8

View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture.

title:

A Model Desert. The Gulf War, Landscape, and the Pensive Image

author:

Krzysztof Pijarski

source:

View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture 8 (2014)

URL:

http://widok.ibl.waw.pl/index.php/one/article/view/254/467

publisher:

Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences
Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw
View. Foundation for Visual Culture

Krzysztof Pijarski

A Model Desert. The Gulf War, Landscape, and the Pensive Image[1]

> There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization.
>
> *Werner Herzog, Lessons of Darkness*[2]

> Ultimately, Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks.
>
> *Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida*[3]

I. "Il pleut, mon âme, il pleut, mais il pleut des yeux morts"

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (VII. And a Smoke Arose Like the Smoke From a Furnace), Documentary, 1992

"The collapse of the stellar universe will occur like creation - in grandiose splendor." It is with this supposed quote from Blaise Pascal that Werner Herzog opens his 1992 *Lektionen in Finsternis*, establishing from the very beginning its distinctly apocalyptic tone.[4] Herzog's documentary takes us to "a planet in our solar system" to witness its doom in a war about the causes of which we will remain in the dark. Dedicating to the war itself just about forty seconds ("The war lasted only a few hours. Afterwards, everything was different," Herzog comments in a voice-over accompanying green night-vision landscapes lit up by uncountable dots of missile engines), he focuses on its aftermath instead.

Starting with an image of vultures against the bare sky, in long traveling shots, we are shown bones on burned soil, abandoned vehicles, destroyed structures, and the planet's surface from above – a barren landscape, bearing the marks of battle.

From there on, the air only gets thicker: the interweaving of the portraits of a traumatized woman and a child who had lost their speech with spectacular vistas – long aerial shots of the earth spitting fire, the face of the land ablaze and clouded in black smoke, lakes of oil mirroring the sky – amounts to a true "lesson of darkness." And when, in the film's culminating moment, we find ourselves in the throes of an absolutely spectacular shot, suspended between vast oil lakes and thick clouds of smoke, with burning oil fields on the horizon, all this to the accompaniment of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* ("Interlude – Dawn" from the Prologue), there can be no doubt that Herzog is indulging in the aesthetics of the sublime. One would be very much tempted to call it romantic if not for Herzog himself, who vehemently rejects such affinities.[5]

Needless to say, it is exactly the film's visual and affective exuberance that incited the violent reaction against it during the Berlin International Film Festival in 1992, when apparently the whole auditorium stood up against Herzog for "'aestheticizing' the horror" and being "dangerously authoritarian" to the point of spitting at him while he was walking down the aisle of the theater.[6] The horror in question was, of course, the 1991 Gulf War, the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm. The fact that this information is entirely withheld from the viewer, decontextualizing the war, contributed to the indignant response.

What Herzog had to say against these accusations goes along the lines of his later "Minnesota Declaration" where he calls for a deeper, poetic truth in cinema, against the superficial "truth of accountants."[7] The aim of making this film, of the stylization, was to take the images of Kuwait's burning oil fields, which everybody had been looking at incessantly in the wake of the war, and try to grant them the power to "penetrate deeper than the CNN footage ever could," because of its "tabloid style."[8]

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (VII. And a Smoke Arose Like the Smoke From a Furnace), Documentary, 1992

Interestingly, it was a postage-stamp-sized image of the Kuwaiti desert marked by missiles from French Mirages and published by *Time* that stopped Sophie Ristelhueber, already known for her then-controversial work on Beirut, right in her tracks.[9] Obsessed by traces,[10] she decided to go to Kuwait. After some hardships– being refused a visa, having trouble finding a helicopter or plane to shoot from–she

[11]

finally started work in October 1991, months after the war had ended.[11] Much too late, at least by the standards of photographic journalism. What came out is, as Mark Mayer aptly noted, "mostly a long catalogue of weirdly parted sands."[12] At the same time, to describe *Fait in this manner*—the work's title bespeaking both the "fact" of war and its being already "done"—would be to neglect the haunting beauty of these images. The seventy-one pictures in golden beiges and blacks or silvery-warm black-and-white show aerial views of Kuwait's punctured and scarred landscapes, alternating with "portraits" of abandoned objects—vehicles, weapons, ammunition, crates, mattresses, and also shoes, hardly discernible from under the thick blanket of oil and sand that covers them. Their peculiar exhibition form—enlarged to 100 x 127 cm on 5 cm thick, gilded frames that produce a halo around them, and hung in rows—further adds to the precious and abstract quality of the single images. Naturally, Ristelhueber was also accused more than once of aestheticizing violence and producing beautiful, abstracted (decontextualized) images. The artist's answer to this kind of critique would be that there seems to be a confusion at the heart of such an argument, the confusion of aesthetization and "the fact of finding a form for an idea."[13]

Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #31*, 1992, color photograph, c-print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

In what follows I shall take this distinction and try to see what the two works, in spite of their abstract and decontextualized character, can tell us about war in general, and the Gulf War and its meaning in particular. In short, what do we learn from Kuwait's "embarrassed landscapes"?[14] The broader questions I will address are the ones which ask about power of images to reflect the world, as well as the relationship of war and what Walter Benjamin called mechanical reproduction (that is lens-based media). But why focus on the First Gulf War, one might ask, when the second one, namely the 2003 invasion of Iraq, is already over? Especially that what separates these events are the attacks of 9/11 and the "war on terror," in themselves watersheds for the understanding of contemporary conflict? To begin with, it seems that the First Gulf War is important for understanding the dynamic of the second—in this sense the Gulf War should maybe come to be seen as a double structure, one of deferred action so to say, the one impossible to understand without the other. Further, I will be searching for a certain kind of

insight that the two works in question specifically, and images more generally, can grant us. One that is not so much the product of their reflexivity—of the image's folding back on itself and its conditions of possibility—but rather of the movement of thought incited by them.

