

**FREE**

**ASSOCIATION**

**MARC  
HULSON**

# FREE ASSOCIATION

1. In conversation with a friend about the recent Warhol exhibition at the Hayward, she reminded me that when I'd visited the Freud Museum in Vienna with her, Warhol's 1964 film *Couch* had been on show there. As she pointed out, there is an unexpected but neat connection between the iconic Factory couch and the iconic Psychoanalytic couch. Both are sites where the enunciation of the self is played out in relation to an impassive observer / interlocutor: with Warhol through self-image in relation to the camera; in Psychoanalysis through speech in relation to the analyst.
2. In 1922 the first translation in English of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by Sigmund Freud was published, in which he introduces the concept of the Death Drive.
3. The curator of a gallery space in Hastings recently informed me over a lunchtime drink that in 1923 John Logie Baird demonstrated the first working Television set there.
4. The owner of a bar and exhibition space in Vienna told me he'd been reading a book about cocaine. In it the author claims that David Bowie intended the name Ziggy Stardust as code for Sigmund Freud: Ziggy is an established diminutive for both Sigmund and Siegfried, while Stardust is slang for cocaine. I haven't been able to verify my friend's claim anywhere else but it is definitely the case that Jean Genet is a reference to Jean Genet. So why not.
5. David Bowie played Andy Warhol in Julian Schnabel's film *Basquiat*.
6. The London based artists' association Five Years was named in 1998 by a friend I collaborate with periodically on text and performance work. We were talking in her studio about the idea of a block of time in which change might occur: a Five Year Plan, say, or prison sentence. The song *Five Years* by David Bowie, from the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, also immediately sprang to mind. Five Years is a free association – each member acts with creative autonomy in relation to the group.
7. Area 53 is the artist-run gallery in Vienna where Five Years will be exhibiting in May 2009. I'd always assumed it was called Area 53 simply because it's at Gumpendorferstrasse 53. However, over a few beers at their place, two artist friends in Vienna told me they thought Area 53 might also be the name of a mysterious US Military designated no-fly zone out in the Arizona desert. I googled it and, while its existence can't be verified, there are several sketchy message boards and websites speculating around rumours that aliens land there.
8. In 1938 the Marxist Psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich fled Austria for the US. Reich had begun working as a Psychoanalyst in Vienna with Freud's blessing and was a respected analyst for much of his career. However in later life he was virtually disinherited by the analytic community due to his eccentric ideas about sexuality. He believed he had discovered a primordial cosmic energy called 'orgone energy', which was responsible for the biological expression of emotion and sexuality. He believed he could harness this energy as a therapeutic tool. He also believed he could harness it to control the weather and to do battle with UFOs over the Arizona desert. Reich was arrested and imprisoned by the US authorities in 1956. He died shortly afterwards.
9. I recently cured a friend of an irrational dislike of David Bowie through a sort of immersion therapy. As she lay on the couch in my front room, horizontal between the speakers of my stereo, I played her the entire Singles Collection. By the end of it she'd concluded that her critique had been misplaced and that Bowie was great.
10. Over coffee at cafe Engländer, a Viennese curator was talking to me about the emigration of writers and musicians from the city to Los Angeles prior to WW2. Many of them chose LA over New York because they hoped to find work scoring or scriptwriting in Hollywood. Among them was Arnold Schoenberg, who was unsuccessful in composing for the screen. However four avant-garde musicians who'd trained under Schoenberg in Vienna formed the Hollywood String Quartet and made a living in LA playing commercial music. Among other projects they recorded an album with Frank Sinatra in 1954 called *Close to You*, in which Sinatra eschews the customary big band setting for his vocals.
11. Another Viennese émigré to the U.S. was the architect and designer Frederick Kiesler, who moved to New York City in 1926. One of the designers of the *Shrine of the Book*, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls in Jerusalem, Kiesler was derided by his colleagues: "If Kiesler wants to hold two pieces of wood together, he pretends he's never heard of nails or screws. He tests the tensile strengths of various metal alloys, experiments with different methods and shapes, and after six months comes up with a very expensive device that holds two pieces of wood together almost as well as a screw". Among other multifunctional items of furniture, Kiesler designed very beautiful fold-out couches, which are still manufactured by the Austrian firm Whittmann.
12. In 1908 the Viennese artist Richard Gerstl, who had been instructing Arnold Schoenberg in painting, had an affair with his wife, Mathilde. Schoenberg stopped the affair and as a result Gerstl committed suicide in his studio. He burnt most of his work, destroyed his diaries and correspondence, then hung himself in front of the studio mirror. He also stabbed himself for good measure. He was 25 years old. 66 works remain. He was unknown in his lifetime. His work now hangs in the Belvedere. Each year Schoenberg marked the day of Gerstl's death with a G in his diary.
13. *Rock'n'Roll Suicide* is a song on the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.
14. In 1910, when Wilhelm Reich was 12 years old, his personal tutor had an affair with his mother. When the affair was discovered, Reich's mother committed suicide by drinking a bottle of household cleaner, dying in

- agony over the course of three days. Reich's father was devastated and in 1914, on the pretence of going fishing, he stood for hours up to his knees in a freezing cold lake, as a result of which he died from pneumonia and tuberculosis. Reich's sense of guilt was profound: he said "the joy of life [was] shattered, torn apart from my inmost being for the rest of my life!"
15. Willhelm Reich was an important influence on Viennese Aktionists such as Otto Muehl. In 1970 Muehl founded a commune, 'Friedrichshof', inspired by Reich's theories. The mission was to equivocate 'Psychoanalysis' through 'Aktion-Analyse'. In its heyday Friedrichshof numbered around six hundred converts. The enemy of the commune was 'monogamy' – its central tenet was to mobilise revolutionary potential through the release of sexuality from the fetters of bourgeois convention. Promiscuity was a requisite of membership, regulated by an imperative to find a new partner every four hours. Inevitably, with such a rate of new couplings, even in a commune of 600, repetition set into the chain quite rapidly. In 1987 Muehl bestowed upon himself the right of 'first night' with the commune's grown up children. Muehl was arrested in 1991 and sentenced to seven years in jail.
  16. Although Freud's theories investigated the potentially harmful impact on the psyche of social imperatives, with respect to the repression of sexual desire, his own love life was conventional, in the sense that it was devoted to one woman. During their engagement, he was separated from his future wife Martha Bernays from 1882 to 1886, while she was away from Vienna, living with her mother in their home town of Wandsbek in Germany. Throughout those four years Freud wrote to her constantly, amassing some 900 love letters. He also sent her packets of cocaine, telling her it would *bring colour to her cheeks*.
  17. *Lady Stardust* is a song on the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.

