

Mobile in a mobile element

Eric Ellingsen*

ABSTRACT

From the times of Pausanias to Pliny the Younger, we have been articulating a philosophy of place and people by collecting stories acquired through touring. Places and people are glued together in stories. Stories provoke reflection. One of the central ideas in this essay is to use a tour of stories to propose a philosophy of refraction. A philosophy of refraction needs to replace a reflexive philosophy. Though I do maintain throughout this essay that we see ourselves better by seeing others, I think it's even more radical: we are the others we are seeing. We are all others. The way I try to show this philosophy of refraction, of becoming the things that pass through us, of being the way we move, is through setting up a few comparative modes of travel: *the plane experience* on one end and *the ground experience* on the other. From doom tourism to dark tourism, nature-based tourism to pro-poor tourism, everybody takes tours for different reasons. I think we keep moving to *keep things whole*, as the poet Mark Strand says. I hope you take the time to take this essay tour personally. That's the point.

Keywords: Philosophy of refraction, subjectivity, staging tourism, representations

ÁGRIP

Á breyfinngu í breyfanlegu efni.

Frá tímum Pásaníasar til Plíníusar yngra hefur mannkynið sett staði og þjóðir í heimspekilegt samhengi í gegnum ferðasögur. Sögur líma saman staði og fólk. Sögur endurvarpa veruleikanum. Ein af meginhugmyndum þessarar greinar er að á grundvelli ferðasagna mætti leggja drög að heimspeki bylgjubrotsins. Heimspeki bylgjubrotsins þarf að taka við af heimspeki endurvarpsins. Því er haldið fram í ritgerðinni að við fáum skýrari sýn á okkur sjálf með því að horfa á aðra, en það má jafnvel taka róttækari pól í hæðina: Við erum þeir sem við sjáum. Við erum allir hinir. Til að sýna hvað heimspeki umbreytingar felur í sér – að við verðum þeir hlutir sem fara í gegnum okkur, og að verund okkar sé fólgin í hreyfingunni – er í greininni fjallað um nokkrar leiðir nútímafólks til að ferðast: Annars vegar *upplifun á flugi* og hins vegar *hina jarðbundnu upplifun*. Ástæður ferðamennsku eru margvíslegar: Að upplifa grimm örlög, myrk öfl eða náttúruna, eða koma fátækum til hjálpar. Ég tel að það sem heldur okkur á hreyfingu sé viðleitni til að *halda blutunum heilum*, eins og ljóðskáldið Mark Strand segir. Ég vona að þú gefir þér tíma til að taka þessa ritgerð til þín. Það er málið.

Lykilorð: Heimspeki bylgjubrots, sjálfsvera, sviðsetning ferðamennsku, framsetning

INTRODUCTION

To work spatially does not necessarily entail the creation of representational distance, and we can precisely avoid this distance, essentially static and unproductive, by insisting that time is a constituent of space. Or as a friend has said: space is 'a constantly mutating simultaneity of stories-so-far'. (Eliasson 2008, refracting Massey 2005)

Marla – the big tourist. Her lie reflected my lie. (Narrator, *Fight Club* – Fincher 1999, refracting Palahniuk 1996)

Should we not learn the lesson that, for example, the woods, which poets praise as the human being's loveliest abode, is hardly grasped in its true meaning if we relate it only to ourselves. (Uexküll 2010[1934], 142)

WARNING: like a story, this paper contains a certain amount of thinking that spills out and leaks all over the place. Rather than attempt to patch the cracks and prevent the leaks, the leaks are precisely

* Species of Space/Institute für Raumexperimente, Germany. eric@speciesofspace.com

what have been cultivated. It is through the cracks where energy is exchanged. These crackles are the grain boundaries where ideas slip over each other and annealing is possible. This is also an excuse. This paper will fall apart. So an academic bib may be required in reading. A suspension of professional, professorial disbelief. Stories are told to see where they go. This is about the importance of maintaining an on-the-way philosophy. It asks for you to take it personally. To take everything personally.

I. THE RUNWAY THINKING TAXI

I am in a commercial airliner flying to Iceland from Berlin. I am moving 900 km per hour. I am sealed, seated and still. I am 12,000 meters above the earth's respiring, floating, spinning crust. I breathe the 23 °C bleed air in the cabin. The monitor on the seat in front of me says the air outside the cabin is -60 °C. I try to think my way into feeling what -60 °C really feels like. I don't think I have ever been that cold. I don't think it's the windows fault. I have read Richard Sennett (1974) on plate-glass windows and separation from the public in *The Fall of Public Man*; Michael de Certeau's (1984, 112-115) refraction of Jules Verne's (2009[1870]) submarine windows in *Twenty-thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. But here I am wondering how fast 900 km/h feels as the monitor in front of me embedded in the economy seat tells me I am moving 900km/h. With windows down driving as a teenager in Kentucky, I topped out at 140km/h. Once. I can see what 12,000 meters above the earth's living, boiling crust looks like, but the experience privileges vision and filters out the rest of my senses. I've free-fallen from 3,000 m (tandem). Once. Falling is not flying. And while flying, I'm forced to try and think what the place I am flying through really feels like. I mean I have small sheltered feelings of the situation. But I have to think my way into

an experience of the intensive relationships involved in the situation. I want to make a sense glue so that a feeling of all the relationships of sound and temperature and speed can stick to my memory. The idea is that if all these senses stick together, a fuller actual physical encounter with the actual physical relationships of the composition of travel can take place. Maybe it would be too much? Overwhelming? Stun me so far past dull that I would be numb? Choke me with vitamins? But I'm not overwhelmed. I'm underwhelmed. A slight shake. Some bumps. Barely enough physical stimulation to stimulate new soil for ideas for a philosophy of tourism. The feeling of being bored at moving 900 km/h makes me laugh. The feeling of having to think about the relationships involved to feel the complexity the situation makes me laugh. The roars are reduced to a low hum, a vibration cushioned by the seat cushions. Recirculated air flows around me. I'm trying to think my way into a feeling of the environment I am moving through. The inside is replenished by the outside, but the outside is compressed, heated, pressurized, filtered, and mediated. I'm trying to think my way into a feeling of the environment I am moving through. Centimeters of acrylic cabin windows separate me from a place made up of intense relationships, the plane being there and my being in the plane two parts of this intense composition. It is as if something was speaking to me underwater; I can see the mouth move but can't understand the words.

Every environment, from boiling water to sweaty armpits, air travel contrail to the craquelure of a painting, from heating the temperature around your mouth by breathing to the cooling of lava and *landscapes on the loose* by pumping thousands of gallons a minute of water onto heated rock while others are hiding where there is "a collection of films that could have turned Hugh

Hefner into cryptocrystalline pumice” (McPhee 1989, 134) to seek protection from lava bombs in Iceland, everything is a constant set of differences caught in interrelationships of pressure, temperature, speed, respiration, large convection cycles of heat exchange, of energy flowing and material cycling. This summarizes the core of everything Manuel De Landa (1997; 2002 refracting Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari 1987) gets at: intensive differences drive processes. Some of these intensive interrelationships are composed into airplanes. Some into walking shoes. Some into paper books. Whether walking on the ground or walking to the bathroom in an airplane, I am also one of these intensive material environments, a variable, now in flight relationship. But in the plane, I don’t feel other intensive relations which I endorse by participating in: the cheap oil that allows the plane to mount to this speed, this height. The ship or pipe conduit that oil traveled in. The politics of those pipes. The lobbies. The metal in the plane, the alloys, the rivets, the patents, the person power that makes sure it’s air tight. The metal which takes geological pressures millions of years to transform biomass into fossil fuels is not felt. The CO₂ being released by the plane as contrail as we move through the atmosphere is not felt. I unwrap my bread roll made who-knows-where, from the plastic bag made somewhere else. I’m preparing for a talk on Eco-tourism, eco from Greek Oikos, home-tourism. I think of writing a philosophy of home travel, a week spent in a walk around the block. I think of how in a plane we always enter a city from above. I recall Fernand Braudel (1996) writing about the ice trade from the Italian mountains to facilitate a market of meats in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. And Siegfried Gideon (1948) writing about cooling mechanisms and mobility in

Mechanization Takes Command. And William Cronon (1991) writing about the ice-sheets to cool Pullman’s cars in Chicago in *Nature’s Metropolis*. And Bruno Latour (2004) writing about actants in *Politics of Nature*. And Jane Bennett (2010) writing about *thing-power* by writing about Bruno Latour and the *right of things* in *Vibrant Matter*. I’m flying over the Atlantic Ocean as I take a swig of cool water bottled from who knows where. I chew on the roll in the plane numb machine suit that 350 of us wear together, chewing together, swallowing together, swallowed in together, and sealed in together. We’re crossing time zones. We do not see or feel the wake of contrail, the vapors and vortexes we are leaving behind.