I will try to argue that what both Ristelhueber and Herzog are offering us are examples of *pensive* images; images that—instead of merely showing how something *looked like*—force us to question what we actually see. To this end, I will begin by trying to make operative the notion of what Roland Barthes called the "pensive" image while at the same time going back to the problematic status of the war photograph, not only in the sense that a photograph of war and suffering always raises ethical questions, but also because war as an object of photography problematizes what ultimately transpires in a photograph. I will also try to show how the artists in question work with the oppressive structure of aerial photography, rendering it problematic as the obverse of the romantic landscape, how they produce an analogy of landscape and body to mitigate the violence of photographing the other, how they activate scale as a central device for rendering photography reflective, and how, finally, both *Fait* and *Lessons of Darkness* can be seen as laying bare a dismal aspect of contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

II. "It is difficult to get the news from poems"

Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #53*, 1992, color photograph, c-print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

Photographic representations of war have always been a fraught terrain, forcing the ethical question of "regarding the pain of others." The pressure of photography's "ethical paradox" (which, as Roland Barthes claims, stemmed from the coexistence of denotative and connotative elements in any picture[15]), moved Susan Sontag to deny photographs the power to reflect the world, reserving that power to narrative, and to claim for them the realm of affective address: what photographs *can* do, is move, or haunt us.[16] While the reasons for her to make this distinction are perfectly understandable—she was writing against the idea of the transparency of the photographic image, of

photography as universal language—it implies a double claim: first that written accounts cannot haunt us and second, that photographs are not interpretations. Judith Butler tries to counter this implication by pointing to the fact that each photograph is an act of framing, and hence an interpretation—"coercive and consensually established"—that needs to be read and understood, especially in times of war. Otherwise, we will remain blind to the exclusions performed by such framing.[17] It should be noted that what Butler refers to is the prevalent use of embedded reporting during ongoing armed conflicts, a development that complicates the ethical and political issues of representing war even more.

Yet the stance adopted by Butler—and many theorists of photography, to be sure[18] —to look beyond the frame, is above all a way to deal with images that have already been made. But can we imagine pictures that would be able to somehow internalize this logic of framing, allowing it to transpire from the picture itself, to confront or to sidetrack this issue of rhetoric and address, in favor of something more obtuse, and at the same time more thoughtful? In Roland Barthes' words, what would it mean to produce "pensive" images of war? To produce images that "think," that incite reflection instead of posing the need to deconstruct their frame?[19]

This is the path Karen Beckman chose in her attempt at "saving" Judith Butler's account of Susan Sontag; saving in the sense of not allowing for a slippage into a straightforward denial, or disavowal, of the photograph's visuality in favor of discursive framing. "What might we gain from putting aside, if only temporarily, the texts that anchor photographs, that hide from view those things we cannot know or understand," she asks.[20] It is exactly these stubbornly illegible things, the moments that keep resisting, or diverting, our capacity to transform them into narrative prose that force us to confront the untamable ambiguity of the visual. To acknowledge this indeterminacy means to recognize the importance of analogical readings (something is *like* something), of the *as if*, rather than of identificatory ones (something *is* something), to confront the question of how such readings can remain "faithful" to the picture that gave rise to them (and the context, in which the picture was made). Beckman advocates for a turning away from attempts at making pictures transparent by way of language:

> Why, when thinking of photography's relation to language, have we focused so exclusively on narrative prose, to the exclusion of other kinds of

> language, such as the elusive language of poetry, with which the photograph may ultimately have more in common?[21]

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (VII. And a Smoke Arose Like the Smoke From a Furnace), Documentary, 1992

Against the taming of the photograph's "madness" by language,[22] she proposes a poetics of the (photographic) image that would account for "incoherent modes of understanding." What she means by that is an acknowledgement, first, of our "limits of knowing," of the fact that the world always transcends our capacity to understand, and second, of our inability to fully account for ourselves and thus to be transparent to our own investment in any attempt at making sense.[23] So "perhaps it is only by unleashing the illegibility of the photograph that new, less bloodthirsty forms of responsibility will be able to emerge," she claims.[24]

If the creation of pensive images is indeed intimately associated with the foregrounding of an image's obtuse moments, one way to create such images would be to refrain from trying to deliver a message. By forgoing any attempt at communicating straightforward meaning ("*this* has happened", "this is what it *looked like*"), the image is left without any pragmatic function, allowing for the obtuse moment to come to the fore, and leaving the viewer the task of coming to terms with it.

At the time of the first screening of Herzog's *Lessons of Darkness* it was obvious for everybody where the footage came from. The same counts for Ristelhueber's *Fait*. Indeed, in the book form of the project the only element accompanying the pictures was an excerpt from Carl von Clausewitz's classic 1832 treatise *On War*. There was no need to contextualize. However, Herzog claimed that even with time viewers would not need to know the circumstances of his film's production, as it "transcends the topical and the particular."[25] More so, he was convinced that this "could be *any* war and *any* country."[26] Also Sophie Ristelhueber understands her work as "just a new expression of human violence, of destruction. I am not denouncing someone or another—she adds—I am in my metaphor."[27]

And yet both artists acknowledge that it is the world they live in that "generates a necessity,"[28] that they work in response to, and not in disjunction from it. Of course, all this is not to claim that a contextualization of their works is not

necessary, quite the contrary: all the readings proposed below are nothing but attempts at (re)contextualizing, at giving an account of what kind of movement of thought these images incite. In the end, while one does not need to know the context of their coming into being for the works to become „eloquent," it is only by relay to what these works answer to that they can become critical. Only then can we understand how Ristelhueber and Herzog have managed to render landscape reflective, suspended between the romantic and the instrumental. To trade one for the other would mean to purposefully reduce their claim on the beholder.

This very tension, between the artists' choice of topical matter and their "stubborn refusal to contextualize,"[29] or, on a formal level, between what the works in question show and what kind of responses they elicit in the viewer, makes them examples of "thinking" images.

III. "the evidence of a blasted landscape disappears in a haze of art experience"

The first, and arguably most important instance of this is the artists' work with the aerial photograph as military technology and oppressive structure, which appropriates and abstracts and instrumentalizes the landscape. The "dehumanization of distance" and "abstraction of scale" effectuated by aerial imagery, as Jennifer Fay remarked—intimately bound to the possibility of administering mass destruction ever more precisely from a great distance—are exactly the point here:

> To see a country, a city, or a forest as a target from far above, is to lose sight of the life that war extinguishes. […] In modern war, aeriality figures forth emotional detachment, expediency, and ruthless power, and it is the attendant visuality that marks the transformation from limited to total warfare, and from close, targeted conflict to vast collateral damage.[30]

This could be read as an ultimate argument for the impossibility of such imagery to become pensive, but stating such a thing would not do justice to the stakes of the works in question, rendering them simply futile. It is not that aerial photography is inherently oppressive, but that it partakes in what Allan Sekula calls the

"fundamental tension [that] developed between uses of photography that fulfill a bourgeois conception of the *self* and uses that seek to establish the terrain of the *other*."[31] As a consequence, the same push of the button could produce a portrait, nude, etc. as an individualizing and unique representation, or a mug shot, a specimen, etc. as an objectifying, instrumental image. The very same image could be used to both ends. This is why Sekula writes elsewhere that "photography welded the honorific and repressive functions together,"[32] and why, as he claims, "every romantic landscape finds its deadly echo in the aerial view of a targeted terrain."[33]

