n144.
302. Anja Isabel Schneider provided a detailed analysis of this notebook page in relation to the question of the (mermaid’s) tail, Ferenczi, and Marcel Broodthaers’s *En lisant la Lorelei. Wie ich die Lorelei gelesen habe* (1974). See her (*Psychic Subtext(s)*), 87 and 109–119.
303. Sekula, 5 October 2000–, NB 066 (October 4, 2000–March 19, 2001).
304. See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Venus-of-Willendorf> (accessed October 20, 2020).
305. Van Loo, *Gorge(l)*, 114.
306. Vandebroek, *Azetta*, 2000, 122.
307. *Ibid.* Original emphasis.
308. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, verses 874–877.
309. *Ibid.*, 877–879.
310. Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 122. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphases.
311. *Ibid.* Original emphasis. Barthes uses a metaphorical comparison with the jellyfish called medusas, whose endoxal stings and blisters can get cured using potassium chloride.
312. *Ibid.*, 123. All further quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
313. The French original is “*sidère*.” Original emphasis. See Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 1975, 126.
314. Barb, “Diva Matrix,” 208.
315. *Ibid.*, 210. Original emphasis. Barb (p. 235n266) provides a fascinating explanation of the Gorgon’s head as the cosmogonic *Mētra* that can even be based on the Perseus myth itself: “The familiar story tells us how Perseus first has to pass the three Graiae (Γραῖαι) and to rob them of the single eye which they guard in common, to find (and kill) the Gorgo. Now γραῖαι denotes (among other things) ‘the folds of skin below the navel’ [...] and their single common eye might be the navel (*omphalos*)—leading to the Gorgo = *mētra*. If this is a coincidence, it is certainly a remarkable one.” For Ferenczi’s short note on Medusa, see *id.*, “Zur Symbolik des Medusenhauptes,” *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, IX, 1923, 69.
316. Barb, “Diva Matrix,” 209–210. Original emphasis.
317. *Ibid.*, 210. See also Vandebroek, *Azetta*, 122.
318. Barb, “Diva Matrix,” 210–211.
319. *Ibid.*, 211. The following quotation is on the same page.
320. See Vandebroek, *Azetta*, 123. See also the analysis in Chapter Ten.
321. Sidgwick, *From Flow to Face*, 197.
322. Vandebroek, *Azetta*, 123.
323. Barb, “Diva Matrix,” 210.
324. Sidgwick, *From Flow to Face*, 196 and 198.
325. Vandebroek, *Azetta*, 123.
326. *Id.*, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 286. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
327. *Id.*, “Nameless Motif,” 160. Original emphasis.
328. All *Ship of Fools* (2010) photographs have been reproduced in Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*.
329. See Northup and Rowan, *International Transport Workers’ Federation*, 1983.
330. The following countries/registers have been declared FOCs by the ITF in relation to the criteria set by its fair practices committee, which is a joint committee of ITF seafarers and dockers’ unions: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda (UK), Bolivia, Cambodia, Cayman Islands, Comoros, Cyprus, Equatorial Guinea, Faroe Islands (FAS), French International Ship Register (FIS), German International Ship Register (GIS), Georgia, Gibraltar (UK), Honduras, Jamaica, Lebanon, Liberia, Malta, Madeira, Marshall Islands (USA), Mauritius, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands Antilles, North Korea, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe, St. Vincent, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Vanuatu. See <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/sector/seafarers/flags-of-convenience> (accessed October 20, 2020).

331. See, for example, De Sombre, *Flagging Standards*, 2006, 69–84.
332. For exact dates and a ship's log of the voyage, see the subsequent issues of the *Journal of the International Workers' Federation* 5–6, 1998; 1–6, 1999; and 1–2, 2000.
333. The *Global Mariner* docked in Los Angeles on March 4, 1999 and in Seattle on March 30, 1999. See the *Journal of the International Workers' Federation* 3, 1999, 7–8.
334. For more information on Sekula's voyage on the *Global Mariner*, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*; and Van Gelder and Verbeek, "Reverse Magellan (2010)," 2015.
335. As outlined in Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*.
336. For more on this topic, see id., "A Matter of Cleaning Up," 2007.
337. For a more technical explanation of Sekula's concept of the *object of interest*, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 76.
338. ZIM VIRGINIA (IMO: 9231808) is a container ship, with length overall (LOA) 294.1 m, beam 32.2 m, and maximum draught 21.8 m. Its gross tonnage is 53,453 and deadweight is 66,686. ZIM VIRGINIA was built in 2002 by HYUNDAI HEAVY INDUSTRIES. Its container capacity is 4,800 TEU. The ship is operated by ZIM INTEGRATED SHIPPING. See <http://www.vesseltracking.net/ship/zim-virginia-9231808> (accessed October 20, 2020).
339. See Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers' Museum*, 86.
340. Sekula, "Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea," 31.
341. For a full account of this history, see Lovett, *United States Shipping Policies*, 1996, 113–115.
342. Najafi and Wallenstein, "Allan Sekula at Fotografiska Museet," 7. The following quotations are on the same page.
343. Sekula, "Between the Net and the Deep Blue Sea," 31. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
344. There have been no further estimates of the number since September 2020, but the true total of persons was likely higher. See De Beukelaer, "Stranded at sea," 2020, n.p.
345. See Sekula and Noël Burch, *A Forgotten Space*, unpublished synopsis of the film *The Forgotten Space* (2010), distributed by Jba Production, Paris, 2001, 7 (file consulted in the Allan Sekula papers, the Generali Foundation Study Center, Vienna—now Salzburg).
346. On its website, Getlink SE, the company in charge of running the fixed link, indicates that 3 percent of its shares are treasury shares. It is not possible to deduct from the published information how this 3 percent is divided further. What is known is that 91 percent of the account holders are in Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while 9 percent are in other, unspecified countries. Certainly, 97 percent of the shares are in private hands. See <https://www.getlinkgroup.com/uk/shareholders-and-investors/key-figures/shareholder-analysis/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
347. I draw this information from conversations with museum staff members at the Museum of Fine Arts in Calais in winter 2017, one of whom has relatives who used to work for SeaFrance.
348. See <https://www.dfds.com/en/about/investors/shares> (accessed October 20, 2020).
349. See <https://www.dfds.com/en/passenger-ferries/onboard/calais-dover/ship-overview> (accessed October 20, 2020).
350. See <https://www.niferry.co.uk/po-ferries-confirms-the-move-of-their-dover-vessels-from-the-uk-to-cypriot-register/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
351. RMT Press Office, <https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-on-pando-flagging22119/> (accessed October 20, 2020). The following quotation is from the same press communication by RMT.
352. See <https://www.parismou.org/detentions-banning/white-grey-and-black-list;> and http://www.tokyo-mou.org/inspections_detentions/NIR.php (accessed October 20, 2020).
353. Wollen, "Diary: One Half an Hour," [1995?], n.p. This document is part of the ASA, GRI. Wollen made the visit within the framework of an art project coordinated by Alanna Heiss for PS1 in New York (and which resulted in an exhibition there). In his abovementioned, unpublished letter to Marie-Thérèse Champese of March 15, 1996, Sekula recollected his visit of this exhibition to her, writing, "It's interesting how the proposals and commentaries veer between technological utopianism (attempts to match the scale and 'drama' of the tunnel with parallel artistic projects) and Gothicism (that is, remarks about rats and excrement)."
354. See Dally, "Jer, «90 piges»," 2011; and id., "La bonne mine de JER," 2010. On JER's death, see <http://comite-monteil.fr/jer-nous-a-quitte> (accessed October 20, 2020).
355. After months of searching, Erien Withoutck succeeded in tracking down Gilles Rousseau, JER's son, who shared a moving recollection of his father. "My father would have been amused that his work finds itself

