McQuillan, Martin. "1975 to 1871." *Critical Practice: Philosophy and Creativity*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 165–194. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544391.0013>>.

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1975 to 1871

If I might be allowed to paraphrase Marx, hitherto this book has only interpreted the world of critical practice, the point is to do it. Accordingly, I could direct the reader towards my own projects with filmmakers that might be considered examples of the sort of theory-practice that was described in the first half of this book.¹ The experience of working on those films with accomplished directors certainly informed the intellectual labour of the previous chapters. This work would be impossible to reproduce in the context of this book, nor should one present one's own activity in an uncritical way. The process, reflection and commentary have been captured elsewhere. However, given all that has been said up until now regarding creative work and the writing practices that take place at the fraying borders of philosophy as a contribution to extending the parameters of theory-practice, it will be necessary to point towards the sort of artistic activity that constitutes this particular category. In the two chapters that follow we will read singular examples of theory-practice. They are not intended as exemplary either of a particular aesthetic sensibility or for their value as philosophical encounters. They must also be read here, unavoidably, in a critical way. This would be the supplement to theory-practice, criticism cannot be circumvented in a book such as this. It is, perhaps, the critical part of the practice announced by the title of this study. If theoretical writing and creative practice can be triangulated in the idiom of artistic work we are identifying as Theory-Practice then that combination calls for criticism; that is, it calls to be read critically and theoretically. Criticism in this sense being another practice that escapes the ambitions of Theory-Practice. It is not the dialectical result of theory's encounter with practice, but it is what persists and cannot be assimilated by the sublation of Theory-Practice, which must face this other practice both as its other and as a critical practice of its own.

Accordingly, if we cannot help but present such work in the mode of criticism then let us embrace that opportunity for what it might tell us, through singular

examples, of the work of Theory-Practice. In this chapter we will look at a tableau vivant by Valerio Adami, an artist whose work responds to and countersigns the texts of Derrida, Benjamin, Joyce and others. In the following chapter we will read images by Mark Tansey, an artist who has made concerted material efforts to incorporate the text of theory into his canvases. In commenting on these images by Adami and Tansey, these readings will roam across other artistic and philosophical texts, including contemporary filmmakers, playwrights and seventeenth-century artists. It will also necessarily involve reading the theoretical work that this art responds to and exceeds. In choosing these two limited examples, I do not intend to suggest a set of criteria for 'good' and 'bad' critical practice, but I would like to make a distinction between practice that engages with theory as a provocation or extension of the philosophical text rather than creative works that are 'about' philosophy or are merely illustrative of the truth of theory. There is a real value in telling the stories of philosophy or recounting the biographies of the great thinkers, but this seldom results in what we have called here alternatively critical practice or theory-practice. Adami and Tansey are two theory-practitioners, two philosopher-artists who have something to say about both art and philosophy through their art. There are many other examples we could read, many other pathways to diversity we ought to follow through the rich pantheon of Theory-Practice. However, on this occasion, under the constraints unique to this book, we will need to be content with Valerio Adami and Mark Tansey as exemplars of the sort of work identified in this book as Critical Practice. The resources of this study should allow others to extend an analysis, reading and creative response across the wider and diverse fields of Theory-Practice.

1975

Everything starts with an image. Jacques Derrida and his family would often stay at the house of the artists Valerio and Camilla Adami in Arona on Lake Maggiore in Italy. In an interview with Benoît Peeters, Camilla Adami recalls 'every year, Valerio would direct a tableau vivant inspired by a classical picture, such as *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes*, or *The Massacre of the Innocents*. Jacques cheerfully joined in, with Marguerite and the children.'² There is perhaps something a little odd about the idea of cheerfully joining in a tableau of a biblical atrocity, even if one is on holiday with friends and family. The image of the reproduced scene is included in Peeters' biography and has been widely circulated.³ It is based on

Nicolas Poussin's 1629 oil on canvas (147 cm × 171 cm) now displayed in the Musée Condé de Chantilly in France.⁴ It references King Herod's slaughter of children as recounted in the gospel of Matthew.

The Magi, who had followed the Star of Bethlehem to worship the newborn Christ, stopped at the palace of Herod the Great to ask if he knew how they could find the king of the Jews. The paranoid king in a situation of political instability feared for his throne and with seeming innocence asked the wise men to return with news of the Christ child so that he might also pay his respects. However, as Matthew reports, the three Kings were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod and they left Judea by another route. An angel also appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee with Jesus and his mother to Egypt and to remain there until Herod's rule was at an end:

For Herod will seek the young child to destroy him ... Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.⁵

Of all the troubling scenes of cruelty in the Bible, the story of the massacre of the innocents, historically accurate or not, has a particular resonance with artists.

While the account of Matthew may be a creative, theological hagiography, concerned with establishing Christ as the Messiah through the seeming accomplishment of Old Testament prophecy, the events implied by the few lines of verse 2:16 speak to an all too familiar political act of violent repression that today we might recognize as calculated, criminal, ethno-religious or genocidal. Equally, the historic Herod, like Richard III, may of course be poorly served by literary and artistic representations: Giotto's fresco of 1305 depicts Herod directing the massacre from his palace; Brueghel the Elder (1566), painting during the wars of religion following the Reformation, renders the soldiers as Habsburg troops attacking Dutch villagers; Tintoretto (1582-7) and Rubens (1611-12) offer tableaux of visceral cruelty that seem to include rape as well as infanticide, in which the mothers of Judea are central to the visual drama. Rubens also returned to this scene with a no less graphic portrayal in 1638. The version of 1590 by Cornelis Van Haarlem is equally kinetic in its depiction of a riotous scene of depravity and assault by naked soldiers. On the left-hand side of the tableau a group of mothers take unforgiving revenge on an isolated soldier. However, for holiday fun, the Adamis and the Derridas recreated a later work by Poussin, which is markedly different from the traditional representation of

the scene as a mass outrage of rampaging soldiers. Rather, Poussin concentrates on a single moment in which an individual soldier stands on the throat of a male baby, raising a sword aloft, while holding a mother back by her hair as she screams and attempts to block the path of the killer. In the background another mother of Judea looks to the skies, holding a dead baby in one hand. Further in the distance another woman carries a baby (alive or dead, it is impossible to say) over her shoulder. In the space between the soldier's leg and the ground we can see two other mothers, one of whom looks out at us across the canvas, observing the scene of murder before her but her line of sight is multiple, distracted and distracting.

In the Adami tableau, the imagined classical architecture of Poussin is replaced by the Adami house at Lake Maggiore, itself a sizeable palazzo partly destroyed during the war. Jacques plays the role of Herod's soldier with a cloth draped over his shoulders, kitchen knife in hand, with his foot (wearing sandals) resting on the stomach rather than the throat of his eight-year-old son Jean. Marguerite Derrida enacts the part of the distressed mother seemingly reaching for the knife while her husband holds her back by the hair. Unlike in the Poussin, Marguerite's face turns inwards towards the murder weapon, rather than outwards as the figure screams in despair. Camilla Adami is the other distraught mother, positioned closer to the front of the frame than in the original painting, in line with Marguerite, and without a baby in her hand but with a dog at her feet. In the space under Derrida's raised arm we can see Valerio Adami enjoying his holidays, sitting on a Baroque chair, in contemporary clothes and wristwatch, looking on at the simulation in front of him. It is of course a comic set-up in which the philosopher father holds a knife over his son as his psychoanalyst mother seeks to bar his path. The artist observes in the background and his wife looks out of the window, hands on her head, sunshine on her face, more Norma Desmond than Old Testament Rachel. It is, however, a curious image to choose to while away one of those wet afternoons that so often descend on the northern lakes during the summer months. One might ask whether for all its 'cheerfulness' it is a wholly innocent image?

