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The Monochroidal Artist or Noctuidae, Nematodes and Glaucomic Vision

[Reading the Color of Concrete Comedy in Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque*
(1897) through Philosopher Catherine Malabou's *The New Wounded* (2012)]

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

Art History, Theory and Criticism

by

Emily Verla Bovino

Committee in charge:

Professor Jack Greenstein, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson
Professor Sheldon Nodelman
Professor Ricardo Dominguez
Professor Rae Armantrout

2013

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

EPIGRAPH

PRÉFACE

C'était en 18... (Ça ne nous rajeunit pas, tout cela.)

Par un mien oncle, en récompense d'un troisième accessit d'instruction religieuse brillamment enlevé sur de redoutables concurrents, j'eus l'occasion de voir, avant qu'il ne partît pour l'Amérique, enlevé à coups de dollars, le célèbre tableau à la manière noire, intitulé:

COMBAT DE NÈGRES DANS UNE CAVE, PENDANT LA NUIT ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ On trouvera plus loin la reproduction de cette admirable toile. Nous la publions avec la permission spéciale des héritiers de l'auteur.

L'impression que je ressentis à la vue de ce passionnant chef-d'oeuvre ne saurait relever d'aucune description.

Ma destinée m'apparut brusquement en lettres de flammes.

--Et mois aussi je serai peintre ! m'écriai-je en français (j'ignorais alors la langue italienne, en laquelle d'ailleurs je n'ai, depuis, fait aucun progrès).⁽¹⁾

Et quand je disais peintre, je m'entendais : je ne voulais pas parler des peintres à la façon dont on les entend les plus généralement, de ridicules artisans qui ont besoin de mille couleurs différentes pour exprimer leurs pénibles conceptions. Non ! Le peintre en qui je m'idéalisais, c'était celui génial à qui suffit pour une toile une couleur : *l'artiste, oserais-je dire, monochroïdal.*

⁽¹⁾ Allusion, sans doute, à la fameuse parole : Anch'io son pittore.

Après vingt ans de travail opiniâtre, d'insondables déboires et de luttes acharnées, je pus enfin exposer une première œuvre :

PREMIERE COMMUNION DE JEUNES FILLES CHLOROTIQUES PAR UN TEMPS DE NEIGE

Une seule Exposition m'avait offert son hospitalité, celle des Arts incohérents, organisée par un nommé Jules Lévy, à qui. Pour cet acte de belle indépendance artistique et ce parfait détachement de tout coterie, j'ai voué une reconnaissance quasi durable.

Si j'ajoutais un mot à ces dires, ce serait un mot de trop.

Mon ŒUVRE parlera pour moi !

ALPHONSE ALLAIS¹

¹ From Alphonse Allais, *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, 1897

It was 18 ... (This won't make us any younger.)

Brought to Paris by an uncle of mine as a reward for a third certificate of merit in religious instruction, brilliantly taken in formidable competition, I had the opportunity to see, before leaving for America, rewarded with a fistful of dollars, the famous picture in mezzotint entitled:

BATTLE OF BLACKS IN A CELLAR, DURING THE NIGHT ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Reproduction of this wonderful canvas can be found in later pages. We publish it with the special permission of the author's heirs.

The impression that I felt at the sight of this exciting masterpiece does not conform to any description. My destiny suddenly appeared to me in letters of fire.
- And I, too, am a painter! I cried in French (at the time, I ignored the Italian language and I have still made no headway in it.) ⁽¹⁾

And when I say artist, let me make myself clear: I did not mean to speak of artists as they are most commonly understood, ridiculous craftsmen who need a thousand different colors to express their tiresome designs.

No!

The painter that I idealized was one whose genius was so great that he needed no more than one color for a painting: dare I say, the monochromal artist.

⁽¹⁾ An allusion, without a doubt, to the famous saying: *Anch'io son pittore*.

After twenty years of persistent work, unfathomable setbacks and fierce struggles,
I could finally exhibit my first work:

FIRST COMMUNION OF YOUNG CHLOROTIC GIRLS
IN SNOWY WEATHER

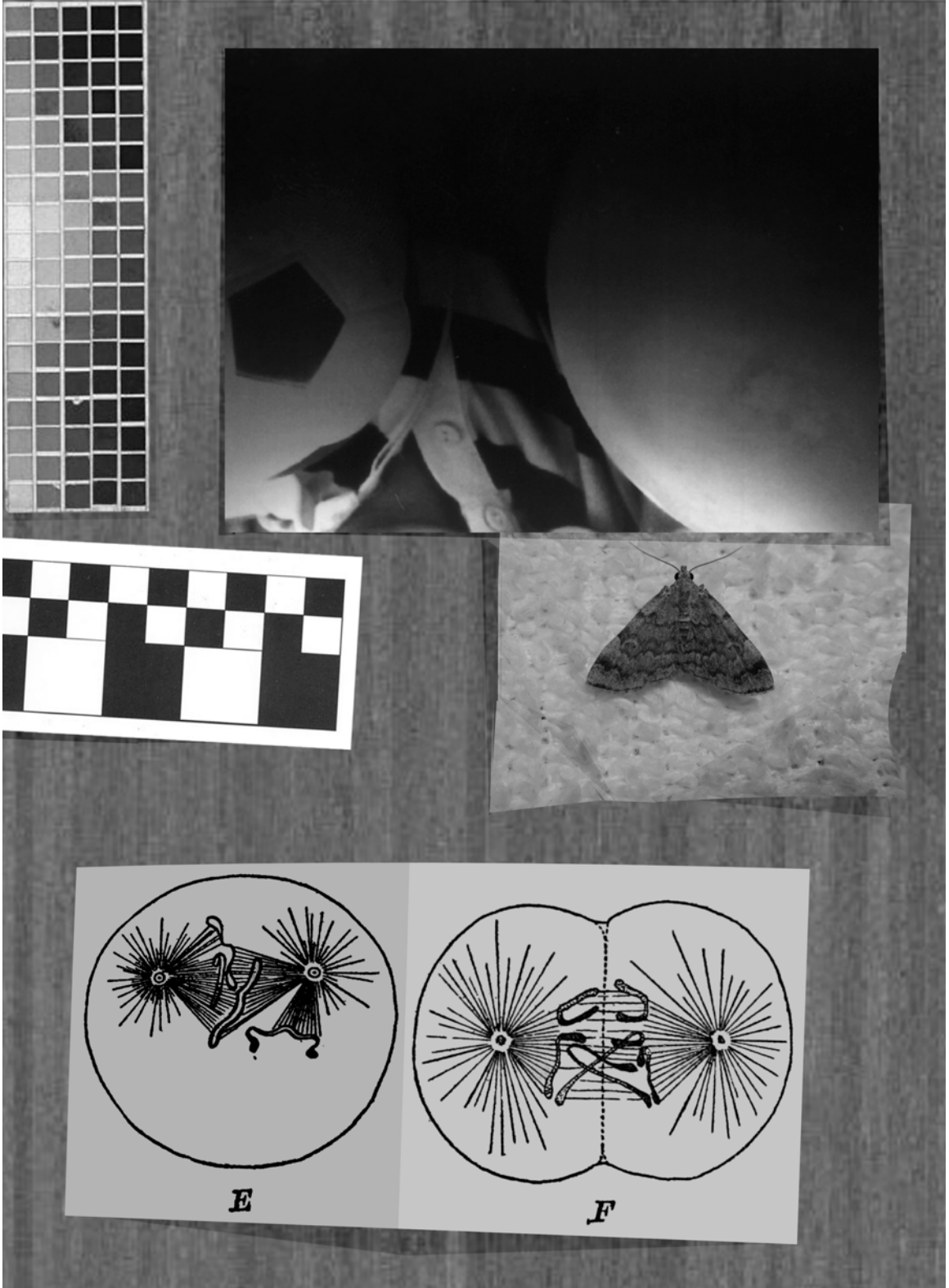
Only one exhibition had offered me hospitality, the Incoherent Arts organized by a man named Jules Levy, to whom for this act of great artistic independence and perfect detachment from the art scene, I have vowed an almost infinite gratitude.

If I were to add a word to what I have already said, it would be a word too much.

My WORK speaks for me!

ALPHONSE ALLAIS²

² Translation by the author from Alphonse Allais, *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, 1897



Previous Page:
Plate \$ _Lethe Picture Atlas_2013
Noctuidae, Nematodes and Glaucomic Vision
Fabricated Screen Shot, Courtesy of the Author

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Epigraph.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Abstract.....	x
PART ONE.....	1
PART TWO.....	65
References.....	115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Monochromes with translated titles, in reverse order.....	95
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Monochroidal Artist or Noctuidae, Nematodes and Glaucomic Vision

[Reading the Color of Concrete Comedy in Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* (1897) through Philosopher Catherine Malabou's *The New Wounded* (2012)]

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Professor Jack Greenstein, Chair

The thesis is a fictionalist thought-experiment that works with the new materialist concepts of cerebrality and destructive plasticity, in an integrative approach to art history, theory, criticism and practice. It reads the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* (1897) – a late nineteenth century portfolio of monochromes by Incoherent Arts humorist Alphonse Allais – through a dialogue between neurology and psychoanalysis proposed by philosopher Catherine Malabou in *The New Wounded* (2012). The new reading of the *Album* that results, comments on early twenty-first century neuro-determinist approaches to art history and esthetics.

In response to the early twenty-first century mania for all things “brain”, the thesis stages a conversation between what Malabou calls cerebrality and destructive plasticity, and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman’s psychoanalytic approach to a

critical archeology of neurology (*Invention of Hysteria*, 1982; 2003). At the time when Allais' was creating the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*: neurologists promoted new-liberal "republicanization" while encouraging a popular fashion for hysteria, the first photographic brain atlases were produced in support of the neuron doctrine, reports of crises in the French colonies were a topic of debate in Montmartre cabarets, new techniques for chromolithographic printing were developed to lessen reliance on skilled workers, and an increasing number of individuals reported experiencing synesthesia.

The thesis focuses on three plates from the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* as they relate to this constellation of socio-historical asterisms, and responds to present renewed prestige of synesthesia in the early twenty-first century neurosciences. In form, it follows the example of a performative slide-show lecture presented by art historian Aby Warburg at the sanatorium of existential psychologist Ludwig Binswanger in 1924. Warburg referred to this performative lecture as, "the gruesome convulsions of a decapitated frog."

PART ONE

People have said to me, better to just do your work and forget all the theoretical angst.
I think, more likely to forget work for a while and develop more angst (119).

Jimmie Durham, "A Friend of Mine Said that Art is a European Invention."

'Invented Tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (1).

Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions."

White People are the Interior.

William Pope. L

In 1842, an article entitled "The Reaction in Germany: From the Notebooks of a Frenchman" appeared in the liberal Neo-Hegelian journal, *German Yearbook for Science and Art*, signed Jules Elysard (Walicki, 120).¹ The author, who had arrived in Berlin two years prior, was no Frenchman at all. The pseudonymous Jules Elysard was a Russian aristocrat who had been attending the lectures of philosopher Friedrich Schelling at the University of Berlin.² Shortly after the death of Georg W.F. Hegel, absolutist defenders of the Prussian monarchy supported Schelling's transfer to Berlin from Munich, eager to establish a conservative intellectual tradition against what they saw as Hegel's

¹ The *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* was founded in Dresden in 1841 and edited by political philosopher Arnold Ruge. It was suppressed in 1843, a year before Karl Marx's final break with Ruge, who believed in the reform of the state, rather than in its radical overturning. The *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* was printed six times a week as "a large, closely printed, double-column four page sheet." See Hook, 126.

² The delay in providing the real identity of the pseudonym Jules Elysard is intentional. The reader will eventually be provided with the identity of Elysard, but is asked to permit the pseudonym to retain its original anonymity for the moment. The purpose of this maneuver is to allow Elysard to perform the part of protagonist in this initial literary re-enactment of actual historical events.

republicanist idealism (Levine, 125; Toews, 3; Brooks, 96-97; Buchwalter, 137). Though Hegel's political philosophy of "civil society" was sympathetic to the formation of a constitutional monarchy, conservative royalists disapproved of it and used the anti-Christian theories that had based their positions on its dialectical model as evidence of Hegel's destructive influence (Levine, 125; Toews, 3; Brooks, 96-97; Buchwalter, 137). From the perspective of Schelling's rationalist metaphysics – in which human reason cannot explain its own existence beginning with reason itself – Hegel's idealism was a form of philosophical narcissism. In Hegel, an abstract negation called the mind, subsumed the objective in its consciousness, closing knowledge into *a priori* conceptual forms that were determined by how the mind *itself* materialized (Bowie; Levine, 125). In this operation, Schelling believed that philosophy was made to reflect on itself, retreating into an ideal that undermined "the questions of life" and endangered philosophy's cultural function (Toews, 4).

While attending Schelling's anti-Hegelian lectures on historical crisis alongside Soren Kierkegaard, Max Stirner and Friedrich Engels, the Russian aristocrat signed Jules Elysard is also said to have participated in rowdy debates among students then known as Young Hegelians and Left Hegelians (Wirth, 4). The Young Hegelians and Left Hegelians gathered regularly at Hippel's wine bar on Friedrichstrasse for discussions on political philosophy: participants like Engels, the future co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) took turns attacking Schelling for his religious revivalism (Woodcock, 83; Shatz, 233; Levine, *Marx's Discourse*, 10-12).¹ Antagonism among the unofficial members of the "Doctors' Club" took the form of arguments between Neo-Hegelians and Post-Hegelians, among *Die Freien* or Free Ones, proponents of political

¹ See Engels, "Schelling, Philosopher in Christ. On the Transformation of Worldly Wisdom into Divine Wisdom For Believing Christians Who Do Not Know the Language of Philosophy," originally printed as an anonymous pamphlet in Berlin in 1842.

reform and advocates of revolution. According to apocrypha, ideological conflicts frequently sparked off into drunken combat and violent street brawls (Woodcock, 83-84).

In an editorial note that prefaced “The Reaction in Germany,” editor Arnold Ruge commented on the article by the Russian Aristocrat signed Jules Elysard, as a call to Germans to abandon their “boastfulness in the realm of theory” and become Frenchmen of “action” (Walicki, 121). In fact, several years after publishing the article, the Russian aristocrat would become a hunted insurrectionist. In 1843, he moved from Berlin to Bern then Zurich, where he met with the radical tailor Wilhelm Weitling, whose book *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom* (1842) was circulating among young students of political philosophy (Leier, 119). Publications in which Weitling claimed Jesus Christ as the “first insurgent communist” resulted in his arrest by Swiss authorities for sedition and heresy. A file was subsequently opened on the Russian aristocrat for his association with the tailor and he was ordered to return home to Russia. However, rather than present himself for the convocation at the Russian Legation in Bern, the pseudonymous Jules Elysard headed to Brussels, then Paris. Russian authorities responded by stripping him of his noble status, confiscating his property, and sentencing him to hard labor in Siberia (Leier, 121).

Though the Russian aristocrat would challenge the idea of society-by-design diagrammed by Weitling, he appreciated the tailor’s works as an “expression of a new practice”: a “concrete consciousness” (Leier, 119). In “The Reaction in Germany,” the Russian aristocrat signed Jules Elysard had argued against the hypnotic effect of the Hegelian dialectic: the model of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In place of Hegel’s triangulating compromise, he had proposed that only a dyadic or two-fold dialectic of thesis and antithesis – an infinite and indefinite Positive, and an infinite and indefinite

Negative – could produce freedom (Bowie; Leier, 114; Cutler, 17).² In the dyadic dialectic, antithesis emerged from the underground, “like a mole under the earth,” burrowing out of hiding to bury the old order and put it to rest (Elysard). In this scenario, antithesis or the Negative, “exists only in contradiction to the Positive. Its whole being, its content and its vitality are simply the destruction of the Positive” (Cutler, 17). However, in the victory of the Negative over the Positive – the triumph of the antithesis over the thesis – both units of the dyad are destroyed: “neither is superposed on the other in the outcome” (Cutler, 18). This dialectical model ends stasis or immobility of the Positive by requiring the suicidal gesture of the Negative: the insurrectionist exhorted his readership, “open the eyes of your mind; let the dead bury the dead and convince yourselves at last that the Spirit, ever young, ever new born, is not to be sought in fallen ruins!” (Elysard, 55).

The dyadic dialectic is not the compromising synthesis of reform, or even the total turn of revolution: it is, instead, the renewal of a pure insurrection in which nothing of the previous orders continues to exist in afterlife. The free societies to result were ones “wholly alien to the world,” derived life from “new sources quite unknown to us” – sources that “grow and diffuse themselves without fanfare” (Elysard, 55). The call to action that ended the article signed Jules Elysard, would later become a frequently quoted aphorism: “Let us trust the eternal Spirit, which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!” (Elysard, 55)

One hundred years after the publication of the article by the insurrectionist, an economist named Joseph Schumpeter published his own assessment of running

² For more on the history of the figure of the dyad as the infinite and indefinite multiplicity in Ancient Greek philosophy, see Reale.

debates on political philosophy. Since the insurrectionist's call to action, the geopolitical configuration of lands determined "Germanic" had been unified for the invention of a German nation state. The economist, born in Moravia under Austro-Hungarian rule, was the child of parents determined "ethnic German." He had moved to the United States shortly before the invasion of Poland by Germany forced the first declarations of war in what would come to be known as the second world conflict.

In the book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter sought to combine static equilibrium theory and barter-based economics in a new image of innovation. This image of innovation engaged openly with theories of capitalist collapse outlined by Karl Marx and his collaborator Engels (Reinert, 265).³ It took the position that an exchange of ideas and actions, between both "inside and outside institutional frameworks," was the source of the technological revolution necessary to the survival of capitalism (Heertje, 41; Sundbo, 64). According to Schumpeter, there were two processes crucial to sustaining the entrepreneurial spirit and preventing capitalism's delegitimization: creative destruction and creative accumulation (Sundbo, 64).

In creative accumulation, large entities appropriated and secured most of the intellectual property in a society. They then created positive feedback loops for research and development schemes that allowed their stocks of knowledge to be influenced by the public domain, though remaining proprietary (Patel and Zavodov, 71). In creative destruction, small entities challenged incumbent large firms with micro-level schemes. These schemes disrupted the circulation of existing knowledge stock, and forced it to

³ Barter-based economics refers to an economic system based on "a simultaneous exchange of commodities, whether goods or (...) services, with bargaining and without money" (Hart). Static equilibrium theory is based on John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy* and refers to a basic category of "natural and normal conditions." In these conditions, a theory of motion is contained within the theory of equilibrium, thus modified as a state of "Statics" and "Dynamics." The question arose in the 1930s as to whether "natural or long-period normal conditions" were the same as the "fiction" of a "steady state." A number of economists worked on this question to distinguish between what would be called a partial equilibrium analysis and a general equilibrium analysis (Milgate).

reorganize itself in previously unexplored niches of the market (Patel and Zavodov, 71). According to the economist, the creative accumulation and creative destruction design for technological innovation, could be defined by the metaphor of the “dwarf standing on the shoulders of the giant”: a process of co-evolution articulated by “links in a chain of improvements” (Patel and Zavodov, 72).

Why Creative Destruction Does Not Unfold to A Creative Passion for Destruction

In the first two decades of the early twenty-first century – over sixty years after the German economist Joseph Schumpeter proposed his new liberal dialectic of capitalist-socialist innovation in democracy – the figure of creative destruction appeared in the title of innumerable publications. In these books and manuals, entrepreneurial cardiologists, economists, and leadership consultants promised to address either one crisis of capitalism or another through the concept of creative destruction. Eric Topol’s *The Creative Destruction of Medicine* (2012) suggested ways in which smart devices and self-tracking software applications could be used to promote personal responsibility in healthcare. Tyler Cowen’s *Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World’s Cultures* (2009) argued that cultural imperialism had a positive effect on markets and kept industries reinventing themselves. George and Joni Graen’s *Knowledge-Driven Corporation: Complex Creative Destruction* (2008) proposed ways in which “open” and “flexible” designs could help corporations capitalize on the “discontinuous changes” of the knowledge economy (Graen, 11 and 16).

The focus in these early twenty-first century studies was to define innovation in terms of reinvention. In line with this logic, innovation had little to do with the thing itself and, rather, had everything to do with networking capacity and the ability to circulate.

The circulated-networked object, “expands its own production” by creating “an expansion of demand” for its own and other contingent products (Patel and Zavodov, 71). It is characterized by “putting productive resources to uses hitherto untried in practice, (...) withdrawing them from uses they have served so far” (Jamison, 23). In this model of innovation, the figures of reinvention, resuscitation, resurrection, recycling, reparation and redemption seem to become the primary logical modes that determine behavior.

The creative destruction and creative accumulation of new-liberal market fundamentalism is a conservative dialectical mode that proposes democracy as the synthesis of capitalism and socialism. It therefore represents the kind of Hegelian synthesis, or reformist republican statism, that the afore-quoted insurrectionist – the Russian aristocrat signed Jules Elysard – would have argued against. Certainly, the pseudonymous Jules Elysard would have written of this Positive synthesis as a preoccupation with animating cadavers. In the creative passion for destruction outlined by the insurrectionist, there is no synthesis. As is explained by the real identity of the pseudonym Jules Elysard – the Russian political philosopher Mikhail Bakunin – the creative passion for destruction demanded that “the dead bury the dead” and that the “new born” not be expected to arise from “ruins” (Elysard, 55). As such, antithesis is an accident: an unexpected trauma that cannot be prepared for, or adapted to, and that creates the space for a new thesis. As Bakunin’s classmate, the tragic-comic philosopher Soren Kierkegaard would write in *Repetition* (1843), “the accidental is the closest thing to the ideal” (Kierkegaard, 30). The back-and-forth process of this Negative dyadic dialectic is necessarily both infinite and indefinite. Because traces of the thesis always remain in the anti-thesis, the anti-thesis can only rid itself of the afterlife by facilitating its own destruction through a respective anti-thesis. It is for this reason that the dyadic dialectic of Bakunin can be understood as driven by a suicidal logic.

The creative passion for destruction follows a different valence of the dialectic than does the synthesis of creative destruction and creative accumulation that was proposed for the survival of capitalism. As indicated, the creative passion for destruction is, in fact, non-dialectizable in the traditional Hegelian scheme: it does not produce revolutions, rather its aim is to generate the uprising force of insurrection by undermining its own privilege as a Negative opposition or anti-thesis. A hundred years before the German economist Schumpeter's conservative Hegelian triad – the formula for thesis, antithesis and synthesis called *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* – Bakunin drew a line between destruction as a creative passion – or radical insurrection – and the creative destruction of entrepreneurialism or corporatist innovation. With an acute sense of the developments to come, Bakunin articulated this distinction thirty years before the anarchists were expelled from the First International at the Hague. It was with the expulsion of the anarchists that Karl Marx was able to establish the hegemony of his scientific-socialist interpretation of communism, laying the groundwork for Schumpeter's mid-twentieth century synthesis: *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*.

Creative Destruction as a Trope in Georges Didi-Huberman's Invention of Hysteria

In the *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (1982; 2003), the French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman never explicitly suggests a possible relationship between the collective trauma of the Paris Commune's violent repression (1871) and the reports of revolts in French colonies on both the African continent and in the Pacific. Didi-Huberman never deliberately inquires into how the respective crises of internal and external colonization may have impacted

those Third Republic subjects diagnosed as hysterics under the French imperial nation state that took form at the end of the nineteenth century.

How did the creation of the reformist Third Republic and its liberalization of the French imperial nation state, influence clinical pictures of bodies and organs, in particular the image of the human brain? In the years that the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot was overseeing the production of the *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1877 – 1888), Ernest Hamy, a former assistant of both Charcot and the neuroanatomist Paul Broca, was the director of the Trocadéro Ethnographic Museum in Paris (Dias, 106). At the time, the Trocadéro was the storehouse for war booty brought into France from the invented geopolitical configurations known as “Africa” and “Oceania” (Dias). These configurations had been partitioned, mapped and redefined in expeditions for “effective occupation” following the Berlin or Congo Conference. This conference had made conquest a “basic ground rule” necessary to claiming colonial territory (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 18). At the Berlin Conference, the imperial powers in the Western Hemisphere had negotiated to establish “European” control over available natural resources and labor power south of the Mediterranean, while simultaneously also securing strategic global positioning (Louis, 75; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 18-19). The objects collected from “Africa” and “Oceania” at the Trocadéro would eventually serve as the basis for a new political aesthetics among a younger generation of artists. Many artists would work under the influence of forms called “African” and “Oceanic” for the destruction of the invented “Europe” that had been devised and institutionalized by imperial powers, through the colonial projects of the late nineteenth century.