- reproduced in an academic publication, he who was formed as a bricklayer. He was a charming and subtle man, very convivial and paradoxically very secretive, complex but at the same time blessed with simple and popular tastes.” My translation from an email sent on April 1, 2020.
356. See De Roo, “Oostende slaat alarm,” 2019.
357. Beausse, “Critical Realism,” 26.
358. Sekula, “On ‘Fish Story,’” 52.
359. Id., “On ‘Fish Story,’” 56.
360. Id., “Deep Six (Notes),” unpublished typewritten document, 1998, part of the ASA, GRI.
361. Id., “Deep Six,” in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. See also Volume I, p. 320.
362. Id., “Passer au bleu,” in *ibid.*, 11. The French translation is “matérialisme affectueux.” See also Volume I, p. 321.
363. Young, “Note on sympathetic materialism,” 2012, n.p. Young has used this term as well as the overarching title for his PhD thesis, *Sympathetic Materialism*, 2018.
364. See Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 75. Scheible wrote about parenthesis, referring to its Greek original meaning, that it is “to place in beside” (p. 78).
365. This quotation can be found in Paine, *Collected Writings*, 39.
366. For more on this distinction, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools / The Dockers’ Museum*, 81.
367. Najafi and Wallenstein, “Allan Sekula at Fotografiska Museet,” 7.
368. Groot and ’t Hart, “Woord vooraf,” in *id.*, *Walt Whitman. Leaves of Grass*, 2005, n.p. My translation. The following quotation is on the same page.
369. Whitman, “Preface (1855),” in Moon, *Walt Whitman. Leaves of Grass*, 2002, 619.
370. *Ibid.*, 622.
371. Sekula, letter sent as a fax on May 5, 1998. This document can be consulted in the production dossier of *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* at the Calais Fine Arts Museum.
372. Id., “On ‘Fish Story,’” 56.
373. Williams, *Cobbett*, 1983, 20.
374. *Ibid.*, 21.
375. Augustine, Comment on Psalm 147:5, in *id.*, *Expositions*, vol. 6, 1857, 363.
376. Baert, *Enclosed Gardens*, 21.
377. Sidgwick, *From Flow to Face*, 2015, 147.
378. This visit is discussed in greater detail in my essay “As a Dog Finds a Spear,” in Kovač et al., *Memory, Word and Image* (see also Volume I n469).
379. Sekula, “Deep Six,” in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 10. See also Volume I, p. 320.
380. Id., “Deep Six, Part 1: The Rights of Man,” in *ibid.*, 28. See also Volume I, p. 332. The original phrasing is from Part One of *Rights of Man* as included in Paine, *Collected Writings*, 455.
381. Allan Sekula owned a copy of a double edition of these two volumes: *Two Classics of the French Revolution: Reflections on the Revolution in France, Edmund Burke & The Rights of Man, Thomas Paine* (London: Dolphin, 1961).
382. See Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 2007, 23–24.
383. Lessay, *Américain de la convention*, 1987, 140. My translation.
384. Paine, *Collected Writings*, 595–596.
385. See Bervoet, “Illegale migranten,” 2018, n.p.
386. See Vander Taelen, “Jungle in Groot-Bijgaarden,” 2018; and Meulemans, “Snelwegparking Jabbeke,” 2018. The case of Mawda Shawri is documented at <https://www.justicepourmawda.be/> (accessed March 31, 2021). On social media, an action committee named #Justice4Mawda continues to raise awareness for the little girl’s tragic fate. On February 12, 2021, a criminal court in Mons condemned the police officer to one year of prison with a deferred sentence and a fine of €400. See Sanderson, “Belgian police officer gets,” 2021, n.p. The driver and five accomplices were both sentenced to jail and condemned to high fines by a criminal court in Liège on March 31, 2021. See https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20210331_95410282 (accessed March 31, 2021). For an English summary, see Casert, “Trial opens in death,” 2020.
387. For more information, see the editorial in *Le Monde* of December 16, 2017; and the contribution by Maryline Baumard of that same day, “En France, une politique migratoire d’une dureté sans précédent.”
388. See Baumard, “Migrants: à Calais,” 2018, n.p.
389. See Press Association, “More than 50 migrants,” 2019; and Grafton-Green, “74 migrants,” 2019.
390. Touam Bona is the author of *Fugitif, où cours-tu?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2016). He was interviewed by Romane Lizée and thus quoted in her “À Calais, la mairie rase,” 2020, n.p. All further quotations are from Lizée’s article. My translations.
391. See also Pecqueux, “Calais: comment 65 km,” 2020, n.p.

392. See Latham, *Kent's Strangest Tales*, 211.
393. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, opening quote, n.p. Sekula owned a copy of the original translation of this book, first published in English in 1997.
394. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-florence-speech-a-new-era-of-cooperation-and-partnership-between-the-uk-and-the-eu> (accessed October 20, 2020).
395. Connet, "Boris Johnson threatens," 2019, n.p.
396. See <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/446790-trump-uks-boris-johnson-speak-by-phone-report> (accessed October 20, 2020).
397. Evans, "Donald Trump UK visit," 2019, n.p.
398. Sekula, "On 'Fish Story,'" 55.
399. Begg, "Recasting Subjectivity," 2005, 636.
400. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 383.
401. Begg, "Recasting Subjectivity," 636.
402. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 384.
403. Begg, "Recasting Subjectivity," 636. The following quotation is on the same page.
404. Cendrars, *Planus* [1948], 1972, 45. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
405. See Volume I, pp. 354–355. Original emphasis. See also Sekula, "Deep Six Part 2: Ship of Fools – Passer au bleu 2e volet : La nef des fous," in Haudiquet, *Calais vu par Allan Sekula*, 50–51.
406. Mitchell, "Planetary Madness," 34.
407. Based on the materials available in the Calais Museum of Fine Arts, no information on this topic could be found. In the early years after Sekula's death, Ina Steiner, the Allan Sekula Studio manager, organized his archive and extensively searched in the available documents without finding any clues.
408. Sekula, "On 'Fish Story,'" 54. The following quotation is on the same page.
409. See <https://www.itespresso.fr/press-release/euro-tunnel-inaugure-son-nouveau-poste-central-de-sret> (accessed October 20, 2020).
410. See Toubon, *Exilés et droits fondamentaux*, 67–68.
411. Anonymous, "Eurotunnel: nouveau PC sécurité," 2017, n.p. My translation.
412. See Tulloch, *Little Book of Kent*, 2011, 170.
413. Samphire Hoe is an amazing new piece of England made from 4.9 million cubic meters of chalk and chalk marl dug to create the Channel Tunnel. See <http://www.samphirehoe.com/uk/visit-us/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
414. See <https://web.archive.org/web/20100103172904/http://www.eurotunnel.com/ukcP3Main/ukcCorporate/ukcTunnelInfrastructure/ukcInfrastructure/ukpChannelTunnelInfrastructure>; and <https://web.archive.org/web/20100113122402/http://eurotunnel.com/frcP3Main/frcCorporate/frcTunnelInfrastructure/frcInfrastructure/> (accessed October 20, 2020). In normal operations, shuttles use the south tunnel in the France–United Kingdom direction, and the north tunnel when traveling from the United Kingdom to France.
415. On how Great Britain has unscrupulously externalized its border on French soil, see also Baumard, "La Grande-Bretagne nous paie," 2018.
416. See also fig. 10.8. For some time, the slide sequence itself could be consulted online via <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/lib/Calais.-Temoigner-de-la-Jungle> (last accessed January 3, 2020).
417. See Pecqueux, "Tunnel sous la Manche," 2018.
418. This letter can be consulted in the production archive of Allan Sekula's *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* at the Museum of Fine Arts in Calais. The original sentence is: "je vous remercie également de me tenir informé de la publication envisagée de 'Deep Sick.'"
419. Simon, "Le classement du *Figaro*," 2017, n.p. My translation.
420. Combe, "Calais, ville la moins dynamique de France?," 2017, n.p. My translation.
421. Rumors have circulated that the Russian secret service could have influenced the Brexit voting process, yet this has never been substantiated. See Castle, "Suspecting Russian Meddling," 2017.
422. A draft withdrawal agreement was publicly released on November 14, 2018. Before she finally resigned on June 7, 2019, British Prime Minister Theresa May failed to have the British Parliament accept this Brexit deal. For the text of the deal, see https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/draft_withdrawal_agreement_0.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
423. For a photograph and more information, see <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-47758618> (accessed October 20, 2020).
424. In Calais, there is also a roundabout named "le rond-point des droits de l'homme" [the roundabout of the rights of man], situated at the crossroads of the Rue du Pasteur Martin Luther King and the Chemin Parmentier. The setting features an elongated rock in the shape of a menhir, inaugurated in 1998. Attached to it is a stone plaque commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Underneath the carved indication