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (XI. The Drying Up of the Wells), Documentary, 1992

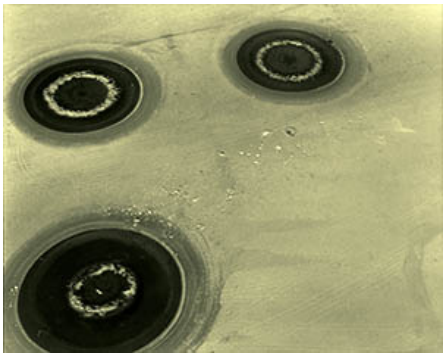
In the light of the above a mere shift from an "aerial view of a targeted terrain" to a "romantic landscape" is by no means enough to subvert this dynamics, especially that the one is always the reverse of the other, both inseparably bound. Thus the fact that both works in question have never served any instrumental purposes won't suffice to explain this problem. This is precisely the challenge both artists faced while creating their works: how to create aerial imagery that—being spectacular and sublime and beautiful—would not reproduce the violent appropriation of reconnaissance photography.

And yet, in spite of the said dehumanization of distance and abstraction of scale, to see a landscape from above is also to see it as signifying surface, site of inscription, a page to be read. In the face of the acceleration of warfare and its becoming spectacle the remove of aerial imaging (and for some time now also that of satellites) became a new promise of meaning, the detachment and distance it offered providing for a sense of mastery over the landscape understood not only locally, as theater of operation, but also globally, as the theater of human life, telling us about what is or is to be, but also about what has been.

Whereas, as Paul Virilio reminds us, at the turn of 19th century the experiments of Muybridge and Marey served analytic purposes—to explode the dynamic movements of bodies into discrete images, to look at, and come to know, movement in its subsequent phases—the aim of aerial photography is synthetic. It is about making coherent something that all but remains inaccessible to view from a normal perspective:

> For the point is no longer to study the deformations involved in the movement of a *whole body*, whether horse or man, but *to reconstitute the fracture lines of the trenches, to fix the infinite fragmentation of a mined landscape alive with endless potentialities*. Hence the crucial role of photographic reconstruction, and of those military films which were the first, little-known form of macro-cinematography, applied not (as with Painlevé after 1925) to the infinitely small but to the infinitely large.[34]

This idea of macro-cinematography (or photography) applied to the infinitely large – that is allowing to look at something infinitely large *as if* it were infinitely small – is of central importance for the operations the works in question put into place. Until it will be taken up directly towards the end of these reflections, it shall remain the background, against which all the interpretations to follow are to be read.



Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #37*, 1992, color photograph, c-print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

One significant side-effect of the military use of aerial photography during the Great War was the discovery of aerial archeology. This new ostensibly scientific method strove to make visible, or rather—render readable, that which remained invisible while walking the face of the earth. As Kitty Hauser explains, thanks to the aerial perspective, while rendering abstract the familiar features of landscape,

> some ancient features of the landscape, including Roman roads and chalk figures such as the White Horse of Uffington, seemed—uncannily—to have been designed for the view from an aeroplane, *as if they had been waiting for these airborne gods of the twentieth century to see them in their correct aspect*.[35]

This newly discovered aspect of the landscape as meaningful surface opened a startling temporal perspective. From high above, contemporary traces and structures of human activity receded into the background, making place for something more ancient, seemingly absent. It was as if, suddenly, "a picture could be taken of the past."[36]

So understood, photography was able to transcend its basic limit, that of the

photograph being bound to the now of its being taken. According to Barthes (and many others), the photograph remains "the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency," able to record only a given moment in time:

> What the Photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what *could never be repeated existentially*.[37]

Ascribing to the photograph the structure of trauma—seeing it as mechanical repetition of a literal trace, one that resists the transcription into meaning[38]—Barthes opens photography to psychoanalytic theory, a move that appears to be especially fruitful in the context of aerial archeology. Suddenly it seems that photography is able to record, make visible, the "repressed" of the landscape.

Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #40*, 1992, color photograph, c-print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

This recognition should also apply to the surfaces of past battlefields. But while aerial archeology has developed a whole dictionary of signs that point to archeological sites ("shadow sites," "soil marks," "crop sites"[39]), no such "method" emerged in the case of landscapes afflicted by war. Nevertheless, there are a few things one can read from Ristelhueber's landscapes. For one, they show a significant shift in war strategy—from the "theater of operations" paradigm, in which the fighting is constrained to a predetermined area, to one in which such a "theater" is impossible to stake out because of the mobility and flash-like character of contemporary warfare. It might seem as if one could reconstruct the whole dynamic of the conflict from the images alone: the speed of the operation, the kind of weapons used, the fashion, in which the Iraqi army retreated, and so on.

In a book-length interview conducted by Catherine Grenier, Sophie Ristelhueber revealed that one day in Kuwait her pilot crossed the border to Iraq (thereby willfully infringing the country's airspace), entering the Bassora region, a place that struck Ristelhueber as a true moon landscape. What she saw were the "stigmata" of the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988. She decided to take a picture, one she later incorporated into *Fait* as the only image that is not from Kuwait.[40] Even if one doesn't know the story, the picture seems different from all the others: in *Fait #40* we see a landscape covered in craters so densely that it seems to come rather from

World War I than from a contemporary battlefield. The strangeness of this image is caused by the fact that while during operation "Desert Storm", the US-led coalition forces literally overran their opponents, during the Iran-Iraq war the belligerents bombed each other over the Shatt al-Arab for eight years. This image, and the discrepancy it introduces, plays a key part in the whole series, since it is in juxtaposition that the others stop looking just calligraphic, becoming a kind of automatic writing, inscriptions of sorts that need to be deciphered. Very often it is difficult to say what it is that one, in fact, sees.

If we then look at the intricate patterns of the trenches in the Kuwaiti desert, conscious of how little cover they gave to the Iraqi army, how useless they turned out to be, it is not difficult to see why for Marc Mayer, it is the "arcane trench patterns" that are the most fascinating in Sophie Ristelhueber's *Fait:* "their geometric strangeness bear[ing] witness to a futile and antiquarian concern for ground strategy in a ridiculously lopsided war, much of it waged from the air."[41] And indeed, liberated from all instrumental meaning, one is hard pressed not to see them as a kind of archaic markings, geoglyphs along the lines of those found in the Nazca desert, "as if they had been waiting for these airborne gods of the twentieth century to see them in their correct aspect."[42] Seeing them in this way imbues the images with a temporality of geological scale—they become something ancient, an instant ruin and thus archeological site, something prehistoric. Not in the sense that what we see is beyond history as we experience it, but that by showing the underbelly of (late) modernity, they undercut its modernizing narrative.