In the years that the collections of the Trocadéro were taking form, the neurologist Sigmund Freud reviewed neuroanatomist Edmund Flatau’s *Atlas of the Human Brain*, the first photographic album of its kind in German, English, Polish and

Russian (Triarhou, 10-15). This atlas was the second comprehensive anatomical study to be published in the nineteenth century of the disembodied organ called the “brain” (Triarhou, 13). Printed two years before the *Das Menschenhirn* atlas by Gustaf Retzius, now considered “the most outstanding work in macroscopic neuroanatomy of the 19th century,” Flatau’s atlas had been preceded in its use of photography to document the brain, by the *Iconographie Photographique* of French neurologist Jules Bernard Luys. Both the atlases of Luys and Flatau were supplemented with schematic drawings: while the drawings of Flatau focused on producing an overview of fiber pathways and the structure of nervous tissue, those of Luys attempted to contribute to knowledge on neuropathological aspects of mental illness (Triarhou, 13).

As a clinician at the Salpêtrière, Luys theories of the emotional center of the brain being in the right hemisphere were supported by his observations of hysterics in which symptoms were seen to manifest on the left side of the body (Harrington, 81). The atlas and its supporting theories developed by Luys in his combination of neuroanatomy and mesmerism, were important for asserting an image of the brain as “double”: an organ constituted by two autonomous halves that could be “cultivated” into “acting separately” (Harrington, 112).⁴ Meanwhile, Flatau’s atlas and supplemental drawings were significant for their support of neuronism, the Spanish neurologist Ramón y Cajal’s

⁴ Mesmerism, also known as animal magnetism, was the creation of a Viennese physician Franz Anton Mesmer. In mesmerism, “an individual was thought to influence another by a variety of personal gestures, sustained eye contact, and the direct influence of the will” (Miller, 471). The spiritualist movement developed the related practice of “table-turning” (Miller, 471). In table-turning the vital powers or “imponderable fluids” that Mesmer speculated “controlled both the celestial and inorganic world,” as well as “the state of living things” were thought to “make tables spin under certain conditions” (Miller, 471). Diverse histories have given mesmerism a role in practices and disciplines as diverse as physics, psychology, parapsychology, psychiatry, chemistry and physiology. Mesmerism was practiced and debated in Europe and America as well as in the colonies, most notably in British India. For more on mesmerism, see Miller. In *Das Kapital*, Marx included the following footnote about table-turning that related the magic of commodity fetishism, lulling the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois masses to sleep in Europe, to revolutionary uprisings in China: “One may recall that China and the tables began to dance when the rest of the world appeared to be standing still – *pour encourager les autres*.” For more on this passage, see Derrida.

neuron doctrine: the theory of neurons as “independent units and not entities fused to each other” (Finger, 43). In opposition to the neuron doctrine, and theories of localization like that of Luys (who had both supported neuronism and produced experiments with it), Italian physician Camillo Golgi created a staining method called the “reazione nera” or black reaction. Using the black reaction, Golgi produced drawings of nerve cells that showed “a dense intertwining, fused reticulum” (Finger, 45). These drawings resulted in Golgi taking a firm stance against the demarcation of brain areas for a “nerve net theory” that “was more in line with holistic interpretations of brain function” (Finger, 48).

While physicians were working on developing new histological techniques and chemical stains to determine if nerve cells retained “independence” or were fused by a process called “anastomosis”, the exiled Paris communards – those sent to the Pacific penal colonies of New Caledonia after the massacres of their comrades in 1871 – found themselves ironically employed in work as “civilizing” agents on behalf of the same French authorities that had suppressed their own Parisian uprising (Finger, 44; Boyer). In the penal colonies, the exiled communards became settlers for the cultivation of a colonial system against indigenous Kanak rebellion (Boyer). A key figure in the medical politics of the Third Republic, Charcot’s collaborator and publicist of sorts, Désiré-Magloire Bourneville was a respected proponent of such Third Republican reformist cultivation. In the years in which Charcot’s *Iconographie* was published and updated in new editions, Bourneville, who worked on the *Iconographie* with Charcot, was committed to the absolute “républicanization” or republicanization of French politics and culture (Brais, 121).

The historical constellation mapped above is not made explicit by art historian Georges Didi-Huberman in the *Invention of Hysteria* – Didi-Huberman’s art historical interpretation of Charcot’s *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*. However, all

of the constellation's asterisms appear as a phantom presence in the book's appendix. In the appendix, the reader of Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria* comes upon a reprint of a section of text that Didi-Huberman has selected from Charcot's *Iconographie*. The reprint is documentation by Bourneville and the physiologist-photographer Paul Régnard of what the two physicians claim to be a written account of the hysteric patient, Augustine. Augustine, who is identified by Didi-Huberman as the "favorite case" of the Salpêtrière's photographic study of hysteria – presided over by Charcot, and produced by Bourneville and Régnard – is also the favored subject of Didi-Huberman. Augustine is the privileged protagonist of Didi-Huberman's own interpretation of the *Iconographie* as a form of pathological art practice. Credited by Bourneville and Régnard as the author of the text that Didi-Huberman reprints in his appendix (two hallucinatory accounts that accompany images of the *Iconographie*), Augustine supposedly produced the texts only after the "reiterated insistence" of her physicians (Didi-Huberman, 295).

Augustine's two hallucinatory accounts outline sensations she allegedly experienced after being administered ether and amyl nitrate for inhalation (Didi-Huberman, 295-296). The two physicians Bourneville and Régnard seem to infer in their description of Augustine's writing, that their "reiterated insistence" had come as a result of an interest in understanding what motivated Augustine's frequent demands for ether (Didi-Huberman, 295-296). The accounts, which Didi-Huberman titles "Provoked Deliria: Augustine's Account" comprise one of the rare instances in *Invention of Hysteria* when the reader is presented with Augustine – the hysteric subject or "body taking on a pose" – as self-inscribed in *writing*, rather than in iconic portrayal of "the hysteric as art object" (Didi-Huberman, 295; 279). All the same, Didi-Huberman makes evident his own position on the hallucinatory texts in the titles he writes for them: they are not deliria "invoked" by amyl nitrate and ether, but deliria "provoked" by ghostwriters Bourneville

and Régnard, the artist-manipulators of the hysteric readymade, Augustine (Didi-Huberman, 295).

While Augustine's inhalations of ether produce what Bourneville and Régnard define as "agreeable and voluptuous dreams" or "the happy phase" of attacks, the "action of the amyl nitrate" is "less agreeable" to them (Didi-Huberman, 296). With amyl nitrate, the "voluptuous sensations" of the ether become "mixed with painful dreams" and Augustine claims to see "red eyes, blue teeth, blood, etc" (Didi-Huberman, 296-297). The interpretations of Augustine's texts by Bourneville and Régnard begins and ends with these rather superficial distinctions between the effects of ether and amyl nitrate as respectively "happy" or "less agreeable" (Didi-Huberman, 296).

While it is unclear if this superficial analysis by Bourneville and Régnard of Augustine's texts is simply a result of Didi-Huberman's decontextualization of them from the *Iconographie*, the Bourneville and Régnard interpretation (as it appears in Didi-Huberman's reprint) is notable for the function it serves in the appendix of *Invention of Hysteria*. Bourneville and Régnard draw attention to, or rather distract attention with, the idea that, for them, what makes ether "happy" and amyl nitrate "less agreeable" is the disconcerting coloration of eyes and teeth among the figures that appear in Augustine's amyl nitrate delusions (Didi-Huberman, 296). Both the physicians and Didi-Huberman are silent about the far more complex fantasy of consummation or sexual gratification at work in the "delusions": consummation and gratification are fulfilled in the case of the amyl nitrate dreams and denied in the case of the ether dreams. Neither the physicians nor the art historian address the fact that the disconcerting coloration of eyes and teeth is the tricolor – the red, white and blue flag of the French Republic. In Augustine's hallucinations, the tricolor invades the ocular orbits and mouths of black men in a combat of insurrectionary theatre (Didi-Huberman, 297).

In the ether dreams, the object of Augustine's desire, M., does not concede to her pleas for touch, while in the amyl nitrate dream, M. succumbs to Augustine's "wriggling" around, to encourage him to "caress" and "tickle" her (Didi-Huberman, 296). Could this M. be code for Magloire – Desiré-Magloire Bourneville himself – the object of Augustine's transference? Indeed, Didi-Huberman suggests this, as it is within the Freudian mandate of his psychoanalytic dreamwork of art history. This mandate draws the reader's attention to sexual etiology or a Freudian causal regime of sexuality. In Didi-Huberman's defense, there are also other instances in Augustine's accounts that seem to confirm transference, in this case definable as the "expressive displacements from the past into the present" through "the linking of "distressing ideas" with the person of the doctor" (Bauer, 568). Under the effects of amyl nitrate, M.'s touch is accompanied by a visit to a theater "where a revolution was being performed": "There were Negroes with red eyes and blue teeth who were fighting each other with firearms," Augustine recounts. "M was hit in the head with a bullet, his blood flowed, I was crying (...)" (Didi-Huberman, 296).

Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria*, now a canonical analysis of Charcot's *Iconographie*, enacts a depoliticizing critical oversight that allows for a significant figure of *mise en abîme* – a cliché of internal colonial strife transformed into colonial revolt, then represented within a cliché of hysterical convulsion – to slip by unnoticed. But why, one might ask, is this slippage – this oversight – so important? According to Didi-Huberman's own logic of the Freudian dreamwork, the forcible splitting of text into image and word – performed by Didi-Huberman's relegation of Augustine's hallucinatory accounts to the appendix of the *Invention of Hysteria* – represses a revelatory underside. Deliberately cut away from the images they accompanied, Augustine's words are stashed in an open archive of sorts, as if Didi-Huberman wants to play a game of hide-

and-see, laying bare for the reader the unconscious of his own critical archeology of art history in the form of an appendix. It is as if Didi-Huberman sets the groundwork for a future worthy interlocutor to engage in critico-ideological analysis of his own approach.

Whether or not Didi-Huberman would agree that he did this intentionally is insignificant: the fact remains that his choice to use the form of the appendix in his book activates this scenario. The attentive reader of Didi-Huberman takes the cue and is given the tools to assert that it is Didi-Huberman's *practice* of the Freudian dreamwork that generates his *blindspot* to Augustine's delirious image, her sexual-socio-political *mise en abîme*. At the same time, it is also Didi-Huberman's *practice* of the Freudian dreamwork that creates the conditions of possibility for a reader to identify the historical unconscious of the art historian's own interpretations. In the instance of the *Invention of Hysteria*, Didi-Huberman's experiment with writing art history has effectively made his theories answerable to their own underside.

The intent of this thesis is, thus, not to delegitimize Didi-Huberman's use of the Freudian dreamwork. It is, rather, to assert that in order for Didi-Huberman's psychohistory to continue to work twenty years after its original configuration, readers of Didi-Huberman interested in his approach must work through the underside of his interpretations, rather than simply citing the content of his readings. The difference is perhaps best understood as one of contiguity with a methodology versus one of continuity with an interpretation: readers in contiguity with Didi-Huberman's approach move alongside his *oeuvre*, in contact with its logic, but not cohering with it as a comprehensive script of interpretation. This approach would seem to be the one most attuned to the aim of exposing the "burrowing moles" in art history, which Didi-Huberman's critical archeology set out to address in the early 1980s.

If the underside of Didi-Huberman's psychohistory is the figure of the Freudian unconscious, then the necessary next movement in furthering his research would seem to be to deconstruct the figure of the death drive that Freud never fully theorized. In other words, Didi-Huberman's approach should be updated to include a causal regime that works both *with* and *against* an etiology of the unconscious as determined by sexual damage. This alternative causality must necessarily be determined by an image of trauma to the "brain": the materialist corporeal realm that Freud denied as affecting psychic events. Freud developed this position after studying neurology under Charcot at the Salpêtrière. He confirmed it while working out the cathartic method or "talking cure" in response to observations of subjects diagnosed with hysteria and analyzed under hypnosis. Freud's refusal to engage with an image of the materialist corporeal realm of the unconscious, an image of the "brain", has, thus, become the access point to an invaluable underside of the social function of images in the early twenty-first century.

It is, hence, in the very figure of Freud as former neurologist, that the image of "brain" becomes the underside of psychoanalysis. In turn, the figure, "brain," can also serve as a tool to revealing the underside of Didi-Huberman's Freudian dreamwork and, likewise, the underside of its proposed critical archeology of art history: his late twentieth century grammar of psychohistory. The example of Augustine's amyl nitrate and ether dreams reveals how an etiology of the sexual and an etiology of the cerebral, when paired in conversation, can make analysis more receptive to the socio-political positions that images always take, whenever they are made to manifest (Didi-Huberman, *Quand les images prennent position*; Malabou, *The New Wounded*). Conceptualizing the immaterial psyche as infinite semiosis – a sedimentation of signs generated by an emblem of the "brain" as an organ constantly in plastic materialization – sees hysteria as an image of cerebral psychopathology. It is important to note that the intent is not to

reassert that those subjects defined by physicians as hysterics in the nineteenth century, were actually brain damaged in the way that a neuroanatomist would understand what constitutes “damage” to an organ called “brain.” The purpose of the conceptual maneuver outlined here is to counter the banal sexualization of hysteria with a dialectical tactic that is capable of nuancing analysis for a clearer image of socio-political and cultural phenomenon. The hoped for consequence of the maneuver is broader, and deals with revisiting and recalibrating the art of writing art history that Georges Didi-Huberman established with the original publication of *Invention of Hysteria*.

The Hysterical Body Politic or The Accidental is the Closest Thing to the Ideal

The *mise-en-abîme* or image within an image, at the center of this thesis is the following emblem: the figure of a subject diagnosed hysteric inhales hallucinatory substances, and produces a caricature of battling colonial subjects engaged in a theatre of revolt; the insurrectionary theatre imagined by the hysteric is the site of an accidental murder; in this accidental murder, the colonial subjects in revolt kill the hysteric subject's object of transference; the object of transference is a physician who is committed to the “republicanization” of “savage” politics that occupied the “brain” of France, the city of Paris, during the Paris Commune in 1871. *The accidental is the closest thing to the ideal* (Kierkegaard, 30).

This *mise-en-abyme*, or image within an image, tucked in the appendix of a book considered a seminal work in French cultural studies, can lead art history to rethink one much-debated cultural object. This cultural object influenced artists of the early twentieth-century avant-garde but has been repeatedly and systematically refused a position within canonical art history. The cultural object is the *fumiste* humorist Alphonse

Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* (1897). For the purposes of the present thesis, a re-reading of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is performed in Part Two. However, Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* requires mention at this point so that the reader understands why an approach to Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria* that combines recent developments in neurology with psychoanalysis, is important to rethinking art history. The point of re-reading Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* in Part Two of the thesis, is not to draw the *Album* into canonical art history. The objective is, rather, to propose an epistemology of vision that allows art history to see into its blindspots. Such an epistemology does not destroy the blindspot, but can be considered a form of heightened peripheral vision.

Hence, the focus of Part One will remain with the broader theoretical questions that inform the reading of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* in Part Two. As such, Part One will proceed with pursuing the conversation between psychoanalysis and neurology that Augustine's late nineteenth century hallucinatory accounts suggest for a twenty-first century rethinking of art history.

The Sexual and the Cerebral or Didi-Huberman Meets Catherine Malabou

What is an etiology of the cerebral, or cerebrality, and where does the concept come from? How might Didi-Huberman's conceptualization of hysterics as auto-poetic or self-generating art objects have engineered a new role for images as agents in the "invention" of history? How does this new role act to expand notions of the corporeal and the verbal through neuro-psychoanalytical readings? Might there be a "burrowing mole" of creative passion for destruction, at work in the ground under Didi-Huberman's new-liberal theorization of "invention" as creative destruction? Could this "burrowing

mole” assist a new generation of art historians to think more objectively about once progressive approaches to writing art history, that in the early twenty-first century, have become academic?

In the early eighties, when the *Invention of Hysteria* was first published in France, a paradoxical new interdisciplinary “disciplining” of the verbal and the corporeal, of speech and gesture, of text and picture, was necessary to establishing ways for the body to be read as a site of signification. Indeed, though much was done to theorize the interaction of word and image, this important work has managed to be absorbed as the reaffirmation of previous conventions. Why? Thirty years of focus on performance, the body and materiality has fossilized much of the discussion around the body politic into an empty form of academic rhetoric. This careerist academicism is often employed strategically to sidestep pressing questions of nature and culture, biology and ideology.

This thesis attempts to work the concepts of cerebrality and destructive plasticity into the discipline of art history. It is a response both to the popularity of Georges Didi-Huberman’s art history and to French thinker Catherine Malabou’s challenge to twenty-first century philosophy. In her writings, Malabou asserts that the philosophical imperative of the early twenty-first century is the discovery of the cerebral psyche as the subject of philosophy (*The New Wounded*, 206). The idea of the cerebral psyche as the subject of philosophy pushes thinkers to interrogate the contemporary form of the death drive and to develop practices that counteract what Malabou refers to as the “evils” of the twenty-first century: new forms of suffering and new forms of cruelty that have redefined disaffection (*The New Wounded*, 160). If the philosophical imperative of the early twenty-first century is the discovery of the cerebral psyche as its subject, the aesthetic imperative must be to write “figures” for this cerebral psyche. These invented

“figures” are emblems that picture what it means for the cerebral psyche to take the form of a subject.

Invention of Hysteria and Semiotic Invention: Inventing New-Liberalism

What is the relationship between Didi-Huberman’s approach to invention – what he defines as the “event of signifiers” – and the new liberal order that was taking form in France in the early eighties with the post-1968 reinvention of Europe? The significant delay in translation of Didi-Huberman’s seminal *Invention of Hysteria* is an occasion to reframe the late nineteenth century hysteric subject within the historical moment of new liberalism’s concretization in the last decades of the twentieth century: the historical moment in which Didi-Huberman elected to reinvent it.

According to Didi-Huberman, the action of “inventing” refers to the process of “preparing” what he calls the “event of signifiers” (Didi-Huberman, 3). The first sense of *inventing* is imagining or, literally, *putting into images* in such a way as to perform a form of speculation. Speculation is a kind of overcoding in which something is imagined to the point of being created; in other words, to the point of becoming more of a reflection of the actual imagining subject, than of the event being imagined. Invention can therefore be understood as a tactical use of narcissism that works to conjure the invisible to the sphere of the visualizable. Here, Didi-Huberman uses the term “controuver”, literally translated in English as contriving, which in French can be broken down into “con-“ and “-trouver” meaning “finding with” (Didi-Huberman, 3). The idea of “finding with” implies an exploitation or exaggeration for the sake of expression (Didi-Huberman, 3). To put it more succinctly, “finding with” is not a “finding in”: it is not the kind of inquiry for which one simply sets up parameters and then records data. In “finding with” there is

a certain degree of projection that is necessary to looking (Didi-Huberman, 3). This does not mean that the results of looking are completely fabricated, but rather that, paradoxically, fantasy is necessary to unobstructed seeing.

This convoluted logic of “invention” leads Didi-Huberman to the third sense of inventing, which he defines as a “coming to” or an “unveiling” (Didi-Huberman, 4). Here, Didi-Huberman makes use of the Latin *invenire*, to discover. Through a process of “overcreation” the imagination is exploited in order to uncover something that has been obscured, or reveal something that might otherwise be hidden from view (Didi-Huberman, 4). Invention is, therefore, a miracle of sorts and, in its analysis, requires a complex understanding of the ways in which thaumaturgy, or wonderworking, functions.

Three years prior to the publication of Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria*, philosopher Umberto Eco outlined the semiotic process of invention in his *The Theory of Semiotics* (1989). According to Eco, the products of semiotic invention are always “fuzzy” signs: they never establish straightforward oppositions but rather draw our attention to gradations (Eco, 256). Semiotic inventions represent the moment in which semiotic phenomenon come into being, and they do this by proposing a possible new code and *making use of remnants of previous conventional ones* (Eco, 256). According to Eco, it must be stressed that there are different kinds of transformations: some transformations are closer to the making of a double and serve the purpose of pure perception or use of the original (Eco, 256). Others are what Eco defines as more “akin to a semiotic procedure.” For Eco, there are three grades within the continuum from the double to the semiotic procedure, which he defines as the following: firstly, congruences or casts; secondly, projections; and lastly, graphs or topological transformations.

The present thesis will not go into an in-depth analysis of Eco's semiotic theory of invention; however, the thesis introduces Eco's three-pronged figure of continuum – from

the double to the semiotic procedure – to show its resonance with German economist Joseph Schumpeter's dialectic of innovation (the thesis-antithesis-synthesis of Capitalism-Socialism-Democracy through creative destruction and creative accumulation). However, like Didi-Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria*, Eco's semiotic theory of invention conceals a point of access for a *politique entriste* or politics of entryism. This point of access is a potential space for classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory to insert itself into a study of signs that might otherwise seem destined to replicate the logic of statist democratic materialism. This point of access is the example of the Death Mask.

In Eco's *Semiotic Theory*, the Death Mask is given as an example of the first order of Eco's continuum, that of congruences or casts. In congruences or casts – Eco's iteration on the index theorized by Charles Sanders Peirce – a point in the physical space of the expression corresponds to each point in space for a real object. One example of this, Eco asserts, is a death mask. "However, death masks," Eco reminds us, "can be 'understood' even if one does not know the model-object": they are frequently displayed, he points out, in order to allow one to detect the physical properties of a person who one has actually never known, but recognizes from iconic characteristics (Eco, 257). Death masks are not absolute congruences in the full geometrical sense of the term, Eco asserts, because they discard as irrelevant material aspects like skin texture and color (Eco, 257). They can even be reproduced on a smaller scale without losing their representative power, and so, they operate to some extent like topological transformations despite the fact that they are governed by conventions of similitude (Eco, 257). Finally, Eco concludes, a death mask is also a form of projection: one "maps backward" to the person in life when one looks at a death mask, however, at the end of this projection there is no object, just a content-type (Eco, 257).

There is also the fact, of course, that that death mask can be faked, so that however one looks at it, “these heteromaterial casts must be signs” (Eco, 257). For Eco, only “homomaterial congruences” are not signs because they are absolute replica or doubles (Eco, 257).

But does such a thing as a homomaterial congruence, an absolute replica or double, even exist? Is it not this attempt at producing the absolute replica or double that constitutes the kind of invention we refer to as the uncanny? The main point of reviewing Eco’s example of the death mask is to draw attention to the fact that Eco’s theory of semiotics in the death mask never addresses a crucial question: what does it mean for an indexical sign of a person to be drawn from an image of death? The death mask is, perhaps, the ultimate emblematic figure of “invention”: it claims to be the congruence of a face, though it is taken in the moment of death. The “mapping back” that occurs, therefore, is not a “mapping back” to the person in life, but a “mapping back” to that face in death, its eternal future. The image of the person that is constructed, therefore, is one in which the person is always after a precipice. If life is a finite passage between two material points, one in which the body comes into its world, or birth, and one in which the body leaves its world, or death, then the death mask is an image of the face caught in a moment of “end” that infinitely repeats in perpetuity. In the canonical art history of antiquity, this image is one that is said to have been necessary for a face to be represented as an ancestor in Republican Rome: the death mask, its sunken cheeks and softened wrinkles, were said to mark the instance of a face coming into the “world” as a point of trauma in the memory, not only of a family, but in the memory of the art of governmentality called the Republic. Despite the fact that there has never been substantial evidence to prove any connection between death masks and what is referred to as the veristic portraiture of Republican Rome, this speculative assumption about the

importance of death masks is frequently invoked (Gruen, 155). These invocations are of sociological relevance for the conceptual history of art history being pursued in the present thesis.

The Figure of the Death Mask: a “Burrowing Mole” for Destructive Plasticity?

Why take the delay in translation of one particular work of art historical writing so seriously? Does this thesis not make too much of Didi-Huberman’s *Invention of Hysteria*? Does it not risk making one book by a single public intellectual more important than it actually is? Firstly, because the present thesis is connected to a broader inquiry into the late twentieth century revival of interest in art historian Aby Warburg (1866 – 1929), Didi-Huberman does indeed feature as a key figure. As evidenced by an entry on Didi-Huberman written for the encyclopedia of “modern French thought” recently published by the massive corporate group Taylor & Francis, Didi-Huberman has been at the center of pushing the revival of interest in Aby Warburg for the purposes of his own agenda. Didi-Huberman’s agenda is to write art history as a form of psychohistory, what the *Encyclopedia of Modern French Thought* calls an “investigation” of “the implications of psychoanalysis for the study of images, especially through the concept of the symptom” (Saint, 173-176). If read through Didi-Huberman’s grammar of psychohistory, Didi-Huberman can himself be considered a symptom: a point of subjective evidence for the disturbances that constitute art history’s twenty-first century conceptual history.