- "ROND-POINT DES DROITS DE L'HOMME," it says: "Thomas PAINE/Citoyen du Monde" [Citizen of the World]. Original emphasis. Although the plaque faces the entrance/exit of the university restaurant, the city administration puts little effort in preserving it. As a result, the inscription in brownish-red paint is barely visible today. I photographed the plaque on February 15, 2020. It is the picture included in Volume I, in the Acknowledgements. I first came across its history and existence in an undated and unidentified note that is part of the *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* folder at the Museum of Fine Arts in Calais. Although it is likely that the museum staff drew Sekula's attention to it, the monument's inauguration came around the time Sekula had already completed *Deep Six / Passer au bleu* and first exhibited it in the Calais museum.
425. As quoted in Spencer, "A precious jewel," 2015–2016, 10.
426. Demotier, *Annales de Calais*, 8.
427. See Lulvès, *Calais sous la domination anglaise*, 1918, opening note, n.p. My translation. The following quotations are from the same opening note.
428. See Smith, *Deal. Dale. Dele. Deale*, 6–8.
429. As Barbara Baert writes about the bowl/jar/pitcher: "symbolically, these bowl-shaped objects are by no means neutral concepts in Christianity. Its shape and content refer to the female → archetype [...] Mary is the *honorabile vas* that preserves the Godly child. And, in the same vein, the baptismal font is the *venter ecclesiae*. The pitcher is sometimes also seen as a symbol of the human → body in which the word is contained, as in 2 Corinthians 4:7: 'but we have this treasure in earthen vessels.' The pitcher is, in other words, not a neutral or 'empty' object in early-medieval perception. It is used for containing and pouring. In the Song of Songs 7:2, we read 'Thy → navel is like a round goblet' and, according to Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), the female is the *vas viri*. In other words, the pitcher represents the ability to receive and conceive. It symbolizes conception. Consequently, the pitcher obviously also refers to the broader context of fertility wells. And like the → sieve, it 'leaks' as well!" Baert, *Fragments*, 2018, 41.
430. See Sekula, *Fish Story*, 20–21.
431. See "West Flemings file complaint against French nuclear plant," 2017. Available at: <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.3107105> (accessed October 20, 2020).
432. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book III, verses 371–437.
433. See Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 39. Until mentioned otherwise, I paraphrase from the same page.
434. *Ibid.*, 49.
435. Baert quoted from Wick, "Narcissus: Woman, Water," 2013, 50.
436. Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 46. Original emphasis.
437. See Sidgwick, *From Flow to Face*, 146.
438. *Ibid.*, 144–146.
439. Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 46. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphases.
440. The closest one might get to experiencing this is during night sailing, while being on guard. Obligated to somehow stay awake, the alarm clock rings every nine minutes or so. Between this state of falling asleep and the need to remain alert for imminent danger, many a helmsman hears voices resonating over the seawaters.
441. Baert, "Marble and the Sea," 50. The following quotation is on the same page.
442. *Id.*, *In Response to Echo*, 3.
443. During one of my visits to the Dover area, a local felt the need to tell me how unhappy he was with the nearby presence of Samphire Hoe. Churning up the marl, in his view, had cast a bad spell.
444. Lapierre, *Sauve qui peut*, 2015, 203. My translation.
445. Regarding the origin of this expression, the OED thus informs us (Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 698): "Mid 18th cent.: said to derive from the French custom of leaving a dinner or ball without saying goodbye to the host or hostess. The phrase was first recorded shortly after the Seven Years War; the equivalent French expression is *filer à l'Anglaise*, literally 'to escape in the style of the English.'"
446. See "Calais, nouveau bastion du Front National," <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3hb0fx> (accessed October 20, 2020).
447. Julian Barnes, *Cross Channel*, 1996, 197. Original emphasis.
448. See https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2018/20181717_718QPC.htm; and <https://www.ecre.org/france-court-decision-is-a-triumph-for-solidarity/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
449. The Appeals Court of Aix-en-Provence based its judgment on art. L. 622-1 of the Code of entry and residence of foreigners and the right to asylum. See Baumard, "Aide aux migrants," 2018.
450. On August 1, 2018, the French Parliament enacted a law that conformed to this ruling. See Damgé, "Le 'délit de solidarité,'" 2018.
451. See The Human Rights Observers Project, "Forced Evictions in Calais," 2019.

452. In April 2017, 49 percent claimed to feel unsafe in France. See Monk et al., “Six Months On,” 24. In the abovementioned report by the Human Rights Observers Project of May 2019, this concern is generalized.
453. On June 21, 2019, the French Council of State ordered the Prefecture of Grande-Synthe to introduce emergency measures for the population in distress residing on its territory, overturning a previous dismissal of the case by Lille Administrative Court. The council ordered the Prefecture of the Nord to set up, within eight days of notification of the ordinance, information points in and around the gymnasium of the Espace jeunes du Moulin. This information had to be translated into the main languages of the population concerned to inform them of their rights as applicants for asylum, unaccompanied minors, or beneficiaries of emergency accommodation. In addition, the council ordered the prefecture to install, within the same time frame, enough water points, shower cubicles, and toilets near the gymnasium. See http://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur_ce_2019-06-21.pdf?utm_source=ECRE+News-letters&utm_campaign=88adaa3631-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_07_05_10_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e-c9497afd-88adaa3631-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). However, on September 17, 2019, the entire gymnasium was cleared after a court ruled that the encampment was a security hazard. See Mohdīn, “French police clear,” 2019. Shortly before the closing of the encampment, a then record number of eighty-six persons tried to cross the channel on a single day. Associations directly linked this to the imminent evacuation of the center and the panic that this had caused among the inhabitants. See PA Media, “Record number of migrants,” 2019.
454. See <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2020).
455. See Amnesty International, *Targeting Solidarity*, 25–27.
456. *Ibid.*, 27.
457. Malinowski’s personal website indicates that he worked on the *Via Calais* project from 1989 to 2002. See <http://malinowski.fr/painting/show/via-calais/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
458. The box also contains a typewritten document, signed by Gérard Barron, head of communication of Calais’s Chamber of Commerce. It informs its readers that the Port of Calais has seen an expansion of its commercial activities in 1994 (regarding both the traffic of passengers and of goods), as the result of major investments to make it compete with the Channel Tunnel. The report further mentions that, compared to the Channel Tunnel train, ferry transportation benefits from much greater suppleness, as no reservation is needed, and boarding formalities can be kept to the minimum. For boarding, passengers can remain in their cars, and payment proceeds in a similar way as on the highway (the so-called French *péage* system). As the frequency of the ferries is so high, cars can embark right away. Once on board, the relaxing comfort of the “mini-cruise” includes good restauration and tax-free purchases. The system, so it is said, is fluid and efficacious. This fluid scenario contrasts sharply with the heavy procedures now in place for boarding a ferry at Calais harbor.
459. My emphasis.
460. See Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 30. Until mentioned otherwise, I paraphrase from the same page.
461. *Ibid.*, 122. Until mentioned otherwise, I paraphrase and quote from the same page. My emphasis.
462. I have not made any mention yet of the *Calaisiens*’s handicraft par excellence, lace manufacturing, but this follows in Chapter Ten.
463. See Boudou, *Politique de l’hospitalité*, 2017; and Le Blanc and Brugère, *Fin de l’hospitalité*.
464. Le Blanc and Brugère, *Fin de l’hospitalité*, 187–206. My translation.
465. Derrida, *Of Hospitality* [1997], 2000, 147.
466. Kant, *Perpetual Peace* [1795], 2010, 22.
467. *Ibid.*, 23. In what follows, I paraphrase from the same page.
468. See Boudou, *Politique de l’hospitalité*, 65–69. Boudou references Benveniste’s *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris: Minuit, 1969) in which its author reflects on the latin verb *hostire* [to equalize, to compensate], which provides a double root for both *hostis* [enemy] and *hospes* [host].
469. See Amnesty International, *Punishing Compassion*, 2020, 11 and passim.
470. Homer, *Odyssey*, Book VI, v. 122–123.
471. *Ibid.*, v. 38.
472. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, v. 552–553.
473. See *Ibid.*, Book XIII, v. 160–181.
474. It is striking (although coherent) that Horkheimer and Adorno (in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 35) identify Odysseus as the “prototype of the bourgeois individual.”
475. See Beard, *Women & Power* [2017], 2018, 3–6.
476. This situation is discussed in extenso in Leghtas, “Like a Prison,” 2017. For recent incidents, see Wallis, “At least 150 migrants,” 2019; and <http://www.ekathimerini.com/241453/article/ekathimerini/news/seven-drown-in-migrant-boat-sinking>

