

Beauty: Writing on the Cadaver
[La belleza: escribir sobre el cadáver]

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The heyday of the image has led to the inevitable comparison between the different natures that these may acquire. Technique, always linked to creation, characterizes the form taken by a particular image. At present the video, a modern medium of reproduction, is opposed to the painting in terms of its effect upon the spectator: while the brush-stroke separates the background from the figure—that is to say, generates it—the video incrusts. A review of the meditations of such varied authors as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy, Michael Fried, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Didi-Huberman or Timothy Clark, together with the examples of artists—again of disparate nature—such as John Donne or Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, leads us to a deep reflection on the significance of the image. The question this work seeks to resolve involves the complex relation established between presence and image in contemporary life.

Keywords: image; modernity; painting; video; presence.

El auge de la imagen ha conducido a la inevitable comparación entre las diferentes naturalezas que ésta puede adquirir. La técnica, siempre unida a la creación, caracteriza la forma que adquiere determinada imagen. Actualmente, el video, medio de reproducción moderno, se opone a la pintura en términos de su efecto en el espectador. Mientras la pincelada separa el fondo de la figura, es decir, genera, el video incrusta. Un recorrido por las meditaciones de autores tan dispares como: Martin Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy, Michael Fried, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Didi-Huberman o Timothy Clark, entre otros; junto al ejemplo de artistas, a su vez tan alejados, como John Donne o Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, nos lleva a una profunda reflexión sobre el significado de la imagen. La pregunta que este trabajo quiere resolver gira en torno a la compleja relación que se establece entre presencia e imagen en la contemporaneidad.

Palabras clave: imagen; modernidad; pintura; video; presencia.

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II. TECNOLOGÍAS DE LA IMAGEN: ARTEFACTOS Y PERFORMATIVIDAD

BEAUTY: WRITING ON THE CADAVER

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For/To
Cuauhtémoc Medina González,
because it is in expositions
that the infinite receives its finition.

I see three ways this paper might possibly end, all of them having the English language, intransigent as it might be for some of the readers, make way within and in advance of the common stock of traditional literate knowledge *we*, I mean art historians, claim to possess. As you will no doubt quickly gather, in each of the three cases I bring to the table the phrase “make way” because I want to produce a general atmosphere of endless shifting of direction and boundless communicability, a trafficking which is at the same time a hazarding of words, whose plasticity is out to make one, someone (call her detective, lawyer, or judge) resolve whether this Oedipean or better Heideggerean-Oedipean¹ “giving” of language is, to borrow a phrase from Stanley Cavell, a crime or a deed of glory.²

I’ll explain: as this paper’s purposes will slowly become clear, I treat the example of “Oedipus,” and precisely the way its infra or hypo- (the subjectum) status is inscribed in history and politics, in conjunction with its putatively, seemingly antagonistic other, the older, more obvious, more powerful socially and politically, figure of the “Worker.” I acknowledge “Oedipus” the way we all came to understand this “type” with Sigmund

¹ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “Oedipus as Figure,” *Radical Philosophy*, no.118 (March/April, 2003): 7-17.

² Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?. A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191.

Freud³ as the figure of the desire for knowledge; the figure of seeing and knowing; the figure of the theoretical; all the time setting it in relation to the “Worker,” the figure of production and energy put to work, as it was thematized by Ernst Jünger⁴ and thoroughly sustained in Karl Marx’s thought in its entirety. Individually and jointly they stand as Western humanity’s exclusive representations. However, and following Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe’s remarkable essay “Oedipus as figure,”⁵ we should not consider “desire” as opposite to “labor” in the same way that we oppose production to consumption; given that desire too is consumed we may not be entirely wrong in treating desire as a form of production or energy. In fact, it was Martin Heidegger’s distinction of being from appearance in his 1935 book *Introduction to Metaphysics*,⁶ where by way of the revelation of truth of the poetical use of the figure of Oedipus, that allows us to identify knowledge with techné in its strong, Greek sense of the word, namely as both techné, poiesis, art and technology and therefore continue arguing about a common desire for knowledge that operates, works and animates both the desiring and the laboring animal, both political and libidinal economy. As Heidegger writes a year after his Rectorial Address, modern technology is the Oedipal realization of the metaphysical:

At the beginning Oedipus is the saviour and lord of the state, living in an aura of glory and divine favor. He is hurled out of his appearance, which is not merely his subjective view of himself but the medium in which his being there appears; his being as murderer of his father and desecrator of his mother is raised to un-concealment. The way from the radiant beginning to the gruesome end is one struggle between appearance (concealment and distortion) and un-concealment (being). [...] we must see him [Oedipus] as the embodiment of the Greek being-there, who most radically and wildly asserts its fundamental passion, the passion for the disclosure of being. The knowledge and the science of the Greeks were this passion.⁷

³ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Basic Books, Kindle edition, 2000) and Sigmund Freud, “Typical Dreams,” in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Acheron Press, Kindle edition, 2012).

⁴ Ernst Jünger, “The Worker: Domination and Form,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, eds. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimenbergh (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995).

⁵ See footnote 1.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁷ Heidegger, *Metaphysics*, 106-107.

We might be able to take Cavell's explication of art's appearing in his seminal book *Must We Mean What We Say?* as if not exactly occupying or subletting the Heideggerian Oedipus, the figure of glory and crime, but maybe inscribing this figure deeper into a movement of displacement from a moment in which everything that in modernist painting seemed to count did count to a moment after Minimalism in which number under its various forms, such as series or distances or speeds, and in general numbering beyond what can be numbered has come to impose itself on and transform all thought on art.⁸ The opening of this space—its very spatiality or its many spacings—is the place of art's appearing; yet our access to it is according to Cavell inseparable from and subject to the risk imposed by the full difficulty and complexity of having an experience at all and putting it patiently into words. "Putting it patiently into words" is another way to render Cavell's phrase "getting the news out," which if it does not mean exactly "report" or "reporting the report," it might refer to the urgency of an impossible judgment, a decision that is impossible to reach, or only partly reachable in a speculative manner. The passage in question is worth quoting in its entirety:

The critic is part detective, part layer, part judge, in a country in which crimes and deeds of glory look alike, and in which the public not only therefore, confuses one with the other, but does not know that one or the other has been committed: not because the news has not got out but because what counts as one or the other cannot be defined until it happens; and when it has happened there is no sure way he can get the news out at all without risking something like a crime or glory of his own.⁹

I'll begin with John Donne's poem "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day, being the shortest day" (1627). Together with Domenico Beccafumi's *St Lucy* (1521, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale) this poem inspired and gave its name to the Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's last *Shadow Box* piece (2011), a work which I will examine in more detail later. *The Year's Midnight* is the tenth and last in a series of video installations/affective interfacings/unhappy and felicitous encounters between an embodied viewer and a digitally generated repertoire of facial images, facializations, revalorizations of surfaces and intensive micro-movements. I would characterize all ten shadowboxes in the series as different tonalities, different

⁸ On the imposition of "number" in all its forms on all manifestations of the "common" see Jean-Luc Nancy, "La Comparation/The Compearance: From the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence,'" trans. Tracy B. Strong, *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (August, 1992): 373.