One of the things this paper sets out to achieve is the start of a Ecopsycho-philosophy, a feeling thinking philosophy while moving, an emotive contact as a mode of travel with the relationships that are the places, the things, and while being mobile in that mobile place. Ecology is the flow of energy through material and the interrelations of that material as it cycles. The energy flowing and the material cycling are inseparable. In other words the energy flowing through the material is a kind of refraction; something passes through something and is changed. This is what informs a philosophy which I will continually refer to in this paper as a *philosophy of refraction*. By *contact with relationships* I mean, coming into contact with the processes and constraints coupled together to give form and organization to things. The plane is one extreme. To travel in an airplane means to reduce the degree of contact with the relationships which constrain and organize and are constrained in the place moved through. Another extreme is to walk. While walking, the contact with the relationships at play, the politics of the street (made out of the insides of volcanoes and dinosaur bones, as Eco-philosopher Timothy Morton (2007)

says in *Ecology Without Nature*), the speeds, the weather, the directions of where one is allowed to go, the contract of gravity and our two physical motor centers (center of moment and center of gravity), and who walks on which side of the street and who gives way to who, and are there joggers, and is alcohol being consumed there, and are vegetables being sold there, and bread... All these things may be contracted into the experience of street. The smells. The temperatures. The light levels. The sounds. The body balancing its weight. The spaghetti of senses twisted together. The meat ball of desire. The stains of memory and expectation. The stories following then are evaluated between these two extremes: being in a container and disconnect perceptually from the environment you are moving through, vs. being the container connected perceptually to the environment you are and are moving through.

Every *thing* is a set of intensive relationships, a composition of forces and materials squeezed, heated, cooled, transported, respiring, half-living, changing. Everything is in motion. Everything. And as we attempt to preserve the “differences which make a difference” (Bateson 1972, 381), knowing that “perception operates only upon difference” (Bateson 2002, 27), the earth is spinning. And the macro molecules are spinning. And the waves are swashing. And the synaptic gaps are chemically/electrically are *firing together and wiring together* (Edelman 2006) connecting along the most reinforced routes of last times. Every center is in orbit. All *things* are composed of interrelationships. And this paper claims that it is crucial to understand all *things* as intensive relationships and then to cultivate contact with as many of the seams along which those differences are exchanged; the cracks along which the relationships respire. The relationships which compose the situation – the plane, the bread, the -60 °C, the

900 km/h – gain significant meaning when we feel them. The more the senses are enlisted in that feeling, the more powerful the bond to experience and memory. A *unitary scene* happens according to Edelman (2006, 13–14), when we are “conscious of being conscious and can report on the experience.” Feeling the relationships of things glues experience together with emotions together with the world. We become bonded. Storied. Stories. “And then, connectedness between people in that all think in terms of stories” (Bateson 2002, 12). So this is also a philosophy of tourism because tourism is a bonding profession. Tourism curates a form of contact.

That’s a lot. I can’t prove this, but this isn’t a prove-to-you paper. You’re either fuming, or fusing, or refusing to go on. That’s ok. I hope you take it personally. This is not a strip mall; it’s a market place of ideas; you have to watch where you’re going. Ideas may squat sidewalk space illegally. There are dogs around. So there’s crap and crud here; good for the roots, bad for the shoe’s treads and new carpets. (Unless you’re as story strategic as Mr. Snopes in Major De Spain’s house in a William Faulkner short, and you force yourself into a carpet cleaning job because you whipped *poop* on the rug on purpose – see Faulkner 1993.) Maybe a paper can be allowed to throw the random foot out into the sidewalk and trip you without contextualizing why, like how “[t]his silence would be more pedagogical in a meatpacking plant”, as Johannes Goransson (2007, 40) says in *A New Quarantine Will Take My Place*. This says you’re reading. You’re in contact. You’re hands are coordinating a motion of pages, of paper saplings liquefied and smushed into 2D planes. You don’t know what the last word of this sentence will be till you get here spazzing. Inger Christensen (2006 [1969], 3) walks by saying, “It. That’s it. That stated it. It is. Goes on. Moves. Beyond.

Becomes. Becomes it and it and it. Goes further than that. Becomes something else. Becomes more. Combines something else with more to keep becoming something besides something else and more.” Touring is an opportunity for combination. In holding these smushed sapling pages the mechanics of your hands confounds the most cutting edge robotics, the same way fingers and the human hand astounded Walt Whitman (2010, 31): “And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery” (*Song of Myself*). The molecules in the room where you are reading are volatile, which means as you read this you smell something. All odors dabble in turbulence. What? What’s the taste in your mouth right now while your eyes are rolling? What sounds are coming through the window or walls right now? We are so bad at being nomad.

II: TAKE OFF:

A PHILOSOPHY OF REFRACTION

This paper focuses on the importance of experiencing the relationships that compose and constrain a situation. It trades reflexivity, being reflective of an experience or place or theory, and replaces reflection with refraction. Reflection requires proof: *I’ve read this and this and this and am adding this bud to that branch and here is the thesis tree.* To refract something allows that thing, an experience, a story, to enter and pass through you and pass out of you. You are changed in the process. The story is changed in the process. The theory is active and actively shaped in the process. Everything comes out on the other side slightly jarred, tilted, slanted, swerved, and changed. This paper takes place from inside the tilt. I haven’t gotten to the other side yet. I’m mid-travel. I’m trying to do my learning knowing in front of you. Francisco Varela (1990, 191) says, “the fact that whatever it is that we know, it is not separate from what we do to know it.” The way we perceive ourselves

moving matters. I hope this paper feels in motion. I don’t want it to fit back together nicely in the end. Even Newton couldn’t humpty-dumpty back together the beam of light after rainbow-ing.

This philosophy of refraction is approached through stories. Those stories will try not to merely reflect encounters, but provoke encounters. Encounters allow grip, something to hold onto. The last time I was a geographer I came back as someone else.

A story links an experience with a time and a space. Stories allow us to connect our eyes to our brains, what is visible to what we see. Stories are contracts, glue makers, grip opportunities. Stories let us stick to each other and stick to places and stick in time and stick in memories and stick in feelings. When any story is told well, like John McPhee (1989) telling the story of how Thorbjorn Sigurgeirsson managed to cool the lava flows in *a war against nature* in Iceland with pumps, that story refracts the original experiences again, reincarnates those experiences, refracts an implicit view of nature evolving between a mechanistic metaphor and an organic metaphor. What happened back then doesn’t just happen back then. Stories are not mirrors, and a writer is not a mirror holder. The images are distorted in story telling, sharpened and blurred at the same time. We are not each other’s mirror. Lou Reed has it a little wrong: *I’ll be your mirror, reflect who you are.*

A picture reflects that an experience has happened, but rarely gives the person looking at the picture an experience of the story that happened. If I show a picture of the giraffe I saw in Tanzania, that picture needs a story or it simply reflects that I’ve been there, and that some things were there too, a giraffe, a truck, a shirt, oil from somewhere, tires from somewhere leaving treads here, buttons and threads on my shirt from somewhere, for example, etcetera. A

philosophy of refraction requires a story with the picture. This paper is a philosophy of refraction. This paper is asking the reader to be a traveler, a traveler reader, a refractive reader unafraid of hiking around in a drift of academic discharge, unafraid of re's: re-feeling-re-thinking-re-acting. Afraid of taking things personally? Retry. Because through a philosophy of refraction there is recognition involved, and with that recognition comes the chance of new knowledge production, which is to say that when we are conscious that we perceive, we are agents of change while being changed. Stories are the containers then that carry that change, but the content is a little like Kurt Vonnegut's (1998) *Ice-nine*, the content is a polymorph substance that goes through everything when it comes in contact with your imagination. The stories related here did not happen, they are not over. They are, as Olafur Eliasson (2009) says, refracting what Doreen Massey (2005, 9) says, *stories-so-far*; stories always happen exactly now.

**III: PLEASE STAY IN YOUR SEAT:
ESTIMATIONS: VITO ACCONCI**

Vito Acconci made a series of experiments from 1969 to 1970 called *Estimations* (Figure 1). The estimations consist of Acconci standing in a place and estimating the distance between him and some object: a tree, a bridge, a road, a sign. By moving into his estimation, his body merged the estimation with his mind through experience. For Acconci, these estimations were techniques for amplifying dimensions. In particular, the dimensions of an art work. As Vito Acconci says on the Art Institute of Chicago's (2011) website, the estimations were a way to "get myself off the page and into real space. These photographic pieces were ways to, literally, throw myself into my environment." Mathematically, a dimension is a variable which contains information. Acconci was attempting to move his art off the page and get his body involved as part of the environment, not simply into the environment as if the environment

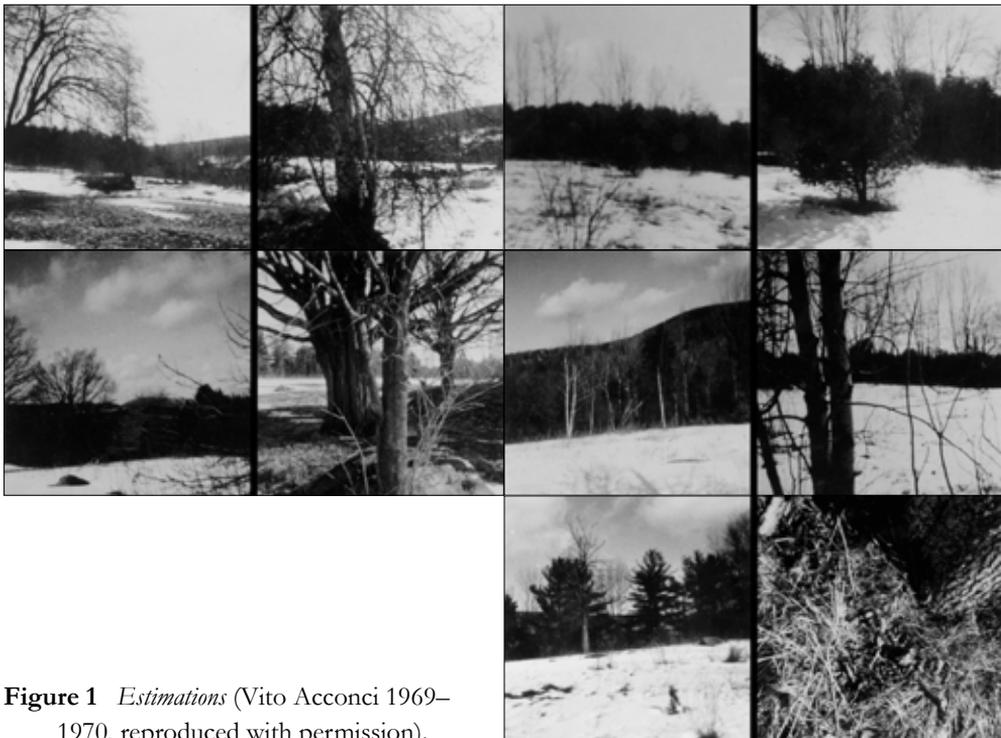


Figure 1 *Estimations* (Vito Acconci 1969–1970, reproduced with permission).

was out there. This is similar to Acconci's (1969) better known *Following Piece*, the urban shadowing of a stranger where the destination was simultaneously fixed in a kind of attached distance – the person tailed – and in motion (the tail was moving). The path is the unknown stranger, which glues the relationships to a set of constraints: the place, the stranger, the act of measuring, an awareness of preserving a moving distance from a moving target while renegotiating the contract with the place and the people around that distance (the shoppers, subway riders, sidewalk strollers, etc).