- off-coast-of-lesvos?utm_source=ECRE+News-letters&utm_campaign=f3cdae8e4-EMAIL_CAMPaign_2019_06_11_11_55&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-f3cdae8e4-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
477. See Smith, “Lesbos to greet,” 2018; for a more recent, similar situation in Samos (since the spring of 2019), see http://www.ekathimerini.com/238867/article/ekathimerini/news/pressure-growing-on-samos-from-new-arrivals-rising-intolerance?utm_source=ECRE+News-letters&utm_campaign=8fe0afd7ec-EMAIL_CAMPaign_2019_03_25_01_06&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-8fe0afd7ec-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020).
478. See Redactie, “Rellen en seksueel geweld,” 2018. For an earlier analysis of the situation in Moria, see my “Lessons from Moria,” in Setari, *Fooling Utopia*, 2015, 37–46. In October 2019, Moria reached nearly fourteen thousand residents. See <http://www.ekathimerini.com/245523/article/ekathimerini/news/moria-migrant-camp-on-lesvos-breaks-new-record-with-nearly-14000-residents> (accessed October 20, 2020).
479. See https://www.proasyl.de/news/drei-jahre-eu-tuerkei-deal-zu-welchem-preis/?utm_source=ECRE+Newsletters&utm_campaign=6dbcd80edb-EMAIL_CAMPaign_2019_03_21_02_30&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3ec9497afd-6dbcd80edb-422323141 (accessed October 20, 2020). In March 2019, Amnesty International projected the slogan “humanity first: refugees are welcome” on the ancient citadel of Athens, the Acropolis, to draw attention to the plight of all the people presently trapped on the Greek islands. See Smith, “Activists project ‘refugees welcome,’” 2019.
480. Saoud and Welandar, “Model of Protracted Suffering,” 2020, 70.
481. See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/08/greece-lead-poisoning-concerns-new-migrant-camp>, December 8, 2020 (accessed December 14, 2020).
482. See <https://www.ecre.org/joint-statement-protect-our-laws-and-humanity/> (accessed October 20, 2020); see also Fallon, “EU border force ‘complicit,’” n.p. See also the website of the NGO Aegean Boat Report, <https://aegeanboatreport.com/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
483. See Bouagga, *De Lesbos à Calais*, 2017.
484. Agamben, *Means without End*, 36. Original emphasis.
485. At one point during the protracted debates about how to contain the presence of “transitory migrants” on Belgian soil, then State Secretary of Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken, suggested without any embarrassment that Belgium should hire one or several “prison ships,” which appeared to be available for rent from the Dutch authorities. See Van Horenbeek, “Regering vindt geen akkoord,” 2018.
486. Agamben, *Means without End*, 45. Original emphasis.
487. *Ibid.*, 65.
488. Except for the first two sentences, this is my translation, with my emphasis, 23:54–24:28. The first two sentences feature in Diomé, *Belly of the Atlantic*, 162.
489. Homer, *Odyssey*, Book IX, v. 475–478.
490. *Ibid.*, v. 469–470 and 427–428.
491. *Ibid.*, v. 513–516.
492. This sublime book, published with Albertus-Verlag in Berlin, contains an introductory essay by Johann Johannsen, and another (detail) photograph of the sheep aboard the full-bottomed sailing vessel (on p. 39).
493. See <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/maps/doggerland/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
494. In response to a questionnaire from Jeu de Paume (2006), Sekula wrote: “Ross McElwee’s *Sherman’s March* (1986) is a great example of a precise way of working out that ratio, providing a psycho-sexual portrait of white males of the American South that is without parallel. The director achieves this through encounters with his mother and a succession of former, future, and potential girlfriends, all of whom play variations on the roles of Penelope and Athena to his Odysseus. Anyone who wants to understand the mother-infused romanticism and seductive energy of Elvis or Bill Clinton should see this film”: Sekula, “Eleven Premises on Documentary and a Question,” in Stein and Steiner, *Art Isn’t Fair*, 2020, 274.
495. See Lapiere, *Changer de nom*, 11. The following quotations are on the same page. My emphasis.
496. Sekula also took a fascination with his own name, and he experimented with variations on it in the context of his *Polonia and Other Fables* project (2009). The humoristic variants ranged, among others, from “*Saecula saeculorum*” to “So Kool ahh,” “see Cola,” or “sea coo la.” He even composed a “**BESTIARY**”: “*Dracula* / *Tarantula* / *Sekula*.” See Sekula, *Polonia and Other Fables*, 58, 67, 70. Original emphases. Contrary to, for example, Brian O’Doherty, who took on the artistic pseudonym of Patrick Ireland for political reasons, Sekula always held on to his given family name for identifying his creations in any medium. See also Lerm Hayes, *Brian O’Doherty/Patrick Ireland*, 2017.
497. A video clip of the installation is available online via <https://vimeo.com/41965882> (accessed October 20, 2020).

498. The invitation came from Joseph del Pesco, director of the Kadist Art Foundation, and Connie Lenwallen, Adjunct Curator at University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Their assignment was quite open: it had to be a protest poster, on any topic of the artist's choosing. Cf. email from del Pesco and Lenwallen, dated January 18, 2012, now preserved in the ASA, GRI.
499. See Barnes, "US President tweets," 2019, n.p.
500. Trump eventually canceled his planned state visit to Denmark, offended by the fact that Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had called his proposal "absurd." See Chadwick, "Pompeo calls Danish foreign minister," 2019.
501. Inman, "Why does Donald Trump," 2019, n.p.
502. On December 19, 2019, the news came through that Denmark had approved the establishment of a US consulate in Greenland. See <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/denmark-approves-new-us-consulate-in-greenland-after-rebuffing-trumps-plan-to> (accessed October 20, 2020).
503. Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain*, 254.
504. See Weyergraf-Serra and Buskirk, *Destruction of Tilted Arc*, 1991. For a good range of historical installation views, see <https://publicdelivery.org/richard-serra-tilted-arc/> (accessed October 20, 2020). Sekula as well referred to *Tilted Arc* in his above-mentioned, unpublished letter to Marie-Thérèse Champesme, dated March 15, 1996.
505. For further reading, see the eighth chapter of Mark Godfrey's *Abstraction and the Holocaust*, in which Godfrey has elaborated on Serra's deep engagement with this legacy through *Gravity* (1993) as installed in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (pp. 199–237).
506. See <https://www.artforum.com/news/moma-union-workers-lead-protest-before-contract-negotiations-76151> (accessed October 20, 2020).
507. See Weber, "MoMA Staff Secures," 2019. An agreement was reached on August 17, 2018. See also: <https://www.artforum.com/news/after-protests-months-of-negotiations-moma-union-reaches-contract-agreement-76257> (accessed October 20, 2020).
508. Erlanger, "Macron Says NATO," 2019, n.p.
509. Boffey and Henley, "Merkel warns of danger," 2019, n.p. Direct business deals between the United Kingdom, the United States, Russia, and China would also weaken the European Union geopolitically while at the same time strengthening the global neoliberal world order. In a similar vein, see also the analysis of Van Parijs, "A fair Brexit," 2019.
510. See <http://ntu.ccasingapore.org/exhibitions/allan-sekula-fish-story/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
511. See Kolczak, "City Aims to Be," 2017.
512. See https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatou_Diome (accessed October 20, 2020).
513. See Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*, 2011, 1. My emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
514. *Ibid.*, 2. The following quotation is on the same page.
515. See Guerra and Van Gelder, "'Do Not Trespass.' An Interview Conversation on the Genesis of Allan Sekula's *Black Tide*/Marea negra (2002–2003)," in Streiberger and Van Gelder, *"Disassembled" Images*, 185.
516. Diomé, *Marianne porte plainte*, 2017, 102–103. My translation.
517. *Ibid.*, 104. My translation.
518. *Ibid.*, 105. My translation.
519. See Gee, "Eurotunnel floods land," 2016. The following quotation is from this text. Footage can be consulted via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WG2NB68LFuA> (accessed October 20, 2020).
520. Anonymous, "Calaisis: au nom de la sécurité," 2015, n.p. My translation. Original emphasis.
521. Ledbetter, "Do Not Look at Y/Our Own Peril. Voyeurism as Ethical Necessity, or To See as a Child Again," in Grønstad and Gustafsson, *Ethics and Images*, 2012, 7. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
522. Diomé, *Marianne porte plainte*, 18. My translation.
523. See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> (accessed October 20, 2020).
524. The Dutch pages of Amnesty International's website provide an excellent introduction to the problems with the right to self-determination, both on a collective and individual level. See <https://www.amnesty.nl/encyclopedie/zelfbeschikking-en-mensenrechten> (accessed October 20, 2020).
525. See https://www.constitutionfacts.com/content/declaration/files/Declaration_ReadTheDeclaration.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
526. See https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
527. Le Blanc and Brugère, *Fin de l'hospitalité*, 196. My translation.
528. *Ibid.*, 45–46. My translation.
529. *Ibid.*, 196. My translation.