### *When the kids had killed the man I had to break up the band.*

As should be evident, the preceding anecdotes, thoughts and stories were gathered via a series of separate conversations, each one centring around the discussion of thoughts for the Five Years exhibition at Area 53 in Vienna. The couch represents a space in which stories are told or enacted and connections made or, in the case of the Factory couch, upon which a chain of couplings also occurs. My initial idea for the show was that participants might respond to the Freud / Warhol / Couch connection proposed at the beginning: both the couch as a space for reverie and drifting self-reflection and the couch and its occupants as a sort of artistic readymade. However the premise rapidly triggered other oddly linked stories, forming a sort of chain of association. Hence the title *Free Association*.

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**MICHAEL  
CURRAN**

## OPEN PAGE

Marc visited again on Tuesday. He comes after his psychoanalysis sessions and is always very open and receptive. We are talking a lot about Free Association, Coincidence and Morphic Resonance in relation to his FREE ASSOCIATION concept for the Five Years Show in Vienna. We laugh about the tenuous nature of making such connections, especially when they are written down and the tension between arresting parallels and schizoid over interpretation of details. I cite the conversation from *My Dinner With Andre* – Surrealist Divination versus Fortune Cookie. We realise that the navigation becomes perilous once recognising the potential connectivity of material.

The meshing or interrelation of all things can become a spell binding pre-occupation and the management of the interpretative function requires at once an openness – countered by a rigour – a kind of filter to cut out delusional dross! Continuously we return to the need for such thought flows to find their actuality in the act or artwork. In many ways perhaps that becomes their only validity and *logic* – within an act or non-verbal manifestation. To be more direct – the requirement is to make art without proviso of anything ...no assurances ... no conclusions ... the not knowing outcome.

AND: apropos of nothing –

*“I am a daydreamer. It has always been a challenge to me to see if I can make my dreams come true,”* said the Photographer Daniel Meadows.

The pressing requirement of actualization! This is at least an instruction to myself – since as an artist my oeuvre is slim. Forcing myself to re-read ancient notebooks I see many shapes, sights and adventures, as propositions never realised.

Simply to a point: it is necessary to make work not talk about it! The most vital encounter comes from the act of doing and daring – even into an expanse of meaninglessness.

Pinter as remembered: *“There is no end to meaning”* (Only an exhaustion of imagination?)

Pinter as said: *“Meaning begins in the words, in the action, continues in your head and ends nowhere. There is no end to meaning. Meaning which is resolved, parcelled, labelled and ready for export is dead, impertinent, and meaningless.”*

Marc and I talked on many things at speed, flitting from subject to subject but a primary concern became our dissatisfaction with the role of meta-fiction in present day Art making. It is perhaps by now an abused term! These works now refer to other meta-fictions for their source and structure but they have no anchor – subtext – really just knowing surface – attempting to repeat past triumphs. They are essentially empty formal exercises, which tell us what we already know – that we are looking at images, things are mediated, and there are many stories. We are now in a position that we do not need reminding that we are exposed to fictions and complicit – that in and of itself is no longer enough.

Much good art embraces strategies of Meta-Fiction but it gives too something completely of its own in its endeavour.

Marc showed me a film of *“Selbstbemalung/Selbstverstümmelung”* by Günter Brus.

Birthing, Gouging, Deforming, Remoulding, Evisceration,

The phantom apprehends himself, dying, birthing.

Chrysalis / Corpse

Decomposition. Mutilation, Effacement.

What an act of DISMANTLING!

(Time of Exploring Ego Id Freud / Going There / Where do we go now – To the Surface / Only Play with what we call Meta-fictions. THE REAL THING.)



# Scissors

Anton Walbrook is the enigmatic narrator of Max Ophüls' *La Ronde*

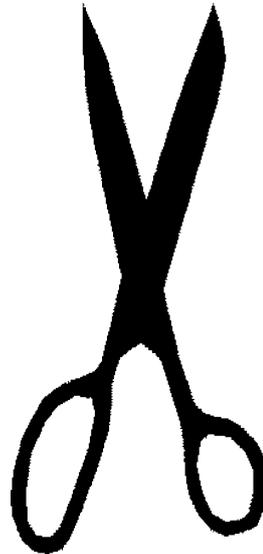
*“What part do I play? The author? An accomplice? A passer-by? I am you. That is anyone of you. I’m the personification of your desire to know everything. People never know more than one side of reality. Why? Because they only see one side of things but I see all sides because I see in the round. It allows me to be everywhere at once”*

To all intents and purposes he is the devil wearing top hat and tails

He takes us to Vienna 1900.

*“We’re in the past. I adore the past. It’s so much more peaceful than the present and so much more certain than the future.”*

He operates the merry-go-round of love and oversees the movements of promiscuity and spread of venereal disease. Towards the end of a scene in which two lovers make ready for carnal pleasure, there is a sudden cut and Walbrook appear scissors in one hand and film stock in the other. He begins to cut into the celluloid, excising the sex scene from the film.