Furthermore, Didi-Huberman’s writings on Warburg’s *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* or the Mnemosyne Picture Atlas, have largely been responsible for popularizing an object of scholarship, previously considered an obscure and insignificant idiosyncrasy: seventy-nine large screens surfaced with black fabric pinned with black-and-white photographs of

objects as varied as postage stamps, advertisements, newspaper clippings, paintings and relief sculpture, arranged in constellations (Marcoci, 14). Didi-Huberman's reading of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as a "montage" of the "unconscious of time" has determined the way in which many artists, art theorists and young art historians in the early twenty-first century have understood Warburg's work (Saint, 173-176). One important indication of Didi-Huberman's influence on the Warburg revival is his participation as principal curator of the exhibition *Atlas: Como Llevar El Muendoa Cuestas?*, prepared for the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid in 2011. For the occasion of this event, Didi-Huberman did not propose a monographic exhibition on Warburg, but rather promoted his own "journey through the history of images from 1914 to the present day": a phenomenon called "warburgism," was said to constitute the "genius loci" or the distinctive guardian of influence in the exhibition (*Atlas*). Didi-Huberman's exhibition featured a long list of "artists," including Italian anthropologist Ernesto De Martino, Hamburg artist Hanne Darboven and poet Henri Michaux. The *Atlas* exhibition is an example of why Didi-Huberman can be considered an artist's art historian, just as, Slavoj Zizek can be thought of as an artist's philosopher, Bruno Latour as an artist's sociologist, Michael Taussig as an artist's anthropologist and V.S. Ramachandran as an artist's neuroscientist. Both Zizek and Latour have either written catalogue essays for exhibitions or actually participated in organizing exhibitions as curators (Zizek, "Second Death"; Latour, *Iconoclash*). Taussig is frequently referenced as the inspiration for a new trend in art writing called "fictocriticism," and Ramachandran has collaborated in theatrical productions, including the *Waves of Mu* presented in 2008 at New York's P.S. 122 (Taussig; Hodges, 277). What is the common denominator shared by all of these figures, these public intellectuals? They all take a distinctly twenty-first century entrepreneurial approach to the role of public intellectual, an approach that seems to

appeal to artists who situate themselves within the internationalist aesthetic popularly known as “contemporary art.”

It is important to note that the appeal of this entrepreneurial approach also has a long history of being critiqued by artists. One example of a similar critique is artist Cady Noland’s lecture entitled “Towards a Metalanguage of Evil,” given at an academic conference organized in 1987 (Noland, 71). Through a sophisticated use of irony, Noland’s lecture attacked self-promotional culture among artists as “psychopathic,” and traced a genealogy of popular entrepreneurialism from Dale Carnegie’s people-skills book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Noland, 64 – 71). Carnegie’s book was first published in 1937 when New-Liberalism was being theorized and the United States was still on relatively friendly terms with totalitarian regimes in Italy and Germany; it has since experienced a number of new editions over the past seventy-five years. These new editions include the 2005 *How to Win Friends and Influence People for Teen Girls* by Carnegie’s daughter, and the 2012 anniversary adaptation, *How to Win Friends and Influence People in the Digital Age* by an authorial “firm” called Dale Carnegie & Associates.

Hence, the intention of the present thesis: to participate in rethinking an emblematic late twentieth century project by an important public intellectual, in light of the early twenty-first century metamorphosis of new-liberal governmentality. In the previous section, specific examples were provided of how such a reconsideration could contribute to recent work in art history and to the alternative epistemologies of vision currently being proposed. The thesis has also suggested how individual texts considered cultural objects, and reified as works of art, take on new life through this reconsideration: Part Two will explore this in more depth. Part One, is the establishment of broader implications; that is, that the occasion of the late translations of the *Invention*

of Hysteria seems to demand that intellectual trends, which saw art history adopt semiotic theory and psychoanalysis to question its conventions in the early eighties, be rethought within a constellation of twenty-first century events. These events include: firstly, the twenty-first century metamorphoses of new-liberal market fundamentalism; secondly, public discourse on torture and the popular rhetoric of the war against terror; lastly, the emblem of these two: the mania for understanding everything and anything through the biopolitical emblem called the “brain”.

New-Liberal Neuromania or the Frenzy For All Things “Brain”

A 2012 symposium on the new field of “neuroesthetics” organized by the Centro per l’Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato, Italy is evidence that the push for encounters between neuroscience and esthetics, neuroscience and art history, is not exclusive to the new-liberal technocracy of the United States (*Always on My Mind*). In fact, new-liberalism has become a global phenomenon. Neuromania, as such, has extended into political cultures of the center-left like the region of Tuscany in Central Italy. Indeed, as the Italian national elections in 2013 illustrate, the global order of new liberalism in the early twenty-first century is not simply the result of a rightward push called neo-conservatism. The concretization of Anglo-American policies for absolute deregulation and corporate free-market fundamentalism has concealed new-liberal ambiguity under the guise of late twentieth century Thatcherism and Reaganism. In the twenty-first century, the image of “heartless” extremism in the figure of former research chemist Margaret Thatcher has transitioned smoothly into the softer new-liberal centrism of another former chemist, German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Indeed, new liberalism in the early twenty-first century has been markedly ambidextrous respective of standard twentieth century ideological alignments. To demonstrate this, in 2013, artist, humorist and activist Beppe Grillo earned twenty-five percent of the Italian popular vote in national elections on a contestatory platform that was unilaterally critical: it targeted the right, the left and the center as a trinity of orientations within one authoritarian system of cronyist statism (Grillo; TG3; Ballarò). Upon entering Parliament, representatives of the movement Grillo spearheaded, the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* or Five Star Movement, refused to form a coalition government with those considered its natural allies: the center left (Grillo; TG3; Ballarò). Not only did the representatives of the Five Star Movement refuse to cooperate, but they also openly announced their destructive intentions: to insert pure democracy into a technocratic system ruled by castes. Weak appeals by the center-left for a coalition government that would be led by a center-left technocrat, and forged between the *Partito Democratico* or Democratic Party and the Five Star Movement, resulted in public denunciations by Grillo. The Five Star Movement refused the alliance and Grillo's posts to his widely-read blog accused the center-left of "cadaverismo" or cadaverism, calling its leaders "morti viventi," or living dead (Grillo).

Two researchers from an Italian research laboratory – an entity that Grillo and members of the Five Star Movement would undoubtedly consider contaminated by the political order of cadaverist castes – was responsible for publishing the original paper on what has been called "the most hyped concept in neuroscience": mirror neurons (Jarrett). In 2011, Indian neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran used the findings of his Italian colleagues as a foundation upon which to base a best-selling book, *The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human*. In *the Tell-Tale Brain*, Ramachandran proposed nineteenth century neurological studies that had previously

dismissed as unscientific, for potential new knowledge stock in experiments with twenty-first century brain-imaging technologies. Ramachandran's messianic declaration, "mirror neurons will do for psychology, what DNA did for biology," was frequently cited when his book was written about in the popular press (Jarrett, *The Rough Guide*). The declaration tended to be quoted uncritically regardless of the supposed ideological position of the respective news outlet.

Indeed, as the chart-topping books by scientists like V.S. Ramachandran and geneticist Craig Venter have shown, innovation in science has followed the entrepreneurial turn that economist Joseph Schumpeter proscribed for capitalism's survival in the mid-twentieth century. The caricature of the "charismatic" researcher that represented this form of entrepreneurial science in the popular imaginary was a portrait of the self-absorbed individual, by then prototypical: a picture of a person captivated by the idea of one's own person being captivated by one's own captivating image. In narrative form, this *mise en abîme* popularly referred to as "navel-gazing," materialized in the "status" lines and blurbs of social media technologies like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. In the early twenty-first century, the emblem of a self, performing a self in front of a self, has proliferated with every new technology developed. The technologies of infinite self-reflection seem also to have replicated within the discursive regimes of popular science and popular theory where concepts like mirror neurons in neuroscience, and the mirror stage in psychoanalysis are repeatedly invoked. V.S. Ramachandran's own low-tech Mirror Box Therapy for the symbolic amputation of phantom limbs has even earned him the title of "latterday Marco Polo journeying the Silk Road of science to strange and exotic Cathays of the mind" (Anthony). Quoted off-hand in the internationalist popular press, this neo-orientalist flourish, pronounced by evolutionary

biologist Richard Dawkins, is frequently used to preface celebrations of Ramachandran as the savior who has filled “the hole” left by the “atrophy of philosophy” (Anthony).

In an awkward coincidence typical of early twenty-first century coy multiculturalism, an article that quotes Dawkins overwrought metaphor on Ramachandran, also features a chronology called the “Ramachandran File” (Anthony). In the “Ramachandran File” the “latter-day Marco Polo journeying the Silk Road of Science” is identified as “born into the Brahmin caste of Tamilnadu” (Anthony). According to Indian publications, the saying, “Parpane Nambakoodatu”, or Trust not the Brahmin, was a popular phrase among non-Brahmin villagers of Tamilnadu used to express suspicion of Brahmins and the position of privilege they enjoyed in the British colonial system (*Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India*, 204). The villagers of Tamilnadu had apparently come to expect that the knowledge of the Brahmins would be used to exploit their lack of colonial “cultivation”, rather than to improve livelihoods at all levels of the caste-system (*Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India*, 204).

How did early twenty-first century neo-orientalist journalism propose that Ramachandran had filled the abscess caused by a gangrenous philosophy? According to the new populism of the corporate press, Ramachandran accomplished this simply by designing experiments for a new image of the “brain”: an image that took into account the postmodern model of a fragmentary post-Cartesian subject. In a farcical twist, the claim was being made, therefore, that Ramachandran – a member of a caste privileged by colonialism – had taken late nineteenth century studies in neurology, indelibly connected to colonialist projects like the French Magloire’s “republicanization”, and repropounded them under a new liberal image: “the Cartesian division of mind and body long ago fell out of fashion in both philosophy and neuropsychology,” affirmed the

opinion leaders of the culture pages, “but only recently have we begun to realize that not only is the brain part of the body but the body is also part of the brain” (Anthony).

Enthusiasm for new biological concepts from the neurosciences is widespread. In art history, the mania for all things “brain” is best represented by John Onians, Whitney Davis and David Freedberg (the latter was a presenter at the neuroesthetics symposium in Prato). The book *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (2011) by cultural critic Raymond Tallis even chastised the scholar Norman Bryson – often written about as art history’s late twentieth century renegade – for his “brain” fetishism (Tallis). Such evidence suggests that new possibilities for cultural analysis through the tropes of “brain” concepts has enthralled across ideological lines. This ideological confusion or ambidexterity, is not surprising: after all, as the author of the first photographic atlas of the brain, Jules-Bernard Luys, illustrated in his studies of hysterics, the left hand is right-brained and the right hand is left-brained (Harrington, 81).

Officially institutionalized as an academic discipline in the sixties, the neurosciences of the early twenty-first century seem determined to brand every discipline with a prefix, from neuroeconomics to neuromarketing to neurohypnosis. In fact, neuroscientists appear engaged in a farcical repeat of the efforts of nineteenth century neurologists like Luys, Jean-Martin Charcot and Desiré-Magloire Bourneville, also entrepreneurs of a new science – that of psychiatry in the late nineteenth century. The photographic atlases of Charcot and Bourneville were part of a promotional project designed to negotiate space for a new field within the knowledge economy of the Third Republic medical establishment. This equivalence between the strategies of the late nineteenth century Charcot and the early twenty-first century Ramachandran is enough to justify that the fraught relationship between psychoanalysis and neurology becoming,

yet again, a topic of fervent discussion in art history. What is the underside that the aggressive promotional tactics of entrepreneurial neuroscience threatens to obscure in the early twenty-first century? Rather than focus on a myopic approach that looks to understand the history of art alongside neurological studies of perception and vision, the discussion proposed needs to be framed by a conceptual history capable of dealing with neurobiological concepts as complex socio-cultural constructions.

In 1910, neurobiologist Ross Harrison published drawings from his observations of axons in the neural tube of frog embryos for what was considered conclusive proof that nerve cells are separate entities: the “final brick in the edifice of the classical neuron doctrine” (Shepherd, 30). That same year pragmatist John Dewey published *How We Think*, an outline of reflective thinking in the education process, and argued that an attitude of “suspended conclusion” be taught to students (Dewey, 13). “To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry,” wrote Dewey, “these are the essentials of thinking” (Dewey, 13).

Suspended Conclusion: Entrepreneurial Neuroscience as Farcical Repetition

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek is certainly among those who editorialists from the corporate press in the early twenty-first century would identify with “a decadent intellectual culture that celebrate[s] totalitarian ideologies,” also known as “the atrophy of philosophy” (Anthony). In thinking of history in Marxian terms as a form of repetition in tragedy and farce, Žižek would suggest more attention be paid to the Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse’s “turn of the screw”: that “sometimes the repetition in the guise of farce can be more terrifying than the original tragedy” (Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, 5). The early twenty-first century claim among anti-intellectual opinion-leaders in the

press that society has “only recently begun to realize that the body is part of the brain” enacts this tragico-farcical logic of historical repetition (Anthony). It willfully ignores that the revolution it harkens actually already happened: “the body is part of the brain” is not a “realization” recent to the first two decades of the second millennium: it is rather, a recent “naturalization.” This distinction between realization and naturalization is significant. The early twenty-first century is a historical moment that has seen scientists and editorialists working to naturalize body-brain maps of the cortical homunculus, a map of brain areas grafted to body areas first drawn by neuroscientist Wilder Penfield in the 1950s (Clarke, 130); in other words, the early twenty-first century has seen the full naturalizing absorption into popular culture of the deliberately constructed image of neuronal man. “I am my connectome,” announces entrepreneurial neuroscientist Sebastian Seung; “My brain froze,” seventeen-year old Casmir Aska is alleged to have told reporters after being charged with the attempted murder of a nine-year old (Seung; Stepansky).

And so we are prompted to ask: what agenda is being served by the image of innovation that is being aggressively represented by neuroscientists in the early twenty-first century? If considered in relation to Ramachandran’s best-selling book *The Tell Tale Brain*, this image portrays a form of innovation that is in actuality just a re-invention of late nineteenth century studies with twenty-first century hindsight, all neatly packaged for public consumption into the caricatures of a few massive egos (i.e. V.S. Ramachandran, Oliver Sacks, Antonio Damasio, etc). Why is contemporary neuroscience – with funding from the National Institute of Health, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Dana Foundation (whose director Edward F. Rover also serves on the board of the Guggenheim Museum) -- so keen on naturalizing the

postmodern model of a fragmentary post-Cartesian subject as new biological truth through the image of the elastic “brain”?

Indeed, the fraught relationship between psychoanalysis and neurology should become a topic of fervent discussion in art history *yet again*. But, how would staging a conversation between psychoanalysis and neurology through art historian George Didi-Huberman’s critical archaeology of art history, help to foster an attitude of suspended conclusion over early twenty-first century neuromania? If it was, as has been previously mentioned, a fissure in neurology that birthed psychoanalysis in the first place, then the discipline of art history takes the figure of Sigmund Freud, as proposed by Didi-Huberman, for an emblem of psychoanalysis born of a wound within neurology. In this allegory, neuropsychology is a goddess of philosophy whose birth cracks open the head of a mythologized father. Such a farcical Athena would recall the afterlife of a period in Ancient Greece, the Hellenic, that history has recorded as a time of worlds at war and civil strife, worlds split into the double hemispheres of Greco-Persian conflicts and Peloponnesian battles. Read through this uncanny image of doubling, Freud’s essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) can be argued to have theorized the death drive as a strategic maneuver. The rhetorical device called the death drive was conceived by the former neurologist Freud amidst fierce competition among scientists fighting over trauma victims from the First World War. In this scenario, Freud’s trope of the death drive acted to protect psychoanalysis from an anticipated future of early twenty-first century mania for all things “brain.”

The question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and neurology is also an important indicator of how new nationalisms of the second millennium relate to the new populisms they contain. Determinist scientists funded by American universities scoff at what is understood to be the negligent criminal quackery of French

psychoanalysis and its willful ignorance of autism. Meanwhile, the French intellectual establishment derides the neo-positivism of Anglo-American irrational exuberance for a potential cure to autism in the “brain,” a mere hunk of flesh (Schofield; Malabou, *The New Wounded*, xiii).

When confronted with the new populisms of protest in Italy and Venezuela, the same intellectual establishment in France that supports the hegemony of psychoanalysis, has been self-reflexive enough to interrogate its own conventions (Gardette). Anglo-American neo-positivists, on the other hand, have been dismissive and indifferent. Tellingly, the Anglo-American response has been to incessantly repeat the accusatory incantation: “terrorism of the market” for the fall of stock values provoked by the parliamentary standstill in formation of new governments (Salvati; Povoledo; Associated Press; Wearden; PhilStockWorld). This may indicate that the particular form of capitalism promoted by French new-liberalism is simply more sophisticated than its British and American equivalents. While the latter continue to think that ostracism and solitary confinement are the most effective ways to ignore critique to the point of self-deflation, the former has understood that institutional approval is the ultimate delegitimizing strategy. There is a long history of this strategy in France, one that can be considered a trademark of new-liberal ideology. In 1880, the French pardoned exiled Communards and absorbed many of the repatriated into parliament under conservative republican Jules Armand Dufaure. In *The Civil War in France* (1871), Karl Marx would claim that, amidst peace negotiations with the Paris Commune, preceding the massacres of the Bloody Week that ended Communards experiments with new arts of horizontal governmentality, it was the “conciliatory” Dufaure who had “commanded public prosecutors to treat “the cry of conciliation” [by Communards] as a crime!” (Marx, *The Civil War in France*)

What might an art historical frame for the early twenty-first century conceptual traffic in images of the “brain” reveal about new geopolitical hypocrisies and sociopolitical ideologies? How might a conceptual history help to theorize the positions that images *take* when they *take* form (Didi-Huberman, *Quand les images prennent position*)? Promoted by American publisher MIT Press as a “classic of French cultural studies” an “almost legendary text, so influential has it been on cultural criticism” – the 2003 translation of Didi-Huberman’s *Invention of Hysteria* is an opportunity to recalibrate French cultural studies’ critical archeology of art history, to undermine its own new-liberal underside (The MIT Press). This new-liberal underside – built on adaptations to classical liberalism by reformist figures like French Prime Minister Jules Dufaure – created the conditions of possibility for the new-liberal neuromania of the early twenty-first century.⁵

The intent of the recalibration of Didi-Huberman’s project proposed here is to show how new-liberal neuromania can be turned to the service of both a political aesthetics and a form of tactical neuroethics. The reconsideration of work by Mikhail Bakunin in the introduction to the thesis is an example of how this can be accomplished with the help of classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory (Sartwell; Newman; Antliff).⁶ The thesis shows how art history can use classical anarchist and post-anarchist

⁵ The author has chosen to use Michel Foucault’s original term “new liberalism” rather than “neoliberalism” because the latter has become a catchphrase. According to François Denord, new liberalism “appeared” in France in the 1930s. The development of new liberalism in France was facilitated by two factors: 1) “the contestation of the liberal creed in the field of public policy (a consequence of World War I and of the Great Depression); and 2) the economic and political defeat of (...) left-wing government coalition[s] that had failed to radically transform France’s economic structures.” Denord writes that in this context, a discourse seeking to reconcile classical liberalism and socialist planning took form. New liberalism “promised the building of a liberal state protecting free enterprise and free competition and the retreat of the state away from the economy” (Denord, 46).

⁶ In *From Bakunin to Lacan*, post-anarchist theorist Saul Newman prefaces his discussion of ethics with several questions: “Is it possible (...) to construct an ethical critique of authority without merely perpetuating the very authority we wish to oppose? In other words, is it possible

theory within Didi-Huberman's framework for a critical archaeology of the framework's own concepts. It suggests that the late nineteenth century phenomena of hysteria be considered in remove from Freudian sexual etiology. This remove or suspended conclusion is attained through the cerebral etiology, or etiology of the "brain," already contained in the figure of the former neurologist Freud (Malabou, *The New Wounded*). The thesis rethinks how economics and the semiotics of invention has conditioned the treatment of aesthetic texts and the manner in which new epistemes are conceived in the tragico-farcical logic of repetition (Durham; Eco; Schumpeter; Hobsbawm; Zizek).⁷ Lastly, the thesis opens the conditions of possibility for possible paths of militant refusal of new-liberal ideology, not for ourselves, as our cause is already lost, but for future worthy interlocutors to whom we will entrust our inhumous gestures: our gestures in death.

to have an ethics not founded on essentialist notions of humanity and man? Is it possible to free ethics from these essentialist notions while retaining its critical value and political currency?" According to Newman, these are the questions that "the anti-authoritarian program must now address." He argues that an "articulation of ethics" is not only possible, but necessary for politics to exist. An anti-authoritarian "articulation of ethics" must therefore be a "radical reconstruction of the idea of ethics." Newman seems to suggest that this radical reconstruction can only be achieved through a willingness to create a polyphony of classical anarchist thinkers, egoists and post-structuralists. Thus, for example, what Newman identifies as the humanist essentialism of Kropotkin and Bakunin can be destabilized and rethought through egoist Max Stirner's arguments against "rational and moral first principles." Post-structuralism, meanwhile, encourages a consideration of anarchy not as a displacement of the place of power but as an ontological position that rejects all "universal guarantees and stable foundations." Part of the project of working with classical anarchist theory and post-anarchist theory in reconstructing the idea of ethics, necessarily involves facilitating a musical chairs of sorts among various authors, so as to keep them in constant conversation with each other. See Newman.

⁷ "Once we are aware of how commonly traditions are invented," writes Eric Hobsbawm, "it can easily be discovered that one period which saw them spring up with particular assiduity was in the thirty or forty years before the first world war." According to Hobsbawm, "the mass-generation of traditions (...) was both practiced officially and unofficially, the former (...) 'political' – primarily by states or organized (...) movements, the latter – (...) 'social' – mainly by social groups not formally organized as such, or those whose objects were not specifically or consciously political (...). A changing society made the traditional forms of ruling by states and social or political hierarchies more difficult or even impracticable. This required new methods of ruling or establishing bonds of loyalty. (...) We may as well note immediately that conscious invention succeeded mainly in proportion to its success in broadcasting on a wavelength to which the public was ready to tune in. (...) Society and the state within which it operated became increasingly inseparable" (Hobsbawm, *Mass Producing Traditions*, 263-264).

Homo Economicus + Homme Neuronal = The Barred Subject (the Lacanian \$)

Georges Didi Huberman's *Invention of Hysteria* was originally published only three years after philosopher Michel Foucault began his now famous lectures on the figure of *homo economicus*, and the art of governmentality called new-liberalism. The *homo economicus* of the lecture series titled *Naissance de la biopolitique (The Birth of Biopolitics, 1978 – 1979)* was strongly influenced by philosopher Georges Bataille's *Parte Maudite (The Accursed Share, 1946 – 1949)*, and its analysis of the changing figure of the individual under ideological shifts extending from the protestant transformations of Calvinism, to Soviet Industrialization, the Marshall Plan and Communism (Winnubst, 454). Bataille's analysis of the early protestant break from Catholicism is important for art history, which tends to focus attention on Luther's severing of human work from religious expression in his condemnation of the sale of indulgences. But in Bataille's reading (Winnubst, 461), while Luther sets the "desacralization of human experience" in motion, it is Calvin who instrumentalizes Luther's protest to develop an actual *theology* for the political economy of capitalism (Winnubst, 462).

According to Foucault, under the art of governmentality called new liberalism, the question is no longer the separation of church and state, but the separation of the economy of the state and an intensification of economic practices and theories as internalized forces of social rationality (Winnubst, 465). The subject of the state in new-liberalism is no longer a right-bearing citizen, but an entrepreneur and consumer required to be in perpetual invention and promotion of images of self: human capital (Winnubst, 466). This image of *homo economicus* as the object of human capital

conjures the phantasm of its biological specter: *homme neuronal* or neuronal man. *Homme neuronal* was theorized by neuropharmacologist Jean-Pierre Changeux in a book that was originally published in France in 1983, four years after Foucault's lectures on biopolitics. According to the Preface of the Princeton Science Library Edition of Changeux's book, its first edition was an immediate best-seller in France (Changeux, xiii).

According to Changeux, "what makes man is his brain" (Changeux, xiii). If one were to read this assertion through the terms of Foucault's biopolitics, then for the entrepreneur and consumer of self to understand self – thus, both invent and promote self for the sustenance of the new-liberal state – *homo economicus* must understand self in relation to the function called "brain". "Brain" for Changeux is a knotting together of neuronal events, or exchanges among neurons in neural networks, hence the term, neuronal man. The original preface to *Homme Neuronal* indicates that work on the book began in 1979 with a "lively dialogue between psychoanalysts and neurobiologists" (Changeux, xvii). "It is often forgotten," reminds the preface, "that Sigmund Freud was a neurologist, for since his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* of 1895, the multiple avatars of psychoanalysis have cut off its real biological basis" (Changeux, xvii). In the years that Foucault was giving his lectures on biopolitics, Changeux was working at the Collège de France as Chair of Cell Communications (Collège de France).