530. Ibid., 197. My translation.
531. See van Houtum and Lucassen, *Voorbij Fort Europa*, 2016, 150–152.
532. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 183.
533. Barnes, *Man in the Red Coat*, 2019, 265.
534. George, *Noir inconnu [wanderer]*, 81. Original uppercase, original emphasis; part my translation, part of the original in English.
535. Vandenbroeck, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 380. Hereafter, I paraphrase his argument from the same page.
536. Ibid., 383.
537. See <https://www.cite-dentelle.fr/en/home/the-museum/history/the-origins-of-lace-in-Calais+> (accessed October 20, 2020). The label promotes itself by stating that it produces “mythical” and “iconic” lace “inherently linked with French chic, elegance, and femininity”: see <https://www.dentelledecalaiscaudry.fr/en/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
538. See Butzbach and Railane, *Qui veut tuer*, 2009.
539. See Zu et al., “Young Sheng buys up,” 2016.
540. See Hebert, “À Calais, le fabricant,” 2019.
541. See Bernardeau and Blaquièrre, “Dentelle de Calais,” 2019.
542. See Anonymous, “Accord pour faire,” 2019.
543. See Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, 250–252.
544. Sekula, FS Notebook #3, May 1992–, NB 041 (May 1992–May 1993), n.p. Original emphasis.
545. Id., *Fish Story*, 150. The following quotation is on the same page.
546. Tchen, “Interview with Allan Sekula,” 163. Hereafter, I paraphrase Sekula from the same page.
547. Sekula, “Walking on Water 1990/1995,” 99. My emphasis.
548. Endo, *A Life of Jesus*, 146. Original emphasis.
549. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 167. Hereafter, I paraphrase Sekula from the same page.
550. Ibid., 110. The following quotation is on the same page.
551. Ibid., 111. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
552. Ibid., 141. The following quotations are on the same page.
553. Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, 355.
554. Ibid., 357. The following quotation is on the same page.
555. Ibid., 47 and Sekula, *Fish Story*, 112.
556. Id., *Fish Story*, 141.
557. The headline “train to disunity” was used on the front page of the paper version of the international edition of *The New York Times* on November 22, 2019. For the online version of the article, see Stevis-Gridneff, “For the Eurostar Tribe,” 2019.
558. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 122.
559. Evenou, “À Calais, des expulsions,” 2021, n.p. My translation.
560. For more on this topic, see Yeung, “‘Like torture’: Calais police,” 2021, n.p. On “flagrance,” see the articles 53–74 of the French Code of Criminal Procedure, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/id/LEGIARTI000006575021/1999-06-23/#:-:text=Article%2053,-Est%20qualifi%C3%A9%20crime&text=Il%20y%20a%20aussi%20crime,au%20crime%20ou%20au%20d%C3%A9lit>. (accessed January 15, 2021).
561. See MacGregor, “France: snow blankets,” 2021, n.p.
562. Amnesty International, in a report from March 2020, suggested as much. See its *Punishing Compassion*, 89.
563. Sekula, *Fish Story*, 185.
564. Barthes, *The Neutral*, 163. The following quotations are on the same page.
565. Id., *Roland Barthes*, 83. The following quotation is on the same page.
566. Lauwaert, “De perfecte Bourgeois,” in Hofstede and Pieters, *Memo Barthes*, 230. My translation.
567. Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, 89. Original emphasis.
568. Balzac, *Sarrasine* [1830], 2010, n.p. The following quotation is from the same source.
569. Barthes, *S/Z* [English translation], 115. Original emphasis.
570. See Reboul, “Sarrasine, ou la castration,” 1956. For further reading on collective and coercive shaping of compulsory heterosexuality in modern societies, see Knight, “S/Z, Realism,” 1995.
571. Barthes, *S/Z* [English translation], 107.
572. Ibid., 106. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
573. Ibid., 107.
574. Ibid.
575. Id., *S/Z* [French original], 113. My translation and my emphasis [the English translation proposing “surface of the mirror” (p. 107)].

576. Id., *S/Z* [English translation], 107.
577. Ibid., 106–107.
578. I feel confident drawing this conclusion concerning *Deep Six | Passer au bleu* as Sekula explained his use of the slash in conversation with regard to his last work, *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum* (2010–2013). For more on this subject, see Van Gelder, Allan Sekula. *Ship of Fools | The Dockers' Museum*, 76.
579. Sekula owned a copy of the English translation of *S/Z*.
580. Bishop and Manghani, “Barthes, Burgin, *Barre oblique*,” in id., *Barthes | Burgin*, 2016, 21.
581. Ibid.
582. Normally, territorial waters extend to twelve nautical miles from the coastline.
583. Anonymous, *Chicago Manual of Style* [1906], 2010, 340. For the distinction between the slash and the fraction bar, see also Eckersley et al., *Glossary of Typesetting*, 1994, 95.
584. Bishop and Manghani, “Barthes, Burgin, *Barre oblique*,” 21. All quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
585. Lauwaert, “De perfecte Bourgeois,” 230. My translation.
586. Anonymous, *Chicago Manual of Style*, 630. See also ibid., 341.
587. Another fine example is *TITANIC's wake* (1998/2000), in which the uppercase letters of the first word are meant to suggest the oversize of the *Titanic* ship, and the remaining lowercase letters suggest a sudsy churn. This information was also confirmed by Jürgen Bock, who curated the installation of *TITANIC's wake* in the Project Room of Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon (2000).
588. Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 27.
589. Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 1994, 183. The following quotation is on the same page.
590. Ibid., 189.
591. Ibid., 181. The following quotation is on the same page.
592. Ibid., 142.
593. See Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 129. The book includes a useful map of all these intended tunnels. See also https://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/site/index_en.htm (accessed October 20, 2020).
594. See art. 3, par. 1 of the Channel Tunnel Treaty, <https://www.channeltunneligc.co.uk/Essential-texts,24.html?lang=en> (accessed March 31, 2021).
595. Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 216.
596. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288985/Dover_strait_TSS.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020). For a historical survey of how the maritime border between the United Kingdom and France in the Strait of Dover developed into what it is today, see David Anderson, “Strait of Dover,” 1992. Anderson also included an insightful overview map of the traffic separation schemes.
597. See Rule 10 of the *Merchant Shipping Notice MSN1781 Distress signals and prevention of collisions*, from 1996, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281965/msn1781.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
598. Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides*, 194. The following quotation is on the same page.
599. See George, *Vita Bruta*, 14. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
600. In Italian the suffix *-issimo* or *-issima* is added to an adjective to obtain its absolute superlative form, to express the meaning of the adjective at its highest level. While both *brutta* and *bruta* exist as adjectives, with different meanings, only *brutta* is used in its absolute superlative form *bruttissima*. *Brutta* is used for something that has an unpleasant appearance or qualities (meaning ugly or bad), while *bruta* for something not governed by reason (meaning brutal). Hence, it can be assumed that the word used by Temesghen Berhe is the superlative form of the adjective *brutta* that is *bruttissima* (meaning “life is really bad”), pronounced, however, with a single *t* as often happens for non-native speakers of Italian with words that have double consonants. A further consideration can be added regarding the use of the adjective in the title *La Vita Bruta*. The adjective is often used in Italian as a masculine noun (*bruto*) to indicate a man unable to master his impulses, to the point of becoming ferocious or even violent. Hence, the adjective *bruta* feels particularly strong when associated with *vita*, grammatically a female word.
601. Ibid., 43. My translation.
602. Ibid., 25. My translation. Original emphasis.
603. Ibid., 14. My translation.
604. Ibid., 29. My translation. Original emphasis.
605. Elkins, *What Do Artists Know?*, 2012, 48. Original emphasis.
606. Ibid., 49. Original emphasis.
607. My translation from the original message in Dutch.
608. Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 1991, x. The following quotations are on the same page.