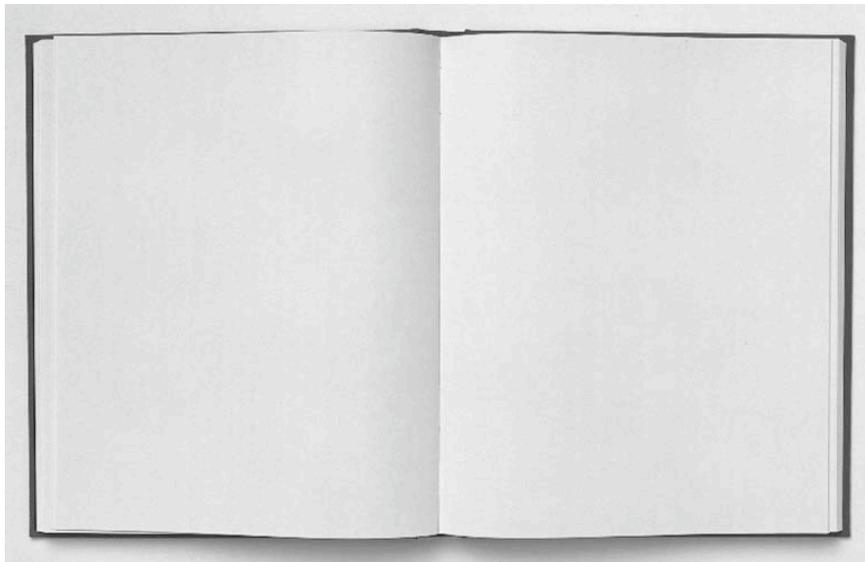
The Cuts required by Censorship /Scissors/ The Cut/ Cutting Room Floor/ Cutting Samson’s Hair/ Anna Karina Bearing Scissors, Grace Kelly Dial M / The scissors and Scalpel of Collagist/ John Hearfield /The cutting remark/The invisible edit/ The Jump-cut /the butcher cutting away excess fat/ Death by a thousand cuts/ The Cut (Short Cut)Solomon’s sword. Caeserian Macduff. An incision. Off with their Heads! The cutting of ties, apron strings, paper cuts draw blood.

# Paper

Delmore Schwartz's short story *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities* tells the tale of a man sitting in a cinema. During the course of film he sees his parents appear on screen as youngsters and witnesses scenes from their courtship. Occasionally he becomes so flummoxed that he cries out in the auditorium and is told to hush by other members of the audience. He then sees his father arriving nervously, far too early for a date at his mother's house and then watches them make their trip to Coney Island. He watches as his young father get down on one knee to propose to his mother.

Overwhelmed with terrible anxiety he stands up in the cinema and cries out:

"Don't do it. It's not too late to change your minds, both of you. Nothing good will come of it, only remorse, hatred, scandal, and two children whose characters are monstrous." He tries to be unwritten— a blank page.



The blank page of the book/ unwritten/ tabula rasa/ paper-making/ pulping trees/ the film script/ the sketch/ the paper lantern burning/ sheet music, an envelope, a gift wrapped, letter to an unknown woman, in wraps, shredder, confetti, hangman, the folds of the origamist, corpse exquisite, the contract, the warrant, the wedding certificate, paper boat, paper hat, roses, William Randolph Hearst, newspaper, photographic paper, cinema ticket, money, IOU, Fahrenheit 451, Christo wrapping a building a paper mill

## Stone

*“A form of statuary which no careful father would wish his daughter and no discriminating young man his fiancée to see”.*

So an outraged journalist described the façade of the British Medical Association situated on the Strand. The offending statues were the Eighteen Ages of Man as envisaged by sculptor Jacob Epstein in 1907. The scene depicted was one of great fecundity, celebrating male and female potency as an essential part of life’s cycle. The fertility frieze remained the source of continuing public disapproval.



Thirty years later the building changed hands, becoming Rhodesia House. It became rumoured that a stone phallus had dropped down from the well-endowed assembly, almost killing a passer-by. The new owners claimed the sculptures posed a lethal threat to pedestrians and removed the protruding penises from all the figures, while inflicting other mutilations and effacements in a flagrant vandalism of Epstein’s work.



Stoned Love by the Supremes, written by a teenager, falling stones, raining stones, Beckett’s stones / a rock in your shoe/ Rock Around the clock/ Dargelos throws a snowball with a stone inside / a paperweight/ the necessary anchoring / a touchstone/ a lodestone/ the glass house/ the execution/ the law of the father/ weight of the phallus/ falling off/ falling down to the nether regions/ A stone gargoyle/ Jimmie Durham throwing stones at TV sets/ throwing a stone to break out not to break in, Sticks n’ Stones, Bad Day at Black Rock / The Elgin Marbles/Cock Rock/ Turn to Stone/You looked at the Gorgon/ Hard Labour Breaking those Rocks/ Precious Stones Stoneage Love – 20 million years BC/ a meteorite / a stony silence

## Postscript

There is a man standing by an oval desk. He is cutting out a newspaper article concerning a *somebody* discovered to be carrying a gun hidden in a bag, whilst attending a cinema screening. The rest of his clippings are gathered together on the desk beneath a stone paperweight. He will paste them into an empty book, which is will the beginning of his own film script, comprised of collaged moments.



## Voices, Visits and Encounters in Text

The power that text has exerted on my own thinking is all encompassing.

It would require at least a thousand and one nights to account for its influence with reference to material of such wildly divergent registers that both writer and reader might become deranged in the undertaking! Even to refer to the many winged, ovidian monster of Literature seems too much of an endeavour here, so I will confine myself to texts that have made an impression upon me mainly on account of an eccentricity, either of structure or style, a particularity that makes them odd, resistant to classification and thus the object of great fascination.

**Fear:** *Your clock has three hands. Why is that?*

**Love:** *That is customary here.*

**Fear:** *Why those three hands, for God's sake? It makes me uneasy ...*

**Love:** *Nothing could be more natural, nothing simpler. Calm down.*

*The first marks the hour, the second urges on the minutes, and the third forever motionless, eternalises my indifference.*

**Fear:** *You're joking. I can't believe you'd dare to presume ...No you wouldn't dare ...*

**Love:** *To put a stop on my heart?*

**Fear:** *I don't understand a word of what you are saying.*

**Love:** *And when I keep quiet?*

**Fear:** *Oh! ...Then I understand far better.*

**Love:** *That's it really, that's the explanation.*

**Fear:** *What's the explanation?*

**Love:** *The one I'm not inclined to give you.*

The text *Fear Visits Love* appears in Alfred Jarry's novel *Visits of Love* in the form of a dialogue, and reads rather like a short entertainment, or indeed a film script. It first appeared in *La Revue Blanche* in April 1898 under Jarry's name, yet his authorship remains contested by claims that the author is in fact Rachilde, (Marguerite Vallette-Eymery), the darling of the Decadents and author of such works as *Monsieur Venus* and *L'animale*.



This ambiguity of origin is entirely appropriate to such a peculiar text, one

that keeps its reader a little frightened by its strange perambulations, and as perplexed and as uncertain as the character of Fear herself, on a visit to the house of Love.