The constellation *homo economicus* + *homme neuronal* summons the ghostly phantasm of yet another mole burrowed in the underside of art history: Jacques Lacan's matheme for the subject, \$, or the barred subject. Lacan's mathemes were emblems designed to give a degree of scientific rigor to psychoanalytic theory. It is curious that the bar that Lacan chooses for his emblem for the subject is a vertical line rather than a diagonal or horizontal one: the vertical line makes the abstraction "subject" recall the

abstraction “money,” that everyday object most commonly associated with the processes that generate capital. By following this constellation around the invention of man – from the early twenty-first century absorption by neuroscience, of a fragmentary post-Cartesian self as model of the individual, to Foucault’s *homo economicus* and Changeux’s *homme neuronal* – this series of “death masks” of the figure of the individual, ends with Lacan’s matheme of the barred subject. In doing so, it returns once more to the work of philosopher Slavoj Žižek. The endgame for Didi-Huberman’s critical archaeology of art history is Žižek’s paradox of an idealist return to René Descartes, through the work of philosopher Catherine Malabou.

In his interrogation of new-liberal enthusiasm for the post-Cartesian subject, Žižek asks, but “are we really entering a post-Cartesian era? Or is it that only now our unique historical constellation enables us to discern all the consequences of the *cogito*?” (Žižek, “Descartes,” 9). This question comes at the beginning of an article Žižek wrote in 2008, in response to French philosopher Catherine Malabou’s publication of *Les Nouveaux Blessés* (*The New Wounded*, 2007). Malabou, a student of Jacques Derrida, is committed to “forming the concept” of “plasticity” from the philosophy of Hegel, to affirm a new conception of the future both *in* and *for* Hegel’s phenomenology (Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 4). For her commitment to Hegel and the dialectic, Žižek featured Malabou’s work in an edited anthology titled *Hegel and the Infinite* (2008) and promoted her 2004 *Que faire de notre cerveau?* (*What Should We Do With Our Brain*, 2008). For Žižek, the twenty-first century processes of proletarianization – what he calls the tripartite “enclosures” of the “commons of culture”, the “commons of external nature” and the “commons of internal nature” – justify a “resuscitation of the notion of Communism” (Žižek, “Descartes,” 21). The figure that Žižek chooses for the last part of his trinity – the enclosed “commons of internal nature” – is Malabou’s post-traumatic subject, what he

calls the “autistic monster”. This “cogito at its purest,” what Žižek calls its “degree zero,” is:

“living proof” that the subject cannot be identified (does not fully overlap) with “stories it is telling itself about itself,” with the narrative symbolic texture of its life” for “when we take all this away something (or rather, NOTHING, but a FORM of nothing) remains, and this something is the pure subject of death drive (Žižek, “Descartes,” 21).

This figure of “a FORM of nothing” or “the pure subject of death drive” is Žižek’s Lacanian *detournement* – a turning against itself – of philosopher Catherine Malabou’s deconstructed Lacanian Real.⁸ To put it more simply, this figure of a “living proof” of a subject which does not overlap with the narrative symbolic texture of its life, is Žižek’s appropriation for his own agenda, of Malabou’s two “brain” concepts: cerebrality and destructive plasticity. Cerebrality and destructive plasticity are “brain” concepts in what Malabou calls a post-Lacanian Material realm of the “new wounded.”

But what does Slavoj Žižek have planned for the “brain” in his “resuscitation of Communism”? Žižek’s assessment of Malabou’s *New Wounded* in “Descartes and the Post-Traumatic Subject” focuses mainly on: first, making note of Malabou’s oversight of particular passages in Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1968); second, correcting her misreadings of Jacques Lacan; and, third, praising her critique of what he calls “all too humanist” neuroscientists (i.e. Alexander Luria and Oliver Sacks).

⁸ The use of the term “real” by Jacques Lacan followed a trend among certain philosophers of the 1930s. At this time, the “real” referred to an “ontological absolute.” In the 1950s, determined three orders according to which, he claimed, “all psychoanalytic phenomena may be described”: the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. According to Lacan, the real is that which “resists symbolization absolutely.” For Malabou, it seems that the connection of the real to the imaginary remains too ambiguous for cerebrality, firstly, because the real is defined in opposition to the imaginary, which in some way connects it to the subject’s image of. Secondly, because it assumes a too definitive “being in place.” She does not seem to be convinced that the material realm of cerebrality is as “ignorant of what might exile it” from its place as Lacan asserts is the case with the real. The material realm that Malabou introduces into Lacan’s orders as a fourth dimension of sorts is also partially rooted in the imaginary as the subject’s relationship to the image of its own body. It is because cerebrality seems to slip around all three of Lacan’s orders that Malabou asserts the need to add her new order, the material. For more on Lacan, see Evans.

According to Žižek, Malabou is “at her theoretical best” when she shows readers the manner in which the “all too humanist” neuroscientists avoid confronting the “true traumatic heart” of the “pure subject of the death drive”: “not the subject’s desperate effort to recompense his loss, but the subject of this loss itself (...) (the disengaged impassive subject).” While Malabou’s primary interest in *The New Wounded* is to address the conservative dogmatism amongst proponents of Lacanian psychoanalysis in France, Žižek’s target is the ideological underpinnings of neuroscience (Malabou, *The New Wounded*, xi – xix). As Žižek writes in his blurb on the back of Malabou’s *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*: “as a rule, neuroscientists avoid three things like a vampire avoids garlic: any links to European metaphysics, political engagement, and reflection upon the social conditions which gave rise to their science. Catherine Malabou does exactly this: she provides a Hegelian reading of neurosciences (...)” (Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain*, back cover).

Žižek published his appropriation of Malabou’s new post-Lacanian Material realm of destructive plasticity and cerebrality, only a year before *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (2009). It is curious, therefore, that he does not find it of pressing importance to problematize the possible connection between Malabou’s “brain” of destructive plasticity, and the “creative destruction” celebrated in new liberal forms of capitalism. In *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, Žižek quotes economist Guy Sorman extensively, citing Sorman’s work as an example of a “clinically pure, laboratory-distilled version of contemporary capitalist ideology” (Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, 22 – 25). Financial crisis for Sorman is “just part of the normal cycle of creative destruction through which capitalism progresses” and “creative destruction is the engine of economic growth” (Žižek, *First as Tragedy*, 22).

By creating an image of “brain” that naturalizes creative destruction in the neuropsychanalytic concept of destructive plasticity, is Malabou just participating in the naturalization of new liberal forms of capitalism, expressed in neuroscience’s image of the “brain”? In *What Should We Do With Our Brain*, Malabou proposed a similar subtle, but abyssal, difference: this difference was between the elasticity and flexibility of *homo economicus*, the new liberal subject, and the plasticity of what she performs as a Marxian *detournement*, or turning on itself, of Changeux’s neuronal man (“Humans make their own brain, but they do not know they are doing so”) (Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* 8). However, in *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* Malabou explicitly draws attention to this subtle but abyssal difference; in *The New Wounded*, she does not. The fine line between destructive plasticity and creative destruction is never explicitly addressed. The silence of both Zizek and Malabou on the question of how destructive plasticity relates to the new-liberal economic rhetoric of creative destruction is unsettling. Is it perhaps a deliberate rhetorical ploy? Might Zizek and Malabou be infiltrating the new-liberal image of the brain to ironize it within a tragico-farcical logic historical repetition? If so, is it effective for Zizek and Malabou to be so coy about their intentions?

There is no doubt that both Malabou and the Leninist Zizek are well aware of Bakunin’s famous aphorism on the creative passion of destruction (Critchley, 228). If the coyness of Malabou and Zizek is motivated by a desire to allow classical anarchist theory to retain a “burrowing mole” within the figures of cerebrality and destructive plasticity, thus protecting classical anarchist theorists from appropriation by academic discourse, this operation would represent an interesting tactical model. However, there is nothing in the way Zizek and Malabou perform their proposition for a post-traumatic subject – the degree-zero return to the Cartesian cogito as the ultimate figure of the

death drive – that hints at a *politique entriste* or entryist politics. Post-anarchist theorist Saul Newman has proposed Lacan's arguments about “subjectivity, signification, and particularly his notion of the lack” as ways to conceptualize an outside of power, therefore, the only possible indication of tactical coyness in Malabou and Zizek is Zizek's commitment to Lacanian theory and Malabou's chapter entitled “Separation, Death, the Thing, Freud, Lacan and the Missed Encounter” (Newman, 10). However, considering Zizek's celebration of Leninism, the conspiracy of silence between Zizek and Malabou on both classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory would seem to indicate that they are complicit in following the Schumpeterian economic logic, Communism-Socialism-Democracy – that Hegelian dialectic that the Foucault lecture between 1978 and 1979 outlined as the generating charge of the “art of governmentality” called new-liberalism.

From Creative Destruction and Destructive Plasticity to a Creative Passion

The disambiguation of creative destruction and destructive plasticity leads to the following question: should the history, theory, criticism and practice of art continue to be complicit in the ongoing aestheticization of Marxism that has characterized the early twenty-first century? The philosopher Slavoj Zizek not only endorses this tactic, but he can also be made answerable to its propulsion. Zizek has collaborated with institutions like the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, and in 1999, even had his text, “Kosovo 4.99” exhibited in the form of an e-mail, enlarged and printed, to be adhered to a wall of the artist-run Cubitt Gallery.

Is communism, as Zizek asserts, an antagonism, “contained *within* today's global capitalism” that is “strong enough” to prevent the “indefinite reproduction of capitalism”

(Zizek, “Descartes”)? The aim of this thesis is to suggest the position for a Negative response: an anti-thesis capable of generating an insurrectionary logic. It foregrounds how Didi-Huberman’s publication of the *Invention of Hysteria* in the years of new liberalism’s concretization as a global order, can be used to formulate the figure of the death drive that Malabou asserts is the philosophical imperative of the early twenty-first century. The fact that one could very easily misread creative destruction as destructive plasticity – and misrecognize the new liberal values of flexibility or elasticity, with Malabou’s plasticity – seems proof enough that staging what Malabou calls “missed encounters” between neurology and Lacan, neurology and Marx, is not enough. Any philosophical “resuscitation of communism” that does not look closely at the relationship between the institutionalization of Marxism – facilitated by Marx’s own rhetorical strategies – and classical anarchist theory (which Marx and Engels appropriated to undermine their stiffest intellectual competition, Mikhail Bakunin and Max Stirner), risks simply repeating its own farce of twentieth-century tragedies.

Neurasthenic Neuroesthetics in the Confessions of an Incurable Schizoid

Rereading art historian Georges Didi-Huberman through philosopher Catherine Malabou, allows art history to theorize what the present thesis calls a “neurasthenic neuroesthetics” for art history. Neurasthenic neuroesthetics does not throw the brain out with the philosophical vat.⁹ Nor does it throw a Marxian analysis out with the twenty-first

⁹ The Brain in a Vat scenario is a thought experiment that was first presented by philosopher Hilary Putnam in *Reason, Truth and History* (1981). The thought experiment was used to refute Cartesian or global skepticism. Putnam argued that the Brain in a Vat scenario is impossible based on the premise of “causal constraint” on reference, or rather, that “a term refers to an object only if there is an appropriate causal connection between that term and the object” (Hickey). According to Putnam, reference cannot simply be an accident (i.e. if an ant were to accidentally draw a picture of Winston Churchill in the sand, few would claim the ant represented

century aestheticization of Marxism in art history, theory, criticism and practice. Neurasthenic neuroesthetics is conceived in debate with the determinism and essentialism of the neurological art history that has been proposed by art historians John Onians, David Freedberg and Whitney Davis, and as a challenge to the neurological esthetics being developed by neuroscientists like V.S. Ramachandran and Semir Zeki. Neurological art history and neurological esthetics passively accept hyped concepts from neuroscience to propose a therapeutic potential for the discipline, a potential that suppresses historical memory, rather than offering early twenty-first century approaches to reflexive education. Neurological art history and neurological esthetics are part of a culture of entrepreneurialism within which neuroscientists are always on the look out for new niches of knowledge stock to traffic in the twenty-first century information economy.

Neurasthenic neuroesthetics does not aim at the redemption of art history. It is, instead, stimulated by Didi-Huberman's suggestion that perhaps art history *should* be spoken of as a "pathological" discipline (Michaud, 14). Didi-Huberman's art history as a "pathological" discipline seems to have been conceived as a response to art historian Whitney Davis' prognosis for art history; so as not to be "pathological," art history according to Davis, "must give up" the image of itself as a "denial of departure" – "it must take leave of its objects" (Davis, 265). If art history is, as Davis insists, always a "taking leave of what we witness departing," what would it mean to actually inhabit the pathological tendency to "live as death"? In other words, rather than forcibly denying social history, what would it mean for art history to actually write the figure of the double mind – the split histories of subject and object, subjective and objective – as the figure of

or referred to Churchill (Hickey). Putnam's argument takes the form of a conditional proof: 1) Assume we are brains in a vat; 2) If we are brains in a vat, then "brain" does not refer to brain, and "vat" does not refer to vat (via CC); 3) If "brain in a vat" does not refer to brains in a vat, then "we are brains in a vat" is false; 4) Thus, if we are brains in a vat, then the sentence "We are brains in a vat" is false (1,2,3) (Hickey).

the death drive in art history's underside? Neurasthenic neuroesthetics works, not within the grammar of psychohistory, but rather, within the grammar of *Nachleben*, or the Afterlife of images. It looks to accomplish this by taking as its model, the Kreuzlingen lecture of art historian Aby Warburg: "confessions of an (incurable) schizoid, deposited in the archives of mental healers" (Michaud, 191). The performative aspect of this grammar of a "pathological" art history, of the *Nachleben* or Afterlife of images, was composed in collaboration between the art historian Warburg and the existential psychologist Ludwig Binswanger, while Warburg was a patient at Binswanger's sanatorium. The collaboration manifested in a form of a slide-show that Aby Warburg presented for his release from Binswanger's Bellevue Clinic in Kreuzlingen in 1924. Didi-Huberman's "warburgism" – his pathological art history or critical archaeology of art history – is a Zizekian "antagonism contained by global capitalism" that is strong enough to resist capitalism's indefinite reproduction.

Thus, a neurasthenic neuroesthetics uses conceptual exhaustion with the new-liberal mania for the "brain" to redefine the fine line between creative destruction and destructive plasticity. It uses this fine line to theorize a tunnel for a political aesthetics of classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory to construct a figure of the death drive through art history. In this aesthetic politics, the philosophies of anarchism that are already present in the underside of art history, offer a semiotics of the image as an underground agent, capable of generating critico-ideological positions of distance in everyday life.

Unlike Zizek's communism, classical anarchist theory does not need to be resuscitated: in philosophy, new-liberal ideologies never considered anarchism important enough to be represented as a "God that failed" (Crossman). As a result, is it possible to picture an underground for art history in which classical anarchist and post-anarchist

theory infiltrates the image of neuronal man, for a twenty-first century underside of art history, theory, criticism and practice? In this approach, Didi-Huberman's model of analysis is recalibrated for use against itself, in precisely the manner that the psychoanalytic model of Freudian dreamwork permits. It is because Didi-Huberman's semiotics of invention in the *Invention of Hysteria* resonates with both new liberal economic theory of Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism, Democracy*, as well as with the image of human capital presented by Changeux's *Neuronal Man*, that his work offers a perfect strategic point for infiltration. The aim of this maneuver is not to disprove Didi-Huberman's theorization, but rather to preserve the perversion of its radical kernel by subjecting it to ideologico-critical use. The idea is that through this infiltration of Didi-Huberman's text, not only does art history gain a more nuanced understanding of the body politic of hysteria in medical history – its significance as both a cultural movement and socio-historical phenomenon – but, more importantly, the late twentieth-century theses of aesthetic function can be laid to rest by its anti-thesis: the dead bury the dead, clearing ruins for newborns. The thesis proposes a political aesthetics that looks to emancipate young artists from the mannerisms of the hysteric subject: cynical reason and the nihilistic re-enactment of symptomatic gestures.

What is Cerebrality? What is Plasticity? And Why Should They Matter to Us?

The anarchist Peter Kropotkin was a committed evolutionist. Rather than focusing on the intraspecific *competition* underscored by Charles Darwin, however Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* (1902) focused on intraspecific *cooperation* (3). Kropotkin cited examples of cooperation among animals, from aquatic birds to monkeys, and then extended his argument into human history (32-33; 51). As such, he did not attack

Darwinian competition as the basis of the evolutionary process: instead, he proposed a contestatory model that worked through the very framework of evolution, to undermine the idea of an inherent violence as a natural order. Kropotkin's theory of cooperativist evolution recognized the persuasive power of biological concepts, and attempted to invent a model of evolutionary biology within which mutual aid and sociability could be written as "laws of nature" just as "natural" as mutual struggle and survival of the fittest. As Kropotkin would write, "it happened with Darwin's theory as it always happens with theories having any bearing upon human relations[:] [i]nstead of widening it according to his own hints, his followers narrowed it still more" (3). The present thesis approaches the theories of its inspirational founts, according to the model of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*: it attempts to "widen" them "according to [their] own hints" (3).

Like Kropotkin's mutual aid, the concept of cerebral etiology theorized by philosopher Catherine Malabou can function as a form of tactical irony. It can perform this position in relation to both Freudian sexual etiology and the lack of disciplinary reflexivity in the neurosciences. Malabou's project is to create an image of the emotional brain or limbic system – a bridge between the cerebral and the psychic, "a secret economy of affects and the dark core of destructive plasticity" – that is both *with* and *against* the conventions of brain science, both *with* and *against* conventional Freudian and Lacanian concepts of the unconscious. *The New Wounded* can work as a form of neuroethics to undermine a brain manic technocracy in the United States, which risks making neuroscience the new eugenics of the early twenty-first century.

Malabou's *The New Wounded* can also work to undermine a regressive psychoanalytic hegemony in France that refuses to acknowledge the relevance of psychophysics, a material realm that Malabou posits as an order alongside the symbolic, imaginary and real. Whether or not it is empirically provable that the brain functions the

way that neuroscience tells us it does, or that the subject functions the way that Lacan tells us it does, is relatively unimportant to the aims of this thesis: what is fundamental is that in the epistemic conditions of the early twenty-first century these concepts have currency in the prevailing knowledge economy.

The early twenty-first century image of the brain has produced an image of the subject driven by the endogenous chemicals of neurotransmitters: this neuropharmacological subject is the human capital of the collective popular imaginary, from self-help manuals to cognitive behavioral therapies. The same could be said of the contemporary image of the “barred subject” in France, and countries like Argentina, where the currency of the Lacanian \$ is of similar import (Roazen, 339). Rather than work at an iconoclastic annihilation of these figures, accusing them of being agents for the suppression of thought, an effective appropriation of them adapts their figures to the ends of a different agenda. In this case, the agenda is a political aesthetics informed by classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory. In order for this tactical neuroethics to work, the fictionalist philosophical position articulated by this thesis of entryism requires moments of *parrhesia* or frankness: the fictionalist philosopher will admit to disbelief in the fiction asserted, if expressly challenged, but will always otherwise maintain the appearance of a true believer (Eklund).¹⁰ In the case of this thesis, the fiction being proposed is that of a subject knotted together from neuronal events, or exchanges among neurons in neural networks. Because it is fictionalist, the thesis is disassociative

¹⁰ The philosophy of fictionalism is a “pragmatic antirealist position in the debate over scientific realism.” It asserts that, “the use of a concept or theory can be reliable without the theory being true and without the entities mentioned actually existing.” It “challenges the explanationist argument for scientific realism that only the truth of a scientific theory and the actual existence of the entities occurring in the theory could account for the theory’s instrumental success. Another way to think about fictionalism is as the “beginning of a more comprehensive philosophical treatment of modeling.” See Fine.

in the way it inhabits the neuronal subject: it is posited in suspended conclusion over the image of neuronal man ruled by the connectome.

Philosopher Catherine Malabou asserts that the philosophical imperative of the twenty-first century is for philosophy to recognize the cerebral psyche as the subject of philosophy. In the contemporary image of the brain, Malabou sees the conditions of possibility for a twenty-first century theorization of a plastic subject through Hegel: if for Hegel, “man is exemplary because the human formative power can translate the logical process into sensuous form,” for Malabou “this makes each of us capable of plastic individuality,” of “transforming” ourselves in “unforeseeable ways by incorporating what was formerly accidental” (Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 74). *The closest thing to the ideal is the accidental* (Kierkegaard, 30).

The goal of Malabou's *What Should We Do With Our Brain* was to show how the image of neuronal architecture related to social hierarchies enacted in capitalism. Malabou's purpose was to perform a Marxian materialist dialectics upon the figure of the brain, in order to make the argument “we make our own brain but we do not know it”: “any approach to psychopathology constitutes a political gesture and our awareness of this is empowering (xvi). In addition, Malabou asserts that the determination of psychic disturbances – their definition, their clinical picture and their therapy – is always contemporaneous with a certain state or a certain age of war (xvii). For Malabou, it is impossible to separate the effect of political trauma from the effect of organic trauma: it is impossible to separate the effect of new-liberalism from the effect of suicide terror. All trauma of any kind impacts the cerebral sites that conduct emotion, modifying the configurations of neural networks in such sites or actually rupturing neuronal connections: “in the absence of any patent wound, we know any shock, any stress or

acute anxiety, always impacts the affective brain – this unrecognized part of the psyche” (xviii).

Malabou's project for a plastic subject is developed further in *The New Wounded* through her proposal for a redefinition of trauma (xviii). In this redefinition of trauma, a twenty-first century conversation between psychoanalysis and neurology is aimed at producing new horizons, not for pharmacological therapy, but for conceptual analysis. Malabou's three main hypotheses in *The New Wounded* are: firstly, that it is possible to deduce the existence of a cerebral eventality, a psychic regime of events whose causality differs radically from the sexual eventality theorized by Freud and Lacan; secondly, that a general theory of trauma must be developed that can accommodate this new eventality; and thirdly, that the consequences of an idea of destructive plasticity in the brain must be taken more seriously by neurology as the basis for this new cerebral eventality (xix).

Eventalities – defined as regimes of events – and etiologies – as the dynamics of causation responsible for these events – are interdependent for Malabou (24). Every psychopathology implies an elaboration of specific concepts as they pertain to both how damage is caused and to the material body between event and wound (xvi). The sexual etiology proposed by Freud is a study of causation determined by sexuality. Sexuality, in Freudian terms, does not refer to the practices and behaviors of sex, but rather to a law of relations between the disruption of sexual function – or the function of interaction between internal and external, endogenous and the exogenous – and the way this disruption conditions psychic life (1).

For Malabou, the distinction between sex and sexuality is the same as that between the brain and cerebrality (2). Cerebrality is the causal value of deficit or excess in brain function: it is both a break in the internal homeostasis of neurotransmissions,

and the way this imbalance determines psychic life (47). Malabou's conceptualization of the brain, in relation to what she calls Hegel's "plastic subject," may indeed be best understood in relation to philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's theorization of despair (Heiss). Kierkegaard's work was conceived in dialogue with the Young Hegelians, though it deliberately distanced itself from their liberal anti-religiosity. Malabou's plastic subject in the brain is a material Kierkegaardian "spirit": a relationship between the self and itself as a relationship between the body and itself, between "brain" and itself. If one thinks about cerebrality in these terms, then cerebrality can also be conceived within the various plastic iterations of despair that Kierkegaard outlines under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus in *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849): the despair at not being conscious of having a self, the despair at not willing to be oneself and the despair at willing to be oneself. This triple form of despair resonates as an affective synecdoche of twenty-first century connectome maps, brain maps of neuronal connections: "varieties of neuronal experiences". This pun on philosopher and psychologist William James's "varieties of religious experiences" is an image of the destructive and creative psychophysics of plasticity in Malabou's figure of "brain".

Cerebrality and sexuality elucidate a specific historicity in which either the cerebral event or the sexual event is made to coincide with the psychic event (2). Whereas Freud uses the term libido to denote mental function activated by bodily needs, neurobiology speaks of "appetites," which subordinate the libido to one among a series of neuronal dynamics: "an effect due to the facilitation or inhibition of certain neurotransmitters" (3). Malabou's purpose in underlining the difference between the libido of psychoanalysis and the appetites of neurobiology is not to intellectualize desire, but to show that in a conceptualization of cerebrality for which neurobiology and psychoanalysis are in conversation, cerebral organization would preside over its own

libidinal economy: "an economy of neuronal dynamics or of mental functions [is] also activated by bodily needs, but needs that are different from those that have been explored through the laws of sexuality" (3). The type of event that interferes with *cerebral* affects would be acknowledged as of a very different sort than the type of event that interferes with *sexual* affects. Exploring the way these eventualities may, at times, work in collusion with one another – and other times to the exclusion of each other – is central to the new theory of trauma, that Malabou contends, is the twenty-first century philosophical imperative.

What is the difference between the psychic event in cerebrality and the psychic event in sexuality? As previously noted, in Freudian psychoanalysis the psychic event always has two sides: an exogenous side and an endogenous side (5). The exogenous is an unexpected occurrence or element of surprise coming from the outside, whereas the endogenous is the way in which the psyche elaborates this exteriority – the accidental, the surprise – in order to integrate it into the subject's own history (130). In other words, the endogenous is a form of internalization. Accordingly, the exogenous, or the surprise from the outside, can only act on the subject in so far as the interiority of the subject allows it to. The psyche is like a crystal that can only crack along a predetermined axis of sensitivity (78). Though being struck is its trigger, the very structure of the crystal itself determines its own fissures (78). Echoing Didi-Huberman's Freudian spin on the semiotics of invention – the "event of signifiers" – Malabou calls this encounter between the endogenous and the exogenous, an "incident" and a "signification" (5). She quotes philosopher Paul Ricoeur's remark that the essence of psychoanalytic discourse lies in the determination of each event as the intersection between the energetic and the hermeneutic, as the connection between an excess charge and the making of meaning, between nonsense and sense (5).