The eponymous innocent is Jean, born in 1967, and so at least as old as the age of grammarology, forecast in the same year. His brother Pierre is nowhere to be seen but instead a dog lies asleep at his feet in an inventive addition to Poussin's scene of death. He holds his arms above his head like the child in the original painting, but in the Poussin, it seems as if the baby's arms are raised not so much in horror or in surrender but in an involuntary fashion as a result of the weight of the soldier's foot on his throat. There is then little that is innocent

about Jean Derrida's pose, for it is precisely that, a pose or posture, a deliberate feint, that carries all the weight of art history, a performance under the heel of the philosophical father. Jean, unlike the infant in the Poussin, is of course covered below the waist: there is only so much family fun you can have. Like Adam and Eve after they have eaten from the tree of knowledge, the young Jean Derrida knows what it would mean to be naked. He is no innocent newborn. This then is a knowing tableau, not an innocent one. It is both a pose and a posture. We might say that it massacres its own innocence in its knowing and ironic performance of the scene it reproduces that places the emphasis on the laughter in slaughter. Marguerite pleads for the life of her son, or the return of the bread knife, while Jacques assumes his position for the camera, hoping that he is neither pressing his foot down too hard on his son nor clutching his wife's hair too tightly. He is acting for all his worth, as he truly murders murder. There would be little that would be innocent about this family drama between philosophy and psychoanalysis, watched on knowingly by the artist directing the scene from his chair, both a seat of learning and a director's chair for a God like mogul. As with the Poussin his line of sight is complex and multiple, looking on to the scene of murder without murder and through it to the outside of the frame. His wife looks off out the window rather than to the heavens, while the dog plays dead, the most convincing performance in the scene.

There is no doubt an innocent explanation for why Adami chose this scene to re-enact – that is a speculation for another biography and another day. However, the summer of 1975, sadly like many summers before and since, was notable for disquiet in the region of Herod the Great. Lebanon, once the site of the French mandate in the Middle East, witnessed the outbreak of a bloody, multi-sectarian Civil War that would last for fifteen years. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein brought down his boot on the throat of the Kurds when the Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran saw the Shah withdraw his support for the Kurdish uprising in return for settlement of the border at Shatt al-Arab waterway. Suddenly and unexpectedly without backing from Iran, Israel and the United States, the Kurds were left to the mercy of Saddam, hundreds of thousands were killed or displaced. The Iraqi Army rounded up village after Kurdish village and took the population to a compound in the southern desert where they were forced into huts, the walls of which had 'Dar-al-Fana' ('House of Annihilation') scrawled on the side. This particular massacre of the innocents led the then US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, to explain his cynical withdrawal of support from the Kurds to the Pike House Committee on CIA activity, with the words 'covert action should not be confused with missionary work.'⁶ While the slaughter of

innocents is a recurring theme in the history of the world, the manipulative treatment of the Kurdish cause by the Western powers is a repeat performance of a tableau we have witnessed many times before: innocence died with Nixon, no innocence after Kissinger, and still today the sacrifice of the Kurds in the Great Game continues.⁷

The Adami house in Piedmont is said to be a place rich in stories and resonant of the history of the region. Perhaps Adami had the words of John Milton in his mind when he posed this scene from Poussin. The 1655 sonnet 'On the Late Massacre in Piedmont' speaks to the poet's anguish at the massacre of the Waldensian protestant sect by the Duke of Savoy. Milton's record of this atrocity bears comparison to the classic tableau of Poussin:

Avenge O Lord thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold [...]
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks.⁸

The sadly long route of the primal generality of criminal atrocities by soldiers on innocent civilians, marches past the door of many particularities, each in their own way worthy of consideration, each requiring a more patient and considered response to do justice to the individual lives lost across the span of history, from Milton's 'Italian fields' to 'the Babylonian woe' he invokes at the end of his sonnet. And massacres beget massacres, as Milton's ripping up of the Irish peace process in 1649, on the grounds that vengeance was called for after the 1641 'rebellion', paved the way for Cromwell's massacres at Drogheda and Youghal later that year.⁹ The question here is not what Valerio Adami was thinking when he set up his holiday tableau but in so doing what it gives us the opportunity to think with respect to the haunting resonance of the scene's title and what it would mean to think of 'innocence' as such. The pose of Derrida standing over his son with a knife most keenly reminds us of the reading of Abraham and Isaac in *The Gift of Death* (dedicated to the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka) in which the slaughter of an innocent child is ultimately substituted for the slaughter of an innocent kid.¹⁰ The question of Abraham's own innocence, compelled and tested by God, is an open one for any observer of that scene. Moreover, God is the one who comes out of that situation least well, having caused such anguish to father and son: how innocent can an all-knowing being be? He directs the scene on Mt Moriah like Adami, while back at home that morning Sarah wondered where all the kitchen knives had gone.

1981

Six years after the tableau vivant at Lake Maggiore, an innocent Jacques Derrida was arrested in Prague on the pretext that narcotics had been found in his luggage at the airport when he was about to leave the country. The facts of the Prague Affair are widely recorded elsewhere but some of the details are worth revisiting in order to understand the complexity of a phrase that would be tantamount to an oxymoron for some: 'an innocent Jacques Derrida.'

Derrida was visiting Prague as vice-president of the Jan Hus Foundation (named after the religious reformer who was burned as a heretic in Constance in 1415, another slaughtered saint). He taught a seminar on Descartes *in camera* for philosophers repressed under Communist rule. He had become increasingly worried that he was under surveillance and in fact decided to abandon the second session of the seminar, checking out of his hotel and going to stay with an aunt of his wife, whose maternal family were of Czech origin. Derrida had taken a risk in his bold act of solidarity with Czechoslovakian intellectuals but that courage did not extend to a double session and prudence (either for himself or for the sake of his hosts) got the better of him. It was when attempting to board his plane to France that the Czech police sprung their trap, finding the drugs they had already concealed in Derrida's suitcase and placing him under arrest.¹¹

One way these events have been understood is that the Czechoslovakian state attempted to frame Derrida in order to discourage dissent and to intimidate other foreign intellectuals who might be minded to visit Prague. That is to say, Derrida was targeted because he was Derrida. The reality of the situation was quite different. The facts were confirmed later by Ladislav Hejdanek, a signatory of Charter 77, the human rights movement that had previously requested that the Czechoslovakian government uphold its own legal obligations to freedom, and in whose home Derrida's seminar took place. He explained that a new head of the local police had just been appointed, who wanted to make a name for himself by some innovative act of repression. Acting on his own accord he decided to make an example of the Jan Hus Foundation, coincidentally at the time Derrida was visiting. He knew nothing of Derrida or his place in the world, and was ill prepared for the diplomatic and media row that ensued after Derrida's arrest. After Derrida's release, the police chief was demoted and sent back to his previous provincial duties. Benoît Peeters records that after the Velvet Revolution, the same officer was himself arrested for drug trafficking. The chief of police had considered the whole of the Jan Hus group guilty but had thought he was picking

on an innocent man in order to deter further criminality. In fact, his choice was anything but innocent. There is something profoundly Hitchcockian about this set-up, in which rather than an innocent man stumbling onto a scene that leads to his embroilment with intrigue and the police, here we have a police officer who naively picks on an 'innocent' man only to be caught up in an international row.¹² The doubling and inversion are dizzying: the corrupt police chief turns out to be an innocent in the ways of philosophy, the innocent tourist is revealed to be the mastermind of an international network of free thinkers that extended all the way up to the highest echelons of the Élysée Palace. Marguerite Derrida turned to Régis Debray, who at the time was an advisor to President Mitterrand, for help in securing Derrida's release.

The Prague Affair begs a number of questions about the innocence of the philosopher abroad, or, the philosopher who knowingly intervenes in the business of another country.¹³ There is a certain complicity that needs to be explored around this question of how innocent, as opposed to how naive Derrida was in undertaking this trip to Czechoslovakia. This is not to question Derrida's motives or to defend the actions of the Prague police; rather it is to raise a question about the absolute innocence of the innocent. Innocence in English, taking its root from the Latin *in-nocentem*, meaning doing no injury, or, free from guilt by doing no harm. The activity of innocence is then based on a certain passivity, its positivity is the result of a negative, doing no harm is not the same thing as doing any good.¹⁴ However, by any recognizable legal criteria we would say that Derrida was the innocent party in this intrigue. On his return to Paris, Derrida wrote to President Gustav Husak demanding an official apology and insisting that he be cleared of the accusations against him. After an eighteen-month delay, the response from the Czech Foreign Ministry simply certified that 'no criminal proceedings had been set in motion.'¹⁵ This, of course, acknowledges that he is technically innocent but there remains within such a statement the whiff of insinuation, that there may have been a case to answer and that the Prague police are themselves innocent of any wrongdoing. To be placed before the Law is immediately to be marked by the Law and in defending one's innocence one is merely drawing attention to the ways in which innocence is necessarily contested.