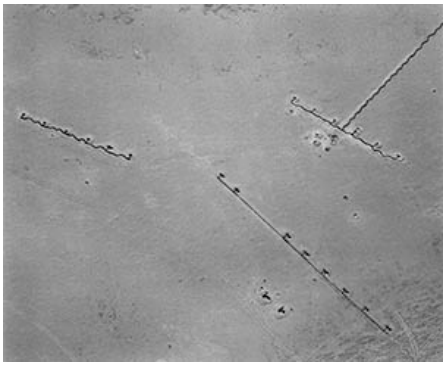
IV. "'Blood and Fire' are writ large on the landscape"

Such a reference to the prehistoric also finds expression in Herzog's *Lessons of Darkness*, namely in the film's ninth chapter, *Dinosaurier unterwegs* [A Dinosaur's Feast]. Here we see the heavy machinery used to clean up the mess left by the war, all the bulldozers and tractors and excavators and helicopters and so on, move to the sounds of Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*. The sublime *Recordare* for soprano and mezzo-soprano

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (IX. A Dinosaur's Feast), Documentary, 1992

from the *Dies Irae* renders the heavy machinery graceful and monumental. Herzog shows the machines as endowed with agency, anthropomorphic even, traversing the hellish atmosphere of the burning desert, assisting—and dwarfing—the humans. At the same time, they seem instantaneously obsolete, prehistoric in their clumsy sluggishness, already as if being devoured by the landscape.

Curiously, it was Robert Smithson who—looking at a the late industrial landscape of Passaic, New Jersey, at a highway in in the process of being built—had also thought of heavy construction equipment as of "extinct machines—mechanical dinosaurs stripped of their skin."[43] To him modernity, whose workings he traced in the suburbs, the kingdom of the vernacular, seemed like a "prehistoric Machine Age,"[44] belying the teleology of progress traditionally connected with it. In the process of modern construction he saw an inversion of the romantic logic of ruin, so that buildings, instead of attaining this status after having fallen from use, now "*rise* into ruin before they are built," through this willful anachronism unearthing "the discredited idea of *time* and many other 'out of date' things."[45]



Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #39*, 1992, black and white photograph, silver print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

Needless to say, all this goes blatantly against Virilio and his identification of modernity with speed and the desire for a direct feedback loop with the world that has become "an integrated world of events reduced to shapes and symbols, viewed and manipulated instantaneously on screens."[46] His idea of geology as model for the modern experience of time introduces layeredness, and asynchronousness as its key features. While it is indeed so that communication and destruction (that is, war) have accelerated beyond imagination, most processes that define the reality of late modernity, the reality we share—the processes of (re)construction among them—are still slow. In other words, "out of date," but what we get to see most of the time is only the moment of destruction. The post-war reconstruction is something that escapes our carefully managed attention. And yet, it is this moment in the contemporary system of permanent war that allows to understand its dynamic.

The concentration of both Ristelhueber and Herzog on the surpassing destruction of the landscape, and the consumption—or, should I say conspicuous combustion?—

of oil seem to point, at least from today's perspective, towards something the Retort collective called "military neoliberalism,"[47] and away from the classic "Blood for Oil" thesis, according to which oil is the main force behind the modern imperial politics of the US. The three premises of the thesis were conveniently summarized by George Monbiot as strategic use (America runs on oil), scarcity (the fear of "peaking" world production) and geopolitics (the political geography of oil reserves).[48] Against this Retort argue that because most likely we are still decades away from any problems with the scarcity of oil, the problem is more complex and that the contemporary guise of the said imperial politics cannot be simply attributed to an attempt at securing oil reserves. Hence conspicuous combustion. What Retort claim is that the wars in the Gulf are but subsequent chapters of another wave of what Marx called "primitive accumulation." While for Marx this meant the initial, non-recurring violent expropriation of laborers, indispensable to get capitalism going (after that capitalism was supposed to become more civilized in its practices of dispossession), the Retort collective claim it turned out to be "an *incomplete* and *recurring* process [encompassing *all* forms of dispossession], essential to capitalism's continuing life."[49] According to this logic, the mechanism of permanent war is the main flywheel to keep contemporary neoliberal capitalism going. While a war bolsters the military industry that has in the process become privatized (so it is not only about equipping the national army, but also selling arms to various military groups and the country's political allies), its aftermath leaves the place wide open for private contractors, introducing in the process of (re)construction "democratic" values, etc. This is what happened in Kuwait after the first Gulf War, and what was supposed to happen in post-invasion Iraq.[50] It is exactly because capitalism thrives on surplus value, in other words on inequality, that it must work to (re)establish it wherever it can, venturing out into territories it can "*plunder almost unopposed," but* also interfering at home, so to say, "deep into the fabric of sociality, in search of resources to rip from the commons."[51]

Of course, the effect of these recurring periods of primitive accumulation is the deepening of the gulf of inequality. If we are to look at Ristelhueber's *Fait* and Herzog's *Lessons of Darkness* in this light, we might recognize in them the scorched landscapes of primitive accumulation, the face, one might be tempted to say, of military neoliberalism. As I will try to show further on, the suggestion of seeing a landscape as face is not merely a turn of phrase here. While, owing to the fact

that they proceed by abstraction (by withholding discourse, focusing only on the burning oil fields and/or their aftermath, and treating the desert landscape as surface of inscription), Ristelhueber and Herzog seem to invite readings that one might call speculative they also elicit embodied responses, more so—in both we will find strategies of embodiment that are constitutive of the critical potential of their works. It is to these strategies that I would like to turn to now.

V. "a requiem for an uninhabitable planet"

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (IX. A Dinosaur's Feast), Documentary, 1992

Granted, the bent towards abstraction of aerial imagery, together with the said tendency of both Herzog and Ristelhueber to universalize, do elicit doubts as to how these images are supposed to lead us back to the reality that lay at their origin. Mark Simpson, for instance, writes in the context of Herzog that in his *Lessons of Darkness*

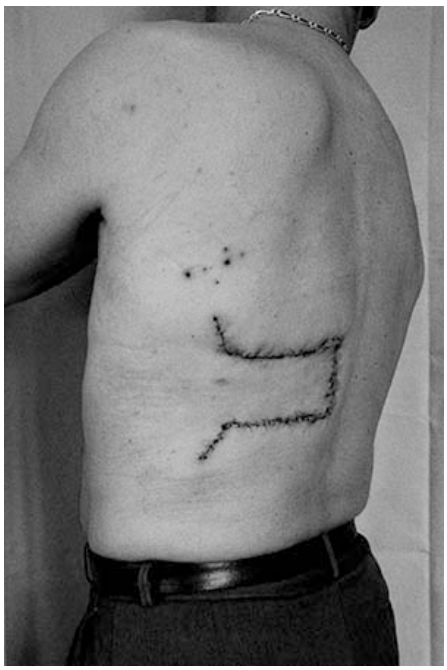
> the conditions and perspectives of the attacked populace remain largely immaterial; indeed, the lessons in question tend to posit the untranslatability (and thus reify the otherness) of the war's Kuwaiti and Iraqi survivors. The effort to transcend the particular makes war metaphysical – […] a condition beyond time.[52]