A person walking in slow motion through a park, like the artist Olafur Eliasson (2009) does in *Non-stop Park (Zeitlupenstudie)* (figure 2). Walking differently through a space causes the contracts implicit in how that space, whether public or in 'nature', and the urban codes regulating the organization of materials (curbs, gravel, hedges) and the flows through that space to be renegotiated (speeds, paths, don't walk on the grass, don't run beside the pool or you won't be allowed to swim, etc).

The perception of how we are allowed to use space changes the space and us when we connect ourselves consciously within the critical experience of the feeling of moving. This is the *ground experience*, compared to the *plane experience*. The way we don't feel our self moving matters: "No feeling is also a feeling, / a powerful one surrounded by all feelings", the poet Ben Mirov (2010, 1) says. But I don't want to live in a state of no feeling.

An estimation is not simply synonymous with expectation. An expectation is a feeling which is thrown ahead of an experience. An estimation happens inside of an experience, is conscious of the experience it is having without tripping up feeling of the experience. In other words an estimation simultaneously scoops up and includes the projected measurement thrown ahead of

that experience and allows the experience to be felt in the moment of having it. A measurement is a translation, like counting foot strides into meters and time when walking. An expectation says when walking between points I will arrive. An estimation tries to understand the variables which play a part in that arrival while measuring the variables in play, to qualify the quantitative, to break down the parts and look at them while in the situation rather than cutting the parts out of the situation and taking them into a lab so they can be understood and then reinserted into the place. A good example of the difference can be performed through a simple perceptual experiment.

(PLEASE TRY THIS ESTIMATION EXPERIMENT: Set a stop-watch at 0:00:00. Close your eyes. Start the stop-watch. Open your eyes when you think three minutes have passed. The expectation is that you will open your eyes around the time when three minutes has passed, and that it will either feel longer or shorter than three minutes. The estimation happens consciously and interior to the experiment. While feeling the time passing you improvise some system of measuring the time passing as you feel it passing (counting, tapping your feet, etc). In this experiment you experience the estimation and the experiment simultaneously.)

Whether metric or cardinal, measurements attempt to transfer a set of correspondences and relationships from one situation to another. This is similar to the role of metaphors, as described by Manuel De Landa, "metaphors are important knowledge producers because they allow you to transfer a structure of relations from one domain to another domain" (quoted in Ellingsen 2007, 216). Acconci's estimations allowed him to simultaneously focus his perception within an experience which he could have, analyze at the same time, and then transfer that experience and

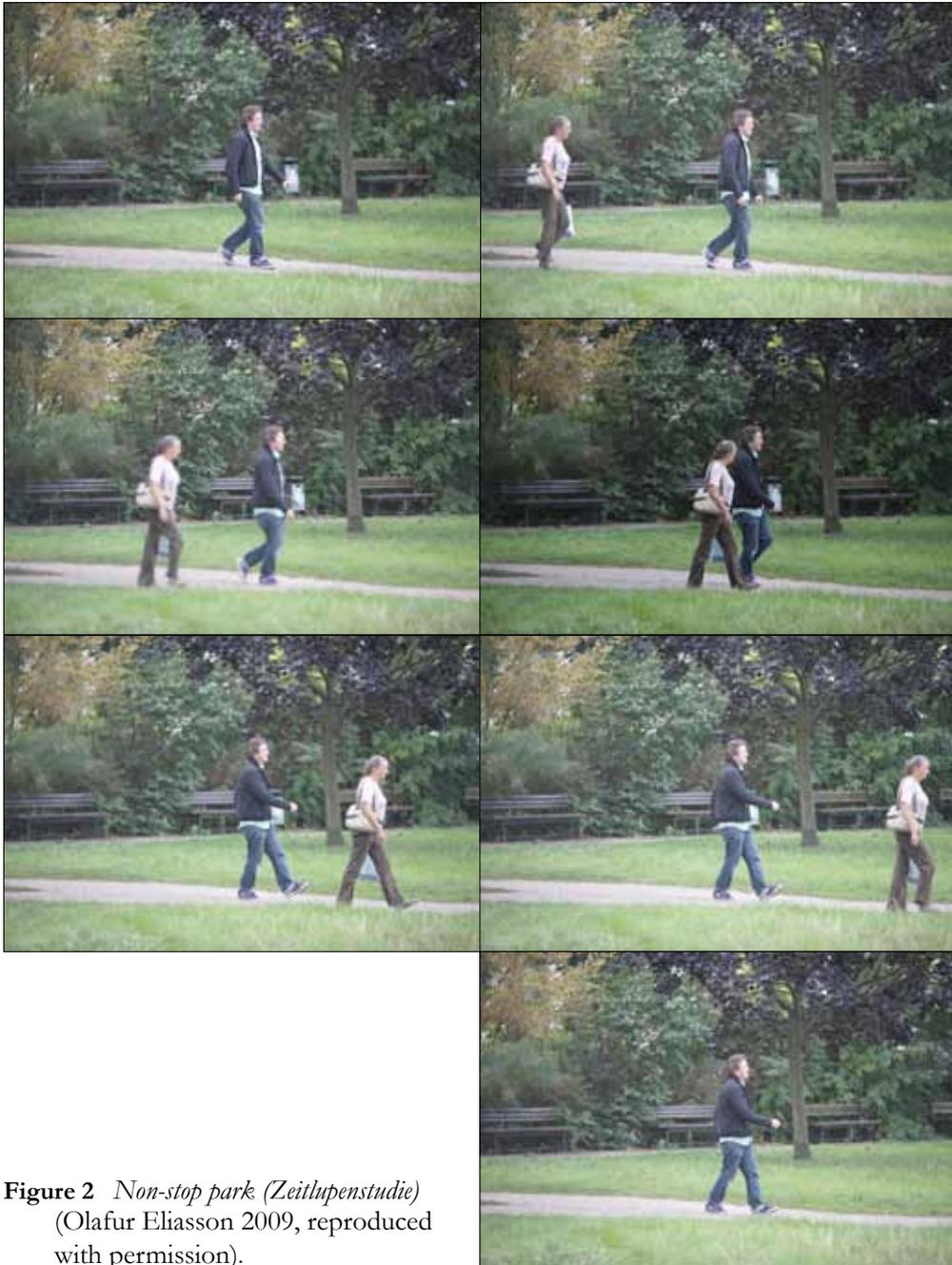


Figure 2 *Non-stop park (Zeitlupestudie)*
(Olafur Eliasson 2009, reproduced
with permission).

analysis into an art project. He could coordinate a thinking and feeling and making and measuring at the same time. This is incredibly difficult. This is the complexity of having a destination while being aware of the departure and in motion and at the

same time wander within the process and record that process while making contact with the place and perceiving that contact and having a container – an art project, which is co-produced by the place and coupled to the thought and felt experience.

The combination of fixing while wandering while having a destination allows Acconci to experience the experiment.

Eliasson's walk is done without a prescribed spatial frame, without a Euclidean geometry of set points, without a spatially organized system before he shows up. I don't mean to set up a difference of quality or a judgment of method between the two artist's experiments. Acconci shows up with a map and plan, a rule, an algorithm, a system. He might not know exactly what stone and tree he will walk between before he arrives, but he fixes two points and cuts his one line of flight fixed between them. Interior to the geometric fixed points of that perceptual line, a spontaneous emergence of felt detail through measured experience can occur. He is going to stop in front of things he didn't know to stop in front of before setting up the rules. Will focus on relationships in the space without knowing what those things focused on will be before he starts. But he does construct a known frame, guardrails to the walk, a path of relational directions, from which to start and a stop. This allows an analytical layer.