In cerebrality, the relation between the event and the wound – the trauma of excess or deficit in the brain, that is, the disruption of neuronal homeostasis – reveals the *interdependence* of the exogenous and endogenous spheres in determining the cerebral event (8). This interdependence is distinguished from sexual eventuality by the fact that, in contrast to the causal regime of sexuality, no interpretation of it is possible: the hermeneutic level or principle of interpretation is impossible (8). As Malabou explains, the accidents of cerebrality are not like the accidents of sexuality because they are wounds that “cut the thread of history”: they “place history outside of itself, (...) suspend its course and remain hermeneutically irrecoverable even though the psyche remains alive” (5). With this image of the “thread of history” being “cut,” Malabou perhaps unintentionally references a personification of death that is well-known in canonical art history: the triad of Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos spinning threads of individual lives and cutting them off with scissors (Guthke, 34). As an allegory of death, this triad had a long afterlife in images after its first traces in Ancient Greece, still appearing in fifteenth and sixteenth century French books of hours and in illustrations of the Triumph of Death theme (Guthke, 34).

According to Malabou, it is the ability of the subject to survive this “cutting” – the senselessness of a cerebral accident or neuronal disruption – that Freudian psychoanalysis never accepted. Citing the *Projects for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), also quoted by Changeux in his preface to *Homme Neuronal*, Malabou insists that Freud was only able to elucidate sexual etiology through his neutralization of cerebral etiology (84). Freud inscribed the event within the material psyche through what he called the “facilitation of synaptic connections,” or the energy level of the interconnecting neurons that make up the nervous system; the brain, however, was always an “opaque organ” (Lacan, 143; Malabou, *The New Wounded*, 6). The “brain” was not a place capable of

constituting its own events and, as Malabou writes, “he [Freud] would never waver on this point” (6).

Because, in Freudian psychoanalysis, neuroses arise from a conflict between the ego and the sexual drives that the ego repudiates, the true cause of war neuroses is always a peacetime conflict. Accidents or exogenous events constitute only secondary factors whose damage does nothing but activate the endogenous axes of sensitivity (6). There is a distinction, Malabou explains, between efficient cause and determining cause (7). For Freud, there are no truly traumatic accidents. Everything happens for a reason. There is no influx of cerebral excitation – of the energy level of the “neuronal quantity circulating in the fibres” – that is capable of overwhelming the metabolic capacity of the psychic apparatus: “sexuality always trumps the brute accident, the pure effraction, the wound without hermeneutic future” (Lacan, 143; Malabou, 8).

According to Malabou, it was Freud’s path from neurology to psychoanalysis that led him to change the meaning of “nervousness” from the nervous to the neurotic (8). A wound such as a brain lesion is, unto itself, psychically mute: as Malabou writes, “the lips of the wound must be closed to allow the “other mouth” to speak, hence, for Freud, victims of brain lesions must be recognized as “people who are crippled in sexuality” (8). Cerebrality, on the other hand, designates another manner of arranging contingency. In its interdependence of the exogenous and endogenous, cerebrality allows for the possibility of a disastrous event that plays no role in an affective conflict supposed to precede it. Cerebrality is “the causality of a neutral and destructive accident – without reason” (9).

As Malabou writes, “it is the causality of a senseless danger as unexpected event that is incompatible with the possibility of being fantasized” (9). Because it is incompatible with the possibility of being fantasized, Malabou would not agree with Žižek

when he states that the traumatic event is not the intrusion of the real into the imaginary, but the intrusion of the imaginary into the real (Zizek, "Descartes," 15):

what happened on September 11 [2001] is that this screen fantasmatic apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality (i.e. the symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality) (Zizek, "Descartes," 15).

Without fantasy, the imaginary cannot become a self-fulfilling prophecy permitted to penetrate the real. For Malabou, the impossibility of being fantasized makes the unexpected event partake of a new realm, the material. This realm is new because it is outside of the conventional triad of the imaginary-symbolic-real, theorized by Lacan for psychoanalysis in its twentieth century iteration.

"One does not fantasize a brain injury: one cannot even represent it," Malabou writes (9). The material excess or deficit in neuronal transmissions is the destruction of everything that attaches the subject to himself and to others – auto-affection, desire, love, hatred, pleasure. As an event, it is blind to the hermeneutic dimension: it cannot make meaning. What does this say about the various forms of indifference or disaffection experienced and enacted by both the victims and perpetrators of such a regime of trauma – one in which the border between the organic and the sociopolitical is increasingly porous? Because, all trauma impacts neuronal organization, the image of disrupted brain function – whether in excess or in deficit -- "blurs the boundaries between history and nature, and reveals that political oppression, today, itself assumes the guise of a traumatic blow stripped of all justification" (Malabou, 12).

New-Liberal Republicanization and its Government of Entrepreneurial Science

In his critique of Marxist class analysis entitled “Statism and Anarchy” (1873), Bakunin accused Marx of abandoning the peasants to the industrial working class. In Marx’s vision, the peasant rabble would be the new proletariat, subject to domination by a sublimated proletariat that had been reified as the ruling class. For Bakunin, this revealed a fundamental methodological flaw in Marx’s thinking. Bakunin identified this flaw with Marx’s Statism, but not exclusively. For Bakunin, the Statism of Marx’s thought could not be separated from its scientism. The classical anarchist theory of Bakunin, therefore, understood its task as articulating a contestatory position against “the worshippers of the goddess science” (Bakunin).

“What is now the basis of all the influence exerted by the States?” Bakunin would demand. “It is science. Yes, science. The science of government, the science of administration, and financial science; the science of fleecing the people without making them complain too much and, when they begin to complain, the science of imposing silence, forbearance, and obedience on them by scientifically organizing violence.” Bakunin’s revolt, however, was not aimed at destroying science itself, but at destroying a certain kind of scientific thinking that he understood as complicit with Statist ideologies. The destruction of science itself would be “high treason to humanity,” Bakunin asserts, but science must be “remanded to its place, so that it can never leave it again.” Classical anarchist theory can therefore be conceived as “a revolt of life” against the “government of science”: an appeal for an art of governmentality that sees science as a seductive system of thought capable of lulling people into a position of absolute subordination to the “natural” (Bakunin).

Rereading hysteria through the figure of cerebrality rereads invention through the figure of destructive plasticity and allows art history to conceptualize the following constellation of events for proto new-liberalization in late nineteenth century France: the biomedicalization of the proletariat, the colonization of the indigenous New Caledonian Kanaks, and the reformist re-education of the communards. All three asterisms are within a broader cluster of policies called republicanization: the strategy of domination devised by a Statist-scientific elite that was represented by figures like neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and physician Desirée-Magloire Bourneville. The phenomenon that Bourneville called “républicanization” constituted one of the waves of proto new-liberal reforms that reverberate both in France and on a global level, into the present-day. What the French intellectual elite has called new populisms of protest (represented by the figures of Beppe Grillo in Italy and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela – in turn, representations of larger geopolitical configurations known as the Mediterranean and Latin America) have led some to echo Malabou’s call for a new culture of analysis. Could a French alternative be to lead an alignment of Latin American and Mediterranean interests for a new geopolitical configuration that crosses the Atlantic? Would such an alternative alignment, breaking with the reinvention of Europe proposed by the European Union, work against the “cold” and “indifferent” technocratic political class, so diffident to “suffering”? For Malabou, this political diffidence is replicated in psychophysics through the new subjectivities of brain diseases like Alzheimer’s.

To ensure that the Hegelianism proposed by Malabou does not reify “suffering” and repeat the mistakes of Marx’s own Statist scientism, the present thesis proposes a turn to classical anarchist and post-anarchist theory, and thinkers like Mikhail Bakunin, Max Stirner and Soren Kierkegaard, all of whom allegedly engaged in Young Hegelian debates alongside Marx’s collaborator, Engels. The thesis proposes that the continued

relevance of the dialectical method to twenty-first century thought necessitates bringing these thinkers back into conversation with Marx. For art history, theory, criticism and practice, a simulation of the drunken, rowdy brawls at Hippel's wine bar in Berlin's Friedrichstrasse is, perhaps, the best way of imagining the aesthetic imperative of the early twenty-first century. In other words, if the philosophical imperative is to develop a figure of the death drive in the form of a cerebral subject, the aesthetic imperative is to create a space of disassociative distance from the penetrative images of new-liberal brain technologies. By inhabiting the fine line between creative destruction and destructive plasticity with an aesthetic politics of entryism, the creative passion for destruction becomes a radical reconstruction of the idea of ethics in the form of a neurasthenic neuroaesthetics.

Epilogue: Epicureanism and The Mind's Own Mental Object, The Brain

In *Homme Neuronal*, neuropharmacologist Jean-Pierre Changeux begins the chapter entitled "Mental Objects" with an epigraph extracted from the *Letter to Herodotus* (305 B.C.) by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (Changeux, 126). *Letter to Herodotus* is one of the few fragments that remain of the writings of Epicurus. His philosophies are mainly known through the study of Epicurean-inspired texts like the Roman Titus Lucretius Carus's poem *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*, c. 94 – 55 B.C.), widely read in the Renaissance (Greenblatt). The epigraph from *Letter to Herodotus* selected by Changeux reads, "It is because something of exterior objects penetrates in us that we see forms and that we think" (Changeux, 126).

Changeux uses this statement about visual sensation to outline the aim of the chapter: the proposition of a thesis that defines itself as "the exact opposite" of

philosopher Henri Bergson's assertion that "the nervous system has nothing in the way of an apparatus to make or even to prepare representations" (Changeux, 126). According to Changeux, experiments in late twentieth century neuroscience had proven that "the human brain contains representations of the outside world in the anatomical organization of its cortex, and it is also capable of building representations of its own and using them in computations" (Changeux, 128). Changeux traces a genealogy of mental images that begins with the use of the term "simulacra" in the writings of Epicurus and Lucretius.

In the *Letter to Herodotus*, the *eidola* – a Greek term translated into Latin by Lucretius as the *simulacra* cited by Changeux – are "atom-thin films of matter which more or less preserve their colour and shape in transit" (Sedley). That *eidola* are "atom-thin" implies that they are either "uncuttable," or physical particles only further analyzable into "absolute 'conceived as altogether', irreducibly small magnitudes" (Sedley). This conceptualization of the atomist *eidola* can be likened to the difference between the idea of a neuron as indivisible from its neural net, or the idea of a neuron as an independent "minima", or "partless unit," that fuses with other similar units (Sedley). According to the atomism of Epicurus, the spirit can be considered functionally, though not anatomically, as an atomic structure spread throughout the body with a migrating command centre. A sensation is the spirit's internalization of the phenomenal properties of an external body communicated through this atomic structure (Sedley). Hence, in visual sensation, streams of "atom-thin films of matter" project off of bodies to result in acts of "picturing" in which isolated films enter the spirit, permitting for visualization (Sedley). All sensations are, therefore, evidence about the external world, and because truth is representational rather than propositional, all errors lie in interpretation rather than in the act of "picturing" itself (Sedley).

Changeux's citation of Epicurus, and his reference to Lucretius, indicates that neuroscience has worked within the various conceptualizations of Ancient atomism as a way of thinking through the neuron doctrine. In the *Letter to Herodotus*, Epicurus also states that since nothing comes into being out of nothing or perishes into nothing, the substance that makes up the universe is permanent (Sedley). This substance of permanence consists of body and space: bodies having independent existence as they can move through space, and space being determined by whether or not it is occupied by bodies (called place if it is, void or *kenon* if it is not and *room* or *chōra* if it is being moved through) (Sedley). The resonance of these ideas with early theorization of the neuron doctrine, the nature of axonal fusion and the physics of synaptic connections is notable. It is also of considerable consequence that Epicurean Schools of Philosophy are often cited as examples of "premodern proposals for anarchist societies", along with Chinese Taoists and ninth-century Islamists in Basra (Long, 217). As concerns the latter, by the middle of the ninth century, atomism had become firmly established in theological discussions among Islamic schools of thought in dialogue and debate with Christian interpretations of ancient texts (Fahri, 219). Materialists who professed an anthropomorphic view of God reduced everything to the notion of the body, divisible *ad infinitum*, and not made up of atoms. For atomists, on the other hand, "the body is an aggregate of accidents, which once constituted, becomes the bearer of accidents" (Fahri, 219). The atom was defined as the "bearer or substratum of accidents, which "was such in itself, and can be conceived as substance prior to its coming-to-be." (Fahri, 219) Anarchist historians have written of the atomist Epicureans as among "the extreme individualists for whom the State counted little," and, in relation to anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin, "no socialist thinker (...) has come nearer to Epicurus (...)" (Marshall, 68; Kropotkin, *Fugitive Writings* 125).

The broader conceptual inquiry of this thesis, thus, concludes with the image of a young Karl Marx' interested in exploring how the Epicurean Philosophy of Nature differed from earlier Democritean approaches to the qualities of atoms. Between 1840 and 1841, Marx finished his very first complete work: a doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Jena, entitled *Differenz der demokratischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie (Difference between Democritean and Epicurean Philosophies of Nature)*. Ten years after completing the dissertation, Marx would write that he had embarked on the study not for any "great tenderness" or preference for the philosophers concerned, but to treat them as objects of, what he cryptically called, "*special study*" (Fenves, 433). The dissertation is, in fact, an important early moment in Marx's thinking opposing two concepts of science: a "science of logic" and a notion of "natural science" (Fenves, 433). Marx's "*special study*" was certainly influenced by his interest in conceptual history, and his recognition that Epicurus was "central for all those thinkers who developed materialist views in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Foster, 32). These thinkers most certainly included Bakunin whose writings aligned him with the "Materialists" over the "Idealists" (Bakunin, *God and the State*). The qualities of mind that defined the thought of a "Materialist" who Bakunin considered "right" was one of Bakunin's major sources of conflict with Marx whose political philosophy of dialectical materialism, Bakunin contested (Bakunin, *God and the State*).

In Part Two of his dissertation, Marx outlines the primary difference between the ways in which Epicurus and Democritus conceptualized the atom, and how this affected their respective methods as philosophers. What interested Epicurus, according to Marx, was that through its qualities, "the atom acquires an existence which contradicts its concept; it is assumed as an externalized being as different from its essence" (qtd. in Levine, 212). Therefore, as soon as Epicurus "posits a property and thus draws the

consequences of the material nature of the atom, he counterposits at the same time determinations which again destroy this property in its own sphere and validates instead the concept of the atom" (qtd. In Levine, 212). This results in Epicurus determining all properties in such a way that "they contradict themselves." Nowhere does Democritus consider what Marx calls "the properties in relation to the atom itself" (qtd. in Levine, 212). He does not "objectify the contradictions between the concept and existence (...) inherent in them," rather, to Democritus, these contradictions are merely hypotheses that explain the plurality of appearances in the concept of the atom that have nothing to do with the concept of the atom itself (qtd. in Levine, 212). Marx interpreted Epicurus as denying both positivism and natural determinism. Because contradiction always existed between concept and reality, the two necessarily existed in a dialectical relation where "the advance of knowledge was driven forward by the force of negation" (Levine, 213).

Epicurus is at the core of what have been called the "diametrically opposed definitions of mind" proposed by Bakunin and Marx: "Bakunin's notion of spontaneity stands starkly opposed to Marx's notion of collective, rational action" (Robertson). Returning Marx's philosophy of science to the explicitly negative moment at its origins is a twenty-first century reminder for neuroscience: just as the atom was understood by the young Marx to attain to self-sufficiency "only when it declines from the straight line and repels others from itself, human consciousness must be active in the world as praxis and as critique in order to gain autonomy, and experience genuine freedom" (Schafer, 137). Like concept and reality in the philosophies of Epicurus, Marx and Bakunin must necessarily exist in dialectical relation for the new historical materialism suggested by Malabou and Zizek to work as a suspended conclusion for neuroethics within the mind's own mental object, the brain.

PART TWO

The painter that I idealized was one whose genius was so great that he needed no more than one color for a painting: dare I say it, *the monochroïdal artist.*

Alphonse Allais, *Album Primo-Avrilesque*

Lucky Marcel even managed to die happy in Paris. Teeny had just served a pheasant to him and several friends, including his oldest pal, Man Ray. After the guests left Duchamp read aloud to Teeny from a new humorous book by Alphonse Allais, one of his favorite writers. When he didn't emerge from the bathroom, where he was preparing to go to bed, Teeny rushed in and discovered him on the floor, fully dressed. "He had the most calm, pleased expression on his face," she later recalled – an expression only fitting for the man who'd once painted a moustache and goatee on the *Mona Lisa*

Edmund White, *Arts and Letters*

He is now going to attack those, who in his evocative language he calls: *the white savages, the most dangerous of them all*

Alphonse Allais, *Le Captain Cap*

In 1897, the British Empire conquered Benin City and incorporated the Benin Kingdom into British colonial territories on the lower Niger River (Kelly, 76). As part of the occupation, the British removed vast numbers of art objects from Benin, some of which ended up in ethnographic museums like the Trocadéro in Paris, others of which were promoted for private sale to a growing European connoisseurship of "Negro Art," as the arts of the Africas were called in English, and *Art Negre*, as they were called in French (Kelly, 76).

Meanwhile, several months before the British conquest, the Italian printer Michele Angiolillo known as "the Anarchist who shot and killed Spanish premier Cánovas

del Castillo,” was executed by garrote (Falk, 517; “Garroted”). To be executed by garrote

del Castillo,” was executed by garrote (Falk, 517; “Garroted”). To be executed by garrote was to die by strangulation. The strangulation was administered on a prisoner seated or standing against a wooden pole, with an iron or leather collar around the neck tightened until asphyxiation (Childs, 126). Angiolillo had allegedly assassinated the Spanish prime minister to avenge the tortures and deaths of anarchist prisoners at Montjuich (Falk, 517). Following the bombing of a religious procession by a French man named Jean Girault, Cánovas had ordered mass arrests of workers in Barcelona (Esenwein, 191). Though Girault was identified by the press as an anarchist, he was thought by many to have been an *agent provocateur* planted by the police (Esenwein, 191). The workers were held in prisons in Montjuich where they were starved, stripped naked, forced to remain awake, paraded around in leg weights and burned with hot irons after collapse from exhaustion (Tone, 231).

The year that Angiolillo was executed by the Spanish, and that Benin City was sacked by the British, the French publisher Paul Ollendorff printed a small oblong book entitled *Album Primo-Avrilesque*.¹ In one of its “spiritual prefaces,” the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* was signed by a French artist named Alphonse Allais, a self-proclaimed “artiste monochroïdal” or monochroidal artist from a former Norman port city called Honfleur in northwestern France (Allais, *Album*). The cover of this parodic album of synesthetic synthesis announced that the modest portfolio of prints it contained, “priced at one franc,” comprised: first, “a spiritual preface by the author;” second, “seven magnificent plates printed from copper etchings in various colors;” and, lastly, “a second preface even more spiritual than the first” (Allais, *Album*). Captioned with hyperbolic puns, the rectangular monochrome plates constitute a portfolio of “progressive proofs”

¹ A digitized copy of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* can be found at the website of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. See <URL : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86263801>>. An edition of the *Album* at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles was consulted by the author.

featuring characters that range from “blacks in combat”, “chlorotic young girls”, “a round of drunkards”, “jaundiced cuckolds,” “pimps in the prime of life”, “apoplectic cardinals” and impressionable military “recruits” (Allais, *Album*).² The epilogue to the *Album* is nine musical bars of a silent funeral march composed for the mortuary rites of a great deaf man.

The *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, and the Exposition des Arts Incohérents of 1883 and 1884 which inspired its publication, are usually cited in histories of the monochrome that pre-date the *Black Square*, that “zero of form” painted in 1913 by Kazimir Malevich (Danto, 251). Thirty years after Alphonse Allais immortalized fellow cabaret artist Paul Bilhaud’s black rectangle, *Combat de Nègres Dans Une Cave Pendant la Nuit* (Combat of blacks in a cellar during the night) by re-enacting its afterimage in white, *Première Communion de Jeunes Filles Chlorotiques Par un Temps de Nieve* (First Communion of Young Chlorotic Girls in Snowy Weather), Malevich, author of the Manifesto of Suprematism, would proclaim: “the appropriate means to representation is always the one which gives fullest possible expression to feeling as such and which ignores the familiar expression of objects” (Malevich, 5). Arthur Danto, philosopher and art critic for the American liberal magazine *The Nation*, opens an essay on Malevich citing Allais’ *Album* and referencing a witticism by Hegel: according to Danto, “Hegel likened the Absolute in Schelling to a dark night in which all cows are black” (Danto, 251). Therefore, a “clever student in Jena,” writes Danto, “might have had the bright idea of painting an all-black picture titled *Absolute with Cows*” (Danto, 251). According to Danto, it was the intention to “reduce all forms, all painting, to zero,” that made *Black Square* a

² The term “progressive proof” in printmaking refers to a series of prints that illustrate the manner in which a color image is created through superimposition. For an example of portfolios of progressive proofs sold by art dealers see *La Petite Blanchisseuse*, 1895 – 1896, a lithograph in three colors by Pierre Bonnard, and produced for sale by the Parisian dealer Ambrose Vollard (*Pierre Bonnard*, 222).

“radical” gesture, and Allais’ interventions at the Exposition des Arts Incohérents mere “humorist” and “comical” ones (Danto, 251).

Aside from Danto’s passing mention of the *Album* in his profile of Malevich, Allais’ synesthetic series of monochrome plates and silent funeral march – the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* – has also been discussed in relation to two nineteenth century debates: the first, on the primacy of drawing over color in painting, and the second, the symbolist critique of impressionist positivism (Bertrand; Defays). However, though the *Album* is often invoked in general overviews of avant-garde practice at the turn of the twentieth century – as well as, in specialist tomes dedicated to themes like color (Temkin, 53; Riout, 169-175), cabaret culture (Cate, 8-9) or titles (Welchman, 106-107) – as Danto’s treatment of the *Album* indicates, it has rarely been taken seriously as a work of art in its own right. This is because, for Danto, and scholars like Denys Riout, Jean-Pierre Bertrand and Jean-Marc Defays, the plates of the *Album* are objects that aspire to be humorist “pictures.” According to a conservative logic of realism proposed by critics like Benjamin Buchloh, the album is, in itself, a form of realistic representation albeit a satirical one, hence it remains complicit in the political oppression of the Third Republic in Post-Commune France (Beaumont, 135).

Part Two of the present thesis reads the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* as an example of what North American artist David Robbins calls “concrete comedy” (Robbins). It follows through on the claim made by literary theorist Jean-Marc Defays that Allais was sympathetic to the objectives of the Paris Commune, and suggests that the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* be thought of as a deliberate materialization of Post-Commune aesthetic politics in France at the end of the nineteenth century (Defays, 3). The thesis contextualizes the *Album* in relation to Allais’ activities as a journalist, and proposes it be read within a historical constellation that conjoins: first, rising scientific interest in the

phenomenon of synesthesia called *audition colorée* or colored hearing; second, developments in color printing technologies like color lithography; third, the obsession of neurologists with hysteria; and lastly, popular race theory as it related to reports in the French newspapers of colonial revolt in North Africa, West Africa, and New Caledonia in the Pacific. All of the asterisms in the proposed constellation were at one point or another featured in the Parisian press within which Allais worked as a humorist (Thérenty).

Following the model of *Bilder aus dem Gebiert der Pueblo-Indianer in Nord Amerika* (Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America) – a 1924 lecture performed by the art historian Aby Warburg for his release from Ludwig Binswanger’s Sanatorium at Kreuzlingen – this second part of the thesis will conclude with a *Nachleben* or Afterlife of Allais’ *Album* in the early twenty-first century.³ It will do this in order to demonstrate the concrete implications of what has been defined as neurasthenic neuroesthetics in Part One. Warburg’s *Images* lecture, also referred to by scholars as the Kreuzlingen lecture – or in Warburg’s own terms as “the gruesome convulsions of a decapitated frog” – is a dialectical approach to making pictures of history by way of a performative lecture (Steinberg, 98). In Warburg’s slide-show lecture, “images from history as records of cultural predicaments speak to one another, and the eyes and the voice of the historian present the points of contact” (Steinberg, 98). In its own similar dialectic of images in dialogue, this thesis proposes that the conceptual process engendered by the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* can be a useful tool for de-mystifying

³ As Michael Steinberg writes in his preface to an English edition of the Kreuzlingen lecture published in 1995, “Warburg begins [the Kreuzlingen lecture] with ethnography and ends with observations on the culture of Uncle Sam and the telephone” (Steinberg, 98), Reflecting on the “dialectical imagery of Hopi America and the modernized landscape of United States expansion,” Warburg ends the lecture with a photograph of a Gilded-Age speculator in the street under a power line: “Uncle Sam in his stovepipe hat, strolling in his pride past a neoclassical rotunda. Above his top hat runs an electric wire. In this copper serpent of Edison’s, he has wrested lightning from nature” (qtd in Steinberg, 103)

renewed interest in synaesthesia amongst neo-positivist materialists in early twenty-first century neuroesthetics (Ramachandran and Hubbard). The thesis shows how Allais' one-franc approach to multi-sensory conceptual thinking resisted the ideological oversimplifications of sentimentalist romanticism and scientific determinism. It accomplished this with a tactical irony that the thesis argues could prove instructive for the neurasthenic neuroesthetics proposed in Part One. This form of tactical irony may be the base for a humorist ethics to respond to the brain-mania of mid twenty-first century new-liberalism.