The text begins by asking about Time and promptly halts it. I recall first reading it one summer, sitting in a crowded café situated on a busy terrace, noisy with chatter and street traffic. As I became immersed in the printed black words surrounded by the whiteness of the page, everything around me seemed to stop. One of those infrequent moments occurred of not understanding where I was, who I was or what I was reading and of where the text wanted to take me, a *jamais-vu* sensation. The *querulous* encounter beginning on the page, extended outwards, as if into the physical world, engulfing external surroundings. Sitting hunched over a book and intensely aware of my own presence in a crowd, I felt the workings of an entirely subversive force, which was beginning to re-define the shape of everything I had ever thought prior to this moment in time.

**Fear:** *I should have expected in coming here that everything would be singular ...*

**Love:** *Excepting the plurality of my existence. I do not content myself with being double; I am often triple.*

**Fear:** *On my way here I crossed a boulevard, deserted to infinity, and I skirted a great wall, so high and so long that above it one could catch a glimpse of the crowns of some trees pretty much like clowns' pom-poms. I am convinced that behind that wall there was a cemetery.*

**Love:** *There's always a cemetery behind a wall.*

**Love:** *I'm not in the habit of joking about things generally recognised as for public benefit – and commonplace ... the one thing I find very amusing is fear. When you tremble, it makes me want to laugh.*

**Fear:** *You're not very likeable.*

**Love:** *I'm loved. That's enough for me.*

Here stand Fear and Love, in a room with two north-facing windows and one bed.

The encounter progresses in an increasingly ambiguous tone, its *players* appearing to meet as estranged lovers, with no past or future, and inhabiting an indeterminate present; their courtship a conversation between two states of being; one voice imperious yet playful the other frail and full of misgivings. The reader as third party, animating the dialogue, is led to consider the close proximity and interrelation of fearfulness and loving, and to realise that it is not such an odd coupling after all.

The piece delineates the terrible geography of a dream replete with treacherous architecture, a lightless alleyway; high, forbidding walls, steps without foundations, revolving staircases like mortuary teeth, and a doorway made of amethyst, behind which white, centipede-like creatures blister the glass. The House of Love is furnished by nightmare and its contents are to provide the scenic decor and props for many a surrealist adventure yet to come. One sees this furniture borrowed most pointedly in the films of Cocteau, and then later, with less care, in countless horror films of more bloodthirsty persuasions, such as Argento's *Suspiria*. Yet it is not merely the *mise-en-scene* of Fear's visit to Love that gives it such strange power. The words and interchanges create a psychic geometry of the spirit in which one's perceptions are key. The work of the eye and the mind are described when Fear cries out:

*There is no need to tell me that, in the darkness, there are human eyes and that the infinite is a pupil; there is no need to tell me that the eyes terminate in blackbirds the network of the human nerves, that tree dazzling in the night with its electric ramifications, and those whose dead mirror would be a fulgurite-fragment.*

The words evoke the psyche as camera obscura, a dark place waiting for illumination; an auditorium crowded with clouded-over eyes, nearly blind with expectation and then the incandescent after-image of nerve filaments. For Fear to look is an act of terror: perception only filters back terrible things that provoke horror and disgust.

All distortions appear external.

**Fear:** *These white serpents have suckers. They have feet. Long, stringy feet. This stained glass distorts the objects that are behind it and the new door, as it opens – opens onto arms, merely arms ...*

**Love:** *Mine.*

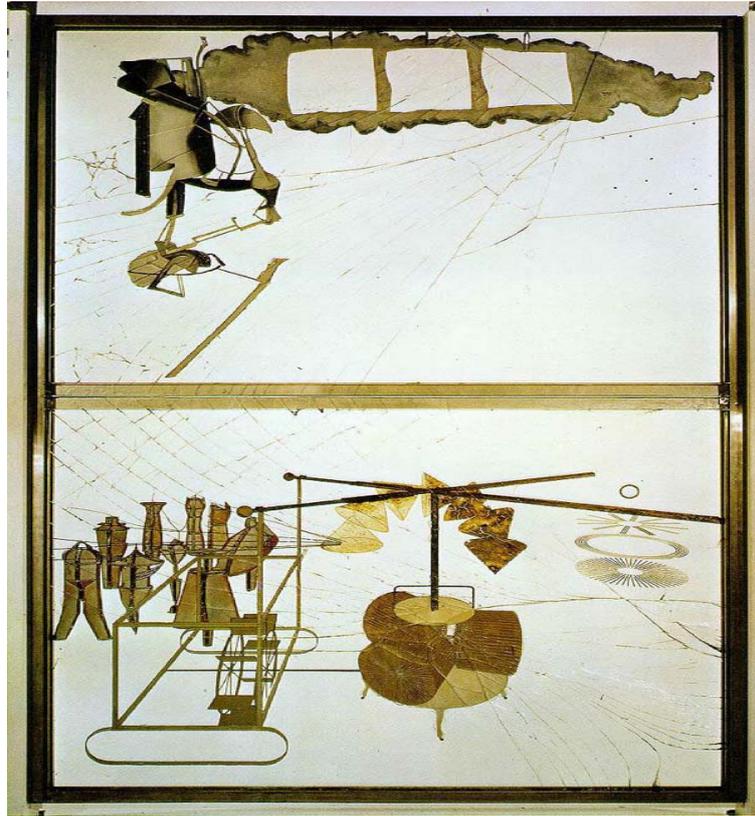
Fear is destined to find everything on her journey, threatening and frightening because she is unable to change her name, and incapable of renouncing a psychology that depends on terror for its very existence. Thus everything takes on the most nightmarish aspect. Love - unsympathetic, almost brutal, - is indifferent to Fear's predicament. At the core of the text, left unsaid but chiming clearly as a bell, is the call for the great seismic shift necessary in order to make the experience of unfettered love possible. This affair will never be consummated.

**Fear:** *The window-mirror reflects clouds one cannot catch sight of because the sky is blocked off. It is like the soul of a black man dreaming of white forms. I am terrified of the window-mirror.*

**Love:** *Wait a moment! With a little spittle and my handkerchief I'll clear it for you.*

**Fear:** *Don't do that. We'll see words written in it. Quick, let's go back inside. There's somebody coming. I heard the whole sea rising ... and the transatlantic ferries.*

**Love:** *Come now, just one more look.*



Despite what I have said, Fear Visits Love remains hermetic and resistant to interpretation. Read it, then re-read what I have written and you will see that all is conjecture. The text sets up a system of allusion, metaphor and poetics that invite scrutiny, yet remains mysteriously aloof from the weight of meaning. The Visit is at once more and less than a sum of its parts. Its forms trick us, while re-shaping the gestalt of our own thought. Reading it is akin to viewing Duchamp's Large Glass by night only to encounter it again by day as fresh apparition: a love-machine at dusk becomes a machine for suffering by dawn. What nocturnally had substance appears in daylight as a flimsy dust trail, while the forms upon the cracked glass take on another aspect. The bride stripped bare, now makes glorious circumlocutions within her compartment, while her bachelors, grinding around the coffee grinder, remain trapped in their own.