What would have happened to Derrida had he actually been an innocent? His arrest resulted in the Ambassador of Czechoslovakia in Paris being called to the Quai d'Orsay, and headlines in the world press. This is not the usual response in such circumstances afforded to those who are innocent but who lack celebrity, friends in the media or ex-students in ministries. Derrida was acutely aware of

the good fortune of his name in the world. He told the Antenne 2 film crew that met him on his return: 'I hesitate to describe the brutality of the thing, which in one sense was commonplace and in another was reserved for me alone'.¹⁶ That is to say that this was in some ways quite an innocent experience, an everyday experience for thousands of prisoners around the world. In one sense, there is nothing unique or especially cruel about it. Derrida does not want to claim a special privilege for his experience, after all Jan Patočka had been beaten to death while in the custody of the Czechoslovakian regime. It is the Chartists, Derrida went on to say to the press, 'who are struggling for human rights to be respected. Yes, they are the ones I would like to salute, since they are struggling in really heroic—in other words obscure and anonymous—conditions'.¹⁷ The innocence of the Chartists, and so many others like them throughout history, is not secured by their obscurity and anonymity. Every day, the innocent people are found guilty of thought crimes, their experiences are singular to them, and sadly quite ordinary. They lack the intense mediatization of a scene that would lift their case from obscurity to exemplarity, from the particular to the general. How many babies die every day from lack of sanitation or medical facilities it is well within the resources of globalization or nation states to provide for them? But how many must die anonymously and in obscurity before we can speak of a massacre of the innocents, today?

When Derrida returned to Paris, the first visitor to his house was Jean Genet who wanted to ask him about his experience of prison. Genet knew, of course, that there was nothing unique about Derrida's time in the Ruzyně jail in Prague. No doubt Derrida told his friend about the Hungarian gipsy who had been placed in his cell on his first night and who, touched by his companion's distress, helped him clean the cell as best they could and later played noughts and crosses with Derrida on a paper handkerchief. The gipsy may have been more familiar with incarceration than Derrida and his fate after the philosopher's release may have been less certain. However, Derrida's experience in prison in Prague is of course unique, not only in the sense that it was an experience personal to him but that it was also the event of Jacques Derrida's imprisonment. It was one experience among many similar ones experienced repeatedly by literally millions of people, but equally it could never be reduced to one among many.

Prior to these events in Prague, Derrida had been reluctant to share his personal image publicly. When news broke of his arrest the media had few photographs of Jacques Derrida with which to illustrate their articles. The images of Derrida's return to the Gare de l'Est are well known to any scholar of his work. He stands at the centre of a paparazzi scrum, in a sheepskin coat, over an open-

necked shirt, his tie undone, looking exhausted and haunted, his hair far from the immaculate coiffeur that some of us associate with him. These are images of a human drama but one that is equally of public interest. After the media tumult at the train station in Paris there could be no return to the obscurity and anonymity of philosophy for Jacques Derrida. He was no longer innocent as far as the media were concerned. Nor could he maintain a certain pretence or a certain innocence with respect to his own mediatization.¹⁸ Innocence would necessarily have to give way to the narcissism of the jealously protected image. We might say that on this occasion the innocence of Jacques Derrida was secured by the complicity of Derrida, his family and supporters in the mediatization of the scene of his release, which was a staged event, a simulacrum of release, not at the gates of the Ruzyně but on the platform of the Gare de l'Est, safely within the perimeter of Paris.

These photographs that spread around the world were very different from those taken days earlier in a Prague jail. As he wrote to Catherine Malabou in *Contre-Allée*: 'I have never been more photographed in my life, from the airport to the prison, clothed or naked before putting on the prisoner's "uniform"'.¹⁹ A surveillance state works by having the citizen under its gaze, in its sights, capturing their image in order to arrest, in every sense, the individual. The press photographs of the dishevelled Derrida are very much images of the man laid bare before a judging audience, but they are not the pictures of a naked foreign philosopher held on record by the Prague police. There is no doubt something indecent about both sets of images but one set are public and one set secret. Perhaps Derrida came to realize that there was indeed a safety to be found in a public image, that complicity with the media would preserve his hard-won innocence, and that the fiction of that innocence could be maintained by the media he had previously sought to elude. Prague had surely taught him that there could be safety in the guilt of publicity and danger in the innocence of anonymity. After all Derrida had once been an obscure, innocent Jewish schoolboy in French Algeria expelled from the Lycée and whom, like so many others, no one had spoken up for, just one more victim of a modern sacrifice. For an academic there is a violence worse than the surveillance of the university and that is expulsion from the university. Perhaps, one does not stop being a pupil or an academic after one has been expelled from the institution, at least not in one's own mind, but there is a geometry of formal exclusion that is more outside than in. Anonymous exiles from the university live the life of the mind without a safety net.

If we speak here of a fiction of innocence, it is not to question the moral character of Jacques Derrida or belittle his genuine experiences of incarceration,

rather it is to suggest that the presentation of innocence must always be necessarily fictional. When he was finally released from the Prague prison, his assigned lawyer said to Derrida: 'you must have the impression of living in a Kafka story... Don't take things too tragically; consider it a literary experience'.²⁰ The phrase is ambiguous, did the lawyer mean that Derrida should consider it the sort of experience that a writer like Genet might turn into fiction, or did he mean that all of this should be experienced as if it were coded as literary? In that second sense, there is something more profound in the words of the lawyer, something even a little accusatory. He is saying that the events of the last few days may seem familiar to you from fiction: you know how they will proceed if not how they will conclude, for you as a foreign professor with influential friends who will soon be released to Paris, you can afford the luxury of their fictionality. For us who remain here we must have another relationship to the apparatus of a security state, one that is different from the policing structures of the French philosophical establishment.²¹

The question of innocence cannot it seems, be separated from the question of literature, as Derrida himself might have put it. The possibility that doing no harm is different from an absence of guilt might be closely related to the simultaneous avowal and disavowal that takes place during the suspended reference of literature, of all that can be said publicly under the name of literature.²² On this occasion we have chosen to read Derrida not, so far, through his philosophical writing, but through events in his life, as if they were a fictional text, a narrative to be deconstructed. No doubt the more meticulous or perhaps scrupulous will object to this strategy but when it comes to imagining Derrida or speaking of the image of Derrida we are never far from the question of the writing of fiction and of the literary, certainly of storytelling and self-narrativization.

1977

Tom Stoppard's play *Professional Foul* was written in 1977, the same year as Ladislav Hejdanek, Jan Patočka and others signed their declaration for human rights and the rule of law in Czechoslovakia. It is another fictional frame for the experiences of Derrida and the Jan Hus Foundation in Prague. It concerns a group of international philosophers invited to a colloquium in the Czech capital during the age of what some insist on calling 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy: 'a lot of chaps pointing out that we don't always mean what we say even when we manage to say what we mean'.²³ The central characters are Professor Anderson, the J. S.

Mill Chair of Ethics at Cambridge University, and Professor McKendrick, a self-declared left-winger who works in Stoke-on-Trent. The former philosophizes in the realm of abstract privilege and is not keen to be drawn into any local dissent, as this would be an act of bad manners against his hosts, the Czechoslovakian government. He has plans instead to attend a World Cup qualifying match being played at the same time between England and Czechoslovakia. The paper he intends to present is entitled 'Ethical Fictions as Ethical Foundations', perhaps a hint at Stoppard's own intentions in the presentation of the drama. McKendrick would be keen to participate in some local action but has no genuine connection to Czech intellectuals, rather his energies are more directed towards attempts to chat up women attending the conference. He is a self-identified Marxist and author of science fiction short stories for pornographic magazines. Anderson's reticence is disturbed when he is visited by one of his ex-students, Pavel Hollar, who asks him to smuggle an essay out of the country that contains ethical arguments contrary to the Communist regime. Hollar is not a professor at Cambridge. In fact, he has become *déclassé* and is now a cleaner at the bus station, one of those heroes of free thought struggling in obscurity and anonymity: 'I am not a famous dissident. A writer, a scientist ... if I am picked up ... there is no fuss ... but I have something to say – that is all' (p. 142). Anderson does not agree to take the text out of the country as he thinks it would be a breach of politesse with his hosts. He does not want to be put in a difficult position and offers ethical arguments against the direction of Hollar's essay to justify his own inaction. However, he does hold on to the text to prevent his student running the risk of being stopped in the street with dissident material.

