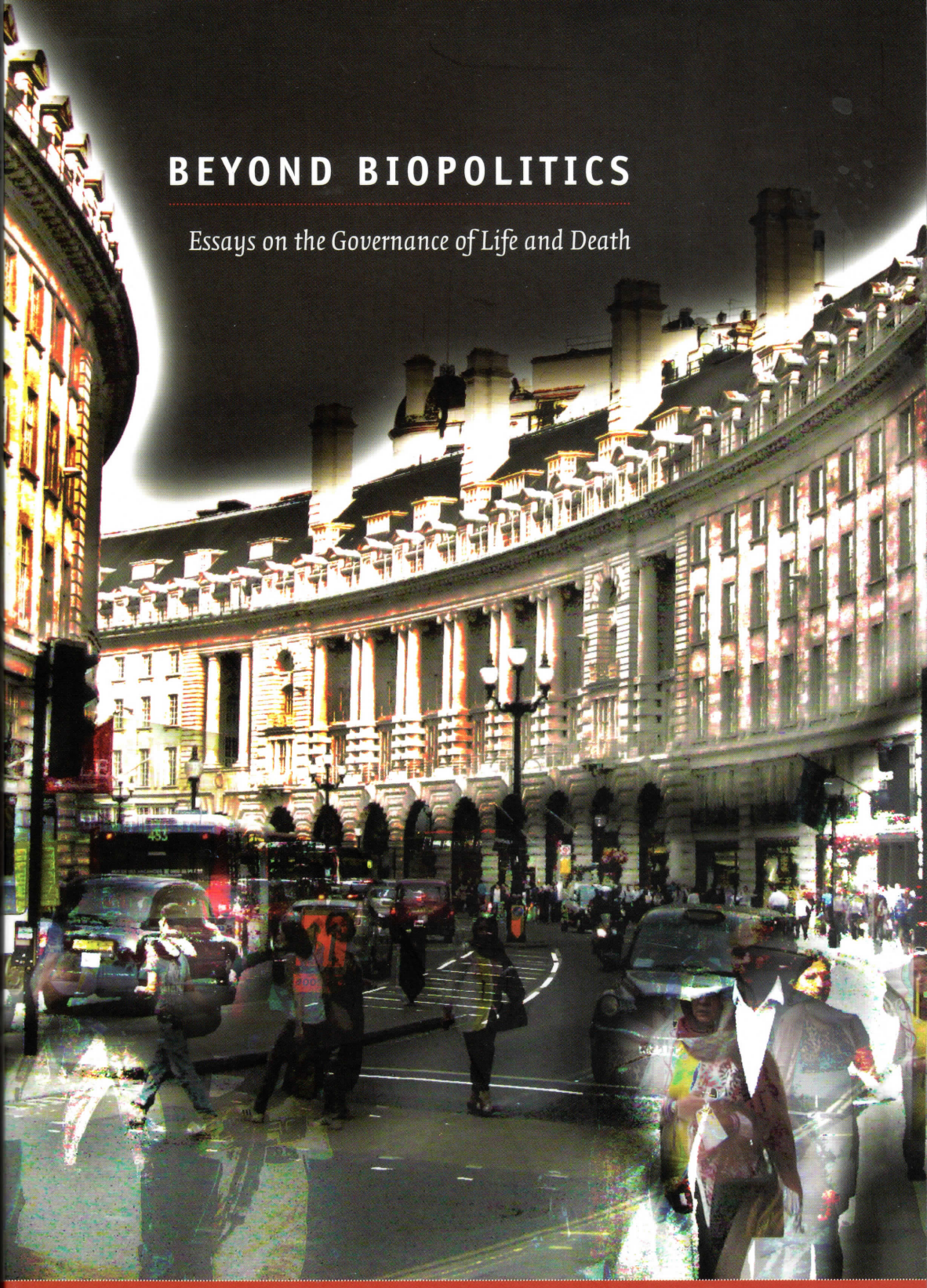
BEYOND BIOPOLITICS

Essays on the Governance of Life and Death



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"SEEING" SPECTRAL AGENCIES

An Analysis of Lin+Lam and Unidentified Vietnam

Lana Lin and H. Lan Thao Lam's (Lin+Lam) multimedia installation piece, *Unidentified Vietnam*, was exhibited in Gallery 456, from September 14 to October 12, 2006. Gallery 456 is a facility belonging to the Chinese American Arts Council and is located on Broadway and Grand, at the intersection of Soho and Chinatown in lower Manhattan. Today, Chinatown is often perceived as a destination for visitors from near and far, where some hybrid of diverse "Chinese" and Chinese American cultures is preserved alongside a shopping mecca for the "democratic" distribution of cheap reproductions of desirable consumer goods. The history of Chinatown's formation and existence throughout the twentieth century, however, suggests that the very notion of an ethnic enclave was constructed through a set of biopolitical mechanisms regulating migration, miscegenation, property ownership, public hygiene, and cultural assimilation. In our encounter with Lin+Lam's *Unidentified Vietnam*, the provocation is this: How does one complete the transport of an archive of South Vietnamese propaganda films from Saigon to Washington, D.C., undertaken as the United States withdrew from South Vietnam in 1975, and then to the borders of New York's Chinatown in 2006? How does one present the Library of Congress's hold on the Vietnam/American War in the context of present-day U.S. foreign policy? How does contemporary art live in a time when biopolitics has risen contumeliously as the supreme form of art?

At the entryway of the gallery is a signage stand, which is similar in appearance to the one located at the entryway of the Library of Congress. Instead of a notice of the Library of Congress's hours of operation, the stand displays a *Washington Star* newspaper clipping from May 7, 1975, whose headline reads: "South Vietnam Embassy Continues to Carry on in Diplomatic Limbo."[1] A portion of the article reads: "The State Department announced last week that although the United States will not recognize any Saigon government-in-exile, it will continue temporarily to afford diplomatic status to the embassy here for assistance in dealing with refugees." According to the article, the situation of Saigon was unresolved, but the exit of the U.S. was complete. The South Vietnamese embassy in the U.S. would not be recognized as a sovereign entity; there would be no Saigon government-in-exile. The embassy was no longer an embassy of a sovereign state, but an entity with temporary diplomatic status. Temporary diplomatic status did not correspond to a temporary state, yet implicitly suggested the effectivity of such political transience.

The state that emerged to handle the transition to reunification of the territory south of the 17th parallel with Northern Vietnam followed a series of short-lived states: the State of Vietnam from 1949–56, the Republic of Vietnam from 1956–75, and the Republic of South Vietnam from 1975–76. The Republic of South Vietnam was not ideologically linked to its predecessor, as its raison d'être was to hand over its agency and to mediate the transition to its demise, rather than to govern or wage war. Nor was the Republic of South Vietnam directly linked to the spectral "South Vietnam," upon whom existence had been conferred by the United States via temporary diplomatic status. The temporary status, without statehood, was solely a U.S. agency, whose existence was severed from any actual Vietnamese political entity, and whose primary function was to enable the maintenance of the stateless status of refugees. It was the spectral agency of a nonexistent South Vietnam that was conjured in the postwar transition. The war was seemingly over for the United States, but the political and economic transition of postwar Vietnam and U.S. involvement in the Cold War were not. The struggles of the newly unified state of Vietnam and the crisis of legitimacy for U.S. foreign intervention were neatly displaced from view by the activity of "dealing with refugees."