In Henri Barbusse's *Hell*, the unnamed protagonist examines a room by day, having stared into it throughout the course of a long dark night,

*The Room was black, all things blending into one, full of the night, full of the unknown, of every possible thing. I dropped back into my own room.*

*The next day I saw the Room in the simplicity of daylight. I saw the dawn spread over it. Little by little, it began to come out of its ruins and to rise.*

The room, a double of his own, has all the potency and possibility of a magical mirror in which anything can happen. It is an event waiting to happen.

*The rooms were identical, but the history of mine was finished while the history of the other one had not yet begun.*

Barbusse details the field of vision of a man who is gradually becoming an obsessive voyeur, drawn towards the scenes taking place in the adjacent room of the grim, grey boarding house in which he dwells. The conduit for his spying is a hole in the wall that is disguised by mouldings on the other side. An already withdrawn figure, he retreats

further and further into his fascination with other lives, his all-seeing eye collecting a series of private moments which he believes to be a compendium of human life.

*I looked. I beheld. The next room presented itself to my sight freely. It spread out before me, this room which was not mine. The voice that had been singing had gone, and in going had left the door open, and it almost seemed as though the door were still swinging on its hinges. There was nothing in the room but a lighted candle, which trembled on the mantelpiece. At that distance the table looked like an island, the bluish and reddish pieces of furniture, in their vague outline, like the organs of a body almost alive.'*

The fascination is that of the scopophiliac, tortured and thrilled even in waiting. The furniture and décor already suggest the fecundity of a body. On first encounter one may fancy this eye is a predecessor of Mark Lewis in *Peeping Tom* or even Norman Bates peering through the hole at the shower stall. The interlopers in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and Antonioni's *Blow Up* rise to mind for a second, but this exploratory eye is far more rigorous than any envisioned by cinematography.

In *Hell*, everything possesses potential life-energy and the text is replete with descriptions of objects, colours, sounds, the depth of shadow the slant of light, the lure of the all-consuming detail. The act of precise description is mesmerizing in its exactitude and is made more compelling by the use of the first person and present tense. Things are happening all around you and the reader becomes accomplice, voyeur and eavesdropper. The form here is tableaux and one cannot help but think of camera and projector as scenes are viewed and interpreted through an aperture in the wall.

In the course of his month long stay, the unnamed man witnesses the presence of guests, visitors and intruders in the room; two pubescent lovers petting, the carnal acts and conversations between adult lovers, a woman giving birth, a lesbian tryst, doctors discoursing on the ulcers of the world and a dying man rejecting the ministrations of a vicious priest. To describe these scenes thus, so plainly, is to trivialise the incredible intensity, pain and urgency *Hell's* narrator conjures in his descriptions of these tableaux vivants. The language also conveys expertly the spectator's feelings of fascination mingling with a sense of power, akin to the greedy gaze of the

pornography addict. There is a feeling of omniscience and mastery in looking:

*I dominated, I possessed that room. My eyes entered it. I was in it. All who would be there would be there with me without knowing it. I should see them, I should hear them, I should be as much in their company as though the door were open.*



Eventually this devouring eye can only absorb itself with looking through the hole, all other activities fall into abeyance. When there is nothing to see but the empty room the man must remain close-by in the hope of someone entering.

*Waiting had become a habit, an occupation. I put off appointments, delayed my walks, gained time at the risk of losing my position. I*

*arranged my life as for a new love. I left my room only to go down to dinner, where nothing interested me any more.*

Not unlike Fear in Jarry's text, the protagonist of *Hell* seeks an epiphany while watching the occupants of the room also in search of something. Often they seek love or at least sexual pleasure, a temporary refuge, as if to escape life and evade death for just a moment. The room is a place of encounter even in the solitary confrontation of one's aloneness or self-deceptions. One lover comments:

*We deceive ourselves a good deal about love. It is almost never what they say it is.*

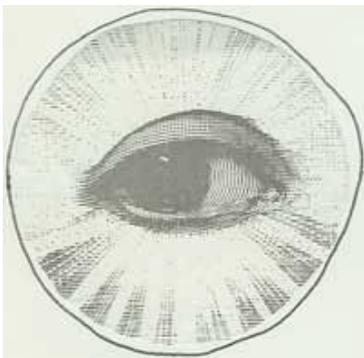
She continues later:

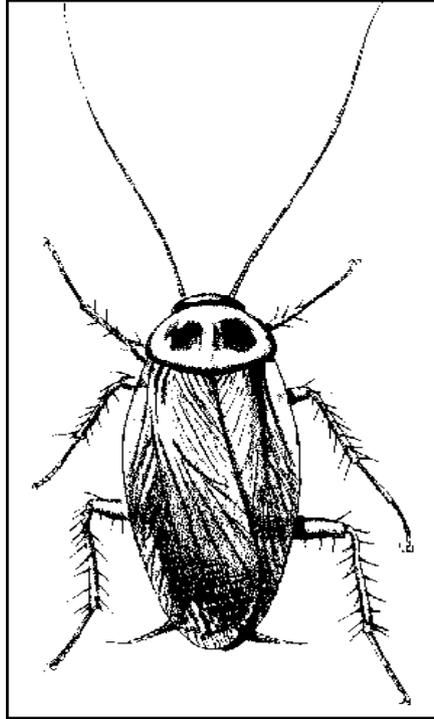
*This is the wound--time, which passes and changes us. The separation of human beings that deceive themselves is nothing in comparison. One can live even so. But the passage of time! To grow old, to thin differently, to die. I am growing old and I am dying.*

Despite *Hell's* claustrophobic interiority there is also the impression of undisclosed events taking place outside of the room and beyond the walls of the guesthouse. These are hinted at, in the conversations of its occupants and in the observer's account of his very brief forays onto the streets. But more than the mere humdrum or mundane facts of living, *Hell* conveys the sense of very powerful changes taking place while mortality awakens to time's inexorable workings. Published in 1908, the text's meditations on disease, science, nationalism and atheism evoke the slow birthing of modernity. It reveals a society faced with enormous leaps in knowledge and the unravelling of past certainties. The lives passing by are being rapidly swept up by the irrevocable surge of history, as the sensibilities and concerns of an entire époque fade away.