⁹ Cavell, *Must We Mean*, 191.

instances of an incrustation of the image, namely different instances of light converted into punctual signs, of a world of pulverulence open to us to enter, a dance of points.¹⁰ I borrow the generic name “incrustation” from Jean-Luc Nancy’s text “Distinct Oscillation” so as to evidence the difference between an image embedded on the screen and an image physically joined to a canvas as in a painting. This difference will allow me to argue that with “video” we are no longer in the order of the screen, nor does the spectator belong to the order of the beholder. In the case of video the terms “penetration” and “voyeur” would be more accurate to render what is at stake in seeing. It is precisely the work’s *doing*, or in Nancy’s words “its manner of doing and making, what it does to sense or how it makes sense” which is at stake.¹¹

It would require a good deal of work to open up the sense of this “faire”: it is enough to say that what Nancy calls the video’s “penetration” and its “faire” should be first measured in relation to what the art historian Michael Fried understood as “absorption” into the space of painting, namely the denial of the primordial convention that paintings were made to be beheld, in his seminal book *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*¹² a fiction that depends upon the Diderotian distinction between “seeing” and “being shown”; and the reworking or resolving of absorption’s antinomy or the aesthetic problem that an irreducible “theatricality” poses to it—the fact that paintings are actually made to be beheld—in his *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*¹³ by way of a crucial inflection through Roland Barthes *punctum*, the accidental and unintended detail, or the wound that in the first part pricks him and me, while in the second, it pricks only him.

After this long detour my first attempt to conclude this essay will begin with two verses from John Donne’s “Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy’s Day, Being the Shortest Day of the Year”,¹⁴ where the word “nocturnal”: a) either standing for a star-clock or *nocturnlabe*, the navigational instrument—something like an analog computer with an outer disc marked with the months of

¹⁰ I invite the reader to compare Nancy’s onto-aesthetic treatment of “video” as a dance of points with the Persian, Arabic, Urdu word “raqs”, as in Raqs Media Collective, which means the state that whirling dervishes enter into when they whirl. It is also a word used for dance.

¹¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, “Distinct Oscillation”, in *The Ground of the Image* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 63-79.

¹² Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

¹³ See Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* (Yale University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ John Donne, *The Love Poems of John Donne* (Digireads.com, Kindle edition, 2009), 39-40.

the year, and an inner disc marked with hours (and perhaps half hours) as well as locations for one or more reference stars—which, following J. H. Parry's *Age of Reconnaissance. Discovery, Exploration and Settlement 1450-1650*¹⁵ marks the lowest point in the year, thus shifting the field from earth to sky. In fact knowing the time was important in piloting for *calculating* tides; b) or carrying a solemnly religious overtone as in *officium nocturnale*, the last service of the day; c) or more poignantly and now from the visual arts pointing to a *night-piece* like the one featuring in the closing scene of John Webster's revenge tragedy *The White Devil* (1612)¹⁶ suffers under Donne's metaphysical plume the desolate process of *nigredo*,¹⁷ *tenebrositas*, chaos at that time of the day when Eros and Superego are at daggers drawn, and there seems no way forward... when she struggles again with her shadow as with some older night; when knowledge opens into non-knowledge and subject and object merge; when her eye expands, blends with the darkness, and becomes what it was the object of its gaze.¹⁸ How else could I bring to end this moment of pain, misfortune and defeat, than with a poem that bespeaks of soul, a transcendental murmuring that rises from the bottom and is amplified (âmmmmm),¹⁹ which always speaks of life and of death and makes us dream of immortality?

¹⁵ J. H. Parry's *Age of Reconnaissance. Discovery, Exploration and Settlement 1450-1650* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982).

¹⁶ On the various meanings of the word nocturnal in the poem see Winifred Stevenson, "Donne's Nocturnal," *Seventeenth Century* 19, no. 2 (Autumn, 2004): 178-182.

¹⁷ Nigredo or blackness in alchemy means putrefaction and is the first step in the process of discovery of the Philosopher's Stone (elixir of life, rejuvenation, immortality), considered this effort as the *Magnum Opus*. See Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigred> (consulted September 14, 2012). Here I would like to add the following: "corvus" is called the first-degree initiation in some ancient mysteries, such as Mysteries of Mithras, in which the other name of this grade is reported in Eucharist and initiatory death. Crow's head (caput corvui) is the first stage of the alchemical Great Work, the Nigredo (Melanosis). Melanosis is symbolized by the skull (caput mortuum), and hermetic iconography combines raven and skull into one symbol. The etymology of the word reveals that the word skull has a common root with the crown (crow), bird relative to the raven, and the crown (crown) (as, respectively, the words "crow" and "crown" in English). Common is the root of these words with the word cornu (horn). Horns, like the spikes in the royal crown, symbolize the rays of the Black Sun. It is obvious that the etymology of the word cornu bears a relationship with Saturn as the horned god Cernunnos. And, moreover, the cerebrum = brain, cere = cover, the Roman goddess Ceres (Demeter) and the deer cervum = (literally: that which has horns) and of course the horn, the Keres and Cerberus.

¹⁸ Patrick Ffrench, "The Corpse of Theory: Bataille/Blanchot Excavation of an Encounter," *Parallax* 3, no. 1 (February 1997): 99-118.

¹⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, "Interlude: Mute Music", in Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, Kindle edition), 25.

John Donne writes:

Study me then, you who shall lovers be
 At the next world, that is, at the next spring;
 For I am every dead thing,
 In whom Love wrought new alchemy.
 For his art did express
 A quintessence even from nothingness,
 From dull privations, and lean emptiness;
 He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
 Of absence, darkness, death—things which are not.

and continues

I, by Love's limbec, am the grave
 Of all, that's nothing.
 Oft a flood
 Have we two wept, and so
 Drown'd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow,
 To be two chaoses, when we did show
 Care to aught else; and often absences
 Withdrew our souls, and made us carcasses.

A second ending to this paper can stem from T.J. Clark's beguiling, that is, highly interrogative and intimate, voice on Jackson Pollock's painterly values who are no-values, his kingly vulgarity/foolishness/indiscreetness around painting's body.²⁰ Clark, the narrator, brilliantly, economically, phrases what binds him, what commits him twice to, what attaches him to the late 1940s-early 1950s painting on both sides of Atlantic (Cobra and Abstract Expressionism) as a double bind, that connects without connecting two identities of painting absolutely different, absolutely other. This double bind to each painting—Clark's story on *How New York Stole The Idea of Modern Art*²¹—signifies to each painting death and the suspension of death, the *arrest* of death, or the death sentence (death and life-after-life/life-after-death) so that American painting's suspension of death will be possible (so that Abstract Expressionism will live on and cease to live). Clark writes: "Jorn's really was an end game. Vulgarity on the other hand back on

²⁰ Timothy J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), chapter 6.