The following day, before the football match, Anderson visits Hollar's flat to return the essay only to find that his student has been arrested and that the Prague police are searching his flat. He is detained and misses the match, which England lose 4–0, the first goal coming from a penalty conceded from a professional foul committed by one of the footballers, Broadbent, staying in the same hotel as the philosophers. Anderson is finally released when the police 'discover' foreign currency they have planted in the Hollar residence. Anderson finds himself as a professor of ethics who must now profess an ethical position beyond the 'bun-fights' of philosophical colloquia. During a verbose lecture by an American professor of language theory, McKendrick asks Anderson, 'do you ever wonder if all this is worthwhile?' 'No', replies Anderson, to which McKendrick smiles and says, 'I know what you mean' (p. 148). They are professional thinkers; it would be a foul against the profession to question the value of philosophical conferences in foreign capitals. It would also be a foul against professional ethics to criticize

his hosts but having reflected on his situation the priggish Anderson decides to make his own intervention by grounding his ethical abstractions in material actions, if only in the guise of a fiction. He sits up all night to rewrite his paper for the conference with a typewriter he borrows from a football journalist in the room next door. The lecture he gives then follows on from his discussions with his former student about the rights of the individual against the state, noting the freedom of letters as a shared human right. The moderator complains that this is not the paper he submitted prior to the conference. Anderson feigns innocence and carries on with his 'fictional' paper. Rather than allow him to proceed with his talk, a policeman sets off the fire alarm and clears the building.

The closing act of the play sees Anderson and McKendrick moving through customs at Prague airport. A junior colleague, Chetwyn, who is known in the UK for campaigning on behalf of Czech intellectuals, is stopped and arrested for carrying clandestine materials. Anderson also has his suitcase checked but the guards only find the pornographic magazines containing McKendrick's fiction. On the plane back to London, Anderson explains to McKendrick that Chetwyn, 'will be on the next plane. Wouldn't look well with them, all the publicity'. McKendrick says 'he took a big, risk, I wouldn't do it, would you?' Anderson confesses that he knew that he would be searched personally so hid Hollar's essay in McKendrick's suitcase. 'You bastard. You utter bastard', rants McKendrick, 'Not quite playing the game is it?' His colleague replies, 'I thought you would approve ... Ethics is very complicated business. That's why they have these congresses' (p. 179).

A professional foul in soccer is when one player deliberately commits an offence against an opposing player, usually a defender against an attacker, in order to prevent a goal. It is known as a professional foul because it is something that a professional footballer, one who is paid to play the game, is expected to do when faced with such a choice. It is a foul by one professional against another, and among professionals is an accepted part of the game. Now it would earn the player a straight red card, but in 1977 such an act only merited a yellow card. In ethical terms we might say that it is an act of least violence committed by the individual for the sake of the collective. The yellow or red card is a professional hazard, taking one for the team. On this occasion the ultimate professional foul is the risk that Anderson takes by making McKendrick the mule for Hollar's essay. Despite his avowed Marxism, McKendrick is furious that his professional reputation and personal liberty were put at risk for the sake of what he had earlier called 'professors with unpronounceable names' (p. 132). He has a point. He is the only innocent in this whole schema: Hollar and Chetwyn are active

dissidents, Anderson is implicated in the intrigue whether he likes it or not. The innocence of Anderson, Hollar and Chetwyn is at least contestable. The ethical calculation that Anderson makes is that the least bad thing to do is to sacrifice McKendrick in a switch that uses his colleague's seeming innocence as a front for smuggling. Ethically and politically, this might be an acceptable thing to do, but this professional foul is not a foul without a victim. The professional foul may be an accepted part of the game, a foul without a foul, as it were, but there is always a consequence, and always someone who is 'brought down' by the foul. It is right, and an equally accepted part of the game, that a penalty be imposed.

The question is whether the penalty is a hard shot lashed at the goal or whether it is what is known in the game as a 'Panenka', a skilful and subtle chip deceiving the goalkeeper, named after Antonin Panenka who won the 1976 European Championship for Czechoslovakia with such an innovative technique. In the Great Game of politics, a professional foul like that committed by Nixon on the Kurds might be laughed off in a memoir but the cynicism rebounds through the decades. The difference between the sacrifice of McKendrick by Anderson and the sacrifice of the Kurds by Nixon is one of magnitude. No doubt Anderson would have thought twice if he had entertained the possibility that McKendrick might have died in prison. What Stoppard's scenario weighs for us is the measure between the private and the public, between philosophy and politics between persons and the people, between a Marxist professor from Stoke and a new Czech Spring for all those professors expelled from the university in the name of Marx. How many innocents can be sacrificed for the greater good? Anderson finally extricates himself from Hollar's flat when he convinces the police captain that he is not there to deliver foreign currency but a philosophical paper. He is dismissed immediately, philosophy being a matter of no consequence to the state, even though it is, in fact, the very reason they are pursuing Pavel Hollar. The question of sacrifice is central to much of later Derrida, notable in relation to questions of sovereignty and economy as a problem of substitution.²⁴

'There is a lot of juice left in the fictions question,' (p. 132) McKendrick tells Anderson in their opening exchanges on their British Airways flight. This recalls Derrida's exchange with Searle, which seems to hang like a backdrop to Stoppard's fictional conference. Fiction is the idiom in which it is possible to say everything that must be said in the name of truth, just as it can be disavowed as a straightforward or innocent reference to the real world. There is nothing more innocent than fiction, nothing more fictional than innocence, and nothing more complicit than fictionalization. As soon as there is writing, we are guilty. The Czech word for guilt is '*vina*', more strictly meaning fault, but like the German

'*Schuld*' also carrying a sense of 'debt'. There is much made in Stoppard's play of philosophical translation at the international conference. As soon as there is debt we are complicit—to whom does Anderson owe a greater debt? Is it to his student or his governmental hosts or to freedom of speech and the academy? For the Czech-born Stoppard the fiction is pointedly engaged with the real world; in 1977 it presaged issues with which few outside the literary and academic community in the West were familiar. There is no suggestion that Derrida knew his Stoppard, but he was engaged with the Jan Hus Foundation, and was aware of the fictional history of Prague and the literary mediatization of totalitarian Communist states. Writing involves a certain massacre of the innocents, sacrificing their narratives for a purpose beyond their own singularity. How could one make the story of *déclassé* intellectuals known without offering up individual narratives to a wider audience? Writing is both the nude photograph of a prisoner and the paparazzi scrum in a Paris train station. Either way there is no choice but to submit one's story to exposition, watched over by the other, for the other, as a sacrifice to the greater good, submitting to that gaze in more or less knowing ways. In this sense, there is nothing more public than private anonymity, and nothing more obscure than the public performance of singularity. The individual has the right to cry, 'you utter bastards', but their particularity is always already sacrificed to the mediatization of the political, which is to say the political *tout court*. No politics without media, no media without politics. And philosophy is in no way exempt from this professional hazard. Just as it is an accepted part of the game of Association Football to trip an opponent from behind, it is equally understood that attacking players will attempt to fake a foul in order to gain an advantage or have an opponent sent off. One can be lured into committing a professional foul or indeed be punished for such an offence when one is entirely innocent. In tackling the media, philosophy since Derrida has begun to appreciate that it is increasingly difficult to tell the difference between playing the ball and playing the man.²⁵

1919

In Ken McMullen's *Ghost Dance* made in 1982 (released 1983) a short while after Derrida dropped his prohibition on the image, Derrida offers the following comments about his time in Prague:

Last year, exactly a year ago, I went to Prague to take part in a private seminar with some dissident Czech philosophers who were banned from the universities.