Eliasson's walk experiment on the other hand, shows up without a frame around the project; it has no predetermined beginning or end, no prescribed boundary around the experiment. Rather, the feeling of when to start and end the experiment happens spontaneously interior to the experience. But, Eliasson's movements are precise and predefined before he gets there. His mode, the slow-motion walk, is practiced, a skill, a technique set ahead of time. The route is not prescribed, but the dance, the slow motion walk, is proprioceptively learned. While slow motion walking all the focus has to remain on the body, on the interrelationship of body part, the heel lifting, the tip of the foot curling, the bend of the wrist, the hips pivot, the bodies jointed double pendulums, the center of moment and the center of

gravity as the body measures by walking the surfaces and speeds of the place in accord with the body in motion. The technique, the form, is a precise coordination of the details of the body to and the place as a special spatial moment; the entire dynamic composition include the people in the place and the place and the art project in a kind of elastic entanglement, a constant connected cloud. Eliasson's moment is amplified because the speeds and the perception of speeds of the other things in the immediate surroundings adjust to the slow motion walk, as occurs with the woman walking by in the photo for example. Everyone in the space takes it personally when Eliasson moves this way, including Eliasson. I would say that these very different kinds of walks, Acconci and Eliasson, are both very different but very effective ways of *grounding the experience*. Of touring. Most of us walk like we are having plane experiences; we don't look where we are, we just look where we are going. In these two examples, the walk transforms from a stale dance into a honed awareness, a stable uncertainly – a stabilized relationship with place which preserves the uncertainty of the place. The romance of merely walking is unflattened; the stories become beveled shovel tips which can be used critically to dig into a subtle non-didactic critique of how we perceive ourselves and a place by moving a little differently.

POINT OF INTEREST (or a stick in the road to step over): Official quote:

Experientia is rendered 'experience' and distinguished from experimentum (experiment), though this distinction was not common in the period (Shapin and Schaffer 1985, 345).

IV: A MOVIE ABOUT A MAASAI VILLAGE, TANZANIA, 2010

The cave was found in a complete pristine state... Hardly anyone was allowed in there; very few scientists... And we had to know the

most famous caves, Lascaux in the Dordogne area or the Altimera in the Pyrenees, had to be shut down because too many tourists were in there and they, their breathing, their exhalation of breath, caused molds on the walls which they [the scientists] cannot fight off (Herzog 2011).

When my guide drives up to the Maasai village, my first feeling is that I am entering another airplane place, a tourist fuselage which seems to warp my estimation of what a nomadic pastoral life consists of in contemporary today. Members of the village are waiting to greet the tourists (figure 3). They are wearing traditional garb. They wait until all the tourist trucks are emptied. They gesture that it is time and OK to take pictures. They start dancing, cherry picking the tourists one by one to dance with them. I feel like this greeting is not the preservation of a way of life, but a romantic mystification of a life of a village which all the tourists have estimations beforehand. But maybe I am wrong. Maybe this is the very exploitative mechanism which will allow the

preservation of authentic ritual? Maybe it's like Mangalitsa swine, an endangered species of pig which you have to eat to save, because without a meat market for the species the species will go extinct, will get hybridized and bred into another species. The comparison is a paradox of survival, and the strange forms preservation takes. The Maasai are historically a nomadic tribe, yet modern tourism is forcing a *strategy of stay* as the villages manage a paradoxical existence: a nomadic tribe fixed to a place so tourists can move in and out of the nomadic village.

The tour is an experience curated to appeal to a desired surface of difference, of tradition, of an opposition to the place I come from, of a nature and cultural divide, a modern and rural divide. What is not mentioned or shown by the tours or explained by the villagers are the constraints and social forces that inform the shapes we see. While taking pictures, we are not aware of the dynamics of the situation; not aware of the processes, or interrelationships, the eco-



Figure 3 Maasai tourist welcome, Tanzania (© 2010 Eric Ellingsen)

gies which organize the things we see. The Samburu practices, the age-sets, the polyandry, the practiced warrior notions, the group lion hunts, the male warriors wrestling to keep the lions tail, the gerontocracy which still enslaves wives, the ceremonial axis of anxieties caused in male circumcision and female genital cutting, the loss of a waterhole in the daily pattern of a village life, the febrile fears that cause the pulling of children's teeth prematurely, the covering of corpses with fat and butter so the corpses will be devoured by animals, the position of the knot of hair on the front or back of the woman's head indicating the loss of a male or female child. I can feel that I am not feeling the things and processes that still organize parts of the Maasai rhythms and way of life. But I don't know how to look for what I don't know I am missing, but I can feel it. I am trying to get the plane experience window open, trying not to be there in a way that is built on reflections, like Tati's (1967) *Playtime*, the modern paradox of literally seeing into a situation (through the window) but seeing nothing about the relationships inside the situation (the lives of the people), while showing to the movie watcher the modern paradox of seeing what is missing. This is similar to what Rowe and Schlutsky (1993) call the difference between *phenomenal transparency* and a *literal transparency*.

The rites of passage through polyrhythm of sound and dance and throat singing can last 10 or more days in a Maasai celebration; it lasts 10 minutes for the tourist group. But I love these 10 minutes of sounds and songs. Ethnopoetics, as UBU web's Jerome Rothenberg (2008) curates it, has changed my life, changed the way I think, changed the way I write, why I write, changed the way I recite my poems and teach the classes and learn from those classes. I take a picture of my wife jumping up and down. The dancers are arranged in a circle. We are on our

honeymoon. We are not in the circle; we are part of the circle's circumference. My wife is chosen to enter into the circle. She is jumping up and down like a pogo stick, like the ground is a trampoline, as two women from the tribe place necklaces around her neck. I do not know that changes in shape and design of those necklaces indicate the social position, ranks and social climbing through child bearing and livestock wealth, until I return home to my studio in Berlin. I know the necklaces are round like the villages are round, like the scarification on the cheeks of the men and women are round, that the round necklace makes my wife's head look like it's on a platter when worn. I know that if we buy one of those necklaces on our tour, and that if she wears it or displays it back home in Berlin or Kentucky, it will indicate an exotic economic relation in terms of the ability to travel half-way around the world as a tourist on a honeymoon and buy round necklaces (figure 4). I'm not afraid of exotic feelings. I am afraid of an exotic feeling which is built on generic and uniformed expectations, ideals which filter experiences, inherit imperialisms, and preserve essentialist hierarchical world views which frame and crutch and patronize the experiences and living relationships of being here.

The way the Maasai villages wear the display of their crafts and wares is fascinating, a spatial inflection I can't stop thinking about. I want to write about how the form of each village is a circle, but I want to write with a sensitivity of someone who can x-ray a situation in an attempt to see and understand the organizational structures informing the circular shapes and forms. Each circle in the village organizes smaller circles. In the internal circular space of every Maasai village is an animal corral. This corral is in the center of the compound, but not necessarily the center of the circle. The corral houses the economic center of the lives – the humans, the cattle, the fowls,



Figure 4 Maasai tourist traps, Tanzania (© 2010 Eric Ellingsen)

the tourists. The grazers are moved out of and into the center every day. Around that center fence there are tables. Under those tables are chickens and small animals. And each section of fence and table and smaller animal pen is owned, or managed, by the family whose circular house is closest to it. So each family uses a bit of the inner circle for their own family's economy: the small animals and the wares (the hats, brackets, earrings and circular plate necklaces which my wife is trying to, politely, return). It's not quite as fractal as the African villages which ethno-mathematician Ron Eglash (2002) writes about in *African Fractals*, but it is a shape repeated everywhere, a circle representing a cycle, a return and a return and a return. A village without edges. A circle invites an opening anywhere, to any direction. When looking at a curved wall your eyes stay in motion, there is no flat surface to stop the gaze. The modernist architects knew this link between form of materials and the perceptual tuning of the

way the body works. I am living a cycle of circles from Berlin to Kentucky, to a Maasai village, back to Berlin, to Iceland, to Berlin. There are no right-angles in these memories. Everything curves. When I try to look at one experience my gaze slides from a point of interest into another.

V: NEWS PROGRAM: SOMETIME BETWEEN ME AND NOW

Tourism organizers rarely talk about ecology, instead they talk about nature. But nature is a human construct, an image which preserves a separation of culture and nature. We should be through that after Latour's (1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*. Old habits are hard to break. I mean, human DNA is 95% chimp and 35% of that DNA is daffodil, as eco-philosopher Timothy Morton (2010) says. He also says: "[A] beaver's DNA doesn't stop expressing itself at the end of its whiskers, but at the end of its dam... You probably drove or flew here today using crushed liquefied

dinosaur bones, most of your house dust is your skin, the environment is starting to look like a not very successful upgrade of the old term nature.” (Morton 2010) Any idea of *nature* carries over an essentialist, wilderness view of the world. Ecology, on the other hand, focuses attention on processes and interrelationships, on differences which drive processes and most of those processes are non-human. Which means an ecology based tourism would be non-human centered tourism while including humans as tourists as a structural force which is renegotiating the terms of life and organisms and intensive processes on the planet.

If Gertrude Stein (2004, 251) is right in her evaluation of Oakland, “there is no there there”, then am I looking for a here here when I visit the Maasai? Am I looking for something I am missing in the west? Can I look for what exists here without using my frame of reference as a base to judge and evaluate what’s here? Can I see what is here on its own terms? My being in the Maasai village makes them less nomadic. But every way of being nomadic is unique. There are buses of me’s from all over. And the wares that are hung on the interior circular wall of the corral, around which and under which the livestock are kept, is as much an economic wall protecting the modern rituals and traditions from the economic predators that are also me. The paradox is structural, urban, similar the thorny acacias and stinging nettles wrapping the villages circular outer wall which is built by the men in the Maasai tribe (the women build the homes). These stinging nettles once protected the Maasai from the lions. Now the lions are legally projected by national and international regulations from the Maasai. Do I see my purchasing and taking home of a platter head necklace as part of an economic campaign in which the nomadic dependence on the flows of nature though

the place is now me, a human animal, part of a population of human animals that shows up in trucks and provides a reshaping of the social forces, the ecologies of place, around which the nomadic tribe organizes itself in a very slow motion nomadism? Do we need tourism protection laws? Should I be there, or is how I am there a better question? Where are the tools given to the tourist to navigate through these feelings of how to be somewhere? Do all the tourists feel them? I didn’t get that sense when I was there. Do we need tourist training, like anthropologists, or ethnographers, or sociologists, who are at least trained to be sensitive travelers, romantic in an un-idealizing way (hopefully)? Do I need to go to be a sensitive tourist school? If I saw them, would I know how to respond to the blood smeared hides, to the death rate of children so high that a child isn’t considered a child till that child survives to the age of three, to the woman making the houses out of mud and cow dung and piss, sleeping with small livestock, with only firelight, under animal skins and commercial cotton cloths, under the sky, with a belly full of fermented buttermilk and boiled stem bark for my protein needs? Would these experience help me to know know my own stories and places differently? Is that the point of tourism, or is that reflective tourism? Mirror tourism? What about a refractive tourism? I’m changing the place, let the place change me.