As a part of the closing of the South Vietnam embassy, an archive of South Vietnamese propaganda films was transferred to the Library of Congress. These films were shot in Vietnam, jointly by South Vietnamese and American military staff. The films were processed in the Philippines and were eventually

relocated to the South Vietnam embassy in Washington, D.C., before finally being transferred to the Library of Congress. The afterlife of South Vietnam will be ensconced in the Library of Congress as the *South Vietnam Embassy Collection*. The archive's final transition will be to climate-controlled, sanitized spaces of preservation. The operational hours of the library neatly cover the messy temporalities, the radioactive half-life, of the Vietnam War and the biopolitical problem of dealing with refugees. Clearly posted hours when these archives are and are not available to the public impose a schedule on what is a far more complex temporality of war. The trope of transition and the image of a timetable do not begin to address the actualities of how one moves beyond war and colonial oppression, beyond the end of war and the persistence of empire.

In 2006, Lin+Lam disrupt those precise allotments of working hours to reconstruct the final transition of South Vietnam into the archive. Their installation repeats the logic of transition, reproduces the space of transfer, and in so doing, lays bare the techniques of preservation and the violence engineered into mechanisms of reconstruction. There is no question of a particular (historical) method of art countering biopolitical governance: governmentality is the art of method.[2] Art simply allows Lin+Lam the tenuous space to imagine one more transition, a supplement to what was meant to be a final transition, a finite yet effectively endless limbo in the United States. The space of art thus permits a virtual post-transition detour that takes us into the borders of Soho and Chinatown. With their installation of *Unidentified Vietnam* in Gallery 456, Lin+Lam bring the suspended life of the South Vietnam embassy to the edge of New York's Chinatown, to a space associated with Chinese American and Asian American cultural politics. The Chinese American Arts Council was founded in 1975 "to meet the needs of an expanding immigrant population."[3] The council cosponsored the first all Asian American multimedia visual art show in February 1977. Gallery 456 opened in 1989 in order to provide a permanent space for such artistic efforts. By shifting a film archive from the Library of Congress to the Chinese American Arts Council, Lin+Lam reopen 1975 to potentialities other than the suspension of the stateless, even as *Unidentified Vietnam* attempts to lay bare the construction of the stateless. Lin+Lam show us how an archive, an installation of an archive, is constructed as the space of limbo. The spatial expansion of limbo is capable of eliminating multiple temporalities of transition, transience, transport, transfer, precisely by insisting on its own domain of liminality.

Lin+Lam play with intermedial movement through photography, the still

image, the magnifying glass, the book, the typewriter, film, sculpture, performance, television, and video. All are assembled into five components: *24 frames = 1 second*, *Pupils of Democracy*, *Invisible Like Peace*, *Card Catalogue*, and *Library of Congress Cleaning Crew*. Brought together on four walls, these media assemblages produce—surprisingly enough—a space of enclosure. As art, they exhibit an (impossible) installation of the in-between. The coexistence of different "outmoded" apparatuses not only raises the question of their historical emergence, but, more importantly, puts into direct contact their various modes, mechanisms, and technologies giving form to time. A developmental discourse of technological progress and obsolescence would not sufficiently account for the installation's engagement with temporality, specifically the problematic of the spatial expansion of liminality. Michel Foucault argues that it is not "at the level of a speculative discourse" but "in the form of concrete arrangements" that two different techniques of power, discipline and control, are seen to cofunction as biopower in the nineteenth century.[4] Similarly, Lin+Lam's *Unidentified Vietnam* refuses an evolutionary narrative of new media and instead works with the space of installation to invoke assemblages that allow us to investigate the intermedial play of the diverse, outmoded archival technologies of transitioning, transferring, translating, and capturing. Technologies, in the form of specific media, may be written into obsolescence by a progressive, developmental history of technology symptomatic of the residual idealist tendencies unavoidable in such a formulation. The assemblage gives us various ways of moving between and across apparatuses, thereby suggesting—precisely where it is not possible to fully materialize—the multiplicity of time.

Multiplicity quickly vanishes, however, in the subsequent production of a space of transition—a suspension that expands its visibility, duration, and mobility through the multimedia installation. The installation thus reproduces the technology of the archive: the production of the archive as the production of limbo, a spatialization of liminality. The necessary tension produced by attempting to install an assemblage provokes the question of how the timing of living is solidified into the age of biopolitics. Furthermore, as Patricia Clough suggests, it is by paying attention to "the timing and intensities of form," rather than "mere interdisciplinarity," that we move beyond a merely historical, narrative account of the archive and toward a genealogical reperception of the forces shaping the moment of closing, transition, and passing into knowledge.[5] Lin+Lam move us to question anew *where in time* refugees and temporary states persist in suspended animation, and, conse-

quently, *when in space* we might perceive time altering itself. At the borders of Chinatown, we might wonder if the necessary next move is the assimilation of knowledge into U.S. archives and revitalization of the project of empire. Does the discourse of Asian America contain its own restrictive perspective on "what comes after"? Must we always read, "After Asia, America"?

Foucault's study of the history of sexuality is, in a sense, a case study of transition that complicates the very notion of transition. He states, "The fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention."[6] Transition is figured here as a mode of partial passing into the field of knowledge, which produces the regime of life, biopolitics. The sensing of an inaccessible substrate becomes partially diverted into a knowing of life, "the taking charge of life."[7] The sensing of life as inaccessible substrate, that which emerges "from time to time," the intervals of life and death, an "older," "other" sense of "body," all disappear into the domain of power's "access even to the body."[8] Biopolitics produces knowledge of this passing, this necessarily partial transition, at times seemingly a mere transfer of parts. It is in striving to grasp the sense of something one feels compelled to call an inaccessible substrate—a striving that is continued and repeated—that the sphere of the biopolitical is extended, expanded, and intensified. The "bio" of biopolitics comes to name a much larger number of things than those discussed explicitly by Foucault, not least the nonhuman and nonorganism regions of biological life and the realm of affect belonging to inorganic life. The expansion is theoretically infinite, only limited by the specific contours of the practices that actualize the passing into knowledge.[9] The temporality of this passing does not passively narrate a transition but is itself materially altered by its mode of conveyance.

Foucault's analysis of sexuality does not aim merely at a correction of the repressive hypothesis, but rather diagrams the transition of older, other modes of sensing life in the politics of knowing bodies as such. The transition is a key method of biopolitics itself. In one of his prime examples, Foucault discusses the expansion of the "confession of the flesh," which "attributed more and more importance in penance . . . to all the insinuations of the flesh: thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined movements of the body and the soul."[10] The body is expanded to incorporate this trembling realm of "stirrings," thus "shifting the most important moment of transgression from the act itself to the stirrings . . . of

desire."[11] The body passes into sexuality, through the incitement to examine (diligently, precisely, thoroughly) the soul, memory, understanding, will, senses, thoughts, speech, action, dreams. The transfer seems simple enough, an equation of identity; in Foucault's words, the "bourgeoisie made this element identical with its body."[12] However, "this element," in Foucault's discussion, is a complex realm of affect; it is "that aspect of itself which troubled and preoccupied [the bourgeoisie] more than any other, begged and obtained its attention, and which it cultivated with a mixture of fear, curiosity, delight, and excitement."[13] This "aspect of itself" is in fact *not* an element of the self, although it is what provokes the productivity of self-reflection. The passing of that aspect into knowledge of the self is a movement and a modal shift between incommensurables. Passing is not merely, nor necessarily, a transition. In a sense, transition is what is produced by (or as) the passing into knowledge of affect.