609. Coward, *Urbicide*, 2009, 144n1. The following quotations are on the same page.
610. See Bayard, *Titanic fera naufrage*, 2016, 42. Original emphasis. My translation.
611. *Ibid.*, 169. Original emphasis. My translation.
612. See, once more, Hunter, “It’s a matter of time.”
613. Already in May 2010, a corpse (in an advanced stage of decomposition), had been discovered at the Thornton bank; it was assumed to be the body of a man, but it was not possible anymore to identify him, nor was any public connection made to attempts at crossing the channel by swimming. See <https://www.7sur7.be/belgique/un-cadavre-retrouve-a-thorntonbank-dans-la-mer-du-nord-a1dfb5c0/?referer=https://www.google.com/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
614. See Lescauwaeet and Huyberechts, “Zo wanhopig dat,” 2019; and Anonymous, “Channel migrants,” 2019. The following quotation is on the same (unpaginated) page. Original emphasis. The incident was also reported on the Flemish television channel VRT één in “Het journaal” at 7 p.m. See <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnu/a-z/het-journaal/2019/het-journaal-het-journaal-19u-20190826/#close> (last accessed August 28, 2019); and on *Euronews*: see Crowcroft and Fleischmann, “A flipper and a plastic bottle float,” 2019.
615. Anonymous, “Channel migrants: Man ‘drowns,’” 2019, n.p. Original emphasis.
616. See Huyberechts and Lescauwaeet, “15 jaar gezworven,” 2019.
617. See the reportage by Dan Rivers and Jonathan Wald via <https://www.itv.com/news/2019-11-15/mystery-identity-of-failed-asylum-seeker-who-died-trying-to-swim-in-the-channel-unveiled-by-itv-news-investigation/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
618. Masoud’s case turns out not to be an isolated one. On November 11, 2019, a small news item in the Belgian newspaper *De Morgen* reported that a swimming man had been saved from the water some twenty kilometers from the French coast by the crew of a ferry, the *Pride of Canterbury*. See https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/zwemmende-migrant-gered-door-ferry-in-kanaal-b81ebb9b/?utm_source=demorgen&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_content=avond&utm_userid=&utm_ctid=fc31af5904f2b02057e78fe404736e30 (accessed October 20, 2020).
619. Kickasola, *Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, 50. The following quotation is on the same page.
620. See Proctor and Walker, “Boris Johnson: I’d rather be dead in ditch,” 2019.
621. See Lauwaert, “De perfecte Bourgeois,” 230.
622. Kaplan, *American Exposures*, 145.
623. Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 113. The following quotation is on the same page.
624. See *ibid.*, 115. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphases.
625. *Ibid.*, 136.
626. *Ibid.*, 135. Scheible proposes no less than “‘canceling’ the semiotic square” in order to overcome the restrictions of “binary divisions that so often structure the logic of the square into oppositions”: *ibid.*, 140.
627. *Ibid.*, 141. The following quotation is on the same page.
628. De Bruyn, “Beyond the Line,” 26. De Bruyn references Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 212–214.
629. *Ibid.*, 27. All further quotations are on the same page.
630. See Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* [1925], 1953, 16.
631. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 293. The following quotation is on the same page.
632. *Ibid.*, 298. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
633. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 154. Original emphasis.
634. Sloterdijk, *Spheres III*, 31.
635. *Ibid.*, 831n6.
636. *Ibid.* Sloterdijk is quoting Wurman’s *Information Architects* (Zurich: Graphis, 1996), 15.
637. *Ibid.*, 44 and 48. The following quotation is on p. 48.
638. *Ibid.*, 49.
639. See *Ibid.*, 58–59. My emphasis.
640. *Ibid.*, 56.
641. *Ibid.*, 40.
642. See *Ibid.*, 43.
643. See Baert, *Kleine iconologie van het weven*, 2012, 60–61.
644. In book 13, vs.107–110 of Homer’s *Odyssey*, nymphs weave marvelous purple.
645. Diomé, *Belly of the Atlantic*, 182.
646. See the *e-flux* message that accompanied the announcement of Akomfrah’s exhibition *Purple* at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/178701/john-akomfrahpurple/> (accessed October 20, 2020).

647. Ingold, *Life of Lines*, 151.
648. Ibid., 150. Ingold quotes Arendt from *The Human Condition*, 182–183.
649. Ibid. Original emphasis.
650. Ibid., 151. Original emphasis. The following quotations are on the same page.
651. Ibid., 152. The following quotations are on the same page.
652. Ibid., 154. Original emphasis.
653. Ibid., 154–155.
654. Ibid., 156. The following quotations are on the same page.
655. Ibid., 11. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
656. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 9.
657. De Bruyn, “Beyond the Line,” 43.
658. Mariás, *Berta Isla*, 136.
659. See Harlizius-Klück, “Arithmetics and Weaving,” 2008; and id., *Weberei als episteme*, 2004, 103 (including a drawing of the Greek loom). Original emphasis.
660. Baert, *Kairos*, 25. See also p. 21.
661. Id., *Pneuma and the Visual Medium*, 151.
662. Id., *Kairos*, 22. The following quotation is on the same page.
663. Id., *Pneuma and the Visual Medium*, 151; and id., *Kairos*, 7. The following quotation is on the same page.
664. Ibid., 25. The following quotations are all on the same page. Original emphases.
665. See Flusser, “Line and Surface [1973],” in Ströhl, *Vilém Flusser*, 2002, 25–26.
666. Ibid., 30. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
667. Ibid.
668. Ibid., 34. The following quotations are on the same page.
669. See George, *Vita Bruta*, 13.
670. Ibid., 38. My translation.
671. For the connection between Kairos and the “spider-web complex,” see Baert, *Kleine iconologie*, 58.
672. See Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 136–137. Original emphasis. The reference is to Cornelia Vismann’s discussion of the etymology of the term “canceling.”
- It is because of the “latticed” appearance of the deletions that the act of crossing out a legal document is referred to as “canceling” (*cancelli* meaning “to cross out”): Vismann, *Files* [2000], 2008, 26. Original emphasis.
673. Vismann’s argument is built on Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1967). See *ibid.*, 26 and 169n79. The following quotation is on p. 26.
674. Ibid., 27, fig. 2. Scheible also reproduced this abbreviation in *Digital Shift*, 137, fig. 27.
675. Vismann, *Files*, 26. Original emphasis. Vismann added that “[t]here can be no more literal proof of Lacan’s claim that the entry into the domain of the symbolic starts with the deleted letters behind bars.”
676. Ibid., 27. Original emphasis.
677. Ibid., 29 and 28.
678. For a concise technical explanation, see Dear and Kemp, *Oxford Companion to Ships* [1976], 2005, 118–119.
679. Innes, “Boris Johnson,” 2019, n.p. The following quotations are from the same, unpaginated text.
680. See Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 2001, 100–105.
681. An English summary of this story is included in Hunt, *The Tunnel*, 1994, 23–24.
682. Ibid., 24. The original is “monstres.” See Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 105.
683. The original is “squares” (see also p. 105).
684. Allen, *Birth Symbol*, 1981, back cover.
685. See Vandenbroeck, *Azetta*, 204.
686. Allen, *Birth Symbol*, 15. Allen here follows Mellaart, *Catal Huyuk*, 1967.
687. Ibid., 3. The following quotation is on the same page.
688. See Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods* [1974], 1982, 91.
689. Allen, *Birth Symbol*, 8.
690. See Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods*, 83.
691. See *Ibid.*, 171.
692. See *Ibid.*, 174–179.
693. See *Ibid.*, 183.
694. Allen, *Birth Symbol*, 4. Allen also mentions that Kurdish rug weavers call the motif of the birth symbol “lovers’ quarrel.” Original emphases.
695. The Greek goddess Athena has traditionally been represented as not only wearing the gorgoneion, an apotropaic amulet representing the Gorgon’s