²¹ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

the other side of the Atlantic, turned out to be a way of keeping the corpse of painting hideously alive—while all the time coquetting with Death.”²²

Even though the words I will be quoting were published fifteen years ago about the culture’s picture of false alternatives, what Clark calls “a little battlefield of basic cultural pieties” (individuals vs. collectivities,²³ the slave’s state of innocence vs. the fruit of the tree of knowledge, witness vs. testimony to the existence of something, a testimony equal to a proof in a trial that aims at fixing meaning and signification into the positive assurance of apodictic truth²⁴) and other orthodoxies like “dignity of man” and “dignity of work,” they precisely could have been written about recent effort—equally Nietzschean in its piquant wit and overkill—to reveal (?), not at once, the terrible premise that plagues the essence of culture. By “essence of culture” I understand what Friedrich Nietzsche identifies as culture’s terrible predicament in his essay *The Greek State* when he writes: “Accordingly, we must learn to identify as a cruel-sounding truth the fact that slavery belongs to the essence of a culture: a truth, granted, that leaves no doubt about the absolute value of existence. This truth is the vulture which gnaws at the liver of the Promethean promoter of culture.”²⁵ By “plague” I mean the state of affliction our use of the term “contemporary”²⁶, in the context of the current dialogue between art history and visual culture, has brought to our shared sense of the most properly speaking aesthetic or disciplinary categories, namely the “plastic arts” with their emphasis on *form* and on what is materially *formable* or subject to molding. More so architecture, sculpture,

²² Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 390.

²³ Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 366. It fully reads: “...as if our culture needs abstraction to be a little battlefield of basic cultural pieties: individuals versus collectivities, freedom vs. tribalism, anti-Soviet driveling versus Stalinist high moral tone.”

²⁴ On the difference between testimony and evidence within first the phenomenological tradition and then in Jean-Luc Nancy’s own texts on photography (“Georges”) and film (*The Evidence of Film*), see Philip Armstrong’s remarkable text “From Appearance to Exposure,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 9, no.1 (April, 2010): 11-27.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, 2nd revised student edition, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 166.

²⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, “Art Today”, *Journal of Visual Culture* 9, no.1 (April, 2010): 91-99. For a variety of reasons he refuses to use the term ‘contemporary’ and replaces it with the word ‘today.’ Compare it with Clark’s: “The most tiresome aspect of so much contemporary art is that it is so determined to *be* contemporary—that it sets this as its goal, or produces it as its best effect. When Daumier said “Il faut être de son temps” he did not mean it as exultant battle cry so much as admission of defeat. Well, “defeat” is too strong. Necessity then”. Timothy J. Clark, *The Sight of Death. An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 23 February, 125.

and music, and less so the “visual arts” like painting and its dependence on “image”. I quote now from Clark:

Pollock, of all people, was unlikely to content himself with an image of the concealment (the pouring) as enchantment. Paint for him was not pearls and coral. The most fiercely worked of the pictures from the end of 1947 got called *Alchemy* [...]. It is made up of minerals utterly untransmuted and untransmutable, most of them mud brown and tar black. Alchemy, so the books say, may originally have meant just “pouring.” Zosimus put the blame for the whole business on the fallen angels, teaching secret arts to the women they married.²⁷ Now here is a metaphor Pollock could ride to the bitter end. But I anticipate.²⁸

A third ending can begin by citing a “small” text by Jean-Luc Nancy, entitled “He Says”²⁹ written in 1983 for the Tsai theatre production *Celui qui ne parle pas* (“He who does not speak”). Those of you, maybe all who have been drawn to Abbas Kiarostami’s 2009 film *Certified Copy* again and again you might have detected Nancy’s title coming from Juliette Binoche’s mouth when referring to her male child Julian³⁰ and to his lack of sense of time as the quintessential Kantian subject extended between his two fundamental modalities: its transcendental temporality and its unconditioned freedom; that same child who is the “certified copy” of his father (?); and who once, we learn, nonchalantly said to his mother “I’ll die? So what?”; a pronouncement, which for Georges Didi-Huberman in *Confronting Images* is, following Adam’s transgression, another manner to say “not to resemble God.” In “Image as Rend” he explains: “And if resemblance, from a Christian point of view, is thinkable only as an immense drama, that is first because through his transgression and the loss of his ‘being in the image of,’ Adam did nothing other than invent death for us. Not to resemble God,

²⁷ Here Clark refers to Lee Krasner’s famous ‘finishing’ of Pollock’s *Cut Out* (1948-56): There exists a photo from 1956 which suggests that after Pollock’s death she hung the work on the wall on top of *Black and White* (1951-2) so that the latter’s black and white markings emerge from *Cut Out*’s empty area. But *Black and White* was shown the other way up than it appears in Pollock’s studio before his death; and it is signed. Clark sees in that story of pitching the balance between figure and field, of trying to put back together the abstract and figurative, an aesthetic rather than an art-world-ethical point. See Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 351.

²⁸ Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 301-302.

²⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, “He Says,” in *Multiple Arts. The Muses II*, trans. by Simon Sparks (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 35-37.

³⁰ I invite the reader to listen carefully to the dialogue in Kiarostami’s *Certified Copy* between 32’36” and 33’11”. The two characters, “she” and James Miller, talk while walking out of an arcade-type walkway; the scene is shot with the tracking-shot technique with the camera dolly back.

that's another way of saying: we are all going to die.”³¹ Now resemblance's loss or having done with “being in the image of” turns out to be the desire of one part of the Renaissance culture—with all its attendant claims to truth and to the human—to identify the image as an invention of death, clearly at odds with another desire for images that kill death. But one does not invent death. We call the second desire “humanism” and we are in a position to trace its threat of violence under Panofskian art history.³²

I've quoted Nancy because I want to set a scene in which his text serves as a rotating support that immediately withdraws itself from the recognitions that it enables between Clark's *Farewell* and the *Sight of Death*, to grant its place to Juan Dios de Machain's photograph of one particular dead infant, the angelito, with eyes and mouth open (call this ambrotype an index of malaise) to raise its mirror and keep modernity's monsters at bay. My claim is that it is possible to read Clark's small book *The Sight of Death* in relation to his last large volume on modernism. To read the text *The Sight of Death* in such a way is neither assimilating it into philosophy nor, and now I go in the opposite direction, extracting from it, visualizing some “theory” of the Husserlian “thing itself” and “self-evidence.” Instead it is to evidence the figurality of the sign and all kinds of intensities in his text's continuing transformation as against the theoretical. This figurality, which also points to a transformation of Clark's career from a social history of art to a writing as oscillation that gives primacy to the image as an intimacy or a *force* that *forms* a world, comes from behind his words, it operates in silence, simultaneously subtle and incalculable. Therefore to read *The Sight of Death* is to engage with, even to resurrect and enliven, its body, not to turn it into a corpse.