The Post-Commune Entanglement of “Empirical-Spiritual” and “Positive Science”

When the Parisian publisher Ollendorf sent Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* to press in 1897, publications on synesthesia had reached a peak that would only be surpassed in the decade following World War I (Van Campen, 11).⁴ Indeed, it has been said that the post-Commune years in France between 1871 and 1906, constituted a historical moment in which “the ‘empirical-spiritual’ became especially hard to disentangle from ‘positive science’” (Gage, 209).⁵ During this time, synesthesia, or the cross-sensory experience of perception, attracted the interest of poets and physicians alike, from Arthur Rimbaud to Alfred Binet (Dann).

⁴ This information is based on a chart that tracks the number of publications on synesthesia per decade using the databases of Psych Lit, and reviews by F. Mahling (1926) and L.E. Marks (1978). See Van Campen.

⁵ The year 1871 is determined as the beginning of the Post-Commune years because it is the year of the *Semaine Sanglante* and the exile of the Communards from Paris. The year 1906 has been selected as its end because it marks the year that the anarchists can be said to have definitively lost the support of the proletariat. A series of articles published by Vladimir Lenin entitled « Anarchism and Socialism ? » initiated the final systematic exclusion of anarchists from the practice of politics. The idea of the late nineteenth century being a period in which the ‘empirico-spiritual’ became increasingly difficult to disentangle from ‘positive science’ comes from the in-text citation provided in Gage.

By the beginning of the 1890s, Arthur Rimbaud's poem *Voyelles* – first published by Paul Verlaine in 1883 – had become legendary amidst French Symbolists for whom experiments pairing color and sound were considered a mark of the *voyant* or visionary (Dann, 26). Anarchist critic Félix Fénéon would immediately suggest that it was the rise in medical literature on synesthesia that had inspired Rimbaud (Dann, 25). Meanwhile, as evidenced by a number of eponymous works of the period, including poet Marc Legrand's 1889 *Voyelles*, Rimbaud's *Voyelles* was spawning a contagious mannerism among aspiring writers in Symbolist Magazines (Seaman, 96).

In 1890, the popularity of *audition colorée*, or colored hearing, inspired the Congrès Internationale de la Psychologie Physiologique (The International Congress of Physiological Psychology) to arrange for a committee to investigate the phenomenon; two years later, records quantified that a total of five hundred cases of colored-hearing had been reported (Dann, 25). "Everyone has heard of that curious and bizarre phenomenon which has been consecrated by popular usage using the inexact name "colored-hearing"," psychologist Alfred Binet wrote in a review of one bibliographic survey on the topic (Binet, 644). "Descriptions of the phenomenon have appeared in the popular press and have kept us up on the cases of people convinced that they too suffer from "colored-hearing" (Binet, 644).

"He Who Says Fumiste, Says Chemist": The Pharmaco-Medical Culture of Paris

In 1954, on the centenary of Alphonse Allais' birth, an article published in the *Presse Medicale* cited extracts of Allais' stories to show that his work had been profoundly influenced by the "pharmaco-medical climate" of the time (Chauvelot, 1508). A section entitled *Bad Jokes* draws attention to Allais' equivalence: "he who says

fumiste, says chemist,” Allais had reportedly written (Chauvelot, 1508). The author of the 1954 tribute to Allais goes on to recount that, as the son of a pharmacist, the ways in which Allais’ youth had been immersed in the dialectic of ‘positive science’ and the ‘empirical spiritual’ that characterized late nineteenth century France. According to the *Presse Medicale*, it had, in fact, been Allais’ father, who according to the popular accounts referenced, refused to supply poet Charles Baudelaire with drugs during his visit to relatives in a village neighboring Allais’ native Honfleur (Chauvelot, 1508). Furthermore, visitors who frequented the offices of Allais’ father (or were guests at his table) are alleged to have included Gustav Courbet. After the fall of the Paris Commune, Courbet was prosecuted for his involvement in the event that royalist Versaillais, or Versaille sympathizers, would refer to as a “savage” insurrection (Bullard).⁶

Bad Jokes recounts the tale of a young man’s alchemical transformation from white to black (Chauvelot, 1508). The story begins with the young man’s uncle dressing him up as Pierrot for Carnival on the third Thursday in Lent. After great success with dancing partners at a ball, hosted by the opera house, the uncle and his nephew break for supper. Before proceeding to the dining hall, the two make a stop at the uncle’s laboratory: it is at this point that Allais interjects his phrase “for as is known, he who says *fumiste* says chemist” (Chauvelot, 1508). The figure of the *fumiste* that Allais refers to designated groups of humorists who defined themselves not with manifestos as ideologically determined collectives, but as single individuals drawn together spontaneously by the mysterious physics of sympathetic energies and shared hypersensitivities. As the historian of Parisian cabaret culture Daniel Grojnowski explains, “because the republican law, in denying prerequisite authorizations [for groups to freely

⁶ The previously cited article by R. Chauvelot is the source for Courbet being an acquaintance of Allais’ father. That the Paris Commune was referred to as a « savage » insurrection is referenced in Bullard.

assemble], favored meetings, notably in the cafés in the Latin Quarter (...) the spirit of the cabaret came together with the search for cultural models that transgressed norms and violated [the tenants of] good taste” (qtd. in Schulman, 39). “After the defeat of France by Prussia, the collapse of the Second Empire, the Paris Commune bloodshed, and the austerity of President Mac Mahon’s moral order,” the groups of *fumiste* humorists “were the first to organize open meetings that were at once republican, anticlerical, apolitical and literary” (Grojnowski, 96). To what extent the *fumistes* should be called “republican,” however, is questionable. As Allais’ association with Belgian artist and mathematician Henri Roorda indicates, there were many proponents of anti-colonialist anarchism and anarcho-communism circulating among the *fumiste* (Roorda, 205). Forms of anarchism were diffuse at the end of the nineteenth century, and many of the *fumistes* seem to have understood their own activities as a form of political aesthetics.

At the *fumiste* laboratory, the uncle in *Bad Jokes* passes a quarter of an hour carrying out a series of mysterious maneuvers in the dark. After the nephew’s persistent complaints about an unpleasant odor of rotten eggs, he agrees to abandon his experiments and return to the ball. Upon the entrance of uncle and nephew to the dining hall, however, the nephew finds all his gallantries towards potential dance partners refused. He is horrified when one woman exclaims: “you’d better get out of here, you filthy chimney sweep, you nasty negro!” (1508). Turning away in shock, the nephew catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror. The white paste that had covered his skin and his costume had turned black. Allais’ conclusion of the story explains the uncle’s chemical prank: “the whole thing was very simple: the clothes and the makeup of the

young man, having been soaked in iron salts so that hydrogen sulphur emanations transforming iron to sulphur, had produced a more attractive black body!”⁷

The *Presse Medicale* does not cite the source of its excerpts and so it is unclear where readers would have first encountered this story. It is notable, however, that Allais’ voice was not only part of cabaret magazine culture and the *Chat Noir* journal, but his authorship was also familiar to readers of the *Vies Droles* series, featured in the same popular press that psychologist Alfred Binet attributed with the inexact term “colored-hearing” in his widely-read review (Thérenty, 57-67). In 1892, another psychologist, Jules Millet, authored a small volume entitled *L’Audition Colorée*. In this volume, Millet suggested that the term for colored-hearing be replaced in the scientific vernacular by the more general “synaesthesia” (Dann, 28). Millet’s idea was to develop a term that could cover all of the phenomenon’s varied manifestations with the precision of so-called positive science (Dann, 28). In the same thesis, Millet also asked if all the artists who made claims to experiences of “synesthesia” in their work were “madmen, neurotics, destroyers of art, sincere artists, or just simply *practical jokers*” (Dann, 28). In the terms of another catchword that gained currency in discussions of art at the time, “synthesis” would seem to be the appropriate response to Millet’s question: in other words, the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* and its chemico-*fumiste* humor were often the deliberate machinations of artists like Alphonse Allais, intent on enacting a symptomatic “synthesis” of all of the caricatures listed by Millet: the madman, the neurotic, the destroyer of art, the sincere artist and the practical joker (Dann, 27). Popular interest for synesthesia – defined by both Binet and Millet as part of the pathologization of everyday life in the

⁷ All translations are by the author. The original French of the excerpts can be found in Chauvelot, 1508.

French Third Republic – reflected an eagerness of the collective imaginary to absorb the new epistemologies of sight proliferating in medical discourse at the time.

Thus, it can be said that the enthusiasm for symptoms of new corporeal and temporal dimensions of looking resulted in the invention of corresponding hypersensitivities among individuals. Proof of one such hypersensitivity can be found in the rhetoric surrounding industrial arts like color lithography. By 1897, the same year the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* was priced by its printer for sale at one franc, a bourgeois market for color lithograph posters had already taken form (Kalba, 136). Critics and opinion-leaders wrote reviews, pamphlets and catalogue essays on behalf of collectors, in order to establish the legitimacy of color lithographs as original works of art and good investments. This promotional discourse that propped up the new market for posters created by designers like Jules Chéret, stressed the relationship between the plan of design and the method of production: “it is impossible to see one of his designs without immediately grasping the nature of the work he puts forward,” wrote a critic, praising Chéret’s process (Kalba, 136). “*If the eye is satisfied, the spirit is no less so,*” he asserted (Kalba, 136).

“White Savages, the most dangerous of them all”: (Re)Visions of Anarchism

This insistence on the essence of a work residing in the surface of its form – defined by academic art historians as “modernist” – paid homage to production methods while simultaneously discouraging viewers from engaging with the question of aesthetic politics: the social and economic relations that artistic processes produce (Kalba, 138). Thus, critics could insist that the perfect harmony between form and function exemplified in Chéret’s color lithograph prints was the source of his “talent and ingenuity,” even

though there was little evidence that Chéret had any extensive knowledge of the mechanical means used to produce his works (Kalba, 145).

Fifty years prior to these discursive tactics, aimed at a distinction of taste for color lithography, the famous printer Godefroy Engelmann had published the *Album Chromolithographique* with the intention of showcasing results of a new registration chase he claimed would forever change color printing (Kalba, 134). The registration chase publicized in 1837 was proposed to remedy alignment issues plaguing the production of color lithographs. These issues required recourse to skilled hand intervention and costly manual labor (Kalba, 134). Sixty years after the publication of the *Album Chromolithographique*, critic André Mellerio was already promoting the “originality” of “color lithography” based on a machine aesthetic: color lithographic prints were no longer just reproductions but autonomous personal conceptions that, in a synthesis of “stylistic, ideological and material connection,” produced a new democratic art, “if not of the poor man, at least of the crowd” (Kalba, 141).

It was over the course of the sixty years that transpired between these two publications – that is, between *The Album Chromolithographique* in 1837 and *La Lithographie Originale en Couleurs* in 1893 – that the skilled operators of printing presses were displaced. This demographic of workers would be disenfranchised by the same factory modes of production that mechanized the watch-making industry in the Francophone Swiss Jura. Indeed, these were the skilled workers who chose the anti-statism of Mikhail Bakunin over the communism of Karl Marx, and built the Jura Federation of syndicalist anarchists. When Russian philosopher Peter Kropotkin visited the Swiss-French Jura following Bakunin’s campaign in the 1860s, it was his experiences with the Jura Federation watchmakers that convinced him to align himself with Bakunin rather than Marx. The political force of watch-makers and their resistance

to unregulated mechanization also inspired sympathizers further north in France, to experiment with the new forms of horizontal organization they would come to call the Paris Commune.

Alphonse Allais was sixteen years old during the Paris Commune, a year of militant political reorganization of Paris, the “brain” of France. According to literary theorist, Jean-Marc Defays, Allais did not hide his sympathies with the Communards when royalists violently repressed the Commune in the massacre of thousands known as the *Semaine Sanglante* or Bloody Week (Defays, 3). In fact, Allais moved to Paris from Honfleur to study medicine the year immediately following the bloody repression. In the immediate Post-Commune period, the French political regime vacillated between a conservative republic of self-proclaimed “reformers” and a monarchist restoration of the royalist *Versaillais*. When Jules Grévy took power in 1879 and installed an opportunist republic that called itself “radical,” Allais dropped his studies and joined the *fumiste* cabaret club, the *Hydropathes* (Defays, 3).

In 1893, four years before the publication of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, Allais collaborated with a group of other *fumistes* and *incoherents*, or incoherent artists, to design a political campaign for a Montmartre personality known as “Captain Cap” (Defays, 12). In posters for the campaign, the name Captain Cap was signed to the declaration:

After twenty years of the sea and the Far-West, upon my return to my dear native soil, what did I find there? Lies, calumny, hypocrisy, embezzling, treason, nepotism, misappropriation, fraud and nullity. You do not have to travel far, citizens, to find the origin of all of these evils: it is the microbe of bureaucracy. Now, one does not reason with microbes, one kills them. And this is what I have pledged to do despite all of them” (Allais, *Le Captain Cap*, 15-16).

The name “Alphonse Allais” appears among signers of a proclamation made by the “anti-european and anti-bureaucrat committee” for legislative elections in the ninth

arrondissement. This *fumiste* document calls citizens to the polls, retelling the story of Captain Cap's Far-West travels: "With the strong love of his native land in his heart, an implacable hatred has formed within him for the worm-eaten institutions of his country. In the Far-West, Captain Cap fought the Arapahoes. He vanquished them; he scalped their chief. He is now going to attack those, who in his evocative language he calls: *the white savages, the most dangerous of them all*" (Ibid, 21).

As the Captain Cap campaign illustrates, the ambitious colonial politics that characterized the new "radical" bourgeois order instituted its own color wheel of savagery in the post-Commune entanglement of positive science and the empirico-spiritual. From 1872 to 1896, the new polity of the opportunist republic extended its colonial campaigns to include regions referred to at the time as Equatorial Africa, Western Africa, Tonkin and Madagascar (Defays, 3). These campaigns also included New Caledonia, an island in the Pacific (Bullard 67-98). After the defeat of the Paris Commune, surviving Communards were exiled to penal colonies in Melanesia where the new French imperial nation state mined for nickel. The idea was that Communards would be made to "civilize" their own "savage politics" by becoming agents of "civilization" among the Kanak, a people of a still "savage nature" (Bullard 67-98). In the color theory of French colonialism, skin of any kind, type or hue, aside from the powdered pristine "white", was an indicator of "savagery" whether beige, yellow, brown, red or black.

In late nineteenth century object lessons of consumerist culture, this attention to ordering fields of color in carefully controlled interactions was exemplified in printing culture by publications featuring "progressive proofs" (Kalba, 136). In progressive proofs, the process of printing color lithographs was illustrated in precious folios of printed plates that were created for the edutainment of the opportunist republic's new bourgeois

“crowd.” The rise and fall of the Paris Commune, the “radical” opportunism of the new liberal bourgeois republic, and developments in psychology and printing, show that what has been referred to by art historians as the “renewed prestige of color” in the nineteenth century, came to exist in a relation of overdetermination to these events (Jay, 158). As Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque* makes evident, the milieu surrounding this renewed prestige was driven by a complex dialectic that both shifted away from “timeless incorporeal orders” – like those found in the device of the camera obscura, and in the art of governmentality known as the imperial nation state – while all the while looking to reassert new fixed ideas (Jay, 158). Hence the paradox of critic André Mellerio promoting “original color lithograph” posters as the “frescoes of the crowd”: the contradiction of a mechanized industrial art that posed as an aesthetic celebrating the unstable physiology and temporality of the human body, while, its actual manufacture pushed the “civilization” of “savage” skilled manual labor to nullity (Jay, 158).

The overdetermination of a renewed prestige of color in the late nineteenth century suggests color was both a significant implication of a cultural shift, as well as one of its causes. In the paradox that Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque* makes manifest, though this cultural shift may have at first glance seemed emancipatory, it was fundamentally a willed breakdown of epistemologies for the deliberate constitution of a new-liberal order. In other words, color, which, in the regressive hegemony of Cartesian perspectivalism, had previously been “relegated to the uncertain workings of the fallible human eye and denigrated in relation to pure form” (Jay, 151) now became the legitimate subject of both “positive science” and the “empirical-spiritual” (both chemistry and theosophy). In this process, the breakdown of perspectivalism was itself the reconstitution of a new regime of post-perspectivalism (Jay, 158). In political discourse, the equivalent of this paradox can be found in the pardoning of the Communards by the

opportunist Third Republic. The pardoning occurred in 1890, the year after penal colony exiles like Louise Michel, who had led the occupation of Paris by the Communards, were officially repatriated to Paris from New Caledonia. In the pardoning, several Communards were even accepted into the new liberal government as parliamentarians in Jules Grévy's so-called "radical" opportunist republic. Hence, the parliamentarian Communards became complicit in historicizing an image of the Paris Commune as an occupation or insurrection, rather than as a legitimate political defense of Paris against the oppressive occupation of collaborating royalist and republican forces. And, *if the eye is satisfied, the spirit is no less so.*⁸

Like the *Album Chromolithographique* before it, Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is also a set of "progressive proofs" of sorts: it is a volume that outlines the process of aesthetic politics as militant withdrawal in *fumiste* humor. Because the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is structured as a sort of *entrisme* or entryist *mise-en-abyme*, an image within an image, it is possible to write about it from an infinite procession of varying positions. In whatever manner it is framed, the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* acts to undo its surroundings. The first half of Part Two has presented a socio-historical framework for considering the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* in relation to what art historian Martin Jay has called "the renewed prestige of color" in the late nineteenth century (151). The thesis proposes that what Alphonse Allais *does* with color in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is best understood as a synecdoche of the new perspectivalism of fragmentation and hypersensitivity. This new perspectivalism can be observed taking form in the psychopathology of colored-hearing and the new industrial technologies of color printing. The second half of Part Two to follow will present an analysis of certain material aspects

⁸ This quote is repeated from a previous citation of reviews written to build a market for the color lithograph posters of Jules Chéret. See previous reference to Kalba.

of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, as they relate to the phenomena of late nineteenth century synesthesia and chromolithography.

Over-Sight: *Audition-Colorée* and the “Figures” in Francis Galton’s *Inquiries*

In his 1891 review of Suarez de Mendoza’s bibliographic survey of literature on colored-hearing, psychologist Alfred Binet notes what he calls a “léger oubli” or small oversight: Suarez de Mendoza does not cite the psychometrics of British eugenicist Francis Galton, whose work on heredity in the human faculties had made several observations in relation to colored-hearing (Binet, 647). Binet’s interest in Galton’s work in his 1891 review is focused on the images or “figures” Galton uses to support his observations (Binet, 647). Binet suggests that the lack of such “figures” in Suarez de Mendoza’s survey is a mistake. Binet argues that in the case of colored-hearing, the practice of having subjects draw what they think they see from sound is useful for experimental research, even though for ideological reasons, Suarez de Mendoza may be reluctant to admit it (Binet, 647).

The particular plates that Binet references in his review illustrate instances of what Galton calls “coloured Number-Forms” (Galton, 141). In their diagrams, the subjects in Galton’s study attempt to portray what they see when they think of numbers. A female subject draws a chart of numbers with their corresponding colors (i.e. up to thirty in clear white; to forty in gray; forty through fifty in flaming orange, etc.) (Galton, 141). A male subject sends Galton a drawing in which he attempts to represent the changing landscapes of arid plains, cloudy knolls and sunny valleys that come to mind whenever he thinks of numbers (Galton, 142).

Binet's attention to Suarez de Mendoza's exclusion of Galton's research shows that though Binet may have argued against the oversimplification of intelligence in Galton's theories, he did not believe that Galton's work should be excluded from Suarez de Mendoza's bibliographic survey of medical literature on the colored-hearing phenomenon. Binet's attention to the drawings Galton published in his landmark work *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883) shows that Galton's ideas associating synesthetic perception with the hereditary tendency of genius, and what he called "mental images," were in circulation in positive science at the end of the century. When read alongside Galton's transcription of the letters attached to drawings of synesthetic subjects, Allais' own captioned "plates" in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* take on the form of complex parodies. Like the flat color of Allais' lithograph plates in combination with each monochrome's hyperbolic title, the colored visions of Galton's female subject tend to be modulating rather than flat: red is "reddish," white is "clear white," and orange is "flaming" (Galton, 142). When Galton's subject mentions a color without qualifying its kind or type, she either makes note of it being "indistinct," or the color is one that already implies a certain ambiguity, such as gray. The "absolument blanche" or absolutely white, that critic Felix Feneon refers to in his review of the first appearance of Allais' white monochrome at the Exposition des Arts Incohérents in 1883, would appear to be ironic. Before becoming a plate in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, the white monochrome is reported to have been exhibited at the Galerie Vivienne as "une feuille de bristol absolument blanc" or a sheet of absolutely white bristol paper, "collé au mur," adhered to the wall. The anemia of premenstrual girls evoked in Allais' use of the medical term "chlorotique" in the work's title – *Première Communion de Jeunes Filles Chlorotiques Par un Temps de Neige* – indicates that the "whiteness" of Allais' monochrome was only made progressively more indistinct with every attempt to reassert

its purity. A first communion procession under snow evokes the image of sooty slush and muddied gowns, while the adjective, “chloritic” would seem to give the entire scene a greenish tint; a glow akin to the pallor of the foreground figure some have identified as Jane Avril in color lithograph artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s oil on canvas, *At the Moulin Rouge* (1892 /1895).

The definition “absolutely white” becomes even more suspect as an ideological position rather than a good faith color description, when the materiality of the exhibited sheet of paper is recalled. The identification of the paper as “bristol” could in and of itself be considered a marker of reification, and the fetishization of art materials typical among artists against the industrialization of craft. Among printmakers and draughtsmen, the British bristol paper was considered a standard-bearer for the perfection of its fabrication: hand-pulled high quality artisanal sheets that had probably, by the end of the nineteenth century, already begun to make the transition into industrial production (*American Society for Testing and Materials*, 35).⁹ Descriptions of the white monochrome in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* rarely mention that it is actually not a printed plate at all, but rather a small piece of white paper pasted into the *Album*.¹⁰

This emphasis on nuance and modulations of color also resonates with the writings of Galton’s second subject in Plate IV of the coloured-number forms. This

⁹ In 1963, the American Society for Testing and Materials would report, “bristol board is actually a bogus or imitation of the original Bristol board, a name referring to Bristol, England, designating a pasted board made of rag-content paper. It is one of the more widely known specific board names. Considering what has been said about the development of color printing, it is reasonable to assume that this process of bristol paper becoming « bogus » was already underway in the late nineteenth century. The note that bristol paper was made of rag-content paper implies that it would have been made of high quality linen or cotton, whose respective absorption properties are highly valued by printmakers and watercolorists.

¹⁰ It appears that the only mention of this in the literature on the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is a footnote in Riout : « on the light cream page of the original edition, the reproduction of the work exhibited in 1883 is not obtained by an impression of white ink, but by pasting a small sheet of very white paper [into the *Album*]. Amateurs would consider this a veritable « multiple » and not a simple « reproduction. » Translation by the author. For the original French see Riout, 296.

subject who is male, indicates he does not “associate colours with number,” rather he experiences shifts in “illumination” across a series of varied landscapes he envisions walking through. This second subject’s “mental images” provide the same kind of absurd attention to detail that Allais offers in the colored fields of his captions:

If a traveler should start at 1 and walk to 100, he would be in an intolerable glare of light until near 9 or 10. But at 11 he would go to a land of darkness and would have to feel his way. At 12 light breaks in again, a pleasant sunshine, which continues up to 19 or 20, where there is a sort of twilight. From here to 40 the illumination is feeble but still there is considerable light (Galton, 142).

The description carries on in its subtle variations to the number 100, which the subject indicates is “rather cloudy” (Galton, 142). The comparison of this hyperbole of nuance, with the caption under Allais’ fifth plate – the reddish monochrome of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* – is suggestive. Like the white monochrome, the reddish monochrome of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is not a color lithograph. It is, instead, a piece of red cloth also pasted onto a page in the *Album*. *Récolte de la Tomate par des Cardinaux Apoplectiques au Bord de la Mer Rouge (Effet d’aurore boréale)*, or harvest of tomatoes by apoplectic cardinals on the banks of the Red Sea (effect aurora borealis), is not only a sequence of variations on the color red – the purple of an apoplectic face asphyxiating in rage, or the pink glow of an aurora borealis – but possible sparks of other colors including a bluish-green tinge, also from the effect of an aurora borealis, and a murky brown stillness evoked with the “mental image” of the Red Sea.