Would I come back better able to see the appalling rituals we practice where I’m from, the fracking (hydraulic fracturing) for natural gas and the grim collusion of politicians around an exploitation of the West’s (and the worlds) natural resources (watch the documentary *Gasland* – Fox 2010)? Would I be able to render and relate to the appalling stories of my well education countries storage of nuclear waste tactics involving hollow mountains outside of Las Vegas which John D’Agata (2010) tells in

About a Mountain (a MUST read!)? What about the power broker urbanisms of Robert Moses, the wasted food practices, the agrochemical businesses where board members simultaneously sit on the US Department of Agriculture and the corporations which genetically modify seeds to contain suicide genes (watch *The Future of Food* – see Koons Garcia 2004), the collusion of chemical warfare and Bayer and bees (watch the *Vanishing of the Bees* – Langworthy and Henein 2009). The stunningly psychotic and totally complicit economic, borrowing and loaning practices of the place I am from being protested on Wall Street while this paper is being written? Are these the models which I bring with me? (see Stein 2004) The pictures of my being in a Maasai village communicate that I can choose to travel. So am I endorsing the unspoken systems organizing the places from where I am coming with these mobile economic options that give me the choice to travel? Can I know the things I carry with me, the processes I represent, like when using a credit card to pay for the tour operator? Who takes the time to research their credit card company, headquartered, if from the US, probably in South Dakota because South Dakota allows the most lenient lending and debt building possibilities, entrapping consumers under the guise of spending options? (I come from a warped eco-relationships perversely tuned to profit and not people, and here I am in the Maasai village seeing the urban form inflecting and changing in response to a preservation profit structure based on my tourism. Should I trade them bootleg copies of *Plagues & Pleasures on the Salton Sea* narrated by John Waters (see Metzler and Springer 2004), a depressing eco-condition of tourism and development which occurred in the Western US, for their bootleg copy of *The Gods Must be Crazy*? (see Uys 1981) What can I know from the plain tourist experience? From a bus? From

a short hike and SUV? Should all places be entered by foot, like psycho-geographer Ian Sinclair (see Piklington and Baker 2002), who implies that the only way a person can know a place is by walking through it? But is a one hour walk around a wall of wares, a few minutes sitting on the bed in the dark in a hut of one of the women who makes those wares and wants my wife and I to take one of them home so she can fend off the forces of contemporary *progress* by participating, even if forced to, with the machines of that progress? Can I know these things around my own eco rather than my ego? My own Oikos, my own home, my own home-logos, home logic, my own home-nomos, my own home-laws, my own economy and ecologies? Is identifying with the structure of the relationships when touring different then identifying with simply the surface of those relationships? I think so. I think when you make contact with the structure of where the interrelationships are coupled together, you feel a dynamic sense of what organizes and informs the surface of those relationships, which is good because the surface of things are usually the only things a picture can capture. I think that when you make a connection with the structures organizing the experiences, you get a better understanding of the surfaces too. Do I know how to see feel the experiences I am touring in relation to the structural ways I organize the daily micro-relationship in my own life? I don't know.

[This section of the tour has been cut short.]

Most tourism shelters me from the confusion of these experiences. They package the experiences and tell me what they mean and then I have images to prove that I've been there, done that, seen it. These tours are reality patronizers (see for example Desmond 1999; Edensor 2000, on staging practices in tourism). If you wanted dancing you'd have to wait for the festival,

and you might not be invited. Or, has the festival shifted to the arrival of the tourist bus each day? What kind of festival is this? What's being sacrificed? Still images of the nomadic tribe? I don't mean to imply that there are experiences which are not real. Or that some experiences are more real than other experiences. I mean to simply identify a kind of experience which imitates and is organized by our expectations, and then are forced to conform to those expectations, versus a kind of experience which causes the experiencers to reorganize their expectations and estimations of the world, where they come from, where they are while having the experience, where they will be when the 'tour' is over. This is similar to what biologist Jakob von Uexküll (2010[1934], 113–114) called the difference between a *search image* and a *perception image*. A search image is the thing you are looking for when you show up to a place. "The search image wipes out the perception image" (von Uexküll 2010[1934], 113). In other words you see what you are looking to find, and you risk not seeing what's there. All experiences are real, but what does the ability of having the experience endorse, what systems, what politics, what perceptions?

I leave feeling the Maasai tour is another air-plane experience. I don't have the feeling of being absorbed in the experience. I'm shut out. Maybe I'm too cynical, but I don't think so. I believe a sense of responsibility comes with being allowed to have the touring experience. However, I don't know if being absorbed is the purpose of the visit? Of losing my ego and gaining a relationship based in-feeling, the German *Einführung*, with the place, the people, the rituals, the living history, the political and social and ecological relationships which pressure and organize the Maasai into the animate forms which I visit on the tour? I am an animate form too. We all are. I am aware of the Levinas' (1990) critique of

time and the other, the *relations without the relationship*. Intellectually, I have bootstrapped the academic theories. But when there I'm thrown into a state of feeling what I'm not feeling, and being aware of the retardation of an exotic expectation. The reflection of the Maasai society I was given feels distorted, and this distortion feels supported by the tour. Expectations are met: the look of difference. The deep experience of that difference, physically, psychologically, intellectually, is severely stunted. It's hard to tell the *differences which make a difference*. I want to refract the experience. Like now, I'm trying now to refract that experience, which is intimidating as hell when reading is more refereed for right and wrong than a territory to play in moving through ideas differently. How to say I feel more in the Maasai village from the studio in Berlin where I am writing this, that I was when I was there. I don't know what this means. How to know what to ask when I am there, and where to ask when I return home How to history better by asking better.

The word 'history' comes from the ancient Greek verb meaning 'to ask.' One who asks about things- about their dimensions, weight, location, moods, names, holiness, smell, is a historian. But the asking is not idle. It is when you are asking about something that you realize you yourself have survived it, and so you must carry it, or fashion in into a thing that carries itself (Carson 2010, no page).

How to carry something back? To confidently write and ask these things from the place of not knowing is a hard way to organize a written tour.

VI: THE SECOND IN-FLIGHT DOUBLE-FEATURE SCREENING: BEING IN-PARADOX & THROWNTOGETHERNESSING

Visiting the Maasai Village I felt a kind of sad simulacrum of a relationship with a no-nomadic human. I feel a non-human

relation decaying. It wasn't as artificial as the reenactment of rural life villages I grew up with – Fort Boonsboro in Kentucky, the candle makers and wool weavers in sad con skin caps circa our expectations of *back then* (see Fort Boonesboro State Park 2006) The Maasai was not this. It was a different kind of authentic human, non-human social relation changing right in front of me, and which I was changing by being there, like a social Schrödinger observer in-paradox. I was in-paradox. We're getting good at living in-paradox. The macro-molecules. The species we have to kill to save. The nomadic tribe who stays put. I was effecting and being affected. I was being refractive. But it was also something staged, a feeling like one social order wasn't moving at all and another was moving so quickly I didn't even have time for nostalgia. The social order I am from was barely moving compared to the rate the Maasai's social life is changing. And what kind of modern trade tourism non-spice route was I helping to establish? A trade route of encounters with ideas for sure, not even necessarily new ideas, or real ideas, more like ideas shrink wrapped and curated to reflect back the ideas which I want to see ahead of time. And the ones they see of me they see on the programs made in the TV West, the ones which portray not only our stories but the concerns and recreations which structure our lives. An example is when I lived and worked in Ghana for a year. In 1996 I was asked on a pretty regular basis if I knew O.J. Simpson. Not if I knew of O.J., but what was he like personally. Because surely, being from the States, I knew O.J. personally. The glove never fits in the West, was my rhetorical answer. We've read Deleuze, we've been deloused, we starting to think maybe it's worth caring about where our food comes from, we all know each other personally in the West, the ecological glove never fits us because it's always someone else's glove,

and we always seem to know which capital freedoms are best for the rest of the world, right?

[The trial of being throwntogether and discordant harmonies has been closed for this essay.]

VII: NGORONGORO CONSERVATION AREA, TANZANIA, 2010

I have many sightings. The animal tourism around safaris at Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania makes sure. This is a remarkable *tourism of near-distance*, of being near to a strictly curated distance: tourism seen from a truck. You can stand up if you want. I'm informed by Gunnþóra Ólafsdóttir, the editor of this special issue, in comment note GO45, that "Jane Desmond's book *Staging tourism* would have been a good read for this discussion." I just want to pass that info on.