To delay ending this essay I will subject Clark's art history—an art history that consciously makes itself out of the practices of seeing and writing without forgetting itself under the weight of an empty professionalism, which is simultaneously a vanishing of its objects and an aversion for the world—to slight adjustments to reach the right balance. I feel, the word “oscillation” may make do, as I would like to see art history in the image of a mouth that opens itself to the passage of sense between things. Not the speaking mouth of linguistic and logical signification but a mouth, resonant to the passion of the thing that opens, and in the opening, things

³¹ Georges Didi-Huberman, “Image as Rend,” in *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. John Goodman (University Park, Palo Alto: Penn State University Press, 2009), 219.

³² On Panofsky and the Heideggerian interpretation see Stephen Melville, “Historical Distance (Bridging and Spanning),” in *Writing Art History. Disciplinary Departures*, eds. Margaret Iversen and Stephen Melville (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 22-23.

and beings come to connect with each other.³³ Nancy tells us the word oscillation

is the diminutive form of the Latin *os*, which signifies the mouth and, by metonymy, the face. Oscillum thus designated a small mouth (closely related to osculum, kiss), as well as a small mask of Bacchus hung in the vines as a scarecrow: the movement of this face swinging in the wind produced the sense of “oscillation.” The Oscillator, then, swings between mouth and face, between speech and vision, between the emission of sense and the reception of form. [...] And yet, the Oscillator does not cease to knock back and forth, to leap or to dance between the two, touching both of them. It wants to make the mask speak and it wants to give speech a mask. This happens for us now especially with *video*.³⁴

Are there words and phrases we could put in Pollock’s mouth without thinking we were forcing things—beyond the unavoidable forcing that follows making the man talk at all, when mostly he preferred not to?³⁵

You didn’t teach me anything. Nobody teaches the child to speak. Language is more motherly to the child than is his own mother; [...] He laughs and says: it was blue; I was blue. Er lacht, und sagt: Ich war blau; Ich war ganz im blau. I was singing the blue note. [...] I used not to speak. You opened my mouth; you forced my mouth open [...] you demanded to hear me; [...] I was no longer allowed to keep silent...³⁶

Blue was the overall note—[...] it is a blue that is not yet the color of evening; a blue lit just enough by the yellow coming from the left for it to be un-oppressive—essentially light.³⁷

Thus ends my third proposal to give way to this paper’s ending.

³³ On the “mouth” that resonates to the passion of the thing see Jean-Luc Nancy, “Fantastic Phenomena,” *Research in Phenomenology*, no. 41 (2011): 228-237.

³⁴ Nancy, “Distinct Oscillation,” 73.

³⁵ Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 316. The section is entitled Echo and its programmatic line is “Matters of vocabulary first.” The section is dedicated to Greenberg’s relation to Pollock.

³⁶ Nancy, “He Says,” 37.

³⁷ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 20 January morning, 36. The entry is devoted to the subject of justice, to the image and justice having the tensions produced in the translation of the French word “travellings” in Godard’s remark on Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) do the job: “les travellings sont affaire de morale”—“tracking shots are a matter of ethics.” Notice also in the same section Clark’s idiomatic use of English: “I should [...] simply begin by recalling the sorts of passage that stopped me dead in my tracks the last few days” and compare it with Maurice Blanchot’s French title of his *Death Sentence (L’Arrêt de Mort)*, 1948); Derrida would capitalize on the double entendre of Blanchot’s title in his small essay “Living on. Borderlines” where he explicitly treats vulgarity and therefore is as close to Blanchot as never before; as well as the beginning (?) of Kiarostami’s film in

The End

Clark in *The Sight of Death* is such an eclectic writer that trying to trace his sources and influences on the image is a futile task that may bring one to the limit of the readable and of interpretation. The reader may experience the feeling of an indecision steadying oneself between elation and the loss of hope, panoramic knowledge, with all its accompanying pleasure and illusion of mastery, and meaninglessness, and this alternation may not stop when deprived of reliable reasons and analytical instruments. Nonwithstanding I took the task upon myself. Oscillating between Clark's exaltation that Poussin's *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake* "turns on a contrast between motion and emotion, sheer endless exterior energy giving way to the running man's deep inwardness"³⁸ and the final moment of his defeat and stupefaction while meditating "Poussin's world is irretrievably lost,"³⁹ I started lifting, as I am doing here, his words, the ones that I thought escape meaning, by subtracting and removing them from homogeneity, distinguishing them, detaching them, casting them forth, relating them to each other and multiplying their sense. I disengaged the phrase "motion and emotion" from any "fascination with the images" and I traced it instead to an unexpected source: Jean-Luc Nancy's "Il y a du rapport sexuel? Et après."⁴⁰ It is Nancy's bodily account of the world, what he says about touch, balance, the entire range of physical conditions of human movement, of emotion, of commotion, of being shaken, affected and infected that I found so compelling; although "compelling" is still much of an academic word. His writing is a constant proximity, a presence, a place of mere events, having all these events impinging the reader, winding themselves into her/his subjectivity, a writing both great and intolerable:

the Italian city of Arrezzo and its end (?) in the village of Lucignano. See also Nancy's afternoon conference on "justice" (notice that Nancy does not discuss the death sentence) and juxtapose it to Nancy Fraser's essay in *New Left Review* (March, 2012) on the film *Never Let Me Go* and justice—shots of which I used in this paper's presentation. But this is a subject for another paper. Later in *The Sight of Death* (3 February, 43), Clark says: "'Tracking shots are a question of ethics.' Making a case about change and persistence, that is a case that will strike us as truly applying to the things presented—is done by finding a balance between different kinds of blue," a statement in which I hear the capacity to appreciate different tonalities, and in which I sense that in the context of a very specific love relationship, another one can take place that has an entirely different quality or an entirely different tonality. But one thing is when it is about artworks and another when there are people involved. This is something to think about. Or as Pozzo says to Lucky in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*: "Think pig!" Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 407.

³⁸ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 5 April, 173.

³⁹ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 21 September 2003, 240.

⁴⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, "Il y a du rapport sexuel? Et après," *Littérature*, no. 142 (2006/2): 30-40.