The time within the room is twilight, a crepuscular zone in which dreams, longings and lives are fading into obscurity with the failing light. Yet in the recesses of this gloomy penumbra something else stirs. The protagonist recognises that his looking has expanded his horizon in complex and indefinable ways that leave him exposed to an awareness he cannot withdraw from. It seems as though all the secrets of life have been laid bare before him. His act of looking then seeing is both gift and curse, leaving him open to a terrible cynicism that can only be tempered by compassion. He asks himself whether such knowledge is to be shared. Can one bear this awareness responsibly, humanely, and with humility? Perhaps he is left with only a fleeting sense of wisdom followed by defeat.

*Sometimes I myself have been sublime, I myself have been a masterpiece.  
Sometimes my visions have been mingled with a thrill of evidence so strong and so creative that the whole room has quivered with it like a forest, and there have been moments, in truth, when the silence cried out.*





*The Passion According to GH* came to me only very recently, relatively late in life: I am immensely grateful for the lateness of its coming, and the fact that it came at all, but even more so for the time at which it chose to come. Yes! It is as it sounds – the book came and found me *needing* to read it – needing to but not wanting to read it. *The Passion According to GH* came into my life imperceptibly to begin with, and then gradually, very slowly and discreetly, made itself known to me, until by increments it sat unopened by my bed. One day I reached from my bed and opened it:

*To Potential Readers:*

*This is a book just like any other book. But I would be happy if it were read only by people whose outlook is fully formed. People who know that an approach - to anything whatsoever - must be carried out gradually and laboriously, that it must traverse even the very opposite of what is being approached. They and they alone will, slowly, come to understand that this book exacts nothing of anyone. Over time, the character G. H. came to give me, for example, a very difficult pleasure; but it is called pleasure.*

Clarice Lispector

I hesitate to go further ... as I hesitated when reading ...there was hesitation before the turn of every page ... sometimes hesitation became dread. So I hesitate, after all this text one must come upon you and following that you must choose to read it.

To the silence of yet another room:

*This room had only one way in, and it was a narrow one: through the cockroach. . . . By a perilous road I had reached the deep breach in the wall that was that room . . . and the break formed a wide natural hall like in a cave.*

Lispector's text confounds then captures its reader by strategies of appeal and alienation. There is a plea to follow the I of the text, a petition for support followed by cautions and chastisements for those who might presume an understanding. In the frank admission of the separation between reader and author, engagement does not diminish but rather intensifies. One is made aware that the act of concentration is absolutely vital; reader and writer must share a present. They have to meet there even if it's pretence. You must read as though your life depended on it, for the truth of your life does so depend. The overlap between the voices of the I in the text with that of its author is so compelling that one quickly overcomes any inhibition and crosses the threshold, diving into a frighteningly vivid identification. The acts of reading and of writing become totally bound to each other, sharing one pulse: empathy slides into embodiment.

*Hold my hand tight, because I feel that I'm going. I am again going to the most primary divine life, I am going to an inferno of brute life. Don't let me see because I am close to seeing the core of life - and . . . I am afraid that in that core I won't know anymore what hope is.*

The bare bones:

*Bare, as though prepared for only one person's entrance. And whoever came in would be transformed into a "she" or into a "he." I was the person the room called "she." I had come in an "I," but the room then gave me the dimensions of "she."*

GH enters a room she has never bothered to look at during all the languid hours, days and months spent ordering and re-ordering her perfectly arranged apartment.

This small square room seems so distant and utterly insignificant on the mental map of her life that it barely seems to exist for her until now. She enters the room, the tiny living quarter of the maid, whom she has dismissed. Once inside she sees three drawings scratched on the wall, three crude, black drawings like cave paintings, scrawled by the maid. She examines them and awakens to the maid's hatred of her. GH stands there before them, scanning each one carefully. The room will have to be made ready for the maid's successor. The walls will need to be painted. There is a wardrobe in the room – its door slightly ajar. The wardrobe should be fixed. GH sees a giant cockroach inside the wardrobe. She slams the door shut and at the same time falls to the floor. There she lies caught between the bed and the wardrobe facing the semi-decapitated cockroach, which is still living while a continuous stream of white creamy pus oozes from the scaly husk of its body. There she is wedged on the floor, staring at the cockroach and it stares back at her.

*But are the discoveries of infancy like those made in a laboratory, where one finds what one will? Was it when, only when I became an adult that I started to fear and grew the third leg? Can I, as an adult, have the childlike courage to love myself? To lose oneself is to go looking with no sense of what to do with what you might find. The two walking feet minus that extra third one that holds a person down. And I want to be held down. I don't know what to do with the horrifying freedom that can destroy me. But while I was held down, was I happy? Or was there — and there was — an uncanny restless something in my happy prison routine? Or was there — and there was — that throbbing something to which I was accustomed that I thought throbbing was the same as being a person? Isn't that it? Yes, that too... that too...*

To read Lispector one has go down, go down there, one must lose all ideas of selfhood and go right down beneath the dearly cherished skeins of identity. To hold GH's hand one must relinquish all illusions, dismantling falsities, for to know *The Passion* it is necessary to take your body to the level of meat and marrow, fibre, cell, particle, molecule. One must go to the thing that is most fearful and look upon it unflinchingly and continue to look. One must be detained by intense nausea, confronting fear in order to find truthfulness.

Lispector's difficult text is a painful initiation towards liberation.

*I know that I still do not feel free  
that I think again, because my purpose is to find...  
find the moment of discovering the way out.*



**EMMA  
WOLF  
DERAZE**

--Completing solitude in fragmented betrayals of the essence: more than one can fit within the frame provided.

The presence, heavy and deep-set, occulting passages (of time, speed, perspective-distortion, angles of desire, the focal variations that misuse of the skin has embedded in his/her breath)

Silence is the backdrop for something to be said, not crushing, not overwhelming, it will be crushed and overwhelmed, or maybe it will be the metal of a ring, ready to be cast. WORD is gem. You pick the colour.