The pun contained in Allais’ mention of the “Red Sea” is transparent: though the “Red Sea” is the one moment in the caption where the color of the plate is actually named, the irony is that the “Red Sea” is, of course, not red at all (Bertrand, 264). When read against the first colored plate that opens the series – the blackish *Combat de Nègres dans Une Cave, Pendant la Nuit (Reproduction du célèbre tableau)* or combat of

blacks in a cellar, during the night (reproduction of the famous painting) – Allais’ appropriation of the “famous” monochrome work by fellow poet Paul Bilhaud, begins to resound as a form of anti-colonial critique that would have resounded with artists like Henri Roorda, whose work Allais published in the magazine he edited, *Le Journal*. “Blacks, Reflect! There is still time!” Roorda is said to have written in response to reports of the numerous crises associated with French colonial campaigns (Liniger-Goumaz, 64). Indeed, Roorda’s plea recalls the campaign of Captain Cap against the “white savages, the most dangerous of them all” (Allais, *Le Captain Cap*).

In a 1973 essay dedicated to Alphonse Allais, “his style and technique, and his continuing importance,” literary theorist Martin Sorrell writes that Allais was not only a forerunner of absurdist humor and its precursors – Alfred Jarry, the Collège de Pataphysique, the Dadaists and the Surrealists – but should also be reconsidered within a marginalized tradition of occultist science fiction, exemplified by writers like Raymond Roussel and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam.¹¹ This same association of Allais with late nineteenth century occultist science fiction also appeared more than sixty-five years earlier in the journal *The Theosophist*. In 1907, the theosophical society held an international conference to review the status of the empirical-spiritual in relation to the culture of positive science that seemed to be prevailing around the world. In its focus on France, *The Theosophist* reports, “occultism is there taking a new lease of life after a long sleep that had only been troubled by the works of M. Shuré, a few romances of Gilbert Augustin Thierry, of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, of Alphonse Allais, etc. etc” (“Theosophy,” 276).

¹¹ Sorrell does not explicitly cite Roussel and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam but his description of Allais’ “bizarre inventions” recalls the work of these two writers. See Sorrell.

It is of note that *The Theosophist* associates Allais not only with Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, but also with Edouard Schuré. Schuré's famous theosophical novel *Les Grands Initiés* was published eight years before the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*. The novel would have certainly resonated with Allais' chemico-*fumiste* sensibilities in that it is said to have been influenced by the research of an early nineteenth century Austrian industrial chemist K.L. Reichenbach (Gage, 248). Indeed, as art historian John Gage writes regarding Reichenbach's impact on Theosophists like Schuré:

just as the alchemists of the later Middle Ages had drawn on the Christian myths to lend plausibility to their ideas, so the Theosophists of the nineteenth century looked to the natural sciences for confirmation of their own conceptions of matter and often found just what they were seeking (Gage, 248).

Though his work may have played this inspirational role, much of Reichenbach's experimental research would be forgotten when James Braid – who “developed the practice of “hypnotism” in 1842 as an alternative to mesmerism” (Miller, 471) – wrote a reply to Reichenbach's discovery of the magnetic force called “od,” arguing that Reichenbach's subjects had simply been “suggestible people who produced the results the baron himself wanted to see” (qtd. in Waterfield, 213). In fact, the encyclopedia entries that list Reichenbach's name usually cite him for the discovery of paraffin, rather than for his unconventional approach to scientific inquiry. In Reichenbach's obituary, William Crookes would refer to this approach as an example of the nineteenth century trend to “philosophic enquiry applied to subjects, scarcely, yet within the grasp, of scientific reasoning” (qtd. in Brock, 119).¹²

In the early nineteenth century, Baron Karl Reichenbach had conducted experiments on the perception of what would come to be called “odylic” light – or light

¹² According to Waterfield, “something similar to Reichenbach phenomena were still being investigated in La Charité Hospital in Paris, with the help of hypnotized subjects, at the end of the century, by J.B. Luys and Colonel de Rochas, until debunked by the English writer Ernest Hart, among others” (Waterfield, 213).

emitted over magnets – using a group of sixty sensitive subjects for empirical research (Reichenbach, 222). Reichenbach’s competition with the German physician Franz Anton Mesmer, whose work he called “wretched magical trash,” in combination with his explicit egalitarianism, may have also contributed to the relative obloquy of his work (Levitt, 112). When considered alongside Francis Galton’s elitist theses on genius and heredity, Reichenbach’s theories seem to propose a contestatory picture. According to Reichenbach, “neither youth, age, nor sex, nor position in society” made any difference in respect to sensitivity to odylic light: sensitive subjects were only marked by the ability of their nervous systems to perceive the “peculiar sensations and luminous phenomena” produced by the magnets used to test them (Reichenbach, 222).

Section 602 of Reichenbach’s published study *Researches on Magnetism, Electricity, Heat, Light, Crystallization and Chemical Attraction in their Relations to Vital Force* (1850) is titled with a heading that recalls the reddish monochrome of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*: “The Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis” (Reichenbach, 445). “Even then,” Reichenbach prefaces, “when I knew far less concerning odylic light, I expressed the opinion that it was nothing else than the same phenomenon, which on the great scale, appears as the aurora borealis” (Reichenbach, 445). The objective of Section 602 in Reichenbach’s study is to reassert, with empirical evidence, this initial claim: that the aurora borealis is produced from magnetic effects rather than from electricity. He writes:

Now that we know, that flaming lights exist over magnetic poles (...); when we learn that these flaming appearances are moveable, undulating, often moving in serpentine windings, like those of a ribbon agitated by the wind, becoming at every moment larger or smaller, shooting out rays, scintillating, variegated in colour, and often nebulous, vaporous and cloud-like; when we find that with our breath we can cause it to flicker backwards and forwards; when we observe that it increases in a rapid ratio, in size, intensity and brilliancy, in rarefied air; and lastly *when we see it followed at every step by the play of rainbow colors, &c., &c.*, -- there remains hardly one essential mark of distinction between magnetic light and terrestrial polar light, *unless*

we regard as such, the difference of intensity and amount of light, in virtue of which the polar light is visible to every ordinary eye, the magnetic light only to the sensitive eye (Reichenbach, 447).

The “flaming lights” and “shooting out rays, scintillating, variegated in color” of Reichenbach’s description of odyllic light evoke the “anch’io son pittore” or I, too am a painter, account of artistic inspiration that Allais uses to introduce the colored plates of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*. The story relayed by Allais in the first “spiritual preface” of the *Album*, which he signs with his own name, is one of a Reichenbachian “sensitive eye.” After experiencing an encounter with the *fumiste* Paul Bilhaud’s blackish monochrome, Allais’ “spiritual preface” recounts that the “spiritual humorist,” author of the preface, leaves France for travels to America, and after twenty years, sees an afterimage of complimentary contrast: the whitish rectangle entitled *Première Communion de Jeunes Filles Chlorotiques par un Temps de Neige* or First Communion of Chlorotic Young Girls Under Snowy Weather. Despite the ironic twenty-year delay that was necessary for the afterimage to appear, Allais recounts that the “mental image” of the narrator’s own transformation into a “monochroidal artist” was instantaneous:

the impression that I envisioned from this spectacular masterpiece [the blackish monochrome of Bilhaud] cannot be replicated by any description. My destiny appeared before me suddenly in flaming letters. And I too am a painter! (...) And when I say painter, let me explain myself: I do not mean to speak of painters in the manner in which they are generally understood, ridiculous artisans who need thousands of different colors to express their pathetic conceptions. No! The painter that I imagine myself, is that ingenious one for whom one color is enough for a picture: Should I dare to say it? The monochroidal artist. (Allais, *Album*).¹³

Whether or not Allais would have agreed with *The Theosophist’s* characterization of him as an advocate of occultism is arguable; it seems more likely that in the spirit of *fumiste* humor, Allais was just as much an *entrliste* – an *agent provocateur* or entryist –

¹³ All translations from the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* are by the author.

of insipid ideology in occultism as he was of what he called the “hypocrisy” of medical culture, the “microbes of bureaucracy” (Allais, *Le Capitan Cap*). There is an abundance of evidence to support the proposition that Allais considered the empirico-spiritual strand of experimentation, exemplified by figures like Reichenbach, as a way of undermining the limiting determinism of positivist science. Allais’ assertion in *Bad Jokes* that, “it is known that he who says *fumiste* says chemist” is only one such proof, but further instances can be found throughout Allais’s work (Caradec). They include his aforementioned poetic use of terms like “apoplectic” “chlorotic,” and “jaundiced,” adjectives that, ending in the suffix *-ique* in the original French, typify the tendency to categorization employed in techno-determinist and positivist medical lexicons (i.e. *Album Chromolithographique*, 1837 or Jean-Martin Charcot’s Lesson XXVI entitled *Cas de mutisme hystérique chez l’homme*).

It is, therefore, notable that the popular late nineteenth century catchwords “epileptic” and “hysterical” do not appear in Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque*. This is perhaps because the *Album*’s title already implies them. To further explain, the terms epileptic and hysterical had been absorbed into the vernacular, largely due to the popularity of Parisian neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot’s public lectures. At Charcot’s public lectures, patients were hypnotized and made to perform their pathologies for an audience. It is no surprise, therefore, that critics like the aforementioned anarchist Fénéon even employed these terms in writing about art. In Fénéon’s review of the Exposition des Arts Incohérents in 1883 – the exhibition in which Allais is alleged to have first exhibited the white monochrome, that is, the sheet of what Fénéon calls the “absolutely white” bristol paper – the critic classifies less effective works as “clowning with too long a fuse,” whereas successful works are “epileptic elucubrations” (Fénéon, 12).

The narrator in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* – Allais’ double who signs the *Album* “Alphonse Allais” – refers to his prefaces as “spiritual,” and in other published stories, defines himself with the tongue-in-cheek title, “spirituel humoriste” or spiritual humorist (Allais, *Allais...grement*). The same term is repeated to describe the figure of Allais in a series of episodic memoirs written by Allais’ “epileptic” friend, the dance hall artist, Jane Avril (Avril, 63). Avril had been committed to Charcot’s Salpêtrière as an epileptic afflicted with chorea, also known as St. Vito’s dance. According to her memoirs, she was released from the Salpêtrière after the annual *Bal des Folles* organized by the clinic, in which she danced under observation by medical personnel. According to Avril’s account, in the presence of Charcot, the director Lebas released her, authorizing her to return to the clinic, if she wished, for a nursing course that had been organized by Désiré-Magloire Bourneville: the medical establishment’s advocate of so-called “republicanization” and Charcot’s collaborator on the *Iconographie Photographique*, the photographic album of hysteria (Avril, 30). After her release, Avril became famous for her long thin legs and frenzied epileptic dance style. In the color lithograph posters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, she would be immortalized as one of the emblematic figures of Montmartre. In Avril’s memoirs, there is evidence that she may have even collaborated with Allais in a prank staged to create a classic Montmartre tall-tale: in a rumor that Allais and Avril appear to have collaborated in circulating, Allais, like many of the *Moulin Rouge*’s bourgeois patrons, was said to have become infatuated with Avril, chasing her down the streets of Montmartre with a revolver and demanding she marry him (Avril, 65). Avril’s only son, Jean-Pierre, was born in 1897, the same year the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* was published. Of unknown paternity, Jean-Pierre took Avril’s name (Avril, 123). Knowing Allais’ penchant for the pun, the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* may be a case of quadruple entendre: firstly, a reference to April Fool’s Day, the canonical day for

pranks that historians associate with the French medieval tradition of New Year celebrations ending on April first; secondly, a reference to the hysteric “theatre” of Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière and the fashion for epileptic gestures among café-concert performers; thirdly, a reference to the debates between chromolithography and color lithography, the handmade aesthetic of craftsmanship and the machine aesthetic of industrialization; and lastly, a self-reflexive reference to *fumiste* irony as synesthetic synthesis.

A Spoof on Progressive Proofs: Chromolithographic Palette as Parodic Spectrum

In turning the initial pages of color plates in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, the reader of Allais’ chemico-*fumiste* spoof of “mental images” and hypersensitive visions, immediately notes that the order of the *Album*’s progressive proofs does not follow the story recounted by the narrator in Allais’ first “spiritual preface.” Rather than move from the blackish monochrome to the whitish monochrome – as the narrative of Allais’ “anch’io son pittore” tale of artistic inspiration would dictate – the plates begin with the reproduction of fellow *fumiste* Paul Bilhaud’s blackish monochrome, and follows with a bluish plate, a greenish plate, a yellowish plate, a reddish plate, a gray plate, only to end with the whitish plate. Though the *Album* of monochromes does not begin with violet, Allais’ color spectrum does follow the order of visible light within the electromagnetic spectrum, up to a certain point: blue is followed by green, which is then proceeded by yellow and red. The respective ends of black and white, however, and the grey that stands before the whitish monochrome as the penultimate plate, do not follow this logic.

The *Album* is published in a format referred to by printmakers as “in-8 oblong,” which indicates that plates are printed on eight folded sheets, and that the width of the

volume is of greater measure than its length (*Arts Incohérents*, 95). In following the order of folded pages, the reader might then read the plates as printed together on single folios. This would result in the order of black to white, blue to grey, and green to red, with the yellowish monochrome at the center. This reading, however, also provides no significant insight into the *fumiste* logic behind Allais' parodic spectrum.

There is, of course, the possibility that the order of the plates in the *Album* is haphazard. However, two indicators would lead to a reading of the *Album* as a portfolio of chromolithographic progressive proofs. These two indicators are: first, that the "spiritual preface" introduces the *Album* as a portfolio of copper engravings, and second, that the title of the *Album* itself, the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, would seem to suggest this orientation.

As regards the first indicator – that is, the fact that the first "spiritual preface" introduces the *Album* as a portfolio of copper engravings – the ridiculous fib that tries to pass a series of flat color fields off as color etchings seems to indicate a reference to the etching revival that had become popular among artists when the *Album* was printed. This hypothesis would be confirmed by the piece of white paper pasted into the *Album* as the white monochrome, which had debuted at the 1883 Arts Incohérents exhibition as a sheet of bristol paper. The etching revival returned to traditional hand-turned presses and hand-inked plates as a response to the commercialization of machine-printing in chromolithography. As previously mentioned, by the late nineteenth century, chromolithography and color lithography had become two distinct media, with the latter being considered the more precious of the two. What differentiated chromolithography from color lithography? Commercial chromolithography was often associated with reproductions of artworks, while as previously noted in reference to critic André Mellerio's pamphlet *Original Color Lithography*, color lithography asserted itself as a

medium of “autonomous” creations (Kalba, 133 - 146). It was at the 1893 Arts Incoherents exhibition reviewed by Felix Fénéon that Allais first exhibited his white monochrome in response to poet Paul Bilhaud. What was not earlier specified, however, is that this exhibition was curated by Jules Levy, founder of the Arts Incohérents, and promoted as an exhibition of artists who did not know how to draw (*Arts Incohérents*, 5). Considering this play on the French *paragone*, or debate in French Academy aesthetics between the primacy of color or line, it is quite likely that Allais identified this other point of contention amongst artists – the fetishization of the hand in the etching revival and the rhetoricizing of high art status for color lithography – as yet another instance of infectious divisions perpetrated by the Third Republic “microbes of bureaucratization,” this time afflicting aesthetics rather than politics (Allais, *Le Captain Cap*).

But aside from this explicit deception in which Allais intentionally misidentifies the *Album's* lithographies as copper engravings, there is also the more subtle implicit reference to the less precious chromolithography found in Allais' ordering of the plates. As previously noted, it is but for the singular exception of one footnote, that the literature on the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* has ignored the critical fact of materiality in the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*: attention to the *Album* as an object of concrete comedy results in the discovery that both the red plate and the white plate, the final plate of the seven monochrome series, are not prints at all. The white monochrome, *First Communion of Chlorotic Young Girls in Snowy Weather*, is, rather, a small rectangle of white paper pasted into the *Album*. This presence of what appears to be a synecdochic reference to the original bristol paper Allais exhibited at the Arts Incohérents exhibition in 1883, further lends to the sense that the *Album* is meant as a series of progressive proofs in a *fumiste* political aesthetics. Whether the intention of the designer in a lithograph is to

imitate an already extant design or to create one appositely for a print, the process of color lithography always begins with establishing a palette of colors (Hentschel, 125). This is precisely what Allais does in the *Album*. With six or seven separately inked plates, lithographers could achieve images that appeared to count to a total of ten colors in overlay. Since lithographic inks could also be prepared for transparency, veils of red and yellow would leave behind an orange impression, yellow and blue would produce green, red and blue, purple, and so on (Browne, 94). That Allais begins the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* with a blackish monochrome would resonate with certain chromolithographers: if read backwards from the white monochrome, the small rectangle of white paper, to the first plate, the “reproduction” of Paul Bilhaud’s famous absurd “mezzotint” black painting, Allais’ progressive proofs proceed from the white page to a final stone, inked black. In printing *taille-douce* or copper engravings, the definitive manual by Jacques-Christophe Le Blon, *L’Art d’Imprimer les Tableaux* (1756) instructs that the paper first be printed with black, then blue, for shadows, followed by yellow and red. Green could be produced from the transparent overlapping of yellow and blue, and grey from transparent white and black (Le Blon, 105).

Read in what can be called “chromolithographic order” – an industrial arts parody of precious progressive proofs in copper engraving – the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* would, thus, be ordered from last plate to first, from right to left, from black line, to white page, through five colors to inked black stone :

[Mute]	<i>Marche Funèbre Composée Pour Les Funérailles d'Un Grand Homme Sourd</i> Funeral March Composed for the Funerary Rites of a Great Deaf Man
[White]	<i>Première Communion de Jeunes Filles Chlorotiques par un Temps de Neige</i> First Communion of Young Chlorotic Girls in Snowy Weather
[Grey]	<i>Ronde de Pochards Dans le Brouillard</i> A Band of Drunks in the Fog
[Red]	<i>Récolte de la Tomate par des Cardinaux Apoplectiques au Bord de la Mer Rouge</i> Harvest of Tomatoes by Apoplectic Cardinals on the Banks of the Red Sea
[Yellow]	<i>Manipulation de l'Ocre par des Cocus Ictériques</i> Experiments with Ochre by Jaundiced Cuckolds
[Green]	<i>Des Souteneurs, Encore dans la Force de l'Age et le Ventre dans l'Herbe, Boivent de l'Absinthe</i> Pimps, Still in the Prime of Life with their Bellies in the Grass, Drinking Absinthe
[Blue]	<i>Stupeur des Jeunes Recrues Apercevant Pour La Première Fois Ton Azur, O Méditerranée!</i> Stupor of Young Recruits Witnessing for the First Time Your Blue, O Mediterranean!
[Black]	<i>Combat de Nègres Dans Une Cave, Pendant la Nuit (Reproduction du célèbre tableau).</i> Combat of Blacks in A Cellar, During the Night (Reproduction of the famous painting)

Figure 1: Monochromes with translated titles, read in reverse order of their presentation. (A digital version of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* can be consulted at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France at URL: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86263801>)

But what of the red monochrome, the plate which like its white counterpart, is not a field of printed pigment but a swatch of red cloth? When the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* went to print in 1897, the last time a red flag had flown over Paris was when the Commune raised its insurrectionist flag over the entry to the town hall (Pastoureau, 153). In 1870, a year before

the Commune took control of Paris, an aurora borealis had appeared above the city in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War. In the *Journal of the Siege of Paris*, Denis Bingham wrote:

This evening at about eight, *the most magnificent aurora borealis* ever witnessed in these latitudes suddenly illuminated the whole sky round Paris with an exquisite claret tint. The first impression of citizens was some devilry on the part of the enemy; it was supposed that the Prussians had set fire to all the woods round the capital, but it was difficult to explain the tint and the rays of light which traversed the aurora borealis at intervals as if the sun were struggling to burst its way through the deep rose-tinted crown which was suspended over our heads. It was difficult to get citizens to understand that the phenomenon was caused by terrestrial electricity, and that probably neither William, Bismarck, nor Moltke had a finger in it. As soon as the aurora passed away the whole sky cleared up and the huge clouds against which it had rested disappeared. "The stars then shone out," says astronomer De Fonvielle, "with a brilliancy comparable to that which is reserved for the star of France when it shall disengage itself from the hideous Prussian fog." (Bingham, 80-81)

A year later -- when the red flag of the Commune had been burned by the royalists and proponents of the provisional government had been massacred, imprisoned or driven out of France -- the exiled communard Pierre Vesinier published his *Histoire de la Commune de Paris* (The History of the Paris Commune, 1871). The *Histoire* was written from memory, an afterimage of the fall of the Commune, recorded while Vesinier was in London thinking back to impressions of the massacres during Bloody Week. In his recollections, he again invokes the image of that field of magnetic light, the aurora borealis, as if to draw a metonymic connection between the Prussian invaders and the *Versillais* royalist traitors:

The last defenders of the Commune expected with every moment to see their barricades taken, their final positions invaded, by the troops of Versailles. They never thought they would see tomorrow. A terrifying and magnificent glow illuminated the night, projecting to the north and southwest *with the splendors of the aurora-borealis*, we never saw more intense focus (bright jets ... showers of sparks ... formidable explosions ... a huge column of flames and smoke rose up to the clouds, shining with a phosphorescent glow, it looked like a huge tongue of flame licking the sky. We were told afterwards that this extraordinary flame came from the

corpses of the unfortunate defenders of Paris who the savage Versailles had piled in Champ de Mars in large trenches and who they were burning, basting in petrol. Perhaps this is true, and we would not be shocked to learn that those who falsely accused the Commune the of setting fire to Paris with petrol, had instead been the first to use this powerful ally of destruction, not only to burn the bodies of their enemies, but also to spread the fire by using petrol bombs, a fact proven in the third war council at Versailles, by Assi and his lawyer (...) (Vesinier, 407-408)

The Color of Concrete Comedy and the Monochroidal Artist

A hundred years after the printing of the *Album Primo Avrilesque*, it was reported that new trends in critical theory had “reopened the question of the purity of the visual in modernism” (Jay, 160). Also in the 1990s, the Musée d’Orsay staged its first exhibition dedicated to the *fumiste* Arts Incohérents and staged “reconstitutions” of three works by Allais. The three works were listed at the end of the exhibition’s modest catalogue as “monochroides”: a white sheet of bristol paper served as the reconstitution of *First Communion of Young Chlorotic Girls in Snowy Weather*, dated 1883; a piece of red cloth served as the reconstitution of *Harvest of Tomatoes by Apoplectic Cardinals on the Banks of the Red Sea (Aurora Borealis Effect)*, dated 1884; and a page of sheet musiserved for the reconstitution of *Great Sorrows are Mute - Incoherent Funerary March*, dated 1884 (*Arts Incohérents*, 95).

The three monochroide reconstitutions at the Musée d’Orsay can be considered part of a trend in historical revisionism, invented traditions in critical theory for art history. Among these invented traditions, another artist-writer, Victor Burgin, contributed significantly. Like his fellow revisionists, Burgin’s work succeeded in emphasizing the importance of what had been a “hitherto undervalued countertendency”: an “explicitly antivisual impulse that prepared the way for postmodernism” (Jay, 161). It was by way of analyzing “the modernist fetishization of *sight*” and refocusing on “the impulse to

reinstate the living body,” that authors of critical theory like Burgin were able to write works from the early twentieth century previously “relegated to marginal roles in history,” back into the avantgarde (Jay, 161). Thus, in this revisionist impulse, Marcel Duchamp – previously considered a reactionary by a generation of artist-writers like Donald Judd, influenced by Clement Greenberg – became instead a “subversive presence”: the hero of a “postperspectivalist renewal of vision” and the restoration of what was termed the “desiring body” in the 1980s” (Jay, 162).

Though Alphonse Allais certainly enjoyed increased attention from art historians during the 1990s – with the *Album Primo Avrilesque* even featured as the subject of several in-depth studies in French (Bertrand; Riout) – no such great revision of the marginal role in history of the *incohérent* or the *fumiste* was ever asserted. In fact, one might go so far as to say that such a revision of late nineteenth century eccentric humorism was adamantly refused with great militancy. A review of the relevant literature indicates that the driving idea that motivated this militant refusal was the notion that humor cannot be innovative. Following the argument of writers like Herman Hesse and Henri Bergson, this position always ended studies of Allais’ work by reminding readers that humor never generates new forms. Humor could never result in aesthetic innovation and Allais was, after all, a humorist, not an artist (Defays). Such claims ignore what the reluctant genius of “postperspectivalist revisionism” – the, at times, eerily clairvoyant Marcel Duchamp – could very well have been ironizing when he left his biographer with the following death mask of sorts: Marcel Duchamp, the emblematic artist of the contemporary conceptual moment, reading Alphonse Allais and laughing into his last breath.¹⁴

¹⁴ Art historian Sheldon Nodelman brought this incident to the author’s attention in a conversation about Marcel Duchamp’s relationship to Allais.