I was followed by the Czech secret police who made no secret about it. After the seminar I went for a walk around Kafka's town as if in pursuit of Kafka's ghost who was, in fact, himself pursuing me. I went to see the houses where Kafka lived. There are two in Prague. And I went to his grave. I found out the next day when I was arrested for drug smuggling, supposedly, that it was at the exact time that I was at Kafka's grave and so preoccupied to some extent with Kafka's ghost that the Czech secret police entered my room and planted a little packet of drugs as a pretext for my arrest the next day. When I was interrogated by the police as to why I was in Prague I answered truthfully that I was preparing a paper on Kafka on an extract from Kafka's *The Trial* called 'Before the Law'. So throughout my short interrogation and imprisonment Kafka's ghost was effectively present and Kafka's script was manipulating [*reglé*] the whole scene. The scene being that of *The Trial* as if we were all acting in a film controlled [*programée*] by Kafka's ghost.²⁶

Here Derrida is in performance, improvising a character that is both himself and entirely fictional. How honest an answer this was to give to the Prague police is contestable, certainly it was an innocent one if not entirely an innocent one. With his friends and colleagues still in Czechoslovakia, a year later it is perhaps more than a question of good manners not to mention the Jan Hus Foundation. However, if Derrida's time in Prague in 1981 reads like a fiction and screens like a film, it is because since the event it has been thoroughly fictionalized, least of all by Derrida himself in McMullen's film. The events are then both predetermined by fiction and post hoc rationalized as fiction. Here Derrida suggests that the whole thing was a screenplay written by Kafka who sat in the director's chair, like Adami at the Lake Maggiore villa or McMullen on the set of *Ghost Dance*.²⁷

The text that Derrida is referring to in McMullen's film is Kafka's 1919 parable, 'Vom dem Gesetz' that was originally published separately from *The Trial*. Familiar to us from Derrida's essay, it tells the story of a man who comes from the country to seek admittance to the Law but is blocked by one gatekeeper after another who impedes his progress through the doorways of the court. The man spends all his money and several years frustrated in the hallways of the court. As he is dying he asks the final gatekeeper why, if so many seek access to the Law, he has never seen another soul all these years. He is told: 'No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it.'²⁸ Derrida offers a long reading of this text in relation to the problematics of prohibition in Kant and Freud, which there is no space to elaborate on here. However, Derrida is also concerned with the question of literature. The Kafka text is to be considered literature, a literary phenomenon,

if you will, but that literariness is not straightforwardly connected to its fictional status or its narrative form. Rather, it is literary according to certain Laws of the institution of literature but, asks Derrida, 'who decides, who judges, and according to what criteria?'²⁹

Like any relation to Law, the law of literature must necessarily involve a singularity, 'a law of singularity which must come into contact with the general or universal law without ever being able to do so' (p. 187). The singular experiences of Jacques Derrida in Ruzyně are his and his alone, as are those of the J. S Mill Professor of Ethics at Cambridge University or the villagers of Iraqi Kurdistan, but they have a relation to a universality that makes them of interest to the generality of Law, its enactment and suspension. The universality of Law requires that, in Derrida's words, it 'must be without history, genesis, or any possible derivation. *That would be the law of the law*' (p. 191). The Law is the general algorithm through which the exemplary is judged. However, just as it disavows its historicity, fictionality, and narrative status, the Law can only rely on individual cases to develop and establish itself. Standing before the Law is the pinch point between singularity and universality. And the rule of Law is multiple: Professor Anderson stands before a categorical imperative as well as the Prague police force; Professor Derrida stands before his accusers in the Czechoslovakian secret service and the immutable law of mediatization. An innocent man may stand before the Law wrongly accused but his relation to the law is always divided. To whom does he owe a greater obligation and according to what criteria, and who will judge? When Derrida recounts in *Ghost Dance* his 'truthful' answer which law is he submitting to – judicial, ethical, literary, or another strange law of the media? His innocence is thus divided, irretrievably ruined by the law that he must both submit to and defend himself from. His innocence, one might say, is both massacred and sacred, split by a *différance* of infinite complexity, complicity, guilt and debt.

Only an innocent man can pass through the Law, equally, an innocent man can never be done with the law. In his text on Kafka, Derrida recalls the words of his Prague lawyer: 'don't take this too tragically, live it as a literary experience'. He adds to this anecdote that he tells his prosecutor that he had never seen the drugs before. The prosecutor replied: 'That's what all drug traffickers say' (p. 218). He has gone beyond Kafka to *Catch 22*: only an innocent would say that they had never seen the drugs, but by denying knowledge of the drugs he proves his obvious guilt. Derrida is something of a specialist when it comes to double binds and the non-passage from the absence of Law to its fulfilment. Philosophy cannot resolve such a conceptual impasse, it can only dig us deeper into the hole

it has dug and that we have dug for ourselves. Only the simultaneous suspension and imposition of the laws of mutability that come with writing can move us to another place.

1940

Professor Anderson has his suitcase checked at Charles Airport in Prague. Despite requests Derrida never had his confiscated valise returned to him by the secret police. These 'fictional' professors carry considerable baggage that makes them a suitable case for study. In their stories they evade the law, give it the slip, and live to profess another day. They return home to the academy. Derrida shared a birthday with Walter Benjamin, who in 1940, pursued by the Law of National Socialism, and with no chair in Cambridge or consulate representative or accompanying camera crew, sat in Portbou in Catalonia, with only a suitcase full of manuscripts, unable to secure passage across the border, and finally understood the weight of the totalitarian and the unbearable lightness of philosophy. This gate was made for him and him alone, and then it shut. He is the subject of Derrida's other great essay on the Law concerning '*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*'. A self-slaughtered innocent captured so sympathetically by Adami in his portrait, another counter signature to an image, another ethical fiction as ethical foundation.

1961

Margarethe von Trotta's excellent 2012 film, *Hannah Arendt*, demonstrates many of the problems of film's encounter with philosophy.³⁰ This film does not come out of a tradition that seeks to engage film itself as a medium that could be productive of knowledge, rather it wants to tell the story of a philosopher and in order to do so has to find ways of explaining philosophy on screen.³¹ It is not true to say that the philosophy is incidental to the story, the philosophy in this case is not a McGuffin that might as well have been otherwise. Rather, the story that the film wants to tell around Arendt depends entirely upon the meaning of her philosophical work. However, this is not an in-depth study of philosophical issues as such, in the way that, say, *The Ister* (2004, dirs. David Barison and Daniel Ross) is a contribution to philosophy through film, or, Kirby Dick and Amy Zeiring's 2002 film on Derrida is a document of reported thought.³² There is no

unpacking or countersigning of Arendt's significant thought on totalitarianism, revolution, violence or human rights.³³ Rather, the film tells the story of Arendt's commission by *The New Yorker* to report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and the media scandal that followed as a result.³⁴ It is then a human story, philosophy as costume drama, in which it is necessary to explain who Arendt is, why she was significant, and what her report on Eichmann actually said. There is a necessary tension in the film between drama and exposition, between action and thought, practice and theory, if you will. The drama is to be found in the biography of Arendt, her youthful affair with Heidegger (told in flashback), her escape from occupied Europe, her domestic arrangements with the unfaithful Heinrich Blucher, her friendship with the ever-loyal Mary McCarthy, her visit to Israel, and the experience of vilification for reporting evidence from the trial of Eichmann that Jewish community elders had assisted in the organization of deportations.³⁵ The narrative of the film flips in a way that Arendt moves from investigator and reporter to being the persecuted figure on trial. In the final scenes her lecture room at the New School becomes a courtroom in which she has to defend herself in public against accusations of being a Nazi apologist. Between, the domestic interactions and this narrative arc, the film convinces as a drama and so pulls its audience, by no means expected to be expert in philosophy, through the turns of Arendt's thinking in relation to Eichmann. However, as with any similar storytelling on screen, we have elisions and composite characters, the realism is entirely artificial for the sake of capturing a narrative on screen.