But what would it mean to properly address "the conditions and perspectives of the attacked populace"? What Simpson seems to be desiring, decontextualization notwithstanding, is for Herzog (or Ristelhueber, if I might universalize his argument) to give the survivors of the war a face. For him, to show only mute subjects—or mute landscapes—means to reify those who lived through it and render war abstract, a universal "human" condition. Such a direct acknowledgement of and dependence on the actual historical frame and position of the images, would seem to call for a classically humanist (photo)journalistic or documentary approach.

At the same time the face seems to be exactly the problem today. Under conditions of war as spectacle the possibility of recognizing the other in an image seems always already voided, or at least severely attenuated. In her book, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, written in "response to the conditions of

heightened vulnerability and aggression" after the attacks of September 2001,[53] Judith Butler convincingly argues that in the times of the so-called war on terror the face of the other has become an ethical challenge. On the one hand, we are reminded by Levinas that the face is the condition of humanization, that it is only through the face that we can acknowledge the other, on the other hand the media have instrumentalized the face to the point where it becomes the medium of dehumanization.

Butler insists that violence can happen "precisely through the production of the face,"[54] and she gives the undeniable examples of Osama bin Laden, Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein, whose faces have come to be seen as synonymous with, respectively, terror, deceit, and tyranny. But even when such a face connotes something we would see as positive, for example the faces of the Afghan girls who decided to drop their burkas—a seeming success of democracy—Butler insists that being confronted by such images we need to ask "what scenes of pain and grief these images cover over and derealize." Only then will we realize that even such images remain the "spoils" or "targets" of war, and in this sense "we might say that the face is, in every instance, defaced."[55] Thus it appears that the human face doesn't guarantee any human relationship to the reality depicted, and that this relationship is "not as straightforward as we might like to think."[56]



Sophie Ristelhueber, *Every One (#3)*, 1994, black and white photograph, mounted on fibreboard, 270 x 180 cm, edition of one, courtesy of the artist.

Levinas, however, insisted that "the face is not exclusively a human face,"[57] and I would like to claim that in the work of Ristelhueber and Herzog one might be able to recognize an attempt at inscribing an "inhuman but humanizing face"[58] into the scarred and wounded landscape of Kuwait after the battle.

Ristelhueber achieves this by establishing an analogy between the Kuwaiti landscape—"full of traces"—and an injured body, the marks on the surface of the desert often resembling scars and bruises. To understand how this structure is put into place we need to move on to *Every One* from 1994, her first work on the

Yugoslav Wars, a series of fourteen photographs showing bodies marked with prominent, and in a few cases quite spectacular, scars. The artist travelled to Yugoslavia in 1991 to accompany friend and journalist Jean Rolin, and from the very beginning she was struggling with form, with the question of "how to put this in pictures, do something around this idea of a civil war in the heart of Europe?"[59] Only in Kuwait, when she thought of scars while looking at the drawing of the trenches in the sand, did she understand that she wanted to make a work about cutting and suturing. Back in Paris, she started searching the city's hospitals for people, whose bodies would bear marks that could figure that war.[60] Later she would go on to claim that "the body and territories were the same thing" to her, acknowledging that one could also see *Fait* as a kind of mapping of a lacerated body.[61] At the same time one cannot help but look at the pictures from *Every One* as landscapes, partly due to their large scale:

> I have expressly chosen this large scale to introduce uncertainty as to whether one has to do with human matter. The face that is in the collection of the Centre Pompidou is so big that one regards it at first as a mountain, a rock, and then suddenly one realizes: "But no, this is a face."[62]

Sophie Ristelhueber, *Mémoires du Lot*, 1990, courtesy of the artist.

Another scar, that of *Every One #3*, looks rather like an aerial view of a piece of land, especially when Ristelhueber displayed it horizontally, spread out on the floor. *Every One #2*, on the other hand shows a strange resemblance to a motif in *Memoires de Lot*, a project from 1990 – the remnants of a Roman encampment at Masada, etc. By introducing this ambivalence of body/landscape Ristelhueber on the one had humanizes the landscape, and on the other—by rendering her sitters abstract, as landscape—defers the literal emergence of the face, that would allow for too easy an identification (both with and of the subjects), and hence an abolition of the distancing effect the image's indeterminacy has on the beholder. It is exactly this effect that makes the pictures in question pensive, distance being one of the preconditions of thought.[63]

Herzog proceeds in a different way. *Lessons of Darkness* strive to create an affective relationship with the landscape, the force with which Herzog attempts at

establishing it being the main reason for the sharp reaction of the film's original audience. The main means by which he proceeds are, according to Lutz Koepnick, the film's "at once distanced and spectacular images of the postwar inferno" and its "emotionally manipulative and overwhelming soundtrack."[64] It is for this seeming manipulativeness that some critics accused Herzog of "replaying the agendas of no one less than Leni Riefenstahl," the bone of contention being, of course, Wagner.[65] Koepnick very aptly describes the dissonance that arises while watching the film:

> What we expect is a modernist aesthetic of disruption and emotional restraint; a filmic language tactfully expressing mourning, loss, and melancholia, yet keeping in check the filmmaker's own subjectivity. What we get instead is grand opera indeed: a choreography of sights and sounds that will unsettle our affects and sweep us off our feet.[66]

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (XIII. I Am So Weary Of Sighing, O Lord, Grant That The Night Cometh), Documentary, 1992

He describes Herzog's juxtaposing of sublime images of destruction with Wagner's "redemptive" *Parsifal* and *Götterdämmerung* as "striking discrepancy," and then goes on to propose an interpretation that dubs Herzog's use of Wagner as "homeopathic" on the account that we are served controlled doses of the poison that we have to immunize ourselves against.[67] But are Herzog's doses of Wagner really homeopathic? Rather, he seems to be using Wagner unflinchingly, to an effect one could call ecstatic. Eschewing establishing shots that could give us some feeling of orientation or control, Herzog combines the force of long aerial traveling shots (suggesting the field of view of a human being) with the strong affective pull of the musical score to immerse the viewer in the landscape, to implode any distance between the beholder and the screen. Herzog himself would confirm this by claiming that his landscapes never only show a place, but that they are "literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through [them]."[68]

By way of such a "production of affective experience," as Eric Ames pointed out, the viewer is no longer able to "identify clear and fixed boundaries between exterior and interior spaces of representation."[69] At the same time, this radical reduction of objective, or rather objectifying distance is interposed with strong distancing impulses, the 'impropriety' of Wagner being one of the strongest: giving in to his

affective pull, we cannot but feel manipulated—we are not supposed to *like* it, much less be captivated by it. And yet, we are.