Over 220 vehicle permits are allocated to tourism companies in order to conduct a trade in sightseeing in the Ngorongoro Crater. This number has nearly doubled in the last 10 years. In 1996, there were 122 licensed tour companies; in 2010, 220+ licensed tour companies (Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority 2011). Drivers from these companies corral the animals, walkie-talkie their way through the crater with a constant update of info where the non-humans which the humans want to see are hanging-out. The humans are from everywhere. Travel thousands of kms from everywhere else in the world to get here to watch an elephant travel a few hundred meters to a watering hole, and then speed off in a covered truck that seats eight as fast as a leopard to see a lion a few kilometers across the park yawn. Like me, some of the humans spent hundreds if not thousands of combined hours of their lives to coordinate the estimated financial resources to get here. So getting here took years. The drivers look for other drivers. I'm happy to be a human

animal. So taking a cue from the drivers, I watched the human animals that were watching the non-human animals. If I was falling for what David Foster Wallace (1997, 381) pitches, that “the real spectacle which draws us here is us,” it was alright with me.

I am usually pretty happy, though often nauseated by, that drawl to watch my own species watching. I’ve been practicing for a long time. My oldest buddy from Kentucky, Brian, and I used to go out just to practice people watching. We called it that, people watching. We practiced the eye for our creative writing. We needed to practice the eye, needed to practice picking up the details. We were taking advice from other writers, like George Perec, who in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* outlines techniques for practicing seeing: “observe the street, from time to time, with some detail for systems perhaps... “Get rid of preconceived ideas... “What do you observe... You still haven’t looked at anything, you’ve merely picked out what you’ve long ago picked out” (Perec 2008, 50). To look is an obsessive itch.

A specific kind of nature preserve is preserved in these game parks, a preservation of potential sightings. A sighting in these preservations requires the coordination of some of the most intense technologically sophisticated communication and transportation devices in the world. If you are a tourist who can afford it, you can take a tour at night and make sightings with infrared binoculars made for the military. To get closer, we’ll have to starve the lions better.

Camp stories the first night was a long laundry list of how close we got. These stories don’t last very long. And then the rest of the night consisted of people telling stories about what they do, and where they are from, and what they are getting away from. I listened for hours the first night to four people talking about how far they had to come to get away from what they do everyday. Then they talked about what they

do everyday. Most of what we bring when we travel are things we are trying to get away from. It’s hard not to be cynical. I was board. I felt bad for being bored, both in the back of the truck and around a campfire. But here was a species at least whose languages I could understand, even if I didn’t understand where they came from, why they came. Their migration patterns seemed more complex than the animals walking to a pond. But I listened. It was a migration they did year after year to a place called away. A place called distance. These migrations were loops back and forth, not to the same places but in the same way to different places. The patterns of their thinking and experiencing place were the same, same stories over and over. I don’t mean to claim superiority in the way I travel. When I travel I like getting lost. I like showing up without a map. Without a guide book. Without a reservation. It’s takes preparation to maintain a state of being unprepared. It’s a stable uncertainty. It’s like a weird copulation combination of the walks of Acconci and Eliasson. I usually know my dates of arrival and departure; I try to be aware of a precise way of being conscious how I move while there. It’s not better or worse than other tourists, it’s just different. But it does make me scramble to see where I am, because I don’t read up on a place much before I get there, I don’t research the right restaurants. It means I usually miss things. It means that I usually have to just talk to people. It means I have to guess which people to ask and how to ask them. It means that I have to have a little micro-encounter. It means I often have to scramble. In asking those questions I end up wanting to do something I didn’t know to ask for. It’s often uncomfortable, and unromantically so. And annoyingly so to my wife, who often settles for a partial planning: a few reservations, like rock cairns, to dot a trip to guarantee at least the chance to get lost right.

Every part of tourism industry is based on being mobile in a mobile place. And this mobility is a tourism organized by *distanced propinquity*, to tour a concept of Nigel Thrift (Anderson and Harrison 2010). This is a nearness which doesn't allow us to see how far we have traveled as a species to arrive at the safari, a distance which doesn't allow us to see how far we have not come as a conscious species, a species conscious of our social and cultural impact by traveling. Every time we travel to a place we risk not merely bringing home a new experience, we risk making the place traveled to more like the home we left. But I had the feeling that on the safari I was seeing us as a human species. After the first nights campfire disappointment, I spent more time watching the people and listening to them talk to each other. When they were looking at the lions and the zebras and the giraffes, I was seeing us by looking at the shapes and forms we force other species to take and conform to. I watched the people watching the animals for days, and it was great. But the tourist operators didn't put it this way, and the human species were not on any of the checklists of wild animals and I saw some rare ones. A missionary group of evangelicals. An army dentist. Two retired high-school public-school teachers. A family hoping to adopt. A person starting an NGO for the rights of rivers. The conversations they had were not very interesting. But the way they had them was interesting. What they said to each other didn't engage me. But the way they said things to each other, the structure that informed what they said, captivated me. Either we are not wild enough as species to be included on the interesting sighting lists, or we are too wild to see it.

**VIII: HOLDING PATTERN:
ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, 2011**
this trial is very small to fit into the essay,
so you will have to move closer to the
words to read them

I was in Zurich running a workshop on walking and mapping when a biker was hit by a tram. I estimated that it happened about a minute before we were right in front of it. I didn't stop and look. I looked, but I didn't stop. I didn't let the situation affect me. I was affected. My speed changed. The walking experiment ended. We all slowed down to almost still. After a while of silence I was talking with a friend, and we weren't sure if by not stopping we were not adding to the emotional power of taking the time. We didn't want to be gawkers. But maybe, we thought, to stop and simply let the act affect the spatial flows around us was a way of offering a kind of spatial emotional support by participating from the crowd. By slowing or stopping, a crowd bump formed which was so big it was starting to shut down traffic on all sides and in all directions. A spatial bump that on the fringes of the stopped flows, got people out of their cars. Drivers who didn't know what they were honking and screaming at to get going, had to get out of their cars to see what they were stuck in. And we were all stuck. And it didn't feel like the spectacle theories I've read in studying crowds and power. It wasn't the image Debord (1995) laments and lambasts regarding societies and spectacles. It didn't feel like we were watching to get the details of a story out of it, it felt like we were watching because we were drawn in by care. It was a species in concern for one of their own. And it was a way of feeling which had an immediate affect on the spatial dynamics of the species around it. Strangely enough, I saw the same thing happen last week when visiting Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. I wasn't visiting as a tourist. I was researching an education experiment. But from my hotel window, on the day I was leaving, a guy was crushed by a car right under my hotel window. The concern was the same. Everything stopped. At least one hundred people rushed to see. And again I had the feeling that it was not out of the need of spectacle, but rather a deep connection of concern for one of our own. The radii of the experiences were defined by the sounds of the accidents, by touching the accidents, by literally smelling the fear and concern. By being able to walk and stop and stare in places and in ways which the streets and sidewalks do not usually allow people to walk and stop and organize.

[The story which led to an opening in the essay which I was calling "Touch Tourism, the Paga Pond, Northern Ghana, Summer 1996", has been removed to shorten the essay.]

IX:

X: ZANZIBAR, 2010:

My final night in Zanzibar I listened to a man die. A thief had been caught underneath my bedroom window. A vigilante force of 12 taxi-drivers and shit-shooters hanging out with the taxi-drivers had surrounded the thief in a tight ring defined by the radius of their arms swinging sticks and fists. There was another thief but he

slipped through the ring. I was told later that there were other robberies the week before my wife and I arrived, and the aggregated retribution was all the more brutal. I grew up in Kentucky. The sounds of fists smacking flesh of cheeks and faces on a Friday night are not unfamiliar. I don't mean to romanticize it, but fighting was just one of the ways to pass the time and center the attention. But it was nothing like this. Ironically, somehow hearing these sounds made me feel less like a tourist. It threw me into the politics of the place I was in a way that visiting the Maasai village didn't throw me because the trip to the Maasai village didn't allow me to see the way decisions in the village are made and the way unscripted actions take place.

Listening for 35 minutes to someone being beaten to death under a window shakes you up. It doesn't go away like a car accident goes away. The emotional state doesn't get absorbed by time. Leaning my head cautiously out the window, only 8 meters from the scene, at first I was listening in a spectacle of disbelief and curiosity. I debated if I should slip my hand over the lintel and record the situation with my new smart phone video camera. I opted for sneaking back into my bed. I didn't mean to lie awake shaking. I didn't want to romanticize the experience while I was having it. I didn't know if I was angry or scared or fascinated and frightened, if I should feel guilty about feeling fascinated, or for wanting to film it, or for not wanting to film it, for not throwing a nights shape of local justice into the on-line video world. I didn't know if this would be news or new material for an art project, or would I simply be shaping new material for old stereotypes to reinforce new misunderstandings? I didn't know the role the experience was asking me to play.

I didn't know how to engage within the encounter as it was happening. The encounter was not inviting me in, but not

allowing me to leave. I didn't know who I should tell that couldn't hear it themselves, out their windows, at their front desks, at their security guard post outside the front hotel door like our security guard who was on duty, or not on duty on purpose. I didn't know how to be this kind of tourist. I didn't want this to be the part of the tour which stood out. Was this a *face-to-face* encounter of differences, what Nigel Thrift's (1996) non-representational theory might call the *centrality of an encounter*? Shouldn't this happen with even the smallest things, the canny exchanges? How much Nigel Thrift would I have to read to get to increase the centrality factor, because after this, even the little things I experienced changed? I didn't know why I was crawling back to the window with the video camera again, but this time for different reasons, thoughts and feelings breathing down my neck. I didn't know why I was crawling back to my bed for different reasons again not having made the video a second time. I didn't know what was louder: the sounds of fists landing sharp blows on bare cheeks, or the over-tuned strings on the warping instrument of all the stories and theories and thoughts I had collected in the past ten days. I didn't have any estimation back-ups with me. I had no refraction energy.