In his essay "The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life" Mark Hansen emphasizes the significance of understanding affect as the source rather than the "derived modality" of subjectivity. He makes the important point that "we cannot hope to account for the technical contamination of subjectivity if we limit it to a derived modality."[14] However, in his reading of Bill Viola's work, he treats affectivity as that which lies between the captures of affect in social time. Hansen thus reduces the incommensurable to transition.

In the following passage, Hansen explicates affectivity through readings of Francisco Varela, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Gilbert Simondon:

> Far from being (merely) impressional, that is, the result of a uni-directional relation from object to consciousness, perception is relational because it occurs through a recursive correlation of the living present with the intentionalities (protentions and retentions) that "anchor [it] to an environment" . . . that locate it in a field that does not converge on a central I. This is why perception—and all its coessential modifications, including protention-retention but also retention-recollection and protention-projection—must ultimately be rooted in the more basic operation of living presence (or simply life). Such a position is succinctly expressed by Gilbert Simondon, Merleau-Ponty's student, when he claims affectivity as a mode of bodily experience that mediates between the individual and the preindividual, between the constituted body and its constituting virtual or ecstatic milieu . . . whereas perception appeals to structures already constituted in the interior of the individuated being, "affectivity indicates

> and comprises this relation between the individualized being and preindividual reality; it is thus to a certain extent heterogeneous in relation to individualized reality, and appears to bring it something from the exterior, indicating to the individualized being that it is not a complete and closed set [*ensemble*] of reality."[15]

Perception is understood not simply as the imprint of phenomena on an individual consciousness, but as a relational dynamic with a "field that does not converge on a central I." Affectivity is what constitutes perceptual relationality, with the distinction that perception might be thought of as a capacity derived from the individual's interior and affectivity as what appears to "bring it something from the exterior." Affectivity both "indicates and comprises this relation between the individualized being and preindividual reality." For Hansen, affectivity is *relational* rather than *immanent*; affectivity is itself always oriented toward capture, effectively defined by it. Thus he draws certain conclusions from his reading of Gilles Deleuze, which seem to counter the tenor of Deleuze's own argument. For Deleuze, "What counts is on the contrary the *interstice* between images, between two images: a spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void and falls back into it."[16] This leads Hansen to suggest that by manipulating video technology—shooting at high speed and then playing back at low speed—what lies invisibly between two images might be made visible. He calls this the technological expansion of the in-between, which is made to live in our present, expanding our "now." The in-between for Deleuze, however, is not simply the *imperceptible* but, most importantly, the *incommensurable*.

Hansen suggests that in Viola's work the still image can "represent a cut." In the case of Viola, what is represented is not the existence of incommensurability but the accessibility of "our bodies." What was for Foucault a sign of the rise of the biopolitical is for Hansen a sign of the capacity of technology to allow for "a fuller and more intense experience of subjectivity . . . a closer relationship to ourselves . . . a more intimate experience of the very vitality that forms the core of our being, our constitutive incompleteness, our mortal finitude."[17] Reading Hansen's interpretation against the grain, we can see that Viola's work is actually about the containment of affectivity for the sake of producing an image of self-affection. Thus self-containment appears as if it were synonymous with self-reflexivity. If there is still openness to a field not converging on a central I, it exists solely in transcendent relation—and for Viola, it is an auratic relation to the Old Masters. It is in order to reincarnate

European Renaissance religious figures in the bodies of contemporary people that contemporary bodies are made to "slowly progress from neutral facial expressions through indeterminate affects to primary emotions (sorrow, pain, anger, fear, rapture)."[18] "Viola's intention here, as in the *Passions* project as a whole, is to capture the transitions between emotional states, what his inspiration, the Old Masters, 'didn't paint, those steps in between.'"[19]

It is not surprising, then, that in order to draw out the implications of self-affection in Viola's work, Hansen conjures up a spectral body of the spectator—"you"—in place of the social and political collective of the audience. "You" invokes a body attuned to a "normal video rate" and equipped with the "normal function" of perception and a set of normalized ways of capturing affect in language—the linguistic categories of "primary emotions." The body of "you" serves to ground the register of a "normally imperceptible experiential modality." If the in-between were merely that which is too fast or too subtle to be perceived, then affect would always already be contained by the normal technology of the human body. This again raises the question of the human body as a production of norms, which is the crux of Foucault's critique of biopolitics. While Hansen elucidates the notion of affectivity in provocative ways, he leaves out of frame the many histories of technologies of bodies that have been written precisely in order to contest the political viability of deploying the body as you. It seems that the genealogical investigation of how differential populations are produced through biopolitical techniques or methods of governmentality is the point. Without these histories, we are left with technology and its double, a new universal of species life.

Furthermore, much as Hansen's phenomenological approach limits affectivity to an experience of the body, his approach to technology limits the technological to an extension of human perceptual capacities. This impoverishes our understanding of both technologies as bodies and humans as technological. In contrast, Lin+Lam's installation does not produce the mesmerizing quality of Bill Viola's work. Instead, Lin+Lam's installation refuses an aesthetics of relationality on the grounds of an engagement with the politics of postcoloniality, that is, the politics of the incommensurable. Affectivity in *Unidentified Vietnam* is not coded into "primary emotions," as it is in Viola's *Passions*. Machines are not there to capture us, to name us, but rather to engage themselves in the proliferation of time.

Lin+Lam ask us to consider two different kinds of transition—the geographical transport and political transfer of an archive of South Vietnamese propaganda films—in connection with the temporality of film editing in 24

24 frames = 1 second, Lin+Lam.

frames = 1 second. This piece is composed of a series of twenty-four film stills, each frame a reproduction of a wipe from among the 527 propaganda films in the *South Vietnam Embassy Collection*. The wipe is a particular form of film transition commonly used during a certain historical period but now considered outmoded. The wipe is a technique of transitioning between images or sections of film, often (as in the image above) a swish pan between black and white, or dark and light. The wipe spatializes the in-between of two images. The space occupied by the wipe gives duration and visibility to transition. The wipe calls attention to the existence of transition by calling attention to its spatialization, thus obscuring other temporalities of the cut.

Gilles Deleuze, in his two-volume analysis of cinema, makes a sharp distinction between two types of editing cuts—the rational cut corresponding with the movement-image and the irrational cut with the time-image. The rational cut links two images according to a movement, which is not seen in totality but whose reconstruction rationalizes the cut as a mode of linking parts of a single movement. The cut itself has no duration but enables the viewer to see continuity of movement. To miss it is to see it, that is, to miss the cut is to see the movement. The irrational cut, on the other hand, links images abstractly, and the absence of sutured movement draws attention to

the cut itself, which becomes suddenly visible as a cut. The cut cannot be seen in itself as long as we insist that to see is to see space, that vision is the perception of space, whether in unbroken duration or in linkages of kinetic movement. To see the irrational cut is, however, to encounter a multiplicity of temporalities. Deleuze states that the "time-image puts thought into contact with an unthought, the unsummonable, the inexplicable, the undecidable, the incommensurable."[20] The putting into contact of thought with an unthought does not occur in the time of kinetic movement; rather the materiality of this "putting into contact" emerges in the interstice of incommensurable relations between images that are no longer associated (for example, through metaphor or metonymy). This interstice is precisely *not* a space of transition. To see the irrational cut is to be located elsewhere, rather than to be embedded in movement. One is no longer absorbed in identification with the naturalized twenty-four-frames-per-second time, and instead becomes aware of the time of the irrational or abstract. Time here does not passively follow the flow of kinetic motion but appears in the break of movement, the capture of emergence, the interstice of putting-into-contact, the sudden seeing of the unsummonable. The irrational cut is the materiality of changing time, whereas the rational cut is the rationalization of transition as natural human movement.