Then the beasts appear and their slow and hushed advance in the night (*Nightmares are triggered off by the electroencephalogrammaton we all foolishly believe we will override - us full of shit and full of ourselves*) keep you from registering them in time - they call forth a denomination of the frequency, beyond doubt but before certainty, right where it's pretty damn obvious the bad shit is coming, but it doesn't have a name yet, probably cannot have one, ever, or it wouldn't be THAT bad - triggered them off, then, within a system whose configuration truly cannot cope with them, was not meant to, or rather, was meant NOT to.

"i want you", she says, eyes glazed in the others' lurking fluids, the remnants of something toothed and fully-fledged, but with broken bones.

You cannot answer but it will pass as a radiant and grateful acknowledgment. Sitting there in the becoming of SILENCE, that son of a Cunt now vetoing every single one of your prayers.

You can look anywhere, anywhere you look is somewhere bled dry.

(*Sound was once perceived as the emanation of divine particles that a closed circuitry had trapped inside cell walls, deep deep inside the marrow of our soul's skeleton. Then they figured it out. Science and its golden tongue, its long, sharp-nailed fingers, its delicate way of fucking us over.* )

There between the long gaps of our common history lie the little chunks of TRUTH that your teeth fell upon one after the other until you broke one, chipped the thin enamel, cut the soft membrane of your gums, thought you'd choke on them, broken glass, the tiniest, sharpest stones, the kind they could grind you with. Well, actually...

You count the numbers backwards - back to the thing it started from - back to You and the Other - mirrors - back to unity - back to infinity.

There are so many of you under this skin. How in the holy name of Fuck are you supposed to manage someone else letting themselves in smoothly, tenderly, full of promises of blue suns, bright nights, but forcefully as bulls on the charge ?

(*They only attack because you did it first. That's how martyrs handle the concept of responsibility*)

Frigid like a mural of arctic contemplation, white forever because there are places there's no point in setting foot on, and everybody knows this.

It's all come down to this.

No one to say it's a pity, it's a waste, the damage done, all that.

Who gives a shit. It's all come down to this.

The very place you used to inhabit you now haunt.

Felt, vaguely, but never answered.

They cannot tell your frame from the curtains' shadow.

And you can't tell their words from the wind's holler.

Transformation is not a process, it's an event.

Hammered repeatedly into the bones of your plurality.

Going nowhere, so fast it hurts, so slow you can't see it until you're there.

The air is a grid. Vacant until you fill the little boxes in. But with what? All has been said, the words placed like in some bad cosmic version of scrabble where it's always the others' words that count more and win.

## A

You sit down, now. Just sit down, there, then. It opens you up. You are not on it you are in it. It is holding you like a palm holds sand, only, with a better grasp. Comfort is a trap.

You are sinking now, can you tell? Sinking not within yourself but sinking within it. It only takes a soft voice, The Other's soft voice. And then, you're gone. Taken. The leather's/velvet's/suede's/blanket's soft, soft grip. Hard as stone under the leather/velvet/suede/blanket. Will not let you slip through.

There are those moments when you are willing to be taken this way, and others when you could have sworn you were willing to.

The Other's gentle voice that drags you out of the zone you had buttressed. Breaking through so calmly, surely they cannot want you harm  
*do they.*

...no, it's here to help.

The couch is here to help. With its fucking velvet glove and its fucking endless lust. Because you see, you give it your left hand, and it seizes the right one too. And then the arm. You can't even feel its teeth chew the meat of your soul.

On it you are naked. Raw, stripped to the core. The Other speaks, slowly, from far away it seems, telling you to open up. It wants in, it has the slow-burning and relentless hunger of the true vampires, those whose kiss have the taste of some sort of paradise, lost or to come, you're pretty sure it's both, but the truth is, it's neither. But when you're in the couch's hands you don't really give half a shit about Truth

*do you*

*do you now,*

no, you only care about its gentle beckoning. Its elaborate whore-tricks. The couch is the über-cunt. Why so wide open? All the better to suck you in, my child. The Other becomes its agent. Or maybe it's the other way around. When you let yourself sink so deep, who does what to you ceases to matter, it's only what is done that counts, and how it feels. And you feel so much lighter. All this weight taken off your weary shoulders. All this blood taken off your weary veins. All the long, long struggles against the "world" (the what? i don't remember that. is it outside? there, beyond the velvet? i am gone from it now. let me rest in the hands that love me) forgotten now, all forgotten. Let yourself go, further down.

It carries you in a place that feels you should never have left it. What actually happens is this : *from then on and in those moments of rendition only, you will come to trust the presence that allows your passivity as a fuel that enables your activity. Wrong, of course. That valve you open, it's not you opening it. You are still passive and allowed, not enabled. But you feel that some kind of separation operates there that could not have happened in any other place (a chair? of course not. no, the reclining... in the reclining lies everything. the reclining is the point. the reclining of your pride, for one. You dirty little masochist without the guts to see it.). You feel (you think you think but no, it's just a feeling, And not that deep, either) that what you give away there is somehow given back to you. What you fail to see is that you could have given it to yourself without being there and without responding to The Other's soft, gentle voice (commands. Yes, they are commands. Deal with it). You could have been face to face with your very own self, what you say you want to get to, without reclining. But It is hungry for your trust, Like a priest, assuring you there's no direct way to god, only he has His Holy Number, and the kind of phone that can dial it. It wants your Love, your belief that all you find is thanks to It. The Other. The Couch. Them.*

So you recline and give.

It feels like... it just feels right.

Trust is everything.

It's only ok if it is not misplaced, and then, consequently, misused.

Are you one of the lucky ones?

Is that a vampire you're kissing, reclining ?

The Other's call on its own might not be enough to get you to lie this far down. But it is not in The Other you're lying, it's on the couch... right? Right? Wrong. But it does not matter what you believe, and what you're wrong about.

Just as long as you can sit up and walk away, facing straight ahead.

It is a hand that pries you open in style, smooth style. It wants you, drags you closer, just wants to touch you, caress you, hold you, no, really, don't worry. By the time it's got you, you've emptied your guns and dropped the knives on the floor. So if you're not gonna fight back you might as well let it do it, that thing it wants to do, whatever it's called. It's fine, you tell yourself.

The Other tried to get to you before. But this is the one place that can break your resistance. Just by the angle it gives to your spine. There really is nothing you can do

is there.