What to me was an experiential convergence of sounds and images in seeing and hearing someone beaten to death by a vigilante mob of do-gooders, was to the hotel owner, and the other business owners around the hotel, because they were in their windows, a quick unsympathetic shrug and a short explanation of how it's easier for the police if they don't show up till after it's over. The hotel owner said, that's how it is here over and over. An experiential storm which years later still leaves me on the first clap of applause, after a lecture, or a performance, or a sporting event, violently flinching. I think sometimes I am still a

tourist of Tanzania. That I will be stuck there forever, in that window, listening to myself deciding if I should listen. I'm stuck in so many places like this. Most are not so extreme. But I'm still in so many of those places I've toured, the experiences of which are touring my sense of who I am, what I should do, why.

XI: AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU, POLAND, DEC 30, 2010

A half a year after leaving Tanzania, my wife and I took a tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau. When given the option of tour guide, I went against my instinctual need for being alone to experience the horror-space, but out of sheer emotional survival instinct, I took my wife's advice and we took the guide with us. The guide was a guard-rail against which my intellect could lean as my feelings went over the edge. I was able to lean closer over the edge of the things I was looking at in the hope of being able to emotionally fall in. Our guide was from Oświęcim, grew up there. She came from a whole family of tour guides. She was finishing a PhD in Kraków in the science of tourism economics. In order to feel what you are seeing she said, you need stories.

You need one story about human hair from corpses being woven into socks for U-boat sailors, as you stare at tons and tons of human hair and hear figures of more.

You need stories with grip, stories which become small doors, small thresholds pried open into the situation which you are touring to help you enter, help you touch and hold onto the situation, pick it up as it changes you. If the past in relation to the present traps you in an airplane of time form an event that is timeless, these stories are the senses primers. Stories are doors, door stories. Unlike most doors, these do not have a fixed shape which you then slide through. They are doors which exactly fit the size of your body mind, what you are

capable of holding onto and the tour guide has to see it, feel it in your questions, feel it in the questions you are not asking but want to ask if you only knew how. Our guide curated these stories just enough so they hurt, but not enough to paralyze me, not enough to overwhelm me on the spot to the emotional safety of numbing. My guide didn't let me go numb. She un-numbed me by regulating the speed of my tour, by stopping and slowing and speeding through spaces. She curved the experience. I would have time to break down later. I was wiped out, emotionally, physiologically, physically, after going through the tour. That's the point.

But after the tour I knew I needed more, not more emotional flooding, but more information fix on the curation of the tourism and the preservation of places of the stories, which are still only *stories-so-far*. There was a gift shop, which is a strange thing in itself, though nothing seemed strange after the tour, because everything was strange. In the gift shop, my tour guide told me, there was a book called *Preserving for the Future* (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum 2004). The book was the proceedings from an International Preservation Conference which was held to combine tourism with molecules, horror with decision making, emotion with reason, and theory with policy with acting. What needed to be replaced? How much fence? Could new trees be planted? Did they have to be similar species? Could the Pope light a candle and keep that lit candle in a torture cell? Was a sock made out of hair an object or part of a corpse, and should that corpse part be interned, or should it be displayed, and if displayed should the display be underground like a grave or next to the shoes without shoelaces (because the feet would swell) like an object? Was the town surrounding the site the site too? How many tourists were too many tourists to a group, to a guide, to hear a story, to feel the parts of history that are

not past? Those were some of the lighter questions debated in the conference.

The conference was held in order to tell stories to use those stories to make material decisions about tourism and preservation. Preservation in this case had to decide on a geographical boundary to the camp. Like trying to define a natural preserve with lines and fences while migrating species and populations involve much more complex patterns and systems, the concentration camp doesn't end where the fences enclose the site? But where does the camp end and is it important to ask? Does the camp include the town, the industry of which supported, was forced to support, the chemical manufacture and the mechanical infrastructure maintenance which allowed the camp to operate? This was a comply or be killed on the spot situation, as explained by my tour guide. But if the town was also considered the railroad companies and the tracks part of the camp, as Lars von Trier's (1991) *Europa* implies. (Though I hesitate to mention Lars in light of his recent Cannes festival 2011 Hitler comments.) *Preserving for the Future* was made because like *nature-based tourism*, these stories are only stories-so-far, they are not even close to being stories that happened *back then*.

Again, on the train back to Berlin back from Auschwitz-Birkenau, I found myself a tourist, blown away, desperately looking for hand-rails because I had a grounding experience – intellectual hand-rails, emotional hand-rails, theoretical hand-rails, historical hand-rails, anything to make the visible seen, anything to understand the pictures I couldn't take, the things that are not there. Every time I take a walk around Berlin now I am conscious of the police that are on 24-hour patrol outside all the Jewish synagogues and schools and cultural institutions. I don't know if the guards' being there upsets me or comforts me? I don't know if they offer the perception of

safety or the accusation of a social organization still warped? I think it's warped. And I think this warp is NOT unique to Germany. And I think we are all connected to it in ways which the surfaces barely reflect any longer but which we can feel when we allow the relationships which compose the situation to enter in through our feelings and refract us. When we take it personally. I mean, where I'm from in the US, the Republican party is articulately agreeing right now, today, November 2, 2011, that the environmental crisis is a scam, that the fence between the Mexican/US boarder should be 8 meters tall and electrified to kill on contact, and that there should be no regulation for companies wanting to tap into *nature* reserves. I think most of us are going through the politics and decision curating the world as if we are tourists experiencing the way things work from an airplane. We are citizens from an airplane sense of what's personal to us. The world is there for pictures and machine parts. Again, I need a guide. Sometimes it's philosophers, poets, artists. Lately it's been geographers. Not because these disciplines are somehow special; they are simply aware of how they move, like Wallace Stevens (2000) who says he often composed poems when walking; and they use that movement, that ground experience, to critique and inform their work and the world and themselves into a refractive product. What are my responsibilities in such tourist contracts? What are the tour operator's responsibilities? Is it to be response-able, as biologist philosopher Francisco Varela (2005) cleverly but poignantly says "To be more bio-logical as a species of these spaces?" As a perceptive being with agency by being here, creating an economy, changing the ecology of the place, the nature of the place through my little local economy? Maybe a feeling of responsibility can occur through contact, and the abstraction becomes real without

loosing the abstraction, without losing the feeling part of thinking? Maybe this allows a resourcefulness to recompose the relationships around our responsibilities to those things as processes, ourselves and our species included?

The landscape architect/movement expert Frederick Law Olmsted designed Central Park in NYC so that the curves of the roads curated the traffic without the need of speed signs disrupting the picturesque perception of the place. The speed of the motion of the horse and buggies could be felt by the drivers and they could adjust their speeds according to the feeling of their tipping. Their movement was a composition of travel which allowed them to feel the mechanisms that allowed the motion and the motion itself. In other words, much like a sailboat and not at all like a steam-liner, bodies stayed attached to the curves as the wheels take the curves and the body took in the park

Tourism has the opportunity of re-mattering the traveler's perceptions. Tourism is a voluntary opening to difference and different experiences. Tourism is a story making machine. Sometimes, like poet travel writer Eileen Myles (2009, 24) says in *The Importance of Being Iceland*, "I'm not sure if I'm telling a story or unveiling my mania." I think good story telling does both. I think like the title of the book, we become the places we travel. Maybe we already are those places and don't know it yet. Maybe feeling the importance of being the places we are requires a scale of motion we can feel? If we are no more aware of our daily spinning around the sun, then we are of our sun spinning around some other solar center, can be aware of the motions and emotions which are organizing the daily radius and circles we live in? As Doreen Massey (2005, 138–139) says in *For Space*, "I know we all 'know' this [that the earth is spinning]; the point is to feel it, to live

in its imagination". What if we need to go slower to feel how fast things are changing, or how fast they are not changing? Would it help to take more time to get to where we are going, to see fewer places in tours and stay longer and slower in a few places? Can we make the arrival to the places and the departures from the tours crucial parts of the experience of the tour? To include the places in-between the places we want to visit as crucial to the visit? It would be extreme, but what if we imitated the performance of the artist Tino Segal, who, in traveling to the places where he exhibits his art, doesn't fly. Rather, he takes the trans-Siberian to Japan, and boats to New York. In other words, coordinating how his work is done is also part of the work, part of the critique of the work, part of the perception of where the art starts and ends, how difficult is it to draw a circle and boundary around art. And it takes Tino longer to get to where he's going. It's slower. He has time to make art estimations while getting there. Maybe it should take us longer to get around. Maybe we need to slow up to catch up to where we think we have gotten with all this progress. Maybe we need to take things more personally. Take where our food comes from personally. Take how we get from one place to another personally. Take stories personally. Maybe then we'll feel more responsible for the world, we'll risk society better having let the world pass through us, allowing us to reconstitute the way we cycle in relationship to the other materials and energy for the interrelations we can understand, and the ones we cannot yet.