In an early scene, the editorial team of *The New Yorker* are gathered in the office of Editor William Shawn as they receive the news that Arendt is interested in covering the Eichmann trial. 'She's not one of those European philosophers is she?' asks journalist Francis Wells. The exposition is clunky but we are through it quickly. However, the important point for the drama here is in fact one of greater significance for the problem of film and philosophy. Wells quips to Shawn, 'philosophers don't make deadlines', and correspondingly we later find Arendt dodging phone calls from her editors and refusing to print her thoughts on Eichmann until her studies are concluded. However, the film itself also plays out the problem of the time of philosophy and the time of media, which are two, not necessarily compatible, separate things.³⁶ A film of this budget and with this ambition to reach a wide audience must by necessity fall back on the centrality of narrative. It is, in essence, a biopic, and a particularly good one at that. However, having made the choice of the speed of media, which is necessarily reductive to complex thought, the moments when we encounter Arendt's philosophy are

therefore elided if not compromised. For example, we see Eichmann make the defence that he was obliged by his oath in the *Feurherprinzip* to follow orders. There is a suggestion here of a conflict between duty and conscience, which Arendt makes something of in her philosophical work as an inheritance of the Kantian categorical imperative in the German tradition of public service.³⁷ However, this is left veiled in the film, which does not have time to unfold these considerations. Von Trotta has come as close as anyone (including John Huston's *Freud* [1962], Pinchas Perry's *When Nietzsche Wept* [2007], or, David Cronenberg's film on Freud and Jung, *A Dangerous Method* [2011]) to pushing a biographical film about a philosopher in the direction of an exposition of philosophy through dramatic action.³⁸

Nevertheless, the speed of film and the speed of philosophy are different. You will learn more about the thought of Arendt by reading one of her books or sitting in a philosophy lecture than you will by watching this film. This does not make it a bad film, on the contrary it is a rather good film, but it is still a film not a text of philosophy, and a film that would be recognizable as such to both philosophers and filmmakers. Von Trotta's interest in Arendt does not extend to her philosophical work impacting the director's own practice as a filmmaker. There is little in Von Trotta's back catalogue to suggest that she is engaged on the cusp between theory and practice, seeking new idioms for the articulation and representation of complex thought. However, she is a skilful filmmaker who delivers a compelling drama in her film of Hannah Arendt. This is not Theory-Practice but rather a technical consideration from the side of an industry professional of how to represent thinking on screen. Thinking in this sense being a problem for the screen as it is essentially invisible.

However, the story needs to tell us that Arendt is thinking, this is why she is late with her copy for *The New Yorker* and why it is so good when it finally arrives. The film has to discover within the resources of the sound-image a way of representing the quality of thought: why thinking about your article for a long time will make it better than rushing to a pressroom deadline. Philosophy, in this sense, is value-added thinking, which does not negate the need for editorial deadlines outside of the Ivory Tower, but demonstrates why we need the thinking that goes on in the Humanities Faculty as well as the newsroom. Accordingly, we see Hannah (Barbara Sukowa) smoking, lying on her ottoman in the afternoon, lying on her ottoman in the dark, smoking and lying on her ottoman, sitting at her typewriter, smoking at her typewriter, smoking outside the New School: a woman lost in thought. We see Martin Heidegger tell the young Hannah that 'thinking is a lonely business', and we see her thinking by

herself in venues across the tri-state area and Israel. Heinrich (Axel Milberg) is sneaking out the door, perhaps hurrying to a liaison with a lover, when Hannah catches him. He responds, 'never disturb a great philosopher when they are thinking'. Hannah tells him, 'but they can't think without kisses'. Heidegger might not have advocated that view, but this after all is a *female* philosopher and this is the movies. Hannah's deep thought is in contrast to Eichmann who as a banal bureaucrat of the Third Reich did not think about what he was doing. The young Hannah sits in the front row of a lecture given by Heidegger in which he tells us that thinking does not lead to knowledge, instead we think because we are thinking beings. In the final lecture room scene at the New School Hannah makes a defence of thinking, repeating Heidegger's view that thinking does not produce knowledge but instead enables us to tell right from wrong and so to avoid catastrophes. It would seem that she privileges *phronesis* over *episteme*, or judgement over pure reason.

However, what links Eichmann in the courtroom and Arendt's tormentors in the lecture room is the inability to think. It is also her own Achilles's heel, she failed to think through what would happen when she published her critique of the *Judenrat*.³⁹ Her thinking exists in a differently mediated frame from those who received it second hand, in summary and without reading what she had actually written, even though it appeared in the most prominent and canonical media space possible, *The New Yorker* magazine. She did not see it coming and even when she is in the middle of the hurricane can only think of it as a storm in a teacup. The speed of philosophy and the speed of media are very different. The film then thematizes the same dichotomy it performs, namely the gap between thinking and showing, between thought and its representation, and so between theory and practice. It does so at a level that does not consciously challenge that binary as a self-reflective Theory-Practice might have done so, but as a text, like any other text, this film accomplishes its own disarticulation regardless. The value of the film is its attempt to show the value of thinking that it cannot possibly show. Further, as a feature film that took longer to make than it took Arendt to write *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, it demonstrates its own value and values according to a different index. The reductive speed of media can in fact be longer than the time of philosophy. The gearing is different, one is not a more advanced mode of the other; their orbits are not concentric. It shows film and philosophy to be distinct just as it combines them within a single film about philosophy. It sits in a spectrum with theory-practice, filosophy, and 'films about philosophy', a range that has considerable overlap and is constituted by several shades of grey.⁴⁰ However, Theory-Practice cannot be reduced to a

question of thematic content or style, it is rather a matter of a critical attitude that compels a work into self-reflection at the abyss and border between philosophy and art.⁴¹ Perhaps, neither Von Trotta nor Stoppard are critical practitioners in the way that Adami and McMullen are, or that Benjamin and Derrida might be, the study of Theory-Practice is not easily rendered as a competition in aesthetic value.⁴² That does not delegitimize or lessen their contribution to philosophy on screen. On the contrary it makes it necessary, the necessity arising from their difference. Telling the stories of philosophy is too important only to be left to philosophical storytellers.

1867

Everything starts with an image.

Edouard Manet made several attempts to paint the execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. The work refers to his death by firing squad that brought an end to the abortive Second Mexican Empire, after Napoleon III of France withdrew French troops that had been propping up his puppet ruler. Manet painted the scene four times. One version now hangs in the Kunsthalle Museum in Mannheim, painted between 1868 and 1869 but dated in the corner with Manet's signature as 1867.⁴³ An earlier version from 1867–8 exists in the form of fragments in the Nation Gallery in London. It is thought that Manet cut the painting himself and parts of it were sold separately after his death. The existing fragments were brought to London by Edgar Degas in 1918 but were not combined as a single canvas until 1992. A third, unfinished oil version from 1867, can be found in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. It is smaller than the Mannheim canvas, but not as small as a fourth version now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. This version formed the basis of a 50-impression lithograph run in 1869, prints from which can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, among other galleries.⁴⁴ In the Boston version the soldiers wear the clothes of the Mexican peasantry, in the Mannheim canvas and the Copenhagen oil they wear uniforms and can be easily or deliberately mistaken for soldiers of the French army. The paintings were never exhibited in France during the reign of Napoleon III, with the first appearance of the Mannheim version appeared in New York and Boston in 1879 six years after the death of Louis-Napoleon.

In a short film entitled '1867' Ken McMullen responds to a commission from The Programme for Art, sponsored by Channel Four, the Metropolitan

Museum of New York and the Ghetty Foundation to document the creative process through the eye of the artist.⁴⁵ He chooses to produce a 15-minute film of single uninterrupted shot that tracks the walk of Maximilian from his prison cell to his execution via the studio of Manet. The short film is a response of one painter (McMullen) to another (Manet) that is also a documentation of process in general. It records the path from historical event to its iterations in art, commenting on a practice through the ambition of a single shot as the chosen vehicle for McMullen's own critical practice. This is process that takes account of process, a visual mis-en-abyme that places the representation of history within the history of representation.