After the rapport, and before the other, what of the rapport? Nothing, as one knows, a form of sadness, to say, a certain despondency, that is to say more precisely a fluttering that separates, for a time more or less long, a brief exhaustion, a “satiety” (a “enough!” a “cannot-go-any-further” that divides itself infinitely in fullness and evidently), and a recommencement of the rapport, that is to say, of the desire, its signs and its motions and emotions.⁴¹

Nancy launches an aesthetic, specifically erotic treatment of the artwork’s mute thingness cherishing, that is, being attentive to, the intensity in Wittgenstein’s color blue or in the blue note’s microtonality among other sensual details and micro-perceptions,⁴² while altogether disputing Jacques Lacan’s affirmation that the unconscious is structured like language. But most importantly he entrenches *jouissance* and *rapport* within a Stoic understanding of the four incorporeals: space and time, the void and the *λεχτόν*,⁴³ which subsist not under, below, or beneath but in a relation to the world, bordering on the corporeal (compare for instance Clark’s final meditation “but at length it dawns on me that a few Stoic *sententia* are in order”).⁴⁴

Nancy and Clark, a philosopher and an art historian, manage to expose the travesties behind both a semiological/structuralist method as well as the one that foregrounds the subsignifying materiality of the visual image; while aligning themselves to the Jean-François Lyotard of *Discours, Figures* who decries the imprisonment of the image behind meanings when he writes “This book [the *Discours, Figures*] is a defense of the eye...It has a

⁴¹ Nancy, “Il y a du rapport sexuel?,” 31. The translation is mine.

⁴² Nancy argues that the handling in a work of art has to do with attention: “The exercise of this approach is called attention. The attention, the tension and the dilection, the preferential election and the setting in value—the cherishing—of the area, the detail (think of Cézanne with his ‘small perceptions’ and Wittgenstein demanding that ‘this blue’ is reproduced, of ‘the microtonal musics,’ etc.)—the attention differs from the phenomenological intentionality in that it does not focus on an object, but the intensity is related to (or on, or similarly, in contact with) a place with which, one is not to be confused, but to make ‘place’ in its contiguity and in its contagion.” Nancy, “Il y a du rapport sexuel?,” 33. This brings him closer to Courbet who, as Clark says, was always fond of shoving his fingers in viewer’s face and saying “La peinture, c’est ça!” And the *ça* is something in which the spectator is meant to “see” the artist but see him behind or in front of the figurative order. See Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 331. The entire argument about attention can also be followed throughout *The Sight of Death*.

⁴³ The four Stoic incorporeals Space, Time, the Void and the *λεχτόν*, which Nancy evokes, do not exist; instead they subsist. The incorporeals have a mode of existence, which is different from that of bodies in the sense that the latter exist while the former subsist, for the reason that they do not have an independent existence in relation to the rest of the world. See Jean-Paul Martinon, *On Futurity. Malabou, Nancy and Derrida* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 84-6.

⁴⁴ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, last entry, 14 November 2003, 242.

shadow for a prey. It is interested in that penumbra which, following Plato, speech has cast like a grey veil over the sensible.”⁴⁵

Clark’s second quote may be a tired catchphrase by now but it is not an empty one: it was as clear as day to me (as the saying goes—but what’s day?) that it was meant to be read against Erwin Panofsky’s essay “*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition”⁴⁶ on Poussin’s painting of Arcadian shepherds. The reference in question reads as follows: “Sanazaro’s Arcady is like Virgil’s, a Utopian realm. But in addition *it is a realm irretrievably lost* seen through a veil of reminiscent melancholy.”⁴⁷ As we all know this is the essay whose first version, the 1936 one,⁴⁸ marks the interruption of a career of an exceptionally penetrating mind, which goes by the name *transplanted academic*⁴⁹ (or if you want call him *the intruder*),⁵⁰ from the schematism of transcendental imagination to an ordered narrative that follows the typical sequence of “before” and “after.”

Panofsky delivers an exceptional analysis of Poussin’s “entirely new idea” on the transience of life with its indestructible beauty and the preservation and destruction of death through: a philological analysis of the *tomb’s inscription* “*Et in Arcadia ego*,” a cryptic phrase that as Clark elsewhere muses “art historians cut their teeth on...”;⁵¹ and that Nancy deems as an inscription that makes its ordinary sense in the absencing of the words’ sense in their image, treating them instead as their own graphism, graphite, graffiti,

⁴⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, “Taking the Side of the Figural,” *The Lyotard Reader and Guide*, ed. Keith Crome and James Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 36. Compare it with Clark’s diary entry on the day of Winter Solstice, which is the day commemorated to St. Lucy and Lozano-Hemmer’s work’s literary reference: “Boyer believes—and here we move closer to the story Poussin is telling—that these feelings are magnified by the fact that any corpse, however domestic its passing, is seen by the unconscious mind as *prey*.” And later: Or rather, the snake and the corpse are for him [the running man] inseparable, visually and mentally. They are one.” Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 20 December 2001, 228.

⁴⁶ Erwin Panofsky, “*Et in Arcadia Ego*: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 295-320.

⁴⁷ Panofsky, “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” 304.

⁴⁸ See Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 16 February, 96-97.

⁴⁹ See E. Panofsky, “Epilogue. Three Decades of Art History in the United States. Impressions of a Transplanted European,” in Panofsky, “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” 321-346.

⁵⁰ Compare for instance Nancy’s warning in his text “The Intruder,” where he talks about his heart transplant: “Isolating death from life without leaving one intimately entwined with other, and each intruding into the heart of the other, this we must never do” (*Corpus*, Kindle edition, p. 165 out of 177). With Clark’s “What is it the running (and not running) man recoils (but does not recoil) from? Not from death pure and simple, I would say, and not just from the snake’s endless, formless liveliness, but from the obscene mixture of the two—from the way one state feeds on the other.” Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 17 June 2003, 236.

⁵¹ T. J. Clark, “At Dulwich,” *London Review of Books* 33, no. 16 (25 August 2011), 24.

images in the image that give way to the unheard and the unintelligible;⁵² or to put it more simply, the inscription means that death is always present in the land of Arcadia, or perhaps, we may hear it as being spoken without solace by a body within a tomb, “*I too*—not death in the abstract but *this* warm hand—once touched spring water and the yielding earth,” an explanation of the *spirit* of the moment and the *historical context*. As Louis Marin states in his *Sublime Poussin*, Panofsky’s essay closes with a self-revelation. To the question “Who is the *εγώ* inscribing its name on the tomb,” like the I’ in Donne’s verse “I am the grave” or like in Paul Klee’s tomb “I cannot be grasped in the here and now, for my dwelling place is as much among the dead, as the yet unborn, slightly closer to the heart of creation than usual, but still not close enough,”⁵³ the answer is, and this time Panofsky’s analysis comes full circle through Giovanni Francesco Guercino’s treatment of the Arcady literature: “Even In Arcady there is Death”⁵⁴ but also “Even in Death there may be Arcady.”⁵⁵

According to expectations I took my cue from Panofsky’s famous article and connected it with Robert Smithson’s famous phrase “Et in Utah ego” in his essay “Spiral Jetty” on that great lost/submerged object of desire “irretrievably changed into the absence” of photographs, film and narrative,⁵⁶ media which give access without access to an interminable in-figuration of the jetty’s finite figure. Therefore and still following Lyotard, I performed a passage from phenomenology to psychoanalysis treating Clark’s and Poussin’s figurality not as a present object of perception but as death drive: “Staring at the rust-colored Salt Lake and not seeing even a shadow of the Jetty; walking out on the axis of the winter solstice from the Sun Tunnels, heading west across the yellow grass, looking back to check that the two circles still floated one inside the other.”⁵⁷

I was still holding on to my old conviction that the chapter layout for *Farewell to an Idea*⁵⁸ was formatted following Friedrich Nietzsche’s “How the True World Finally Became a Fable” section from the *Twilight of Idols or*

⁵² Nancy, “Distinct Oscillation,” 71-72.