- head, but also an armor made from goatskin. Traditional Lybico-Berber culture also knows a goddess named Neith, who can transform into a goat. See Vandenbroeck, *Azetta*, 123–127. In that sense, once again, it is striking to find Allan Sekula included in *The Dockers' Museum* a photograph representing two goats munching peacefully on the deck of an atom bomb target ship (as is indicated on the front side of the photograph). The USS *Nevada* was part of Operation Crossroads, a series of nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in 1946. Most animals aboard the fleet did not survive the Able and Baker bomb explosions. See <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/operation-crossroads> (accessed October 20, 2020). Discussing this topic further would lead the present discussion too far, but it is striking to find that animals known to have been sacred epiphanies of ancient goddesses have been sacrificed for atomic tests.
696. Barthes, *Preparation of the Novel*, 304.
697. Vandenbroeck, “Nameless Motif,” 158.
698. Allen, *Birth Symbol*, 4. Original emphasis.
699. See Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 106.
700. Hunt, *The Tunnel*, 24.
701. Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 104. My translation and my emphasis.
702. See Hunt, *The Tunnel*, 23. Thomé wrote, “débris de coquilles blanches”: Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 104.
703. Hunt, *The Tunnel*, 23.
704. In Thomé’s words, it says, “Je vis même passer des corps miroitants, entraînés par un mouvement rapide et que je jugeai être des bandes de poissons plats, de la famille des soles ou des raies, troublés par ma présence et planant dans l’abîme” (as included in Reneau, *Louis Joseph Aimé Thomé de Gamond*, 104). My translation and my emphasis.
705. See, for example, <https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/community-projects/worthing/mermaid39s-purse> (accessed October 20, 2020).
706. Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 137. The following quotation is on the same page.
707. *Ibid.*, 124.
708. *Ibid.*, 123.
709. *Ibid.*, 122–123. Original emphasis.
710. See Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, Book 1, chapter XIII, as quoted in Gaffney et al., *Europe’s Lost World*, 2009, 169n1.
711. Gaffney et al., *Europe’s Lost World*, 2. It is worth bringing to mind in this context that the opening slide (after the initial projection of the title) of Chapter Eight in Allan Sekula’s *Fish Story*, entitled “Dismal Science,” is taken from *Genesis* 6:15 (precising the length, breadth, and height of Noah’s ark). The visual components of this chapter (encompassing a total of eighty slides) were made in Newcastle and during a journey from Glasgow to London, in 1989.
712. See *Ibid.*, 170n1.
713. *Ibid.*, 14. The authors reference Muir Evans, “East Anglian Notes,” 1932, 131. The following quotation is on the same page.
714. For a drawing of how the spear was most likely used, see <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF11171-Mesolithic-harpoon-from-Leman-and-Ower-Bank-Doggerland&Index=10473&RecordCount=56734&SessionID=53b0c8f7-1a35-4192-b9c0-ed79fd5e349b> (accessed October 20, 2020).
715. Anonymous, “Harpoon Found,” 1932, 218.
716. Bloch, *Traces* [1969], 2006, 172. The following quotation is on the same page.
717. *Ibid.*, 173.
718. *Ibid.*, 39.
719. *Ibid.*, 41. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
720. Marin, “Frontiers of Utopia,” 420. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
721. Bishop, “Ambrosius Holbein’s *memento mori*,” 2005, 110. On p. 111, Bishop provides an enhanced image of the map, which clearly reveals the shape of the skull. For a good online reproduction of the original map in the Basel edition, see https://lib-dbserver.princeton.edu/visual_materials/maps/websites/thematic-maps/theme-maps/utopia.html (accessed October 20, 2020).
722. See <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/hans-holbeins-dance-of-death-1523-5> (accessed October 20, 2020).
723. Marin, “Frontiers of Utopia,” 420. The following quotation is on the same page.
724. Bloch, *Traces*, 173. The following quotations are on the same page.
725. Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, 200.
726. *Ibid.*, 206.
727. See Vandenbroeck, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 379.

728. For a photograph of a wooden weaving shuttle that strikingly resembles the Colinda spear, see <https://www.heddels.com/2014/10/shuttle-vs-projectile-ooms-whats-the-difference/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
729. See <https://www-oed-com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/view/Entry/19792?redirectedFrom=blade-axe#eid18999251> (accessed October 20, 2020).
730. Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1653.
731. Shakespeare's full play can be consulted via <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html> (accessed October 20, 2020). Arendt's quotation runs from "Full" until "strange"; see Arendt, "Introduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 38.
732. As argued by Eva de Valk, Arendt identified with Benjamin regarding her own working methods. See de Valk, "Pearl Divers," 2010, 39.
733. Arendt, "Introduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 39. The following quotation is on the same page.
734. *Ibid.*, 42.
735. *Ibid.*, 49.
736. *Ibid.*, 51. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
737. See, once more, <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/full.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
738. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 860.
739. *Ibid.*, 460. The following quotation is on the same page.
740. See de Valk, "Pearl Divers," 43.
741. Arendt, "Introduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 5 and 14. Original emphasis.
742. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 456. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
743. *Ibid.*, 459. The following quotation is on the same page.
744. *Ibid.*, 463 and 867.
745. *Ibid.*, 464. The following quotations are on the same page.
746. *Ibid.*, 461.
747. My reading here slightly deviates from the English translation, which says "another species of existence." I stay closer to the German original, which is "eine andere Daseinsform": Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk*, 575.
748. Arendt, "Introduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 41.
749. See *ibid.*, 49.
750. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 473.
751. *Ibid.*, 463. The following quotation is on the same page.
752. *Ibid.*, 911.
753. *Ibid.*, 4.
754. *Ibid.*, 461.
755. See *id.*, *Illuminations*, 258.
756. *Ibid.*, 261.
757. See Gaffney et al., *Europe's Lost World*, 66 and 102. On p. 43, they provide a fascinating map of the probable maximum extent of land during the late Paleolithic era. The edge of the European continent was situated north of the Shetland Hills (now Shetland Islands) and, to the west, included an area situated more westerly than Ireland.
758. The name Doggerland was coined by Bryony Coles in her "Doggerland: a speculative survey," *Proc Prehist Soc*, 64 (1998): 45–81. Literally, the term is presumed to have been derived from the Dutch "Dogge," indicating a double-masted ship (a trawler). In recent years, voices have been raised about the utility of the name Doggerland and a proposal has been made to change it into Northsealand. In opposition to that, Vince Gaffney, Robin Allaby, Richard Bates, Martin Bates, Eugene Ch'ng, Simon Fitch, Paul Garwood, Garry Momber, Philip Murgatroyd, Mark Pallen, Eleanor Ramsey, David Smith, and Oliver Smith have convincingly argued that the name Doggerland should be preserved. First, they noted its existence in early-twentieth-century popular literature; second, they argued that a violent destroyer should never be rewarded with name-giving: "in a fundamental manner the North Sea was ultimately the destroyer of a named land and wiped clean millennia of traditions and cultural geography—it should have no further claim on the landscape it so effectively eradicated." Gaffney et al., "Doggerland and the Lost Frontiers Project (2015–2020)," in Bailey et al., *Under the Sea*, 2017, 317.
759. See Starckx, "Atlantis in onze achtertuint," 2019.
760. See Gaffney et al., *Europe's Lost World*, 32 for an insightful overview of this evolution drawn on four maps.
761. See Weninger et al., "Catastrophic final flooding of Doggerland," 2008.
762. There is evidence that movement between Britain and Europe was already by boat around 6000 BC. Prior to that time, most probably, there still existed a rich continuous landscape filled with rivers or estuaries. See Garry Momber and Hans Peeters,

- “Postglacial Human Dispersal and Submerged Landscapes in North-West Europe,” in Bailey et al., *Under the Sea*, 321–334.
763. *Ibid.*, 330.
764. See Waddington, *Mesolithic Settlement in the North Sea Basin*, 2007, 203–207.
765. Matthew C. Hunter has brought to mind that in *Chinatown* (1974) Polanski, strikingly, gave the name Noah Cross to a frail character who “controls the flow of water to drought-stricken Los Angeles”: Hunter, “Curve, Line, Circle, Slash, Cross,” 2017, 16.
766. Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 124. Original emphasis. The following quotation is on the same page.
767. See also, the open letter that Frédéric Pennel and André Vallini published on this subject in *Le Monde* (November 25, 2019), “Europe: « Le monopole de l’anglais contredit le projet européen »,” https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/11/25/europe-le-monopole-de-l-anglais-contredit-le-projet-europeen_6020471_3232.html (accessed October 20, 2020).
768. Scheible, *Digital Shift*, 106.
769. See Lausson, “En France il ne faut plus,” 2013.
770. See <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=di/esis> (accessed October 20, 2020). The dictionary entry there is reproduced from Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1940.
771. Sebald, “So wie ein Hund einen Löffel findet. Gespräch mit Jean-Pierre Rondas (2001),” in id., *»Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis«*, 214. My translation.
772. Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk*, 575. My emphasis. For the potential to generate further, see Sidgwick, “From Flow to Face,” 158. For more source materials on “the myth of the *petra genitrix*,” see *ibid.*, 157–158. Original emphasis.
773. As written by Paine in the Preface to Part Two of *Rights of Man*. See his *Collected Writings*, 547.
774. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831199/20190802_Latest_Yellowhammer_Planning_assumptions_CDL.pdf (accessed October 20, 2020).
775. See also, for the Belgian situation, Stroobants, “Brexit: en Belgique,” 2019.
776. Lichfield, “A ‘Brexit bonanza,’” 2019, n.p.
777. See <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/video/2021/jan/14/jacob-rees-mogg-fish-british-happier-because-brexit-video> (accessed January 21, 2021).
778. For as many as at least fifteen years, there have been incidents between British and French fishermen about who has the fishing rights for scallops off the coast of Normandy. Over the years, the clashes have only become more violent. See Beswick, “Scallop Wars,” 2019. Uncertainty over Brexit resulted in speculations about access to mutual territorial waters in the post-Brexit era, and how it would come to deviate from the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). For a good introduction and helpful map, see Whitfield, “Brexit Fishing Map,” 2019. At the end of 2020, an agreement was reached, which has disappointed British fishermen and fishing businesses. See Morris and Carroll, “‘Betrayed’: UK fishing,” 2020, n.p.
779. See Minten, “Kopje-onder,” 2021, n.p.
780. Churchill, “Wars Are Not Won,” in Cannadine, *Winston Churchill*, 165.
781. See Tombs, *Sweet Enemy*, passim.
782. See Latham, *Kent’s Strangest Tales*, 103.
783. See <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/RTSinfo/videos/lapique-de-jean-claude-junker-aux-britanniques-sur-le-brexit/854346418061881/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
784. See <https://www.facebook.com/GuyVerhofstadt/posts/10156089226450016:0> (accessed October 20, 2020).
785. Bernard, “Un fabricant français,” 2018, n.p. Production of the passports has started as of March 2020. See Chadwick, “Rollout of UK’s new blue passports,” 2020.
786. Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 54. My emphasis.
787. Van Duzer, “The sea monsters in the Madrid manuscript,” 2011, 117.
788. Kickasola, *Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, 298. The following quotation is on the same page.
789. Kipling’s poem is reproduced in Heezen and Hollister, *Face of the Deep*, 235, and commented upon on p. 243 of their book. The poem itself can be consulted via http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_cables.htm (accessed October 20, 2020).
790. For more information, see <https://www.nemolink.co.uk/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
791. Barthes, *How to Live Together* [2002], 2013, 36. The following quotation is on pp. 36–37.
792. Sunil Manghani has made a convincing case for understanding Barthes’s posthumously published courses, especially when read together, in terms of giving rise to a “social ethics”: Manghani, “Neutral Life,” 2020, 5.
793. See Lapierrre, *Pensons ailleurs*, 79–81.