This ambivalence forces us to acknowledge the fact that war as such—the sovereign consent to kill other people as a specific exception to a seemingly universal law—is based on a projection. As Jacqueline Rose argued in a lecture delivered two days after the First Gulf War broke out,

> War makes the other accountable for a horror we can then wipe out with impunity, precisely because we have located it so firmly in the other's place. This saves us the effort of ambivalence, the hard work of recognizing that we love where we hate, that, in our hearts and minds at least, we kill those to whom we are most closely and intimately attached.[70]

This interesting point is also developed by Judith Butler in her reading of Levinas: namely that war—the projection of our alienation from the other, or rather of our alienating the other—is but an externalization of something that is constitutive of the human subject. War saves us from ambivalence: when we go to war we don't have to face the alienation that inhabits the human psyche.

In this light war appears to be a phenomenon that always happens instead of something else, it becomes a symptom; a successful war, in this regard, amounts to a structure of denial. (How many successful wars can one wage until one finally brings it back home, be it in the form of revolution, or invasion? Doesn't one always bring war home?) Now, how are we to understand Herzog's gesture of framing his *Lessons* as science fiction, apart from the fact that it functions as another distancing device?[71] If, as we have already learned, in order to wage war we need to dehumanize our enemies, to see them as alien, the landscapes in *Lessons of Darkness* can be seen as thematizing exactly this mechanism, and transferring it onto the situation of regarding the aftermath of war. The destruction is so great, encompassing, that it couldn't have been done by human hand; the landscape seems utterly alien. But, let us not forget that Herzog stages this landscape as *internal*. He thus forces the audience to interiorize it, thereby (re)introducing the dynamic of alienation into the subject. It is exactly in this effect that I would locate the source of the film's critical power (and of the original audience's reaction to it, that might thus be read as one of violent denial).

Thus, in both Ristelhueber and Herzog, we are led to see the landscape as an expressive sur-face, where the face of the earth comes to embody the face of the other, bearing the marks of vulnerability, the destruction wrought upon it. At the same time, the seductive beauty of this landscape as view bespeaks the "murderous temptation" Butler speaks about, the fact the it is exactly "the Other's precariousness that makes me want to kill the Other" in the first place.[72] This is why I try to claim here that the works in question, in exposing us to destruction as seductive (Ristelhueber) or overwhelming (Herzog) beauty, try to make us recognize and acknowledge this "struggle at the heart of ethics."[73] This struggle has also to do with the fact that empathy, care, love (and attention, as a minimum condition), is not something we have in endless supply. According to Karen Beckman, "we need ethics in the first place because our love is unevenly distributed, freely given, but only to some, and for reasons that we cannot fully explain."[74] In other words, Ristelhueber and Herzog, in very different ways, trace the limits of empathy, questioning the possibility of an ethical reaction to images in the teeth of their ongoing instrumentalisation. They force us to acknowledge that an ethical reaction to an image, or an image's effectiveness, is not something that can be ascertained or controlled.

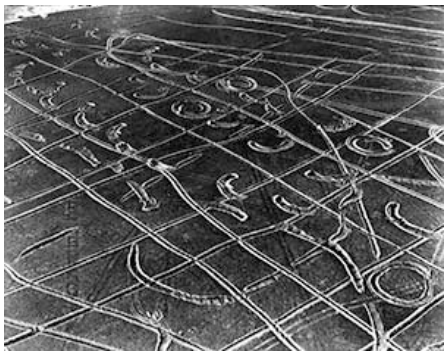
VI. "the desert became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness"

As a way of opening the concluding remarks, there is more to be said about Ristelhueber's choice of text as a frame for her visual statement about the *"fait"* of war. For in Clausewitz's text, as, again, Jacqueline Rose pointed out, "the question of war and the question of knowledge bear the most intimate and troubled relation to each other."[75] In his account, theory is always at a loss when faced with war, because it simply cannot accommodate the chaos and randomness, the fact that the dynamics of war always elides any attempts at anticipating the course of action.[76]

War thus appears as the limit of theory. More so, Clausewitz's metaphor of war as a foreign, destructive force that cannot be controlled or tamed, is, according to Rose, "the perfect image of the alien-ness that Freud places at the heart of human

[77]

subjectivity, the alien-ness whose denial or projection leads us into war."[77] The analogy to what has already been said about Herzog and his use of the alien metaphor should be all but evident. Thus understood, the Clausewitzian frame of *Fait* is more than a device to locate Ristelhueber's project as literally representing the 'theater of operations' (one of the fragments she chose contains a definition of what a theater of operations is, the other what a theory of war amounts to); it also directs us to the pensive dimension of the photographs themselves, which open to questioning not only what war is, but also what it means to represent war.



Sophie Ristelhueber, *Fait #14*, 1992, black and white photograph, silver print, 100 x 127 cm, courtesy the artist

The crucial device by which Ristelhueber achieves this is connected to the idea of aerial macro-cinematography whose discussion I deferred until now—it is that of scale. In *Fait*, as she herself wrote,

> just like the book, which I planned with no priority given to any single image, the wall installation unfolds in same regularity, with aerial and ground shots that *make us lose all references of scale*. I gilded the boxes, in which the photographs were presented, by hand to turn them into objects that were at once precious and much like camouflage, as I had roughly mixed three different golds together. The pictures are linked together by a sort of glowing halo.[78]

The effect is a cartographic one, but with a jumbled scale and endowed with a distancing glow (a "halo"), frustrating any attempt at mastering its grid, of using it as an "objective" framework. More so, Ristelhueber introduced this ambivalence of scale into the images themselves. *Fait #14*, for instance, seems to be painted by finger in the sand, but then, it could have also been the product of the "dinosaurs." It performs exactly the same role as the image from Iraq—the moment one recognizes this indeterminacy is the moment, in which one starts looking more carefully. Recognizing the hiatus between what is in fact depicted and what is available to our experience of the image, is the moment when an image becomes pensive. It is when we stop seeing assertively, proceeding by simple identification (tautology), but start asking questions about what we actually see, and then—about what we know.