⁵³ See Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Vestige of Art”, in *The Muses*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 81-100.

⁵⁴ Panofsky, “*Et in Arcadia ego*,” 320.

⁵⁵ Louis Marin, “Panofsky and Poussin in Arcadia”, in *Sublime Poussin*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 118-9.

⁵⁶ On psychoanalysis and Smithson’s Spiral Jetty see Margaret Iversen, “Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*,” in *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes*, Refiguring Modernism 5 (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 73-89.

⁵⁷ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 4 April, 168.

⁵⁸ See Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*.

*How To Philosophize with a Hammer*⁵⁹, which he wrote in seven days: Clark's modernism departs from and arrives at the claim that modernism equals: presence is an image. Therefore he treats modernism from a non-metaphysical viewpoint that shatters the division between appearance and reality, phenomena and noumena, the sensible and the intelligible, the presentation of the subject (*Darstellung*) and its representation (*Vorstellung*), mending a division that wants the image to be a secondary, derivative presence that distorts what truly is out there. The consequences are enormous: 1) The image does not resemble the thing, but the thing is made to resemble or coincide with itself in the image; or to put it differently the image makes the thing present itself in its resemblance to itself. 2) If Situationist critique and other discourses on "the society of the spectacle" remained obedient to what we call internal truth or desire or imagination or true life or authentic reality (deep, living, originary reality) versus mere appearance (surface, secondary exteriority, inessential shadow) and even false appearance (semblance, deceptive imitation), it is therefore incapable of thinking beyond the metaphysical framework,⁶⁰ that Clark distances himself from. 3) He urges us to no longer fear that we are moderns, where being modern means precisely to no longer be dragged down by our conflicted representations, that is the double spectacle we give to ourselves: good presentation is represented as lost or withdrawn—bad presentation is represented as vulgar; and to instead notice an exposed unrepresentability which is precisely the very presentation of our co-appearing, whose secret, the secret of death exposes itself and exposes us to ourselves. The same politics of the image, what Clark calls the "present democracy of the visual," functions as the indistinct ground from where *The Sight of Death* emerges: his enemy, his Satan, is the spectacle "now internalized, privatized, 'personalized' [see Facebook], miniaturized, domesticated, sped up, put at *every infant's disposal*, administering the false belief that the screen is the realm of freedom."⁶¹ Although the movement of reading from *Farewell* to the *Sight of Death* is a movement from appearance to evidence.

I felt that *something was going on with the Sight of Death*. Clark here is a diarist. The question that immediately came to mind was: why did he, of all people, day after day, keep at the daily task of taking notes even despite the fact that, as Margaret Iversen carefully spotted, he never mentions that the

⁵⁹ See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*, trans. Thomas Common (Digireads.com, Kindle edition, 2010), 17.

⁶⁰ Compare with Nancy's critique of the Situationist project in Nancy, "Of Being Singular Plural" in Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. by Robert Richardson and Anne O'Byrne (Stanford, California: University Press, 2000), 1-100.

⁶¹ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 9 April, 185.

note-taking is a very important aspect of his coming to terms with Poussin's paintings?⁶² We might want to call him a day-labourer or journeyman, a word that once designated the workers paid by the day. We might even like to indulge in a little etymological play: diary in French is a journal. "Journalier," which is a derivative of journal, a word that also stands for newspaper, in French means day-labourer, as "jornalero" does in Spanish. The "jornaleros" are migrant workers with no promise that more work will be available in the future.⁶³ Compare for instance Clark's "You will see me repeatedly forecasting in the notebooks that tomorrow my luck would run out" or "I could hardly believe that each morning there were new things to see in pictures, new things to think about, words for them to hand."⁶⁴ Hence, Clark, the diarist is the "journalist" of his life.⁶⁵ Why then did he make himself the journalist of his daily life, if not because a mute intimate voice demanded that his life enter history, that it makes history, and even altogether subvert the visible history of collective events? From the beginning Clark stresses the point that he does not perceive *The Sight of Death* (a small, sealed realm of visualizations dwelt in fiercely for their own sake) and *Afflicted Powers* (his participation in a collective book by the group Retort, a real-world politics written from a leftist perspective after the 9/11 attacks) as existing at cross-purposes. Even though he insists on the split between politics and aesthetics as a tactic born from the horror of times.⁶⁶

So working in daylight in the Getty gallery, because "[paintings] are not fully ours, not disposable and exhaustible, preeminently by the fact of their living (and dying) in the light of day."⁶⁷ Working under "a most often unmixed daylight," as Clark gushes, "coming through a louvered ceiling,"⁶⁸ which by the end of the book, now at The National Gallery in London, will

⁶² Margaret Iversen, "Seeing and Reading. Lyotard, Barthes, Schapiro," in *Writing Art History*, 150. I invite the reader to compare this point with the distinction between the Worker and Oedipus.

⁶³ On the subject of "jornaleros" see Jean-Luc Nancy, "Beheaded Sun (Soleil cou coupé)," trans. Bruce Gold and Brian Holmes, *Qui Parle* 3, no. 2, *Cultural Identity and the Promise of Literature* (Fall 1989): 41-53. The text was originally published in the exhibition catalogue *Le Démon des anges*, the first exhibition to bring Chicano artists in Europe.

⁶⁴ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 9.

⁶⁵ One might risk the hypothesis that the book's 63 entries correspond to Clark's age by the time of the book's publication (1943-2006). But also "63" is the number of people that died in The Loma Prieta earthquake, also known as the Quake of '89 and the World Series Earthquake. That was a major earthquake that struck the San Francisco Bay Area of California on October 17, 1989, at 5:04 pm local time.

⁶⁶ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, vii-viii.

⁶⁷ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 12.

⁶⁸ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 4.

become “cruel” and “callous” his weeks “spent wondering about what time of day Poussin may have been intending seem totally absurd... Time of day? What’s *day*?...”⁶⁹ Day, “day” in Latin is *dies*—the “day” is the “luminous,” it is the separation of light and of darkness, or the gap between things that light can pass through; the “day” is also the root of the divine and of the first of the gods (Iovis);⁷⁰ the “day” is difference and distance; it is distinction; the “day” is something that comes out from an opaque thickness, that appears and exposes itself to the difference of places and times. “Divine,” “difference,” “distance,” “distinction,” or “daily fogs,” “high hazes,” “morning glooms” and “sudden, improbable glittering afternoons,” all may be the truth of the “day.”