Lin+Lam's *24 frames = 1 second* extracts and lines up twenty-four film frames of a wipe along a wall. The equation of twenty-four frames and one second questions the equivalence or commensurability of two different types of time. Historically, twenty-four frames per second was the standard speed for shooting and projecting 16 mm film. Although a variety of reasons might account for this historical fact, it is often claimed that twenty-four frames per second is also the speed that corresponds most closely to "normal" human perception of "natural" movement on film. The suturing of twenty-four frames per second by the human eye purportedly translates into smooth, continuous movement, which is further perceived as natural by the normal body. The equation invokes the process of naturalization, that is, machine time naturalized to human movement and perception and then utilized as a standard regulating the timing of norms of human perception—thus effectively fixing one machine as the human body. The editing cut introduces a higher order of suture whereby different segments of a film are stitched into an ideological whole, producing a new narrative unity, a consistency of meaning, or in this case, a particular interpretation of the South Vietnam–U.S. war effort. Images of fit soldiers' bodies, elegantly uniformed female paramilitary

troops in training, and President Ngo Dinh Diem's and Madame Nhu's public appearances are wiped together into a rousing show of spirit, a mobilization of affect in the unity of one second.

On the other hand, the equation also visibly separates the two items being equated, distributing them to either side of the equal sign, much as the twenty-four frames serially spatialize what is actually a collapse of multiple images into one second of film. The gap between images provokes the question of whether the images contained in Lin+Lam's twenty-four frames actually fall sequentially within a one-second portion of a particular film; it seems entirely possible that, as presented, the individual images could have been taken from anywhere among the 527 items in the archive. In actuality, then, the twenty-four frames do *not* equal one second of moving image. The equation merely conjures the possibility of naturalizing or anthropomorphizing time.

The wipe functions in this installation in the way coevality functions in the critique of anthropology—as the sign of an insufficient critique. The wipes, and their photographic presentation, effectively reduce the irrationality of the cut into a rational critique. This strategy is akin to the recovery of coevality in anthropology's critique of allochronicity. According to Johannes Fabian, anthropology is a discourse that constructs its object through strategies of time, specifically by locating the object of study in a past relative to the present of the anthropologist. The relation of present and past is then mapped onto a cotemporaneous terrain of here and there, near and far, vis-à-vis imperial center. Fabian argues that what is ignored and denied by the allochronic tactics of anthropological discourse is the synchronicity of the communication event itself. The coevality of encounter between anthropologist and native informant, the space of contact, disappears and reappears as the objectivity of anthropological discourse. It is in the transition from ethnography to anthropology, in the writing that passes from one genre to another, that synchrony becomes diachrony, and the informant is made to speak from the past to the anthropologist sitting among readers in the present. As Fabian puts it, the ethnographic appears to drop out of anthropology. Through this denial of coevality, he suggests, anthropology shares cognitive complicity with colonialism; living inhabitants are spectralized through the instrumental use of time, providing justification for material exploitation. With the "return" of coevality, however, we run the further risk of losing sight of the fact that coevality, too, imposes a violent notion of time and space, an aspect of postcolonialzed reason, rather than a description of the way of the world

"before" or "after" colonial domination. Coevality as a postcolonial destination is all too well equipped to participate productively in the project of global empire. The coeval conceptualization of time gives us the time of the equation, the time of the exchange of incommensurables, of global capital: the dominance of synchrony.

Rey Chow proposes a shift from spatialized evolutionary time to the time of coevality, while recognizing that this is the beginning, not the end, of the problems of the colonial legacy of time. "Once the coevalness of cultures is acknowledged," Chow states, the problem still remains: "Cultural translation needs to be rethought as the co-temporal exchange and contention between different social groups deploying different sign systems that may not be synthesizable to one particular model of language or representation."[21] Additionally, the in-between of cultures is understood "beyond verbal and literary languages to include events of the media such as radio, film, television, video, pop music."[22] The acknowledgment of coevality produces a proliferation of cultural descriptions that utilize tropes of time to express various contemporary situations (speed, displacement, nostalgia, etc.). These differences are, however, now able to be brought into "co-temporal exchange and contention" rather than colonial exploitation rationalized by evolutionary discourse. Chow's description of sign systems that "may not be synthesizable to one particular model of language or representation" suggests that the acknowledgment of coevality may serve to proliferate the irrational cut and to produce temporal multiplicity, against the very logic of coevality itself.

The expanded visibility of Lin+Lam's wipes brings to view their performed self-critique of the ideological function of film editing. Consequently, what can no longer be "seen" is the violence of the suspension of transition itself. It is not simply the activity of war that is ended, but a new regime of development, immigration, assimilation that takes over and leaves in its wake the suspension of the stateless. The wipes force us to look at suspension as if it were a place of transit, an in-between point in the slowing down of war's violent activity to a new day of peace. Yet, in fact, it is not the movement of transferring that is stopped; it is the potential multiplicity of the cut, the possibility of new time, new life, that is undermined through limbo—a limbo that pretends the suspension of life is nothing more than a gentle pausing of time, a space for deliberation and thought, rather than the enclosure of refugee camps and detention centers. This suspension is not the hiatus of a continuous motion; rather it might be described as the destruction of converging points of noncontact, the limit of postcolonial temporality. The expression of

a desire to move beyond what is caught in the linguistic hopefulness of "post" and is never met by "what comes after." Lin+Lam's wipes cover up—by in fact exposing, prolonging, and spatializing—the potency of the irrational cut. In this sense, then, the re-presentation of wipes as abstract art can show us that "power has passed into a non-organic life."[23]

Lin+Lam's sculptural assemblage, *Pupils of Democracy*, constructs passages for intermedial movement between film and several objects exterior to it (film projector, screen, table, books, magnifying glass) and several objects interior to the film (typewriter, miniature model of an office, human hand). As the short 16 mm film loop passes noisily through the Kodak Pageant film projector, we see a close-up view of the moving mechanism of a manual typewriter. The film shows individual typebars flying out of their tight assembly toward the paper. Inked characters slowly lengthen the line of text: "How do you feel the American effort here is being conducted?" In a progression of film images, we see the methodical construction, letter by letter, of the sentence that emerges several seconds later, without being able to hear the loud clacking sound marking each excessively visible strike of the keys. The unrecorded sound marking contact between paper and keys becomes the silence of contact between typewriter and film camera, which is supplanted by the noisy rattling of the sculptural contraption of projector, table, and screen. Between the two different modes of composition connected to typing and filming opens a passage for intermedial movement. This movement is unconnected to human physiology; "movement" refers here to affect, the interstice, the transversal motility implicit in the machinic assemblage.