Herzog uses an analogous device in the opening sequence of his *Lessons*. While we

hear Herzog's voice over—"Wide mountain ranges, clouds, the land shrouded in mist"—he does show us these mountain ranges, and yet there is something off about them. He would later confirm that

> What I actually filmed were little heaps of dust and soil created by the tires of trucks. These "mountain ranges" were no more than a foot high.[79]

Werner Herzog, *Lessons of Darkness* (Ouverture), Documentary, 1992

The introduction of an indeterminacy of scale is one of the most potent devices to establish an interval between the causality of a photographic image and our experience of it. To Robert Smithson, scale is the artistic device par excellence. He writes about one of his most recognized works, that

> the scale of the *Spiral Jetty* tends to fluctuate depending on where the viewer happens to be. Size determines an object, but scale determines art. A crack in the wall if viewed in terms of scale, not size, could be called the Grand Canyon. A room could be made to take on the immensity of the solar system. Scale depends on ones capacity to be conscious of the actualities of perception. When one refuses to release scale from size, one is left with an object or language that appears to be certain. For me scale operates by uncertainty.[80]

For Smithson uncertainty—the ultimate irresolvability of our relationship with the world, our place in it—seems to be at the heart of any true artistic gesture, and at the same time it is this uncertainty, derived from the operations of scale, that is the source of art's critical powers.

Jacqueline Rose on her part places uncertainty at the center of war.[81] And if it is indeed uncertainty that war in fact wreaks, if this is war's true agency, then it cannot but affect many, if not all fundamental concepts that structure our "normal" experience.First and foremost it is truth that—instrumentalized for the need of waging war—becomes its first casualty. Think of the famous phrase of one of George W. Bush's senior advisers about the new way "the world really works," formulated a year before the 2003 Iraq invasion: "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. […] We're history's actors… and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."[82] George W. Bush himself put this more bluntly by

simply stating, "What we say goes."[83] And so, if the category of truth is up for grabs in state of war, then war cannot but seriously troubles our understanding of reality and its relationship to fantasy, introducing uncertainty into the very structure of experience:

> We can never finally be sure whether we are projecting or not, if what we legitimately fear may be in part the effect of our own projection. How much of the preamble to the Gulf War turned on the seemingly unanswerable question of to what extent Hussein was really evil (Hitler reborn) and to what extent a projection, the newly desired enemy - post-cold war—of the West?[84]

Now, when we take into account the fact that war has always been the privileged site to ask questions about truth and ethics in photography, then maybe we have been asking the wrong question in the first place: not what can photography tell us about war, but what can war tell us about photography? Both Ristelhueber and Herzog seem to have taken this question seriously, internalizing it as part of their works, hence rendering them reflective.

The supreme example of this can be found in *A cause de l'élevage de poussière (Because of Dust Breeding)*, a photo Ristelhueber took over Kuwait while working on *Fait* that bears a striking resemblance to Man Ray's rendering of Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* from 1920, first published in the photo-surrealist journal *Littérature* under the title *Voici le domaine de Rrose Sélavy [...] Vue prise en aéroplane par Man Ray – 1921 (Here is the domain of Rrose Sélavy [...] View taken from an aeroplane by Man Ray – 1921)*, hence as an *aerial photograph* of a landscape belonging to Duchamp's female alter ego.[85] As Ristelhueber later recounted, she was "embarrassed"[86] when she first saw this analogy, and put the picture away. She decided to show it only in 2007. In reversing the vector of Man Ray's gesture—instead of labeling the documentation of an artwork an aerial photograph she calls a work of art the reason for taking a "view of a targeted terrain"—Ristelhueber points not only to the ultimate uncertainty of war,

Sophie Ristelhieber, *A cause de l'élevage de poussière (Because of Dust Breeding)*, 1991-2007, black and white photograph, pigment print mounted on aluminum and framed, 155 x 190 cm, courtesy of the artist

but also to the strange ways, in which we make the world accessible to us when confronted with photographic (or filmic) images. *By analogy*, she seems to claim. To reflect the world in photographs is to see something *as* something (else). Herzog's dictum of "fabrication and imagination and stylization" can be read along the same lines, namely that in film, truth or insight is produced through (visual narrative) and not simply reproduced as likeness of some pre-existing, objective reality. This is, maybe, the ultimate lesson we can learn from both Sophie Ristelhueber and Werner Herzog, while trying to come to terms with their responses to the First Gulf War. The structure of these works is pensive insofar as they make us think, rather than simply assert the moment of the capture of the image as fact. As I tried to show in these considerations, it is only when an image refuses to be transparent to us, forcing us to come to terms with it, to return to it in subsequent attempts at rendering it "eloquent," that the „less bloodthirsty forms of responsibility" mentioned by Beckman can arise. My attempts at describing Ristelhueber's and Herzog's work as pensive should be seen exactly in terms of such returns, of trying to account for the way these works are able not only to figure the Gulf War but also to open to questioning the very frame that makes any attempt at representing contemporary war so difficult. This insistence on questioning in place of an assertive or rhetoric mode of address is something we might call the politics of the pensive image.

Footnotes

1 This paper is the first attempt at a chapter for a larger project, entitled *After the Index. The Problem of Distance in Contemporary Lens-based Media*. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to both reviewers of my paper—their insightful and at times point-on comments proved to be of immense help.

2 Werner Herzog, "Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema. 'Lessons of Darkness,'" *Cineaste* 24, no. 4 (1999): 35.

3 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 38.

4 The "Book of Revelation" is cited on several occasions to drive this point home.

5 Werner Herzog, *Herzog on Herzog*, ed. Paul Cronin (London: faber and faber,

2002), 135-136.

6 *Herzog on Herzog*, 245.

7 Herzog, "Minnesota Declaration," 35; It has to be noted that he titled his manifesto *Lessons of Darkness*, thereby establishing the film in question as programmatic.

8 *Herzog on Herzog*, 245.

9 Marc Mayer, "Fait," in *Sophie Ristelhueber: Fait* (New York, NY: Errata Editions, 2009), np.

10 Catherine Grenier and Sophie Ristelhueber, *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, ed. Xavier Douroux (Dijon; Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2010), 43.

11 Apart from the topical consonance of these two projects - to use the first Gulf War as theoretical object to think about the power of images to think the world and its meanings - there is also a strange consonance in the German filmmaker's and the French artists' approach: while I don't think that Sophie Ristelhueber would subscribe to Herzog's maxim that "filmmaking is athletics over aesthetics," she repeatedly took high risks to make her work.

12 Marc Mayer, "Fait," np.

13 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, 55.

14 *Herzog on Herzog*, 248.