Insofar as “day” or “light” symbolizes life, in French it appears in expressions as *donner le jour* which means to give daylight and consequently to give birth. So the word “day” is intimately connected to the logic of the gift and therefore to the question of the origin and the beginning. In other terms, to everything that thanks to an act of giving that resists explanations, is given in advance before anything else: before life, language, event and the rest. One may sense the biblical and apocalyptic tone in the Word, when one reads in Genesis 1: 3-5 “God called the Light Day and the darkness he called Night.”⁷¹

One more stab at a definition: a day, *un jour*, makes an opening, in the same way that one speaks of an “open-work,” “jours,” in embroidery. In this lace of sense, where connotation borders on denotation and embroiders its borders, or to put it differently, seeking consolation in an etymological dictionary, “day” and “painting” are connected: “paint” comes from L. *pingere* “to paint, represent in a picture, stain; embroider, tattoo,” from PIE root **peig-/ *peik-* “to cut” (cf. Skt. *pimsati* “hews out, cuts, carves, adorns”).⁷² An art history as a diary which carves up each day, an art history that wants to leave a scar on the skin. An art history whose task, if one may speak of “task,” is to bring what exists, what is out there, in evidence.

The Sight of Death is silently telling me that “day” is the image and the image is the sacred, the distinct. By distinction I understand a withdrawal and setting apart of the image by a line or a trait, a frame or a border that makes it precede and succeed itself.⁷³ This is why the Kantian

⁶⁹ Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 242.

⁷⁰ Jove was the original namesake of Latin forms of the weekday now known in English as Thursday (originally called *Iovis Dies* in Latin).

⁷¹ See Leslie Hill, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 70-71.

⁷² See Nancy, “Distinct Oscillation,” 67 and 74.

⁷³ On the image and distinction see Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Image-the Distinct”, in *The Ground*, 1-14.

transcendental schema is understood as a drawing, whose contour anticipates itself and prolongs itself as in the hand holding a pencil and moving towards the paper then back away from it.⁷⁴ In other words the image is evidence. So the ground of any image is the indistinct from which the image distinguishes itself so as to throw itself (*jetée*) out-in-front-of-itself. And Immanuel Kant tells us that number is the first of the schemata, or the pure schema of magnitude, the schema of oneself as successive to itself.⁷⁵ It is the pure image by which any image is possible, by which the unity and unicity of a presentation is possible.

I started counting Clark's entries: his diary's first end—before the last morning in front of the paintings—is with day number 48: it is a significant number not only because Barthes divided his *Camera Lucida*, a note on evidence, in two sections of 24 parts (24 is the number of still frames that passes through a film projector each second; the number of hours that constitute the cycle between day and night, light and darkness; doubled and in reverse the age his mother died—the Greeks enter death in reverse;⁷⁶ the Japanese title of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (a 24-hour affair), a film about love, memory and forgetfulness⁷⁷); the second end is with day number 9; the third end is with day number 4.

Once upon a time, paintings came as a whole; the only numbers that mattered, that counted, were real, whole, integral. The scene with Clark in front of *Landscape with a Calm* is clearly a fantasy: it consists of the experience of a single painting, one oil painting through which the whole medium of painting can come into view;⁷⁸ but it is a scene marked by errors, accidents, unconscious depth, violence and blindness, the fantasy's own betrayal; opposite *Landscape with a Calm*, that is opposite the *one* is its *other* the literary supplement *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake* in the same way that opposite Pollock's *One* art historians always set his *Full Fathom Five*.

⁷⁴ See Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Masked Imagination," in *The Ground*, 80-99.

⁷⁵ Nancy, "The Masked," 81. The passage from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is worth quoting in its entirety: "But the pure *schema* of magnitude (*quantitatis*), as a concept of the understanding, is *number*, a representation which comprises the successive addition of homogeneous units. Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general, a unity due to my generating time itself in the apprehension of the intuition." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1929), A142-A143.

⁷⁶ On the number 48 see footnote 16 in Eduardo Cadava's "Notes on Love and Photography," *October*, no.116 (Spring, 2006): 26.

⁷⁷ See the round-table conversation "Hiroshima, 'notre amour'," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 97 (July, 1959): 59-70.

⁷⁸ See Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 24 June 2003, 236: "But *Landscape with a Calm* is the greater achievement... There is a side of me that still agrees with Anne's long-ago verdict..."

The *one* comes from the “other,” through the “other” and as “other” in order to return again to the “other.” And within that scene there is another scene: Clark’s and my gaze, directed towards the gaze of the running man, a gaze or an imaging that originates in death (the man killed by the snake) as the unseeing gaze face-to-face with my own gaze as it sinks into its withdrawn image. My look slips through all the way into the running man’s empty eye, which is the backside or the inside of the eye and places sight in view, which after all is bringing the invisible to the surface or making sight seen.

Following Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* “the house itself, indeed, presents a definite aspect. But we do not have to lose ourselves in this particular house in order to know exactly how it appears,”⁷⁹ and now more in synch with Panofsky’s “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures” [1934/1936] (“One can imagine that, when the cavemen of Altamira began to paint their buffaloes in natural colors instead of merely incising the contours, the more conservative cavemen foretold the end of Paleolithic art”)⁸⁰ we are able to say that in the ground of this scene there is imagination and in the ground of this imagination there is the other, the look of the other, that is the look onto the other and the other as look. The secret of the transcendental schematization, the secret of death—a secret that one unveils only by veiling it anew—is that there is no imagination as such, in the same way that in *Camera Lucida* there is no Winter Garden photograph reproduced (“I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me”).⁸¹ What Barthes contemplates is the eclipse of his own gaze in the ground of the imagination itself. The imagination remains unimaginable in the same way that the Winter Garden photograph remains unimaginable for me.

As for Lozano-Hemmer’s video-installation’s determination to *be* contemporary, that is digital art’s goal to produce St. Lucy’s Day (with a name derived from *Lux*, *Lucis* meaning “Light”)⁸² as its best effect, that is its necessity and its defeat,⁸³ I have to admit the following. By “admit” I’m

⁷⁹ See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. by Richard Tuft (Indiana University Press, 1997), 67.

⁸⁰ See Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures”, in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshal Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 289-302.

⁸¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 73.

⁸² According to the Julian calendar, which came to be substituted by the Gregorian calendar, St. Lucy’s day is celebrated on the 13th of December.