There is a double movement within the short film. A column of troops accompanies Maximilian and his two loyal generals from a castle on a hill to a courtyard where they will become a firing squad. They march past the window of Manet's fictional studio where he has assembled the resources for the contemplation of this scene and where a tableau has been established of another fictional firing squad, which provide the models for Manet's painting. Historically, Manet used real French soldiers to paint the Mexican firing squad for additional authenticity. McMullen doubles these doubles with actors and simulacra, painting over verisimilitude with the genre of realism, and doubling the artifice. Manet used actors to pose as Maximilian and his generals, McMullen raises the stakes by having actors play the part of actors posing as historic figures. It is a film that works with the image as much as it works the imagination, doubling an ambiguous genitive as it shows the creative process through the eye of the painter: both that of Manet and of McMullen who reimagines the scene of the Emperor's death and the scene of production of the work of art that represents that death. This after all is McMullen's studio, the studio set of a film director and not the actual studio of Manet the artist. It is the studio of the artist McMullen, the artist who works in the medium of film but who trained as a painter. He 'paints' for us both the studio of Manet and another version of the execution of Maximilian, one more to countersign the work of Manet. The maker of this 1867 is someone like McMullen-Manet, a director-painter, an author of the image and worker in the imagination.

The camera takes us through a history of art, citing the influence of anxiety in Gericault's *The Raft of the Medeusa* and Goya's seminal *The Third of May*.⁴⁶ A voice-over reading from Manet's notes, states 'at last I have a subject of history worthy of the salon'. The Goya shows the shooting of peasants, the Manet shows the shooting of an Emperor. The one constant is the French army providing the bullets. The two paintings rifle home a message about the Napoleonic legacy; in

contrast the prolonged run on McMullen's camera takes aim before it fires off its missile. In the case of the painting we have an instant caught on canvas, at the speed of a bullet, in the case of the film we have a sweep of history and several minutes to understand several centuries. As the Manet narration tells us it took him one and a half years to paint these four canvases, McMullen takes 15 minutes, in a single take, to reproduce Manet's process. The film ends, surprisingly perhaps for the non-specialist (there for the art rather than the history, at least there for the art history) with Maximilian addressing his firing squad in German. This provides a sharp incongruity to the setting of Frenchmen in Mexico (the scene was actually shot in Portugal). McMullen's shooting is a distant echo of the guns of the French army, swapping one sort of action for another. As Maximilian and his generals are shot, by the firing squad, they pose for the camera, capturing the artifice of the original action picture, the painting that arrests history as a still image rather than a flow of time, reducing depth to surface and achieving depth through mere surface. Maximilian and his generals freeze, their time is over, while a stray dog moves around the square where McMullen films. There is then nothing natural about this history. The moving image and the still image contrast and complement, McMullen's single shot against the random volley of the gunfire, McMullen's compressed whole against Manet's four attempts at the scene, McMullen's freeze against Manet's friese, McMullen's unbroken track against the torn fragments on display in the Nation Gallery in London.

This is not to suggest a privileging of McMullen over Manet as a painter of the historic process. The medium is different, the intention is different, the outcomes are mutually beneficial. Manet finds little possibility of closure in his obsession with this moment, as demonstrated by his repeated return to the scene of the crime. Equally, and despite appearances, McMullen is just as obsessed, just as at sea with respect to the flow of history. This short film, *1867*, is in fact a companion piece to McMullen's feature film on the Paris Commune, *1871*.⁴⁷ Painted a few years earlier, the Manet painting plays a role in feature, as the object of attention of a salon run at the Café Anglais by the revolutionary General Cluseret during the siege of Paris. The later *1867* short is then both a prologue and an epilogue to the longer work of *1871*. It stands before and after the history of the film and the filming of history. The film *1867* is part of the prehistory of *1871*, the *préhistoire* in French specifically names a historic period '*avant l'apparition de l'écriture*', before the appearance of writing.⁴⁸ The film *1867* is in some way prehistoric, primordial and fundamental to McMullen's practice, like cave painting to the Sistine Chapel on *1871*. It designates a period before writing, that is to say, before the architecture of McMullen's practice in the

feature film, which is a profound engagement with texts, the writing of texts, the imagining and imaging of texts, not as an adaptation, translation, or illustration but as an active writing of their future. McMullen is a writer-painter who feels his way along the path of images and texts, assembling and editing, in a practice tethered to an idea of history. That *1867* was made after *1871* is immaterial to this material practice, as an origin it can never be originary enough, coming as it does after the main feature. A short should of course always be watched before the feature. The temporality here speaks of a return rather than of progress.

The shorter film on the process of Manet is then part of the process of McMullen and part of a process that fails to progress. It cannot account for, this unaccountable scene that remains resistant to capture and heterogeneous to measurement. Nor can it process resistant material in a psychoanalytic sense, the execution of Maximilian remains a resistant core that returns as a symptom to be read again and again. This is a process that fails to process. Instead it obsesses, stewing in the juices of history, unable to achieve exit velocity sufficient to understand itself in any other way as art history, and part of the art history it comments on. The combination Art-History, like Theory-Practice, in this sense would be a contradiction in terms, both an approximation and record of the truth and a suspension of reference, given over to the realm of the other. For McMullen and Manet their Art-History is an impossible conjuration, the touching of an asymptote where art caresses history as they both tend to infinity, working towards each other but never wholly making a connection. Instead we have another version of the material, the material represented through the materials of the artist, that is both irreducibly historic and irreducibly art without ever being fully history or solely art. In this Art-History telling a story is as important as capturing a fact. Maximilian and his generals did not process past Manet's studio window, but in adding this procession to the process of Manet, McMullen creates another frame for understanding and experiencing the making of Art-History. The performative and the constative sit within this single frame, which takes a new angle, a camera angle, on this established scene.

This is a process that like all creative process starts from a position of not-knowing. The Art Programme cannot programme, it can only project a programme, an episode, one programme among many that tells its own story from the perspective of a single artist McMullen-Manet, which is not reducible to either Manet or McMullen or even McMullen's other Manets. The seeming coherence of a single shot masks the work of assembly and creation that leads to that moment of action, the artifice of the edit, or the serendipity of the take. The film is shot on 35-mm celluloid, a procedure that was unusual and expensive

even in 1990. On the occasion of the first take, having tracked the passage of Maximilian from his cell to the spot of his execution, and everything having run smoothly up until then, at the last moment as the Emperor gave his speech in German, a gust of wind blew off his sombrero and the dog chased after it. 'Cut!' screamed the frustrated director.⁴⁹ Two takes is a better hit rate than the four attempts of Manet, but this cut is as deep as the scores that separate the sections of the painting in the National Gallery. In the gaps between the fragments of Manet's painting we will find the questions of the abyss between art and history, performance and epistemology, practice and theory, and between what presents and what persists. These problems fall in the gap between 1867 and 1871.

1871

Ken McMullen's film of the Paris Commune is less a document of communism and more an account of the impossibility of filmmaking. Before the reader decides to flick through the following pages, disgusted at the idea of the blood and spirit of the Commune erased in preference to the undecidable performative, they might reflect how obviously true the previous sentence is. McMullen's 1990 film may be a document of Thatcherism but it is hardly to be taken as a historical record of the events of Paris 1871. It is a glorious fiction, that leans but not too heavily on Zola's *La Débâcle*, also a fiction in the Rougon-Macquart series.⁵⁰ It is one thing to salute comrade McMullen for his interest in the Commune, which is far from equivocal (the staging of the show trial of General Cluseret, for example) and quite another to mistake his narrative for a documentary. Instead, the film places us in that zone, which McMullen occupies in films such as *Zina* and *Partition*, namely, that of Art-History, where proximity to historical truth, whatever that might mean here, occurs within the idiom of an undecidable, suspended reference that insists upon reference regardless.⁵¹ Reference that must be taken seriously as reference but nevertheless is irreducibly suspended. This is also, of course, the space that a writer such as Zola occupies. If I am concerned here with the work of Ken McMullen in this book, it is not just because of my own proximity to his films, which cannot be denied but rather must be embraced and understood, nor is it just because in McMullen we will find an exemplary case of Theory-Practice that mobilizes the thought of Marx, Freud and Derrida along the path of making cinema, but because the films of Ken McMullen are a test case (no more exemplary than any other example, to be sure) of this splice or graft between the constative and the performative. McMullen's films are about

history and filmmaking and the impossibility of both, there is a well-developed sense of theory and a considerable artistic practice, but the grain of a McMullen film is to watch the asymptote of art tend towards the point of contact with history, but for the two never to touch, and in the gap between the two, the film takes place. This is what makes film art and not a Xerox of the historical record. It is the decisive index of the dehiscence between practice and theories of practice.