The explicit use of film in the installation, however, ignores such potentiality for the sake of producing a magnified reframing of the process of typing, that is, constructing the "American effort." The time of the typewriter passes into the time of the film. Writing does not materialize through conversion into the movement of keys but passes into cinematic time, twenty-four frames per second. The magnification of the time of construction that we now passively view, following stroke by stroke a dance of keys, displaces any time for reading or responding to the sense of the question. Magnified vision collaborates with the question's rhetorical emphasis on a description of conduct, which displaces the unstated question of whether the United States should sustain or cease the war effort altogether. The effort of typing the question becomes an extension of the American effort to sustain the war in Vietnam. The question of the U.S. presence in Vietnam is presented as the mechanics of English composition and the typewriter. To participate in this English lesson is

to participate in the American effort. Hannah Arendt argues that "education can play no part in politics," that compulsory education for adults is a form of "coercion without the use of force."[24] Adult education is routinely linked to politics and citizenship in the context of the United States' self-annointed identity as nation of so-called immigrants—land-appropriating and genocidal settlers, American-born descendants of settlers and newer migrants, naturalized citizens, noncitizen permanent alien residents, noncitizen temporary residents, temporary status refugees, green-card applicants, resident aliens without residency status, residents of enclosed autonomous areas, confined detainees of various statuses, etc. The role of educator is easily extended ideologically as a rationale for foreign intervention, reinvented as the biopolitical production of "pupils of democracy." In the assemblage *Pupils of Democracy* the temporality of social and political change is converted into the time of democracy, materialized as an assemblage of schoolroom technologies. In this space of pedagogy, the political agency of those being converted into pupils of democracy is indefinitely suspended, looped through a rattling old projector.

The film projector sits rather precariously atop a stack of books placed on a wobbly kindergarten table with foldable legs. The portable projection screen, with retractable legs, is positioned just a couple feet in front of the projector, so that the viewer must stand behind the projector to watch the film, the sculptural assemblage thus remaining in view. The only object lying between the projector's lens and the screen is an opened paperback book, Michael MacLear's *The Ten Thousand Day War*, with a magnifying glass positioned above the exposed pages. The selection within the area of magnification is bathed in intense light: "It is 105 degrees and rising," the code for U.S. evacuation operative during the last months of the war.[25] Changing the spectator's angle of vision allows different selections of text to emerge in the space of magnification and light: "miniature atomic explosion," "combat Marines," "remaining American." The enlarged and brightened letters are not to be read so much as decoded, converted into bodily movement, translated into flight, or the anticipation of the flight of others (vanishing Americans), or the transfer of the American effort to long-range violence, embargo, retrenchment into "remaining American." Where does text become military code? At what point in the everyday do political expansions and halos of violence occur? Such questions are raised between apparatuses.

The film loop also contains a series of images focused on a miniature model of the South Vietnamese president's office. As cinematic time passes,

the tip of a brush enters the frame and descends toward the table in the model office, gently touching it. The fingers holding the brush also enter the frame, but no more than the hand is visible. The model of the office allows us a miniaturized and intensified view of the seat of power. Initially, this miniaturization of space produces an intensification of the space of power, which is then disrupted by the descent of the hand and the gentle brushing movement that recalibrate our sense of scale. We realize that the emptiness of the room does not presage the imminent entry of the South Vietnamese president. The space is clearly much too small to permit his appearance. The stillness we observe does not connect us with an anticipated glimpse of his life but opens to the workshop of the sculptor, the space of the hand's reconstruction. Film does not function here as an organ of mass media, transmitting communiqués between the presidential house and the public, but as a mode of capturing the time of the sculptor's hand. The double intensity of magnification and miniaturization, however, displaces the act of reading and the seat of the reading of the state. Chow tells us that "in the age of multimedia communication, transmissibility is that aspect of a work which, unlike the weight of philosophical depth and interiority, is literal, transparent, and thus capable of offering itself to a popular or naïve *handling*."[26] In Lin+Lam's installation, a hand, and the work of the hand, appears in the place of such mediated *handling*, interrupting the transparency of transmission. The intrusion of the hand's tactility, as well as its organic movement, cover the tracks of the handling of the "American effort."

Fabian speculates, "If machine time were, at some point, to replace (not just assist) human time . . . we would expect anthropology to disappear."[27] Even without anthropologists, however, the cognitive tendencies of the anthropological are incipient in the machine. The death of the anthropologist is also the renewed life of "nonhuman agencies that inhere in finite forces, speeds, and exposures that are productive of technonature and technoculture," Clough explains.[28] Indeed, in *Unidentified Vietnam*, such nonhuman agencies seem to mobilize the capture of media by other media. Between typewriter and projector, between miniature model and magnifying glass, passes an intermedial movement, which properly belongs to the temporality of the irrational cut. This passing might be a figure of the agency moving through "passages that head not toward the 'original' that is the West or the East but toward survival in the postcolonial world."[29]

For Achille Mbembe, such a survival requires a more complex notion of time than that implicit in the dichotomy of preservation/change. As long as

the postcolonial subject continues merely to inquire "what comes after," he or she will end up "postcolonized," caught in the turning of backward/forward glances toward precolonial freedom and postcolonial liberation. To see this predicament is to be in "another space," the space of "raw life."[30] In this space of half-death and half-life, one does not begin to attempt a "recovery of existence," and is instead further compelled to ask, "Is that man still alive, or dead?"[31] Rather than liberation, what comes after is an intensification, as well as a further proliferation, of the biopolitical techniques that had come before. Knowledge of bodies and knowledge of the self can productively utilize the polarization of time along the axis of backward/forward or preservation/change. Against such a notion of "passing time," Mbembe proposes multiplicity: "emerging time," "the time of existence and experience," "time as lived," and "the time of entanglement," the interlocking of past, present, and future.[32] Today, such multiplicity is constantly threatened by the possibility of passing into knowledge—the horizon of the biopolitical. To attempt to reclaim the ontology of multiplicity is to contest biopolitical transition.

The most explicit materialization of survival in the postcolonial world presented in *Unidentified Vietnam* is to be found in the exquisitely terse performances of H. Lan Thao Lam, which appear in fragments of 16 mm films made by Lin+Lam. These are contained within the films of *Pupils of Democracy* (discussed above) and *Invisible Like Peace*, a video played on a wall-mounted television screen. In the film component of *Pupils of Democracy*, sequences of typing are intercut with three segments featuring an unidentified figure performed by Lam. In *Invisible Like Peace*, images of Lam appear *after* images of Ngo Dinh Diem and Madame Nhu and among a montage of clips from the *South Vietnam Embassy Collection*. With Lam's body, what emerges is not Lam's body proper. Lam gives us neither proper name nor identified Vietnamese body, but rather the emergence, "from time to time," of an outside that is "farther away than any outside world." Lam's performances are austere, psychologically minimal, composed only of intense details, bare gestures.

Lam's performance in *Pupils of Democracy* might be transcribed as such:

> A figure facing forward appears with face cut out of frame; only a white jacket is visible, impeccably ironed, the white merging with the white of the screen; suddenly hands buttoning the jacket, in precise rhythm, even speed.
>
> A figure facing forward appears with face cut out of frame; puts on

a jacket with a few swift but unhurried moves, straightens the sleeves, smoothing them out with a few brushes of the hand.