Indeed, the same revisionist impulse that has been credited with recovering Duchamp from the margins of history, has also been extended to extreme consequences: a revisionist history that actually goes so far as to invent a tradition that “pit[s] body against the eye” (Jay, 161). In taking up the artist-writer Victor Burgin as representative of widely-read postperspectivalist critical theory in the late twentieth century, one might follow this genealogy of alternative histories into the present, from the British Burgin to the North American artist-writer David Robbins. In 2010, Robbins proposed his own revisionist history entitled *Concrete Comedy: An Alternative History of Twentieth-Century Comedy*. Robbins alternative history is an example of postperspectival revisionism in its logical extremist extension: pitting body against eye, body against mind.

In his late writings, Roland Barthes theorized bathmology as the analysis of the effect of reflexivity in language: “I write: that is the first degree of language. Then I write that I write: that is language to the second degree” (Force, 187). The definition that Wisconsin-based artist David Robbins gives for his alternative history of comic objectivity, or “concrete comedy,” can be considered a form of bathmology: “concrete comedy is for real,” Robbins writes, “it is non-fiction comedy, the comedy of things done for real, of things really done, and it yields not funny lines but, instead, sophisticated existential gestures and comic objects. Expanded to its logical limit, this non-fiction comedy becomes a comic life” (Robbins, 23). For Robbins, foregrounding this behavioral essence in comedy is necessary to emphasizing that:

the ‘medium’ for comedy isn’t paint or film or music or writing, the medium is us – what we do, and the way we do it. Comedy is a behavioral enterprise that trespasses contextual borders while remaining utterly consistent with itself. Using human behavior as its currency, comedy proposes, and on rare occasions embodies, an alternative physics of human and material relations (Robbins, 23).

Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo Avrilesque* is a refractive comic object: a bathmologic work of concrete comedy. It reflects the effects of reflexivity in the playful language of the *loufoque*, the prankster of the post-Commune period known as the *fumiste* and the *incoherent*. The focus of Part Two of this thesis has been to reconsider the ways in which the *Album Primo Avrilesque* worked as an entryist provocation. The entryism of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* is a deconstructivist infiltration into concomitant phenomena, including the ideological posturing that drove the development of new technologies for the diffusion of images, and of biopolitical regimes that facilitated the psychopathologization of everyday life. The result of Allais' entryist provocations is a profound socio-political commentary on color as ideological construct, predating the canonical monochromes in art history, and setting the tone for a political aesthetics of melancholic irony.

The publication of David Robbins' *Concrete Comedy* by Pork Salad Press in 2010 was a significant event in the history of contemporary artist-writers for whom Alphonse Allais should be considered an important point of reference. Robbins' volume was the result of ten years of drafting and also involved teaching an annual intensive seminar on its topic to young artists enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago (Robbins, 6-9). Though the reading of Allais proposed in this thesis challenges some of Robbins' assertions, it does so not to *criticize* the framework he established, but rather to *critique* it. The distinction between these two approaches can be found in the attitudes that compel them: whereas the former is antagonistic, the latter is agonistic; whereas the former is destructive, the latter is deconstructive. While *criticism* is a scavenging that picks its subject apart to the point of paralysis, *critique* is custodial and preens to permit for new branching.

The main premise that Robbins' articulates for his alternative history of comedy is that "speech" and "gesture" constitute different ways of being in the world (Robbins, 21). His intention is to refocus the study of comedy on comic gesture, on an "impact" that "derives from the difference between saying and doing" (Robbins, 20). Robbins understands "doing" as "unconstrained by the rigid behavioral agreements on which speech must rely": "doing is the story of the body negotiating the physical world, (...) in the comedy of doing, the body builds a world": this world construction may "take place unseen, entirely "offstage" and so exist only in the residue of an object or artifact: a comic object" (Robbins, 21).

The consequence of the dichotomy that Robbins sets up between speech and gesture creates a blind spot among instances of concrete comedy that materialize a more complex dialectic. In fact, while Allais' *Album Primo Avrilesque* is mentioned in Robbins' book, it happens to figure in the alternative history of concrete comedy as a mere necessary mention. In studies that propose to survey the way forms of art, understood as "conceptual," have treated color, the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* also receives the same kind of obligatory gloss (Temkin).

The comic objects of Robbins' alternative history suffer from a certain decoloration or conceptual grayscaling. The objective of Robbins alternative history of concrete comedy is to "direct our attention to action, to gesture, to materiality," "displacing articulation onto action is essential to concrete comedy's special promise," and yet Robbins' 2010 alternative history of art reasserts, in reversal, the dichotomy theorized by Charles Le Brun in the late seventeenth century. For Le Brun, in the work of the artist, the intellectual or theoretical design of speech became the practical design of drawing in which neither of the two previous iterations – the intellectual or the theoretical – needed color "to express the very passions of the soul" (except that is "for

the representation of redness and pallor” of emotion) (Roque, 57). One possible response to Robbins’ unconscious return to Le Brun is to follow the suggestion of art historian George Roque: that a new equivalence, “color is to drawing as writing is to speech,” might provide a way to denaturalize the surreptitious ideology of such common sense oppositions (Roque, 55). In the “shifting of alliances” that Roque proposes, color, like writing, is also “susceptible to “grammatical” analysis, to a break-down into elementary traits or strokes”: Roque, thus, asks that we think of color as sharing a common ground with writing” (Roque, 59). This maneuver relates the age-old dispute between the “feminine” immorality of color and the “masculine” ethics of drawing in painting, to philosopher Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of the idea that “writing constitutes the sublation of speech” (qtd. in Roque, 55). Roque asserts that this Derridean theoretical move forces us to develop methods of analysis that no longer posit any “medium” – whether writing, drawing, speech or color – as “instruments”, but rather as “trace” (Roque, 59). In semiotic terms, Roque encourages a reading of color as an icono-plastic sign, that is, a sign that both “says” and “does”: both a “plan of content” and a “plan of expression” (Roque, 59).

The consequences of the icono-plastic treatment of color that Roque proposes reverberate through the entire project of analysis. In an icono-plastic ontology all studies are forced to explicitly negotiate the balance between “doing” and “saying,” because all images as icono-plastic signs are understood as conceived through the construction of an ideological position. Roque ends his essay “Writing/Drawing/Color” with a conclusion that is particularly resonant with the case of the *Album Primo-Avrilesque*: he turns the reader’s attention to the “importance of writing for ‘color’ painters like Van Gogh or Delacroix, in whose work color indeed seems to go hand in hand with writing.”

Appropriately, he leaves the reader with an ellipsis: “henceforth other configurations may be emerging...” (Roque, 61-62)

The “emerging” “configuration” proposed in this thesis has been that of the color of concrete comedy in Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque*. Part Two of this thesis has proposed that the figure that Allais calls the monochroidal artist should be written into the alternative history of art Robbins calls “concrete comedy.” Rather than understand the *Album Primo-Avrilesque* as, what Robbins calls, the *hint* of a revolution to come, the objective of this study has been to assert that the forward-looking avant-garde Robbins portrays as taking form a decade or two after Allais’ Post-Commune period, was not forward-looking at all. This forward-looking avantgarde was, rather, a hindsight aestheticization of political aesthetics materialized by the *fumiste* humorist Alphonse Allais and his participation in the Incoherent Arts. The play of the *fumiste* is indeed the “kind of politics” Robbins defines as “the politics of the independent unconstrained wit who served not the status quo, but rather, comedy”: a political aesthetics rather than an aesthetic politics (Robbins, 25). But what does it mean for politics to serve the aesthetics of comedy?

This rather vague statement is better clarified by a quote Robbins’ cites from historian of cabaret culture David Grojnowski’s definitive study of the kind of comic gesture that Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque* exemplifies:

the *fumiste* avoids discussion of ideas, he does not set up a specific target, he adopts a posture of withdrawal that makes all distinctions hazy, and he internalizes Universal Stupidity by postulating the illusory nature of values and of the Beautiful, whence his denial of the established order and of official hierarchies. From his point of view, which is that of the sage, the dandy, the observer and the skeptic, everything has the same value, everything is one and the same thing (qtd. in Robbins, 26).

It is because Robbins proposes that concrete comedy “turn the sound off,” that his particular “attention to action, to gesture, to materiality” ends up excluding color (Robbins, 20). Apparently, if “silencing speech” is “essential to concrete comedy’s special promise” then so is greyscaling color (Robbins, 20). Allais’ *Album Primo-Avrilesque* would have provided Robbins with a way out of the very art historical blindspot (or, to pun with the terms of this thesis, mute colored-hearing) that Robbins set out to undermine. Instead, Robbins alternative history turns art history inside out and then inside again, replicating the status quo with clichés that have become commonplace. “Allais’ series empties pictures of all visual illusionism while filling them with its verbal counterpart,” writes Robbins: “that flat green rectangle isn’t just a flat green rectangle, it’s a scene (...). Severely reductive and at the same time playful *these lithographs play less in the eye than in the mind*. They are objects that speak to the emergence of a conceptual approach to object” (Robbins, 25). Allais’ parodic “progressive proofs” of afterimages offer art history a way out of this blindspot in their invention of the tradition of the “monochroidal artist”: a chemico-*fumiste* visionary of posthumous gestures (Allais, *Album*).

What is a monochroidal artist? In a narrative biography that appears in one of the *Arts Incohérents* exhibitions organized by Jules Levy, Allais calls himself the “Monochroidal artist. Student of the masters of the twentieth century” (qtd. in Mourey, 55 and Riout, 170). A monochroidal artist might, therefore, be understood as an artist whose work anticipates the developments of its future worthy interlocutors. It accomplishes this to such an extent that the work makes its master into the student of its own students. Etymologically, the word “monochroidal” is a reference to the monochrome, or rather, to the act of making something a single color. The correct way, however, to write this term, referencing the monochrome, would have been

“monochromoidal.” Allais chooses instead to compress the adjective and eliminate the “mo” from its tail end. This “folding” of a word on itself is a technique that Allais employs fairly frequently in his writing. Another example of it can be found in a narrative biography Allais provided for an *Arts Incohérents* exhibition catalog published in 1884: in the biography, he writes that he is “né à Honfleur de parents français, mais honnetes,” born in Honfleur of French, but honest, parents (Mourey, 55). In this phrase, Allais puns on a parallelism between “Honfleur” and “honnètes”.

A quick search in online science and natural history databases reveals several disambiguations that the chemico-*fumiste* Alphonse Allais would no doubt have appreciated: from the *monochoidea*, defined as a family of nematode, to the *monochroide*, a genus of moth (*AccessScience; Natural History Museum*). It is most likely, however, that the invention of the adjective *monochroïdale* was architected between *monochromoïde* – a neologism for a form that is like a monochrome – and the anatomical term *choroïde*, a stratum of lining inside the eye that connects the retina and the sclera (Briere, 5-6). Though not as common a term of ocular anatomy as the retina or the cornea, the choroid could certainly have been familiar to Allais through nineteenth century medical reports of glaucoma (Briere). As the son of a pharmacist who, like any son of a good bourgeois, had pursued the patrilineal studies in the medical field, Allais could easily have encountered atlases and treatises on ocular anatomy and visual pathologies. Diagrams featuring the choroid can be found in nineteenth century anatomical treatises for ophthalmologists and in medical atlases that diagnose diseases in the eye (Adelon; Briere; Diderot; Lauth; Perrin). In glaucoma, the retina begins to atrophy as a result of inadequate blood flow through the choroid, resulting in glare, visual field loss and a progressive blurring and darkening of peripheral vision. Thus, moths, nematodes and glaucomic vision are the emblems that constitute the allegory of the

monochroidal artist; the artist whose flittering, slithering blindness is a trick of vision, a hypersensitivity in which subtle gestures briefly expand the spectrum of visibility to blindspots of the margins, all the while keeping these peripheral objects out of sight so as to protect them from being canonized as cultural capital.

Epilogue: “Neuroscientists Avoid Three Things like a Vampire Avoids Garlic...”

For the academic symposium “The Cognitive Neuroscience of Synesthesia” held in San Francisco in the spring of 2002, neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran presented a paper entitled “The Emergence of the Human Mind: Some Clues from Synesthesia” (*Synesthesia*, viii). Eleven years later, Ramachandran would give a similar talk based on the same material, this time at a San Diego conference entitled “Is the Human Mind Unique?” The twenty-four minute presentation was introduced with the hyperbolic title, “Inter-modular Interactions, Metaphor and the “Great Leap.”” (*CARTA*)

The objective of Ramachandran’s original 2002 presentation was to assert that the “arbitrary links between seemingly unrelated perceptual entities like colors and number” considered characteristic in synesthesia, could be equated with metaphor, which Ramachandran defined as “making links between seemingly unrelated conceptual realms” (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 169). Likewise, Ramachandran’s 2012 talk foregrounded the connection between synesthesia and metaphor as possible proof that “some high level concepts are probably anchored in specific brain regions” (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 169). If the rhetorical mode in metaphor could be proven as aligned with the perceptual mode that materialized in synesthesia, experiments could, Ramachandran proposed, lead to a revolution in understanding “human origins”: namely, a “detailed psychophysics” – from genetic factors to brain anatomy – which would allow

neuroscience to “probe the laws of interactions between brain maps” that “hold the key to understanding” and “the emergence of abstract thought” (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 184). In the presentation, Ramachandran defined this “emergence of abstract thought” as a driving principle in the “great leap forward,” the period between seventy-five thousand to one hundred thousand years ago when some scientists claim tool use, fire, language, theory of mind and culture were developed by humanoid animals (*CARTA*).

In the same years that Ramachandran presented this suggestion that neuroscience link the cognitive study of psychophysics in synesthesia and metaphor, artists Liam Gillick, John Baldessari and Lawrence Weiner discussed the abuse of metaphor among artists in a staged conversation organized in Zurich. During the panel discussion, it was noted that metaphor was, in fact, frequently used to repress social critique (Gaines). Gillick noted the example of the use of the phrase “war on terror” and, in his commentary on the staged conversation, artist Charles Gaines specifically noted the example “desert storm.” “Desert Storm” had been used to identify the military operation in Iraq led by the administration of U.S. President George H.W. Bush in 1991 (Gaines). The metaphor “desert storm” served to characterize the Persian Gulf War as an inevitable force of nature in an image of silent stillness and detached isolation.

Ramachandran’s suggestion that researchers of psychophysics link metaphor and synesthesia is based on the hypotheses that, first, “high level concepts” may be localized in brain areas, and second, that there may be a genetic predisposition among certain individuals for high-level conceptual work (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 170; 184). Ramachandran writes these hypotheses through two key historical figures – the eugenicist Francis Galton and the Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler: his fusion of their work leaves an undeniable trace of new-liberal ideology in his “phantom” and “tell-

tale” approach to the biopolitical concept he calls the “brain” (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 148; 171).

In an initial slight oversight, the published paper of Ramachandran’s talk misrepresents Galton as the first scientist to have reported on the condition called synaesthesia (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 171). As the previous art historical study has shown, historians of science assert that it was actually not until the French psychologist Jules Millet published his pamphlet on *audition colorée*, or colored hearing phenomenon, that the term synaesthesia was actually used to identify what was called “undifferentiated perception” (Dann, 20; 95). As regards Köhler, Ramachandran’s talk references a 1929 “takete-maluma” experiment in which Köhler had attempted to show that sound was expressed by non-acoustical percepts. The subjects of Köhler’s study matched a rounded amoeba-like figure to low-pitched vowel sounds, and an angular asterisk form to high-pitched vowel sounds (Berthele, 283). Ramachandran uses Köhler’s experiment to design a study of his own, which he reports to have administered in a college classroom. The study is called the “kiki and bouba” phenomenon (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 171). Aside from staging the “kiki and bouba” study in a classroom, an environment that would not have been well controlled, Ramachandran further simplifies Köhler’s experiments by devising names in which the same consonant repeats twice, thus lacking interference from another consonant (i.e. whereas, Köhler’s “takete” contained both the consonants t and k, “kiki” only contains the consonant k). The consonants in Ramachandran’s study also actually resemble the contours of the abstract forms he used to test his students, a factor which would encourage classroom subjects – “suggestible people” – to reproduce the results Ramachandran wanted to see.

As has been stated by psychologists who have studied Köhler's experiments, "provocative as such examples might be, it was not at all clear how one could use them to distinguish "objective" relations from culturally determined attributional properties of specific languages" (Ash, 316). Ramachandran resolves this problem by inventing a history for Köhler's experiments that claims they were conducted among "prelinguistic peoples" (Ramachandran and Hubbard, 170). According to Ramachandran, Köhler conducted his experiments while stationed on Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa, occupied by the Spanish with colonial settlements. In *Gestalt Psychology*, Köhler, however, does not provide any such details about his control group for the experiment. In footnotes, Kohler cites another psychologist, the Soviet Dimitri Usnadze, whose original experiment from which the "takete-maluma" test was derived, had subjects select a suitable name from among a list of seven, for six "nonsense figures" (Köhler, 224; Levelt, 441). At Tenerife, Köhler had worked until 1920 as the second director of an anthropoid research station of the Prussian Academy of Sciences where he had conducted his now famous experiments on learning, with a favored subject: an ape named Sultan (Ash, 148). The objective of research at the station was to "compare the gestures, language comprehension, color perception, and other behavior of various anthropoid species, to determine their respective places on the developmental scale on the way to humans" (Ash, 148). All the conditions for experiments were deliberately constructed: the apes were not native to the Tenerife, rather it was the German colonial government in Cameroon that had consigned the chimpanzees to the island for study before the Triple Entente entered into the first World War (Ash, 148). In both the 1929 and 1947 publications of Köhler's *Gestalt Psychology*, the "takete-maluma" study does not appear to be associated with Köhler's time in colonial Tenerife, and Köhler never identifies how the subjects from the study, who he refers to as "most

people,” were selected (Köhler, 224). There appears to be no evidence to support the claim that the studies were conducted on “pre-linguistic peoples” as Ramachandran asserts. In the relevant literature on Köhler’s study, it is now considerably difficult to determine what the original parameters for Köhler’s observations were, as many references use Ramachandran’s work as their primary source for information.

It has been suggested that Köhler – who claimed he was unable to leave Tenerife when World War I began ten months following his arrival on the island – may have been involved in espionage activities (*A History of Modern Psychology*, 269). These activities would have involved Köhler tracking Allied ship movements and broadcasting relevant information from a powerful transmitter on the roof of a house overlooking the Atlantic from a high cliff (*A History of Modern Psychology*, 269). In a statement that resonates with monochordal artist Alphonse Allais’ support of Captain Cap’s farcical political campaign against “microbes of bureaucracy,” Köhler attacked positivism and behaviorism in the 1930s as “an evil that destroys young energies as surely as does tuberculosis” (Jewett, 166).

Yet, despite what have been called “the epistemological battles around “science and values that would consume (...) scientific democrats [like Köhler] in the 1930s,” the *Gestalt* concepts theorized by Köhler came to be incorporated into the “neobehaviorism” or “purposive behaviorism” that developed in the same intellectual climate as the theorization of new-liberalism (Jewett, 166; M).¹⁵ “Neobehaviorism” adopted Köhler’s conclusions from the Tenerife experiments on apes, that learning involved more than trial and error, and that “because experiential situations never recurred in exactly the same form, (...) trial and error was useless as a guide to behavior” (Jewett, 166). In a

¹⁵ For more on the development of new liberalism in the 1930s, see *The Road from Mont Pelerin : The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, 12 ; 26 ; 45-46.

gesture that resembles Ramachandran's own fusion of theories promoted by Galton and experiments designed by Köhler, "purposive behaviorists" posited that learning occurred through a process called "inventive ideation" (Jewett, 167). In inventive ideation, "mental symbols and concepts" were used to "predict effects of broad categories of stimuli, and thus (...) address situations that had never before been experienced in their particulars" (Jewett, 167). The American psychologist Edward C. Tolman called this process "sign-gestalt formation, refinement, selection or invention" (qtd. in Jewett, 167). It is notable that a former student of Köhler, when asked to place his professor politically, linked him with the party of Gustav Stresemann (Ash, 293). As popular German protest songs indicate, Stresemann was considered by many to be a slick opportunist of typical new liberal ilk, "willing to make deals with anyone" (Robb, 71)

In his analysis of mental processes by introspection, Galton had designed a questionnaire to explore why some people seemed to have "stronger visual memory" than others (Bulmer, 32). Galton's questionnaire reportedly asked respondents to provide accounts of "the picture that rose to the mind's eye" when they thought of the breakfast table that they had sat at to eat earlier that morning (Bulmer, 32). Galton would report that scientists were mostly "completely defective" in the faculty that allowed for pictures to be recalled to the "mind's eye" (Bulmer, 32). He based this assertion on instances of subjects who questioned his very presupposition that such a thing as a "mind's eye" and "mental images" existed, and were not simply "a figure of speech" (Bulmer, 32). Galton dismissed the questions of his peers and equated their lack of mental imagery to "a color-blind man, who has not discerned his defect has, of the nature of color" (Bulmer, 33). Galton, who identified himself as a synesthetic sensitive of sorts, came to the conclusion that the "perception of sharp mental pictures" was

“antagonistic to highly generalized and abstract thought, especially when carried on by verbal argument” (Bulmer, 33).

Biographical studies report that unlike his distant relative Charles Darwin, when Galton visited the women’s slave market in Constantinople in 1840, he showed no emotional reaction (Bulmer, 39). In a book he published about his travels in South West Africa entitled *Tropical South Africa* (1853), Galton recounts how he devised a way of taking measurements of the Khoisan wife of one of his sub-interpreters: “I profess to be a scientific man, and was exceedingly anxious to obtain accurate measurements of her shape, but there was a difficulty in doing this,” Galton writes (qtd. in Bulmer, 13). In order to make the measurements of “the beautiful outline that her back afford[ed]” from an appropriate distance, Galton used a sextant and then worked out the results of his calculations by trigonometry and logarithms (qtd. in Bulmer, 13). These accounts recall the case of Sara Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who had been sold as a slave to a Dutch man and was then exhibited as a “specimen” of “sexualized savagery” in France (Sharpley-Whiting). Called the “Hottentot Venus,” when Baartman died in 1815, her genitals and brain were placed on display by anatomists at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris (Scully; Holmes; Sharpley-Whiting).

Galton was a social and political conservative who joined the Anti-Suffrage League at the end of his life despite the fact that his eugenics laboratory employed a number of women. It has been said that Galton “developed his eugenics program as a kind of secular religion” (Bulmer, 38). Eugenics was the name Galton gave to the “science” he proposed for “hereditary improvement of the human race by selective breeding” (Bulmer, 79). Galtonian principles were the basis on which sterilization policies in more than thirty countries were promoted by eugenicist movements in the early twentieth century. These policies had a significant effect on individual lives in

Britain, the United States of America and Germany: in the 1930s, the average rate of sterilizations per year in the United States was three thousand (Bulmer, 89). In the early twenty-first century, the biotechnology industry – whose principal hubs are Boston, San Francisco and San Diego (the last city being where Ramachandran was still based in 2013; the first, the city where he initially proposed that psychophysics link the study of synesthesia with metaphor) – has reintroduced the determination of genetic characteristics for an individually determined eugenics of “designer babies” in embryo selection (Bulmer, 101).

This art historical study of a late nineteenth century object of concrete comedy, Alphonse Allais' *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, ends with the image of the emblematic “figures” Francis Galton and Wolfgang Köhler, invoked by entrepreneurial neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran. In a determinedly political approach to synesthesia, Ramachandran proposes a new-liberal naturalization of metaphor as a material logic in the origins of the human brain that led to the “emergence of abstract thought.” This epilogue has attempted to demonstrate the important socio-historical function that a grammar of *Nachleben*, or an afterlife of images, can serve in shaping early twenty-first century epistemological questions. Ramachandran began his 2013 presentation in San Diego on synesthesia and metaphor with the flippant remark: “some of you may have guessed that this slide was provided to me by [my collaborator] just an hour ago” (CARTA). This seemingly benign passing nonchalance – in relation to the performative capacity and ideological charge of images in a slide-show – by one of the foremost promoters of the new field, neuroesthetics, is a pinhole to an underside: it is indicative of why Ramachandran and his collaborators have convinced themselves that an “answer” to “mysterious” images must be constructed through an image of the brain as authoritarian command center. “As a rule,” philosopher Slavoj Žižek notes in his

promotional blurb for philosopher Catherine Malabou's *What Should We Do With Our Brain* (2008), "neuroscientists avoid three things like a vampire avoids garlic: any links to European metaphysics, political engagement and reflection upon the social conditions which gave rise to their science": the political aesthetics of entryism proposed for an ironic neurasthentic neuroesthetics hypnotizes neuroscience into a confrontation with all three.

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