15 Karen Beckman, "Nothing to Say: The War on Terror and the Mad Photography of Roland Barthes," *Grey Room* 34 (January 2008): 118.

16 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), 89.

17 Judith Butler, "Photography, War, Outrage," *PMLA* 120, no. 3 (2005): 826.

18 Allan Sekula is the first to come to my mind, but one can name many others.

19 Of course, such a distinction is impossible to uphold; the need to question the frame is not at all abolished by a pensive image.

20 Beckman, "Nothing to Say," 118.

21 Ibid., 107.

22 This formulation is, again, that of Roland Barthes (see *Camera Lucida*, 117-119). "Barthes warns that 'Society is concerned to tame the Photograph, to temper the madness which keeps threatening to explode in the face of whoever looks at it' either by 'making it into art, for no art is mad,' or by generalizing, 'gregarizing' it, destroying those places that would allow it to 'assert its special character, its scandal, its madness.'" (Beckman, "Nothing to Say," 116)

23 Beckman, "Nothing to Say," 123; in this moment she draws on other work by Butler, most notably on *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

24 Beckman, "Nothing to Say," 118.

25 *Herzog on Herzog*, 246.

26 Ibid.

27 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, 79.

28 *Ibid.*, 41.

29 Nadia Bozak, "Firepower: Herzog's Pure Cinema as the Internal Combustion of War," *Cineaction*, no. 68 (2006): 25.

30 Jennifer Fay, "Werner Herzog and Preposterous War," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 13, no. 1 (2013): 256.

31 Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981): 16.

32 Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 10.

33 Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," 16.

34 Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception, trans. Patrick Camiller (London ; New York: Verso, 1989)*, 71 (emphasis his).

35 Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology, and the British Landscape, 1927-1955*, vol. 123 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 153 (emphasis mine).

36 Ibid.

37 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 4 (emphasis mine).

38 "[A] photograph cannot be transformed (spoken) philosophically, it is wholly ballasted by the contingency of which it is the weightless, transparent envelope" (Ibid., 5.).

39 See, Hauser, *Shadow Sites*, 151-199.

40 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, 72

41 Mayer, *Fait*, unpaginated.

42 Hauser, *Shadow Sites*, 153.

43 Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," in *Robert Smithson, the Collected Writings*, ed. Jack D. Flam, The Documents of Twentieth-Century Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 71.

44 Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," 71.

45 Ibid., 72.

46 See Benjamin H. Bratton, "Logistics of Habitable Circulation," in Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, trans. Marc Polizotti (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006), 7. See also Steve Redhead, "The Art of the Accident: Paul Virilio and Accelerated Modernity," *Fast Capitalism* 2, no. 1 (2006), http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/2_1/redhead.html, accessed April 1, 2015.

47 Retort (Ian Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers. Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 71.

48 George Monbiot, "Bottom of the Barrel," *Guardian*, December 2, 2003, after Retort, *Afflicted Powers*, 43.

49 Retort, *Afflicted Powers*, 75.

50 It is in this interbellum that Retort place the constitution of military

neoliberalism.

51 Ibid., 76.

52 Mark Simpson, "Attackability," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 312.

53 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London; New York: Verso, 2004), XI.

54 Ibid., 141.

55 Ibid., 143 (Butler's emphasis). The same goes, for instance, for Luis Sinco's famous picture of the "Marlboro Marine" (see Julian Stallabrass, Ian Boal, "Faces of War," SFMOMA *Open Space* , http://openspace.sfmoma.org/2014/03/faces-of-war/, accessed March 1, 2015).

56 Butler, *Precarious Life*, 140.

57 Butler, *Precarious Life*, XVIII.

58 Butler, *Precarious Life*, 141.

59 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, 53.

60 Interestingly, critics repeatedly assumed the pictures were taken in the hospitals of Sarajevo, accusing the artist once more of aestheticizing horror (see *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*).

61 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure*, 58.

62 *Sophie Ristelhueber. La Guerre Interieure* , 54. The artist speaks of *Every One #8*. All pictures are 2.7 meters long or high, depending on their orientation. The question of scale seems central problem for both Ristelhueber and Herzog—I will come back to this in the next section.

63 The opening sentence of Aby Warburg's introduction to his *Atlas Mnemosyne* reads: "The conscious creation of distance between oneself and the external world can probably be designated as the founding act of human civilization." (Aby Warburg, "The Absorption of the Expressive Values of the Past," trans. Matthew Rampley, *Art In Translation* 1, no. 2 (July 2009): 276-277).

64 Lutz Koepnick, "The Sound of Ruins," in Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch, eds., *German Postwar Films: Life and Love in the Ruins*, 1st ed, Studies in European Culture and History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 203.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 205.

68 *Herzog on Herzog*, 136. So much for Herzog not being a romantic.

69 Eric Ames, "Herzog, Landscape, and Documentary," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 2 (2009): 65.

70 Rose, "Why War?," in Rose, *Why War? Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Return to Melanie Klein*, The Bucknell Lectures in Literary Theory 8 (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: B. Blackwell, 1993), 19.

71 Jean Baudrillard also claimed that some time after their first publishing, *The Gulf War did not take place* will be read as if it were a science fiction novel (*Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. Mike Gane, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 180-1, 203, after Paul Patton, Introduction to Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War did not take place (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)*).

72 Butler, *Precarious Life*, 135.

73 Ibid.

74 Karen Beckman, "Nothing to Say," 128.

75 Rose, "Why War?," 21.

76 Rose, "Why War?," 23.

77 Rose, "Why War?," 23.

78 Sophie Ristelhueber, *Operations* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 282.

79 *Herzog on Herzog*, 243.

80 Smithson, "The Spiral Jetty," in *Robert Smithson, the Collected Writings*, 147.

81 Rose, "Why War?," 17.

82 Quoted after: Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty, and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *The New York Times*, Oct. 17th, 2004, URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/magazine/17BUSH.html?_r=0, accessed May 3, 2015.

83 President George Bush, NBC Nightly News, Feb. 2, 1991, quoted after: Mitchel Cohen, "How Bush Sr. Sold the Gulf War," *Counterpunch*, December 2002, URL: http://www.counterpunch.org/2002/12/28/how-bush-sr-sold-the-gulf-war/, accessed May 3, 2015.

84 Rose, "Why War?," 29.

85 See: David Hopkins, "'Art' and 'Life'... and Death: Marcel Duchamp, Robert Morris, and Neo-Avant-Garde Irony," in David Hopkins, ed., *Neo-Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 2006). See also http://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/elevage-poussiere-dust-breeding, accessed February 28, 2015.

86 Sophie Ristelhueber, "Sophie Ristelhueber's Best Shot," *Guardian*, April 29, 2010.