A figure in profile holds microphone in left hand and makes a sharp upward motion with the right hand and arm, extending them above the head, as the left knee bends to a half kneeling position.

A figure with back toward the camera has right arm raised and moves the right hand left and right, quick repetitions back and forth.

In *Invisible Like Peace*, images of Ngo Dinh Diem are followed by images of Lam in similar clothes, postures, and gestures:

He, then she, in white suit, arms akimbo, glance slightly upward, slightly to the right.

He, then she, in white suit, arms hanging gently to either side, lips barely forming a smile.

The unidentified person in *Pupils of Democracy* wears a suit similar to Ngo Dinh Diem's in *Invisible Like Peace*, and seems to flash between Ngo Dinh Diem as Ngo Dinh Diem and H. Lan Thao Lam as Ngo Dinh Diem. Who is the pupil of democracy? From whom is the pupil learning democracy? Why does the scene of learning become invisible, "like peace"?

In *Invisible Like Peace*, images of Madame Nhu are followed by images of Lam in similar clothes, postures, gestures, and objects:

She, then Lam, turns her head slightly toward the camera, then a subtle twist in the other direction, the barest of oscillations from side to side.

She, then Lam, is framed as a bust, perfectly poised, gazing fixedly over a copy of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* held in front at arm's length.

In the former turning, Lam's Madame Nhu is only framed from the neck up. The image is dominated by hair—the weight and bulk of it, the elaborate coiffure, its elegant sweep up—strikingly set off by the elongated neck. Every slight movement of the head seems to be led by the hair; its sculpted mass heightens the dramatic effect of turning the head, of turning to look at the camera. The violence of Madame Nhu's tenure as "First Lady" is displaced by the massive character of her sculpted hair in Lam's performance. Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu (née Tran Le Xuan) was the sister-in-law of unmarried president Ngo Dinh Diem and was commonly referred to as the First Lady. In exile, she railed bitterly against the United States for removing Diem, and thus also herself, from power in 1963. She was also infamous for her vicious

attacks against Buddhists: "I would clap hands at seeing another monk barbecue show, for one can not be responsible for the madness of others."[33] Lam's Madame Nhu is notably without hands—any clapping, literal or figurative, is cut out of frame. The source of all mobility and agency seems to be magnetically pulled into the immense beehive; the facial expressions and subtle motions of the face merely lag, pull, trail in the wake of the hive's own movement.

In the second of the two aforementioned images of Madame Nhu, her gaze is absorbed by a book, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. This novel is set in Indo-China in the early 1950s, during the war between the French and those colonized by the French. When the quiet American of Greene's novel, Pyle, directly observes this war between France and the "coming community" of "Vietnam," he is stirred to desire actively what he had previously only read about in York Harding's *The Role of the West*: a putative alternative to both colonialism and communism. Pyle secretly begins to work at "arranging American arms for a Third Force" between China and France.[34] It is precisely the age of a "third" regime, an age of U.S. imperialism and neoliberalism, that has arrived to block the way toward "survival in the postcolonial world." Madame Nhu, played by H. Lan Thao Lam, holds this text with calm aplomb, as allied South Vietnamese and U.S. forces continue to wage war against the North Vietnamese, and as the United States continues to postpone its departure from Iraq—two "presents." Between 1975 and 2006 lies 1955, the incommensurable.

In the performances of Lam, we see the medium of the body as geste. Giorgio Agamben states, "What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported. The gesture, in other words, opens the sphere of *ethos* as the more proper sphere of that which is human."[35] Lam's body endures and supports the gestures of an unidentified "citizen" of an unidentified "Vietnam," as well as of the two most visible South Vietnamese figures of the postcolonial preunification period. In contrast to the suspension of agency accompanying the transition of the film archive, Lam's body provides a different kind of mediation: "the emergence of the being-in-a-medium of human beings . . . the ethical dimension."[36] The coming community of Vietnam will have to take into account the afterlife of South Vietnam and the spectral agency of the stateless, in order to fully engage the ethical dimension of nation-building. Whereas the suspension of media produces "the sphere of an end in itself," Lam's gestures open to "the sphere of a pure and endless mediality."[37] In

Invisible Like Peace, Lin+Lam, three photo stills.

Invisible Like Peace, Lin+Lam, woman with book.

effect, "the gesture . . . breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, *as such*, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming for this reason, ends."[38] The gesture is the figure of a being-means, a means without end.

The gesture thus provides an image of a kind of mediation that has the potential to avoid the flaws of both instrumentality and paralysis. Such a gesture might then also be capable of addressing the postcolonial dilemma of self-referentiality. In Mbembe's analysis of the problems of producing knowledge about Africa, he points out the persistent thralldom exerted by two pernicious notions of time associated with colonialism—primitivism and developmentalism. He argues that what is needed is "an attempt to force Africa to face up to itself in the world," and that articulating the "true historicity of African societies" requires an analysis of Africans' "relation to nothing other than themselves."[39] What rhetorically appears here as self-relation is not an argument about the self as asset, that is, liberal self-possession or self-exploitation, but rather a strategy for articulating a cut in the linkage of "First World" and "Third World," reproduced as such in discourses of primitivism and developmentalism. By linking one to oneself, colonial and postcolonized linkages are simultaneously pulled apart and a much fuller world map is allowed to surface. It is not "one" that is thus recovered, but the possibility of a relation of one to oneself, that is relation without end—the making

of collective agencies beyond "Fifth Column, Third Force, Seventh Day."[40] The rhetorical formulation of self-relation is, as it were, *gesture*. How else to make life appear, for one second, "without," "before," passing into knowledge? Self-referentiality, in this precise sense, refers to multiplicity produced by processes of self-differentiation. It is not what produces the self-contained space of enclosure, an ethnic enclave, an early twentieth-century Chinatown, a return of Old Masters, but what opens to multiplicity and incommensurability.

Lam's performances do *not* give us autoethnography. Gestures do not increase knowledge of individuals, produced by themselves for the sake of others; rather the bodily and the affective remain immanent, not passed into knowledge. The body of Lam only appears with the "link or knot of attitudes between themselves,"[41] as "a perpetual *self-distinguishing*, a distinction in the process of being produced."[42] Gestures expose the "media character of corporal movements."[43] To claim the gesture is thus not a redemption of the body, neither a utopian return of human naturalness nor a heroic recovery of existence. The gesture belongs not to the timing of space but to an image of time, or more precisely, in Deleuze's words, "the attitude of the body is like a time-image, the one which puts the before and the after in the body, the series of time; but the gest is already a different time-image, the order or organization of time, the simultaneity of its peaks, the coexistence of its sheets."[44]

Lam's performances, however, are further manipulated digitally in the editing of the film. Between images of Ngo Dinh Diem and of Lam as Ngo Dinh Diem, hands appear from above and below the screen, clap together and apart, a manual wipe. Between images of Madame Nhu and of Lam as Madame Nhu is the brief superimposition of both faces. These explicit visualizations of transition, what lies between the two sets of images, clash violently with what Lam's performances already embody. Such transitions attempt to obfuscate what still persists as gesture, provocatively posing the questions: Is a wipe essentially a gesture of the hand? Are showing, looking, the direction of the gaze, and the direction of the film in the projector, essentially gestures of the face? Is the hand a technology of erasure? Is the face a guide toward memory? Lam's reply: the face does not simply transition into film image, nor hand into film editing; face and hand can hold, or be held by, what cannot be merely handled, or dealt with. The question of medium here appears between gesture and apparatus, unable to link them progressively, as the geste refuses to relinquish its modality of holding to the apparatus's mode of handling.