THE CLOSING LANDING

I want to land the ending on a runway which I did not write but which was a tremendous help in helping me to re-think some of the ideas turned over in this touring paper. I can't footnote the author of these words; she or he was one of the initial referees for

this paper. I don't know if this is illegal. I have never come across a paper that quoted one of the anonymous referees. I also love the idea of referring to an author I can quote but whom I don't know, can't footnote, and cannot identify, and it would be unethical for me to know their names. It's a lot like the Pirandello (1921) play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and I'm just agreeing to be the director of this paper and not the author? Probably not. Maybe it's more like my version of Mark Strand's (1992) poem *Keeping Things Whole*, "I move to keep things whole." I like that, agrees with everything being mobile and connected. Maybe it's like a small conversation with a stranger on a train, except, not as ambient cool as Jim Jarmusch. I will work on figuring out what it is like long after this paper is finished. I do this because it preserves the spirit of being in-paradox. Because it doesn't de-danger the tour. Because I'm getting ready to refract. Because I took the suggestions personally, just like a local person recommending good eats and thing I should take the time to see when touring an academic journal and the discipline of geography.

Equally the author's frustrated reaction to the interior of the plane and being emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed at and after the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau fit neatly into the category suitably cultivated and appropriate responses for a certain liberal subjectivity. Imagine instead, for example, a child on their first flight, or someone terrified of flying. Imagine instead, for example, someone strongly opposed to the active preservation of sites of mass killing, or a critic who despairs of the whole so called 'Holocaust Industry' seeing the raising of such sites to a secular religious status as a way of sublimating the logics which led to it in the first place? I should say I hold none of these positions, however that they are possible

should be without doubt, the point being that what counts as a 'real experience', as the author defines it, is really quite variable thus some sort of justification for the definition of a 'real experience' as opposed to, I guess, non-real ones, seems necessary.

It is interesting to note the compassionate affect the author describes in Zurich compared to the horror in Zanzibar, however (assuming the cyclist died) many would find it horrific that automotive death is so easily accepted and wonder what the juxtaposing of these stories means in terms of the representation of 'Africa' compared to 'Europe'. Notably the author writes that in Zurich the affect was one of "a species in concern for one of their own" (p.10), but what does this line mean after reading the Zanzibar story?

...at the least, I do believe the author needs to be much clearer about their intentions at the outset and the implications of their writing at the close.¹

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank both referees, even the one that strongly strongly recommended that this essay not be published. I benefited tremendously by the comments after I got over the criticism. I also want to thank Markús Þór Andrússon for curating the exhibition *Without Destination*, and for organizing the museum to perform an artwork which consisted of calling my sister everyday for three months and wish her a happy birthday. That exhibition and project set in motion a hive of ideas, some of which were incubated in this essay. I especially want to thank Gunnþóra Ólafsdóttir, who gave me extraordinary editorial advice, and repeatedly encouraged me to go on, even though she did not allow me to use my permanent home address as the page number and reference footnote for the Doreen Massey quote about stories-so-far. (xo)

REFERENCES

Acconci, V. 1969: *Following Piece*. Oct. 3–25, 1969, Activity, "Street Works IV" Program, organized by the Architectural League, New York.

¹ The editor has obtained permission from the anonymous referee to publish these comments.

- Anderson, B. & P. Harrison 2010. 'The 27th Letter': An interview with Nigel Thrift. In: B. Anderson & P. Harrison (ed.) *Taking-Place: Non-Representational Theories and Geography*. Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate. Pp. 193–200.
- Art Institute of Chicago 2011: *Collections. About this artwork. Vito Acconci*. <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/199013> (accessed October 25, 2011)
- Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum 2004: *Preserving for the Future*. Collection of presentations and panel discussions from the Protecting for the Future conference, June 23–25, 2003. Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.
- Bateson, G. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind. A Revolutionary Approach to Man's Understanding of Himself*. San Francisco: University of Chicago Press.
- Bateson, G. 2002. *Mind and Nature, a necessary unity*. New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Bennett, J. 2010: *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Braudel, F. 1996: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Carson, Anne. 2010: *NOX*. New York: New Directions.
- Christensen, I. 2006 [1969]: *It*. New York: New Directions.
- Cronon, W. 1991: *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- D'Agata, J. 2010: *About a Mountain*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
- De Certeau, M. 1984: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley & US & London: University of California Press.
- Debord, G. 1995: *The Society of the Spectacle* (transl. D. Nicholson-Smith). New York: Zone Books.
- De Landa, M. 1997: *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York: Zone Books.
- De Landa, M. 2002: *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. New York: Continuum Impacts.
- Deleuze, G. & F. Guattari 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Desmond, J. 1999: *Staging Tourism. Bodies on display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- Edelman, G. 2006. *Second Nature: Brain Science and Human Knowledge*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Edensor, T. 2000: Staging tourism. Tourists as performers. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(2), 322–344.
- Eglash, R. 2002: *African Fractals. Modern Computing and Indigenous Design*. New Brunswick, New Jersey & London: Rutgers University Press.
- Eliasson, O. 2008: *Nothing is Ever the Same*. <http://www.raumexperimente.net/text-en.html> (accessed November 7, 2011)
- Eliasson, O. 2009: *Non-stop park (Zeitlupestudie)*. Installation view at Rheinhardt Park, Berlin. Photographer: Studio Olafur Eliasson.
- Ellingsen, E. 2007: Possibility Spaces. In: E. Abruzzo, E. Ellingsen & J. D. Solomon (eds.): *Models: 306090 Books (Vol. 11)*. New York: Princeton Architecture Press. Pp. 217–228.
- Faulkner, W. 1993. *Barn Burning. Selected Short Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Fincher, D. (director) 1999: *Fight Club* [movie]. United States: Fox.
- Fort Boonesboro State Park 2006: *Fort Boonesboro Living History*. <http://www.fortboonesboroughlivinghistory.org/index.html> (accessed October 25, 2011)
- Fox, J. (director) 2010: *Gasland* (documentary). United States: New Video Group.
- Goransson, J. 2007. *A New Quarantine Will Take My Place*. Long Beach: Apostrophe Books.
- Herzog, W. (director) 2010: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (documentary). United Kingdom: IFC Films & Sundance Selects.
- Koons Garcia, D. (director) 2004: *The Future of Food* (documentary). United States: Lily Films.
- Langworthy G. & M. Henein (directors) 2009: *Vanishing of the Bees* (documentary). United Kingdom: Dogwoof.

- Latour, B. 1993: *We Have Never Been Modern* (transl. C. Porter). Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Latour, B. 2004: *Politics of Nature. How to bring the sciences into democracy*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.
- Levinas, E. 1990: *Time and the Other*. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.
- Massey, D. 2005: *For Space*. London: Sage.
- McPhee, J. 1989: *The Control of Nature*. Toronto: Harper Collins Inc.
- Metzler, C. & J. Springer 2004: *Plagues and Pleasures of the Salton Sea*. <http://www.salton-seadoc.com/> (accessed October 25, 2011)
- Mirov, B. 2010: *I is to Vorticism*. Tuscan: New Michigan Press
- Morton, T. 2007: *Ecology Without Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Morton, T. 2010: *Thinking Ecology: the Mesh*. YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmWCPa9y3c> (accessed November 7, 2011)
- Myles, E. 2009: *The Importance of being Iceland*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Ngorongoro Conservaton Area Authority 2011: *Nogorongoro Conservation Area Authority's official website* http://www.ngorongorocrater.org/archive2_11.html (accessed November 7, 2011)
- Palahniuk, C. 1996: *The Fight Club*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
- Perec, G. 2008: *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (edited by J. Surrock). London: Penguin.
- Pilkington, M. & P. Baker 2002: *Iain Sinclair: City Brain. A Meeting with the Pioneer Psychogeographer*. Interview with Ian Sinclair. April 2, 2002 Forteanimes http://www.forteanimes.com/features/interviews/37/iain_sinclair.html (accessed November 7, 2011).
- Pirandello, L. 1922: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (translated by E. Storer). New York: E. P. Dutton.
- Rothenberg J. 2008; *UbuVeb Project*. <http://ubuproject.tumblr.com/> (accessed November 7, 2011)
- Rowe, C. & R. Slutsky 1993: *Transparency*. Basel: Birkhauser Architecture.
- Sennett, R. 1974: *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Shapin, S. & S. Schaffer 1985: *Leviathan and the Air Pump. Hobbs, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Stein, G. 2004: *Everybody's Autobiography*. Exact Change.
- Stein, R. 2004: *The Accendary of the Credit Card Industry. The Secret History of the Credit Card*. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/credit/more/rise.html> (accessed November 7, 2011)
- Stevens, W. 2000: *Voices and Visions* (video). New York: New York Center for Visual History.
- Strand, M. 1992: *Keeping Things Whole*. In: *Reasons for Moving, Darker, & The Sargentville Notebook*. New York: Knopf Publishing Group.
- Tati, J. 2006. *Playtime*. DVD. Criterion Collection.
- Thrift, N. 1996: *Spatial Formations*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Trier, L. von (director) 1991: *Europa* (movie). Denmark: Nordisk Film.
- Uexküll, J. von 2010[1934]: *A Foray Into the Worlds of Animals and Humans, With a Theory of Meaning* (translated by J. D. O'Neil). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Uys, J. (director) 1981: *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (movie). South Africa: Ster Kinekor.
- Verne, J. 2009[1870]: *Twenty-thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Hamburg: Classic Books Publishing.
- Varela, F. 1990. *Art meets Science and Spirituality in a Changing Economy*. Amsterdam: SDU publishers.
- Varela, F. 2005: *Monte Grande. What is life?* Zürich: T & C Film AG.
- Vonnegut, K. 1998. *Cat's Cradle*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc.
- Wallace, D. F. 1997: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*. New York: Back Bay Books.
- Whitman, W. 2010: *Song of Myself. The First and Final Editions of the Great American Poem*. Nashville: American Renaissance.