⁸³ Wikipedia says the following about the winter solstice: “Since the event is seen as the reversal of the Sun’s ebbing presence in the sky, concepts of the birth or rebirth of sun gods have been common and, in cultures using winter solstitially based cyclic calendars, the *year as reborn* has been

referring to how far Lozano-Hemmer's work, as well as Clark's and Nancy's books, allow me to follow my intense insistence to emotionally possess *the image, to make it my own*: one cannot force a meaning, in general; one cannot continue inventing something as common and intimate, as shared and repeated as the course of the days, as the Winter Solstice. At the end of the day (as the saying goes), there are only religious courses and rhythms of time. These are times organized around and subject to the end of time, which does not come after, at the end of history, but which always keeps coming, every day, right now. It is an interruption of time at all times, eternity rediscovered every day, every year. As Clark states in the conclusion to *Farewell's* first chapter "Painting in Year Two" (a chapter devoted to the painting of Marat's dead body):

A pen is a pen, a knife is a knife. Goose feathers catch the light like this, and their veins grow separate and sticky with use just so. Blood on a bone handle looks one way, on steel another, in water a third. Matter is stubborn, or at least predictable, and goes on resisting the work of modernity. Even the proud inscription "YEAR TWO" is provisional. The numbers 17 and 93 are still there to the left and right of it, only half erased, seemingly stuck to the wood of the orange box, as if David had tried to make them vanish but had been defeated by his own materials. Technique is a perfidious thing, says the painter, but at least against the future. The time of revolution is short. *Anno domini* will doubtless return.⁸⁴

An artist, better than us, grasps that the time of revolution does not last very long in history, or maybe only two years. So we best trust the cycles given for their power to be genuine cycles, like days, nights, years, lives, deaths.⁸⁵

celebrated with regard to life-death-rebirth deities or *new beginnings* such as Hogmanay's *redding*, a New Year cleaning tradition. In Greek mythology, the gods and goddesses met on the winter and summer solstice, and Hades is permitted to enter Mount Olympus (his domain is the underworld so he of course does not get accepted any other time). Also *reversal* is yet another usual theme as in Saturnalia's slave and master reversals." See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_solstice (consulted September 14, 2012).

⁸⁴ Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 53.

⁸⁵ On the 21st of December 1983 the Antwerp-born literary critic Paul de Man died; see Jacques Derrida's text on Paul de Man "In Memoriam: Of the Soul" in *The Work of Mourning*, ed. and trans. Pascale-Anne Brault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 69-75. See also his 22 December 1977 entry in his *Postcard*: "In any event you have to depart, now, the formalities are over, after the vacation you will still be mistress of the decision. There again, and more than ever it is the case to say so, I am (following) you, I am still living in you and for you. Christmas (the most propitious period) will give you the time up there to ripen the thing. Even if the worst happens,

Now that I have reviewed the photographic images of the little angels, for which not much secondary literature exists, I'll avoid confusing the religious with the sacred or the distinct. Religion, and secondary bibliography, turned them into a part of a set of Mexican rites and observances that were meant to establish a bond with the transcendent and probably had a social function in the promotion of mental stability.⁸⁶ It has been said that their aim was to relate two orders that are in principle heterogeneous through a legitimated transgression. I do not want to distinguish those images as one distinguishes an image from worldly things following a religious model. Neither one of those images are transcendent nor should my relation to them take the form of transgression. Religion, which means to bind, or to make community, is not part of the communal function of the Miccaihuiltontli ritual, the festivity of the innocent dead children, which represents them crowned with garlands, their mouth open in order to emulate resurrection or the triumph of life over death. Instead I will look for an unbinding bond, a distinction of the image in the visible form of the *table* or the *coffin*—call it the box of representation—a form that bears itself the availability of furniture in the same way that the idea of a table (*tabula rasa*, multiplication table, or *tablature*) gives the sense of the general availability for the availability itself: the form of a surface of arrangement, the setting in presence and in evidence.⁸⁷ The close-up grasps the child in its individuality, and that allows me to speak about a face, and not about a portrait, even if it is the first/last one.

Now, to begin with the end a final note: according to etymology the word “infant,” the Latin for “child,” means one who does not speak.

never will I have been so happy (with the tragic twist to which I bend this word, an entire criminal style, a visitation card). During the vacation I am speculating on Titus's small rectangular coffins. This, as I will show, again occurs between S and p, our immense and impossible paradigm (he will have had the foreseeing of everything, we are inscribed in it as on a fortune teller's table. Sp knows everything, even the worst and the best of what will have to happen to us, as soon as you return. He knows everything and say it to themselves. And between the two, there never will have been any other choice for 'me,' any other place than the hack-and-forth without interruption, without interrupter, between two forms of death. From one death to the other I am like the courier who bears the news, good news, bad news. He warns of the other death, seeing the one or the other come. Too lucid and almost blind, he goes from one wall to the other, recognizes the situation of the meurtrière in the stones and the cement of the fortification. The missive has been deposited in it. Thus he hastens to the other fortress: another meurtrière, without meeting anyone he deposits in it the message come from the other. He must not and cannot decipher it en route, he is only a facteur. He attempts to divine but what a job. He would have to be able to stop running. This transparent phrase: you know what the children are for me.” Derrida, “In Memoriam,” 133-134.

⁸⁶ On rituals, psychoanalysis as a replacement of rituals at the times when there are no rituals and exhibitions as therapeutic see Margaret Iversen, “Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty,” 87-89.

⁸⁷ See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le plaisir au dessin* (Paris: Hazan, 2011), 14. The translation is mine.

However Lozano-Hemmer, Juan Dios de Machain, Clark and Nancy are out to make me defend my disappointment. In Clark I read: “A twelve-year old on the bench next to me says to himself struggling with his class questionnaire: ‘Write down what is happening in this picture?...’ And replies a second later: ‘*Nothing* is happening in this picture!’ I know what he means.”⁸⁸ I unbind myself from him, I go in the other direction, I fall upon Nancy and I have faith in him: “But this only proves that Latin, this dead language, still speaks silently obstinately, in the language that I am speaking. In Latin speaks Greek and in Greek speaks many more languages. In a language there are always other languages that speak and it’s impossible to stand behind any language. There is no child.”⁸⁹ The costs of *seeing* the passage from art history to visual culture as amounting to a passage from the old order of painting to a new order of video, are the costs of learning to greet beauty. Salut!⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See for instance Clark, *The Sight of Death*, 25 February, 135.

⁸⁹ Nancy, “He Says,” 37.

⁹⁰ Greeting is both ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye,’ ‘welcome’ and ‘salut’. For its use see Jean-Luc Nancy’s obituary of Jacques Derrida titled “Salut a toi, salut aux aveugles que nous devenons,” in the French newspaper *Liberation* on October 2, 2004 (<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=245193&A>). The English translation “*salut* to you, *salut* to the blind we welcome” is published in the English translation of Jacques Derrida’s book *Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy*. The extract in question is the following: “Salut! May this greeting be a benediction to you (you said this to us too). ‘To speak well’ and ‘say the good’: to speak well of the good, the good or the impossible, the unrepresentable that slips away from all presence and hangs entirely on a gesture, a kindness, a hand lifted or laid on a shoulder or forehead—a welcome, a goodbye that says salut. Salut to you, Jacques...” See Jacques Derrida, *On Touching. Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 314. This book’s last section is introduced as *Xαίρε* [Claire] = Greetings! Farewell! Salut!