Lin+Lam's *Card Catalogue*, mounted on a wall, attempts to put the archive into relation with itself. The catalogue is composed of index cards, on which are affixed excerpts from transcribed interviews with a wide range of people connected to the Vietnam/American War, including the recounting of facts, personal memories, gossip about other interviewees, and various printed images. The material on the cards is presented in undigested, unprocessed, and deliberately unorganized form. Rather than follow the Dewey Decimal System, or even simple alphabetic order, the cards are organized into seemingly random categories, such as "White Christmas," "Different Title, Same Movie," and "Take One"—which directly invite the mishandling of information by any passerby. Additionally, the contents are often repeated, making any form of linearity impossible. What is perhaps most striking about the card catalogue is the disjunction between the haphazard presentation of the cards themselves and the artists' laborious work of conducting hundreds of hours of interviews with individuals in the United States and Canada. Lin+Lam interviewed a range of persons, from their own family members to former military and government officials, and transcribed the interviews into many pages of text—years of preparation to produce an installation lasting only twenty-nine days. Unable to distill or totalize the sum of the living memory of the war, Lin+Lam construct a catalogue of self-referentiality referring to nothing more than labor itself, the immense technology of archival production and preservation.

In the last component, *Library of Congress Cleaning Crew*, Lin+Lam take us into the building that houses the archive, as film turns a free-standing gallery wall into a corridor of the Library of Congress, a long, empty corridor with heavy double doors at the end. In this silent, black and white film, a man pushing a mop steadily makes his way down the corridor as another man walks alongside him, periodically moving roadblock signs out of the way of the mopper's forward progress. Occasionally, other employees dressed in suits walk across the corridor—brisk, hurried, rigid bodies, anticipating the two men mopping, but only awkwardly able to negotiate their differing speeds and rhythms. The walkers' bodies form various gestures of slight contortion, indicating discomfort and irritation at the obstacles they must navigate, mixed with some gesture of apology for the obstacle that their own movements must pose to the working men, then disappear around the bend of an intersecting corridor. The bodies of the moppers never break from their steady movement, and as they seem about to reach the end of the corridor, the moppers seamlessly begin moving backward, returning to

their initial position, and then forward again and backward again, over and over, so that they repeatedly move toward and away, without ever turning to *face* the viewer standing in the gallery. Without break, without completion, the men unhurriedly and unhesitatingly continue their labor of cleaning the passageway.

The moppers do not have direct access to the archive, although they are at the heart of its institutional location. They are not excluded at its exterior but are suspended within the passageway of its interior. Lin+Lam keep us in an approach to the archive, which neither ends nor progresses, but sustains itself in perpetual limbo. This is not a deferral produced by the inaccessibility of the archive, so much as a looping, a particular mode of repetition, marked by the time interval "4:44," the length of a single iteration of the film, which repeats endlessly for the duration of the installation. The labor of mopping up that follows the formal end of war is here suspended and perpetuated interminably as continuous movement, perhaps also invoking Vietnam's experience of prolonged warfare from 1946 to 1989. The national liberation war of 1946–54 led to ongoing conflicts between North and South, conflicts intensifying until 1965, necessitating U.S. involvement until the U.S. withdrawal in 1975. The conflict then extended into Cambodia from 1978 to 1989.

The moppers' actions seem without beginning or end, not only due to the repetition of the film but also the ambiguous direction of their movements. The mop could as easily be pulled backward as pushed forward; similarly the walking companion could as easily be placing cones after the passing of the mop as removing them before its approach. Either series of actions could appear to us as progressing forward in time. However, the bizarre faces and distorted gestures of the other employees caught mid-expression—at the point of reversal—tell us that the film is actually being played backward half of the time. In this sense, the walkers' actions could be described as unidirectional and the moppers' multidirectional. Although the camera captures all of their actual movements on 16 mm film, in DVD playback, this mode of mediating "natural" movement is altered through repetition and reversal, the construction of a continuous series. The consequences for moppers and walkers diverge. The moppers' actions are seamlessly continued through the looping of film, in forward, nonprogressive continuation, while the walkers' movements are abruptly interrupted and undone. The nonchronological time of the moppers becomes visible in contrast to the chronological time of the walkers. The moppers never enter or leave the corridor, whereas the walkers have always just entered or are about to leave.

Lin+Lam's film uses the temporalities of different media to construct figures caught up in progressive temporality. The term "postcolonial," in its idealist form, refers to both the end of colonialism and the advent of what comes after. In trying to embody the end and the beginning, postcolonial temporality simultaneously seeks to go beyond to a future free of the colonial past and to reach back into prehistory to recover an uncolonized state in order to use these two points as a measure of liberation. However wide the distance between the two states or two times, as long as one must look back in order to ascertain that one is indeed moving forward, one has not gone—nor will ever have gone—far enough. Postcolonial desire longs for rupture but is stalled in the space of transition's liminality. Caught between past and future, the true present vanishes in a hopelessly prolonged wish for confirmation of rupture. With a twist of intermedial humor, perhaps, the anthropological temptation of empire is turned into mildly grotesque bodies switching backward and forward. The mopping body that drives persistently forward with the playing of the DVD survives the ruin of gesture, working somberly, faceless, with a certain dignity.

In *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty analyzes a "certain paradox that results precisely from the historian's attempt to bring the histories of the subaltern classes into the mainstream of the discourse of history."[45] According to Chakrabarty, Ranajit Guha cannot help but run into this paradox in his attempt to write the 1855 rebellion of the Santals against the British and nonlocal Indians in Bengal and Bihar into modern history—how to account for "I did as my god told me to do," how to account for the god Thakur himself?[46] The paradox reveals the incommensurable relation of the subaltern's experience to the language of the modern historian: agency of supernatural beings is not equivalent to agency of insurgency. The irrational, supernatural, or religious, i.e., the life of the gods, cannot enter into the historian's narrative, except as ethnographic alibi (that is, if the historian wishes to remain in the proper domain of history, recognized by the disciplinary institution). Subaltern historiography runs the risk of turning past itself into the subaltern (as opposed to the colonial anthropologist's temptation to relegate contemporary subalterns to the past). Chakrabarty suggests that in order to maintain kinship with subaltern history the historian's timeline must become intricately knotted: "To stay with the heterogeneity of the moment when the historian meets with the peasant is, then, to stay with the difference between these two gestures. One is that of historicizing the Santal in the interest of a history of social justice and democracy; and the other that of refusing to

historicize and of seeing the Santal as a figure illuminating a life possibility for the present."[47] The "time-knot" demands that the historian identify in historical chronology the incommensurable event of rupture, shift, and—*in that cut*—refuse this passing into knowledge, enduring and supporting, in one's own body, that "life possibility for the present."[48] The historical dating of practices is necessary for the articulation of political action, yet it is in the living of present as multiplicity that we discover freedom as given.