The film begins and ends in a considerable degree of self-referentiality. It is bookended with sequences set in 1873 at the London Cyclorama, an early technology of the moving image that combined cinema and theatre to tell a story through a panoramic representation. The opening shot of two male figures, one inside the Cyclorama, projecting, the other looking in, as both audience and participant in the drama, will return at the end of the film when we are more familiar with the significance of the two characters. From here we move to a title sequence that places the front credits within the frame of a proscenium arch. Like Marcel Carné's *Les Enfants du Paradis*, this is a film about the theatre.⁵² It is the story of a set of characters who work in the theatre or who move in and out of the theatre as a space of entertainment and business. Timothy Spall's Ramborde is the impresario who treads a fine line between running a theatre and a brothel, frequented by, among others, the Prince of Wales (Ian McNeice) and the British secret agent Lord Grafton (played with colour-blind casting by Roshan Seth). The theatre is home to Maria (Maria de Medeiros) and Séverine (Ana Padrao) actresses in Ramborde's burlesque productions who survive through their relations with the men who pass through the theatre, including O'Brien (John Lynch) an Irish nationalist. The theatre provides a microcosm for the economic bubble and crash that comes with Napoleon III's free-market policies ('capital must flow and flow') and later becomes the site of an imaginary last stand of the Paris Commune, as the theatre troop are mowed down by the troops of the French national government. The action takes place on the stage, in the wings of the theatre, in the dressing rooms, in the fly system, and front of house. The film uses story cards, musical numbers, and live stage productions. It is a drama about drama, about the theatricality of staging politics, and the undecidable pretence between performance and action.

The exception to the story of love and revolution set in Ramborde's brothel-theatre is a number of episodes featuring Napoleon III (Dominique Pinon). Here we see the Emperor as a writer (completing his biography of Julius Caesar) and as an object of art, as he has his portrait painted as his hero, dressed in a toga.⁵³ We are privy to his inner monologue and we find that he is haunted by the ghost of Karl Marx, played in full-beard by the Algerian actor Med Hondo.

Marx stands over the Emperor's soldier and delivers sonorous lines from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'.⁵⁴ These lines become a refrain in the film as the events of the Commune play out against this theatrical backdrop. Napoleon III prefers the great man of history model of historical agency to Marx's formulation of the dialectical path of socio-economic circumstance, but he is, as Marx wrote in his unpublished novel of 1837, *Scorpion and Felix*, more like the playacting Octavianus left behind by the hero Caesar.⁵⁵ If McMullen's film has an explicit relation to discrete theoretical texts, it would be this; testing his practice against these words of Marx, telling the story of lives that make history, make up history, and made up lives that make up history wearing the make-up of the theatre.

However, this film is a work of art of considerable complexity, it is no patronage portrait of the Emperor dressed as Caesar. It is not a propaganda advert for the Marxist position as an application or illustration of a theory. Nor is it the Emperor's new clothes. Rather, as a film it must stand on its own as a film, generative of the affect proper to film, or it is worth very little almost nothing, as un-credit worthy as the *envois* [invoices/letters] of the crashed Paris Stock Exchange that ruins Ramborde and the Emperor. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is a text about Napoleon III's own history; it discusses the coup of 1851 in which Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte assumed dictatorial powers before claiming the throne as Napoleon III in 1852. It takes its title from the earlier coup of 18 Brumaire in which Napoleon Bonaparte seized power from the revolution in 1799. In it Marx offers one of his most famous formulations regarding the predictive power of history: 'Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Montagne of 1848 to 1851 for the Montagne of 1793 to 1795, the nephew for the uncle.' While Napoleon III sees himself as the new Caesar, these words echo in his mind, by the time of the Second French Empire in the years before its collapse at the end of the Franco-Prussian War, the usurping nephew as Emperor is now removed further still, in another space where farce repeats itself as farce like Ramborde's theatre. The comic Pinon plays the Emperor as a dwarf in giant's robes, a fool whose laissez-faire drive for speculation and easy wealth leads his country to ruin. The capital of his empire

is ruined by the capital of his empire. As the Prussian's advance and the stock market collapses, the city falls under siege. It moves from a city of light to a place of darkness. While the citizens starve, the elite dine on the animals in the Paris zoo in a symbolic exchange in which the swan swing we see early on in a burlesque production of the story of Leda, is swapped for the roast swan's wing of the secret elite dinners ('deprivation is never a universal condition'). Swan [*cygne*] and sign [*signe*] sharing the same homonym as a signifier, pointing us to the ways in which farce can also repeat itself as tragedy. The theatrical farce of Ramborde's shows turn to the last stand of the Commune, using the same repertory company, who literally die on stage.

This is a film about the pageant and aesthetics of the political, from Ramborde's nationalist musicals that encourage consumption and the path to war, to the staging of the 'Internationale', with full chorus and flag waving, from an Emperor who plays at dressing up, to spies in disguise and actors who take centre stage. It is about the extravagant play of politics, the extravagance of the players, the gaming of the political, and the excess of a performativity that leads to real material hardship and historical catastrophe. McMullen shows us not so much that history must have blood, but that the blood of history could just as well have been otherwise and is always the result of the actions of men, under circumstances of their own choosing or not. In this sense, the film's narrative of singular loves challenges Marx's thesis on world-historic forces. As Ramborde tells the Marquise de Gallifet, as he arranges a firing squad for the theatrical workers, 'they don't mean it, they are just a bunch of stupid actors who get over excited when they dress up'. Ramborde is trying to both save his livelihood and to make a last-ditch attempt to save the lives of his actors, presenting the Commune as a benefit gig for a trendy cause gone wrong. The actors go down performing, singing in the face of death, pitting an aestheticization against the materiality of the bullet, and so projecting the Commune into a future, swapping the barricades for an auditorium, to give voice to an idea that cannot die with their own mortality. In the meanwhile, the professional revolutionaries Cluseret and O'Brien escape Paris disguised as priests, living to foment another day. But the Irishman cannot escape the denouement of his own drama. The film closes with a return to the Cyclorama, two years later, where O'Brien recognizes Grafton, the English aristocrat and spy, who was his rival for the love of Séverine during the months of the Commune. O'Brien takes revenge on Grafton, shooting him, on a cinematic set, where all the characters of the film 'live on' in the panorama, not out of ideological purpose but out of sexual jealousy. *Eros* trumps *polis*, within the frame of the aesthetic. That's the movies, if not the Marxist playbook.

In the centre of all this is the Café Anglais, where Cluseret exhibits Manet's 1871, accompanied by the testimony of a French soldier who reports on the disaster of the Franco-Prussian war. The restaurant is raided but the subversive painting has been swapped for a portrait of the Emperor. The image of the execution of Maximilian is a *mis-en-abyme* within the *mis-en-scène*, like a door in an advent calendar that if opened would lead us down a wormhole into the process of the director and into the studio of an artist named McMullen-Manet-Zola. In Art-History, for the history-artist, 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. Manet and Zola are part of a history of art, a history of history in art, which McMullen cannot escape from. Instead, he advances on it with his revolutionary battalions, not to overthrow it but to surrender to it. Manet and Zola are as much his nightmare as his muse, the weight of their significance pressing on his creative brain. In this sense, the history-artist is never free to do just as they please. History and the makers of history (its artists more than its actors) leave their traces in the texts of the living, imposing themselves in images and words, signs rather than wonders. If it were appropriate to paraphrase Marx, we might say that McMullen's art-history shows us that men make films but not under circumstances of their own choosing.