## **B**

I was so far away and now i am right here. Chances and instants, more than taken, seized in the throw and held tight.

You are sitting so close to me, and we do not need to speak. We are sitting so close to us and we do not need to speak. If we do speak it will be of what binds us. You are sitting so close, on the same thing i am sitting on.

**I could drink your lips' rosary, its silent prayer.**

**The murder that says no.**

My back and your back, disarmed. This is where we meet. A common couch under our weight. Supporting the common desire we have to bring a low-key past and a major future closer. The present is breathing atonality like fire. Closer even. We are not within ourselves here. This is where we meet. Where we end and us begins. The individual is broken down like the obsolete remnant of tragedy we now understand it is and always was. But it is not fate that brought us here it is the force behind our will. By sitting down on this shared fabric we are acknowledging all the concealed steps taken before.

- tell me
- tell you what
- you tell me..
- i have nothing to say, you know it
- yes, i do. that's why i am asking you to speak..
- ...
- well ?
- i don't know.. i used to
- to what ?
- know.
- you used to know ? and now you don't?
- yeah
- what happened ?
- it's not what happened.
- ...
- it's what didn't.
- ...and why didn't it?
- if i knew it probably would have happened.
- ..right..
- can you feel it?
- it?
- this. the nothing. like nothing, only, thick.
- i'm not sure i know what you---
- ---oh COME ON. you'd need a sledgehammer.
- i'm sorry?
- to cut it.
- ...
- see?
- ...
- ...
- look. you need to talk to me.
- this wall used to contain us and now it just contains us.
- you don't need to be so fucking sibylline all the time, you know?
- i'm sorry. you're just proving my point.
- what point?
- that the nothing is so thick you can't even hear me through it.
- i don't see a "nothing" here..
- of course not. you just see someone you can't see. you don't have the balls to name it, but if you did you'd realize that's what it is. a nothing. a huge, thick, dark, impenetrable Nothing.
- you're building it like you desire it. and yet you seem to resent it. do you know which side of yourself you are on?
- yes. yes i do. do you?
- i don't think i have several s---
- ---of *me*. do you know which side of *me* you're on?
- ...
- exactly.
- we need to break through this.
- you're not trying to break through anything.
- i think you're wrong. i think *you're* not trying. i want to help.
- why?
- why not?
- no, not *why not*. WHY ? *why* do you want to help? and *who* do you want to help? me or you?
- i... i don't like the way things are right now so i'm trying to change them. i can't believe you seem to have a problem with that. what are you afraid of?
- i'm not afraid. i'm charged with knowledge. fear rises from doubt. when you know you don't fear a thing, you know. i know this isn't going to work out.
- no you don't. you're not even trying.
- this is getting nowhere so fast i can feel the wind in my hair.
- you're driving.
- aren't i, *just*.

- ...
- ...
- remember when we first sat there?
- ...yes.
- so long ago... and it all seemed so clear...
- you're not gonna cry now are you?
- maybe? am i not entitled to emotions? are you the only one who is allowed to be fucked up? am i not entitled to anything?  
am i not?
- ...
- why are you smiling ?
- ...
- why are you laughing?
- because you've done it.
- ...i'm sorry? done what ?
- turned the mirror unto yourself.
- ...
- now you know. can i leave now?
- please... don't.
- can you feel it now ? the Nothing ?
- please. sit down. stay. we need to find a way out of this.
- i was never in it.

**SUSAN  
MORRIS**

## BEWARE OF THE IMPULSE

to kill

to screw over

to fuck up

to be killed

Beware of the impulse

to be fucked over

or to attack

to lie open and defenseless

to be too defensive

or too aggressive

to regress

to need

to feed

to drain

to explain

to suffer too much pain

## CUNNING

Cunning  
Like a fox  
A fucking fox

Running  
Like a fox  
A fucking ox  
A fucking cunt  
A fucking runt  
A cunting fox  
A cunning fox

A cunning cunt  
A cutting cunt  
A cutting remark  
Cunt  
A remarkable cunt  
A cut or gash  
Cunnilingus  
(A foxy cunt)

LORD, ABIDE.

Sorry, mate  
I drifted off  
You woke me with  
That little cough  
Now I'm feeling  
Rather  
Queasy  
The dogs are barking  
It's not easy  
The hound is howling  
Rattling his chain  
I've had those  
Illegal  
Thoughts again  
The priest's still mumbling  
Rattling his tin  
The fucking bastard  
Stinks of gin

Suicide!  
O suicide!  
Don't leave me lonesome  
Be my guide  
Gently lie here  
By my side  
The dogs are barking  
It's high tide

*The darkness deepens, Lord,  
Abide.*

## OBSESSIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS

### Obsessive Thought Patterns

Knit one

Pearl

A necklace

A chain

A pearly ball

The King and Queen

The Ace of Spades

Winner takes all

Your call

A dropped stitch

I remember the bitch

I remember the song

I sing along

A dropped stitch

Conjures the bitch

I drop the ball

I see it fall

I know the theme

I've seen the scene

I remember the spell

Very well

A dropped stitch

Conjures the bitch

I drop a stitch

I conjure the bitch

## QUICKENING

A quickening of odour

A quickening of the heart

Like a frog's

(Very like)

An enchantment of the heart

A quickening of the heartbeat

A quickening of breath

A flickering of life

A quickening of the heart

**Paul  
Buck**

## **Dictaphone series: the couch has gone**

### *Transcript of initial improvisation: lying on the couch*

When I asked Liane how she accomplished her photograph which was obviously taken in a public space, a house open to the public, or a stately home, because she was interested in the décor, the rich décor of the room, to place her character, she told me that often the public was still in attendance, passing through the image, but because she used a long exposure time of one hour, two hours, three hours, their fleeting movement through the image, often in the background, did not show on the final image. They are there of course, their presence infinitesimal, but their presence is not felt, even though they are there, infinitesimally, they are ghosts in the image. They are there even though their presence might not be felt, but their presence is there, they are there infinitesimally. They are there on another plane.

### *Final version*

When I asked Liane how she accomplished her photograph, taken in a house open to the public, because she was interested to place her character in the rich décor of the room, she explained that others passed through the space, but by using a long time exposure their passage became fleeting and their trace did not appear in the final still. But they are there, even though their presence is infinitesimal. They are like ghosts in the image.

April 2009