794. See Sebald, *The Emigrants* [1993], 1996, 27–63. For a lengthy analysis of the theme of trains and stations within Sebald's larger oeuvre, see Hessing and Lenzen, *Sebalds Blick*, 2015, 159–198.
795. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life* [1980], 1984, 112. All further quotations are on the same page. Original emphasis.
796. See <http://www.railjoint.com/news/rail-track-components.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).
797. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 113. However, a couple of weeks into 2021, it was announced that the future of Eurostar had become uncertain. The pandemic was given as the main reason for the company's rapid decline. See Delbeke, "Eurostar, een trein tussen," 2021, n.p.
798. This has been the fictionalized subject of Luc Besson's famous film *Le Grand Bleu* [*The Big Blue*] of 1988, based on the life of "dolphin man" Jacques Mayol.
799. Elkins, *What Photography Is*, 2011, 17.
800. *Ibid.*, 19. The following quotation is on the same page.
801. *Ibid.*, 216. By the time the reader gets to these pages, she has worked herself through a confrontational study of the so-called Lingqi photographs that were also analyzed by Georges Bataille in his *The Tears of Eros* (1961). These are photographs of ritual dismemberment, practiced as a capital punishment for acts of rebellion against the power of the authorities in China until 1905. As Elkins pointed out (p. 194), the punishment was executed to make sure that there would be no possibility for the victim to be reborn. For more on this topic, see Brook et al., *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 2008, 91, where it is indicated that this penalty was inflicted to "destroy the future as well as the present life of the offender—he is unworthy to exist longer either as a man or a recognizable spirit, and, as spirits to appear must assume their previous corporal forms, he can only appear as a collection of little bits."
802. Lapierre *Pensons ailleurs*, 219–221. My translation.
803. Marin, "Frontiers of Utopia," 409. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
804. *Ibid.*, 410. Original emphases. The following quotation is on the same page.
805. *Ibid.*, 408. Original emphases.
806. *Ibid.*, 410. Original emphasis.
807. *Ibid.*, 408. Original emphases.
808. *Ibid.*, 411. Original emphasis.
809. *Ibid.*, 413. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
810. *Ibid.*, 414. The following quotations are on the same page. Original emphases.
811. *Ibid.*, 412.
812. *Ibid.*, 414–415. Original emphasis. Marin references Julia Kristeva in a footnote on the *chora*.
813. Mariás, *Dark Back of Time*, 334. The following quotation is on the same page.
814. Vandembroeck, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 396.
815. *Ibid.*, 398–399.
816. *Ibid.*, 400.
817. Lapierre, *Pensons ailleurs*, 221. My translation.
818. See <https://www.lapaysannedesmersmyriampont.com/> (accessed October 20, 2020).
819. Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings*, 1993, 159. Original emphasis.
820. See Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, 123. Original emphases.
821. Glissant wrote: "Retenons bien: *que le poème fut enfoui dans un effondrement de la terre*" (in *Philosophie de la relation*, 15). Original emphasis.
822. Barthes, *S/Z*, 47. The following quotation is on the same page.
823. Sekula, NB 040.
824. Pamuk, *Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*, 2010, 24.
825. *Ibid.*, 69.
826. *Ibid.*, 156.
827. To imagine this further, readers are invited to consult online another picture from the same shooting session, available via <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/nieuwsfoto's/they-dig-out-the-cockles-with-their-toes-katagai-chiba-nieuwsfoto's/107414948?adppopup=true> (accessed October 20, 2020).
828. For more information on the relationship between all components of *Ship of Fools* | *The Dockers' Museum*, see Van Gelder, *Allan Sekula. Ship of Fools* | *The Dockers' Museum*; and Van Gelder and Verbeeck, "Reverse Magellan."
829. Pamuk, *Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*, 27. In what follows, I paraphrase from the same page.
830. Latour, *Down to Earth*, 92. The following quotation is on the same page. Original emphasis.
831. Michelet, *The sea (La mer)* [1861], n.d., 183. Hereafter, I paraphrase from the same page. Original emphases.
832. *Ibid.*, 182. In what follows, I paraphrase from pp. 183–184.

833. Throughout the 1970s, Gould used the same stamp, which he completed manually by adding the year. See, for example, <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/original-1970-80s-8x10-press-1807472383> (accessed October 20, 2020).
834. See https://www.mikimoto.com.hk/hk_en/brand-story (accessed October 20, 2020).
835. Directed by Jules Dassin, a low-resolution version is available online via <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3qzqsy> (accessed October 20, 2020).
836. This scene did not end up in the movie; instead, the decisive moment is marked by Maria putting her empty glass on the dance floor and walking out.
837. See also Vandenbroeck, *Glimpse of the Concealed*, 380.
838. See also Sekula's note on this topic in 10/9/2011, NB 130 (2011).
839. Risberg, "Imaginary Economies," 238. The following quotation is on the same page.
840. For a precise description of how Sekula integrated excerpts from *Never on Sunday* in earlier minutes of *Lottery of the Sea*, see his "The Lottery of the Sea," in Baetens and Van Gelder, *Critical Realism*, 193–194. For this film's complete voice-over (by Allan Sekula), all dialogue (including film excerpts), as well as scene descriptions, soundtracks, and film titles, see Stein and Steiner, *Art Isn't Fair*, 241–270.
841. For the larger story of Medea, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book VII.
842. For this story, see *ibid.*, Book II, 593–96.
843. As confirmed by Sekula in conversation with the author, May–June 2013. See also the thorough analysis of this assimilation of motifs within *The Dockers' Museum* in Anja Isabel Schneider, (*Psychic Subtext(s)*), *passim*.
844. Grossman, *Leven speelt met* [2019], 2020, 112. My translation from the Dutch version. No English translation of this novel exists yet.
845. Sekula, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 332. Original emphasis.
846. Kickasola, *Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, 320.
847. I paraphrase Allan Sekula from the voice-over of *The Forgotten Space*, as published in Zyman and Scozzari, *Allan Sekula: Okeanos*, 178.
848. Sekula, *Performance Under Working Conditions*, 323.

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Who is she? Where does she come from? Have I encountered her before? I mean one and a half millennia earlier? Does she come from a noble Greek lineage, and did her great-grandmother have an affair with people from Asia Minor, Egypt or Mesopotamia?

Closing lines of a letter drafted by André Jolles, designed to draw out Aby Warburg, and dated 23 November 1900; as included in Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography* [1970] (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986), 108.



@AllanSekula [TDM 46] on North 5th #street @Brooklyn, #newyorkcity
#summer #suspense #nymph #enigma #MutinyDoodle

“it consoles me to think that with you my story might even ...” He again sought some better word, but again could not find it: “... yes, that it might still float. And that’s really all it comes down to, Jacobo, to floating.”

Javier Marías, *Your Face Tomorrow. Volume Three. Poison, Shadow and Farewell* [2007], trans. Margaret Jull Costa [2009] (New York: New Direction Books, 2011), 531.



Prismatic #reflection of North #sea #light on #bathroom tiles @RoyalHotelDeal #kent
This was the closest I ever came to observing a #seadog anywhere near @Doggerland
#fish #submarine #bomb #arrow #float #underwaterworld #HarpoonDoodle

Colophon

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