Lin+Lam are able to capture the disjunction between two different types of embodied time in a single film. They do not use two cameras, each of which would capture the activities of the corridor from a different angle or point of view, nor are the two groups of people filmed in different ways. The artistic focus is on the gestural, not the subjective, and on the time of entanglement, not the timeless comparison of difference. A single lens has captured the qualitatively different types of motion that belie the appearance of a single social setting: employees meeting in a shared space of a common workplace. The walkers are the ones, presumably, who have access to the archives, maintain and utilize their contents, at times even transport, alter, or destroy them. For the walkers, the corridor is merely a passageway, an empty transitional space integrated into larger aggregate goals relating to the archives, a larger trajectory of intended actions, within which this walk across the corridor plays a minute role, just one second of a day. The moppers, on the other hand, are instructed to wipe down the working space of others, then promptly depart, so as to enable others to carry on their work. The moppers *work on* the space without ever *utilizing* it themselves. They *remain* in the corridor without *occupying* it. The corridor holds these different workers in synchronicity but is not held in common by them, and thus cannot hold them to a common belonging. The qualitative disjunction in the motions of moppers and walkers demonstrates the paradox of their simultaneous separation and connection. They never truly encounter the other whom they perpetually approach; these bodies converge without touching, are entangled but never joined. In Lin+Lam's film, time-image is also time-knot. Without the limit of the incommensurable, we could not describe the present condition of the potential for real, collective agency in social and political life.

With the passing of film time the corridor becomes the moppers' corridor. Corridor and mopping come to define the walkers' projects, contrary to the usual order of things. The walkers' plans are interrupted unendingly, if you will permit this paradoxical turn of phrase, the interruption not being merely repeated but also, simultaneously, ceaselessly perpetuated. The labor of the

moppers takes precedence; it is they who come to inhabit the corridor most fully with their steady unending actions, the only purposeful movements visible in the corridor. In contrast, the walkers repeatedly pause in the completion of their tasks as they cross the corridor. It is against the steadiness of the moppers' motion that we come to assess the movement of the walkers as unstable. Mopping ceases to become a means to an end and instead becomes a means without end. The question of access to and control of the archives is repeatedly interrupted in the time of mopping. The corridor displaces the Library of Congress. Boundary lines stretch back into an unruly expanse of corridor.

In the early 1800s, British colonialists and the Siamese Royal Court struggled over definitions of the border between Burma (then a new British colony) and Siam, a dispute due less to direct competition over territorial claims at that time than over the rationality of the map. Differences in language and thought caused the endless relay of messages between competing authorities over the question of what exactly constituted a "boundary" or "border."

> In the Bangkok Thai language spoken at the Siamese court, there were many words meaning something similar to boundary—*khopkhet*, *khetdaen*, *anakhet* and *khopkhanthasima*, the prefix *khop* and *khet* meaning "edge," "rim" or "fringe," the word *daen* meaning "area" or "territory." All the Thai words, however, tend to signify areas, districts or frontiers, not lines. They do mean a "limit," but a limit as an extremity without a clear-cut edge and without the sense of division between two realms or powers.[49]

For the British, a border was unquestionably a line; but for the Siamese court, a border was a dense "corridor" of forests and mountains: "This was a border, but one without a boundary line—or at least the line was a very thick one."[50] This "thick" conception of the border was accompanied by overlapping, multiple sovereignties that were common in Siam before the nineteenth century. The specter of such border struggles in colonial invasions of the region of Southeast Asia haunts the coming to life of the corridor in Lin+Lam's installation. Their corridor opens to multiplicity in our thinking of borders and sovereignty, a multiplicity that brings heterogeneous life possibilities back into the past and thus returns to life the dead present of transition.

The departure of the French from Hanoi with the Geneva Agreement in 1954 resulted in a mass migration of over a million people between north and south regions of Vietnam. Migration had significant military, economic,

and social impacts in following decades, as the states strictly controlled migration programs, in order to regulate the effects of urbanization, national security in the highlands, and ethnic insurgencies. After 1975, people could, at last, so it seemed, move freely throughout all of Vietnam, and by the 1990s the roads would be full of buses and motorbikes, as well as the vanishing tracks of "boat people." In 1986 the Vietnamese Communist Party adopted economic and social reforms called *Doi Moi* (renovation), which in many ways undid "much of the previous program of socialist construction."[51] Andrew Hardy emphasizes that Prime Minister Pham Van Dong "used an image of mobility to stress that it was not a monolithic policy."[52] In Pham Van Dong's words, "We are going along a road without a map . . . every day and every hour resolving practical issues, problems full of complexities and unknowns."[53] On the other hand, Hong Kong, after 1988, would selectively screen "economic migrants" from "genuine refugees," those pulled forward by what lies ahead and those chased out by what lies behind.[54] If Lin+Lam give us, in 2006, a spectral South Vietnam that looks back to its 1975 transition into unidentified status and subsequent absorption into the United States' cultural archives, it is not simply in order to ask how far a properly named and unified Vietnam has come along that road without a map, but also to wonder what else the time-knot might yield.

NOTES

1. William Delaney, "South Vietnam Embassy Continues to Carry on in Diplomatic Limbo," *Washington Star Times*, May 7, 1975.
2. See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.
3. Chinese American Arts Council's homepage, http://www.caacarts.org/.
4. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 140.
5. Clough, *Autoaffection*, 184.
6. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 142.
7. Ibid., 143.
8. Ibid.
9. See Da Costa and Philip, *Tactical Biopolitics*, which includes discussion of artists going far beyond the more common, and rather crude, approach of using undigested quotations from Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* in a confused attempt to turn biopolitics into an object of representation. At a more sophisticated level are artists who become indistinguishable from technicians, as they absorb diverse methods and processes with which to produce their art, striving to allow the emerging technologies, knowledges, and political mechanisms to produce the artwork. Some even acquire graduate degrees in computer programming, molecular biology, etc., with the intention of producing art knowledge rather than merely becoming employed in the

industry. Such practices, however, suggest an absorption of art into the biopolitical, as art seems no longer capable of, or even interested in, insisting on its own self-distinction.

10. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 19.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 124.
13. Ibid., 123–24.
14. Hansen, "The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life," 610.
15. Ibid., 609.
16. Ibid., 590.
17. Ibid., 589.
18. Ibid., 611.
19. Ibid., 612. Emphasis added.
20. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 214.
21. Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 196–97.
22. Ibid.
23. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 214.
24. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 177.
25. A radio announcer would report, "It is a 105 and rising," followed by Bing Crosby's singing "White Christmas."
26. Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 199.
27. Fabian, *The Time and the Other*, 93.
28. Clough, *Autoaffection*, 184.
29. Chow, *Primitive Passions*, 202.
30. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 197.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 8, 16.
33. "Letters to the Times: Mrs. Nhu Defends Stand," *New York Times*, August 14, 1963.
34. Greene, *The Quiet American*, 63.
35. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 56.
36. Ibid., 57.
37. Ibid., 58.
38. Ibid., 56.
39. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 5, 14.
40. Greene, *The Quiet American*, 17.
41. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 192.
42. Ibid., 82.
43. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 57.
44. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 195.
45. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 102.
46. Ibid., 108.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 112.

49. Winichakul, "Siam Mapped," 216.
50. Ibid.
51. Hardy, "State Visions, Migrant Decisions," 107.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 107–8.
54. Ibid., 119.