

in/external combat: Maya Deren's *Meditation on Violence*

absorbing the force	horizontally	ward
gentle seeming	& then	up
depending on breath	together	together
sense	up	& then
& spirit	ward	horizontally
over	swoop	the face
centuries	rapidly	into
method	pulsing	reaching
& dis	grip	arm
tinct mean	circling	shadow
ings	pulse of blood	slight
layered with	return to	feet
collection	first	hand to
hand to	sequence	hand to
hand to	first	collection
feet	return to	layered with
slight	pulse of blood	ings
shadow	circling	tinct mean
arm	grip	& dis
reaching	pulsing	method
into	rapidly	centuries
the face	swoop	over

& spirit	reaching	depending on breath
sense	into	gentle seeming
depending on breath	the face	absorbing the force
gentle seeming	horizontally	gentle seeming
absorbing the force	the face	depending on breath
gentle seeming	into	sense
depending on breath	reaching	& spirit
sense	arm	over
& spirit	shadow	centuries
over	slight	method
centuries	feet	& dis
method	hand to	tinct mean
& dis	hand to	ings
tinct mean	collection	layered with
ings	layered with	collection
layered with	ings	hand to
collection	tinct mean	hand to
hand to	& dis	feet
hand to	method	slight
feet	centuries	shadow
slight	over	arm
shadow	& spirit	reaching
arm	sense	into

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part 2: the essay

I have come to believe that if history were recorded by the vanquished rather than the victors, it would illuminate the real, rather than the theoretical, means to power; for it is the defeated who know best which of the opposing tactics were irresistible.

from Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*

I have come to believe it would illuminate the real

the lens engages a view. meaningful human presence. (flesh) (origin)
filmed in Haiti. 1947–1951. by Maya Deren. stillness isolates.

Haiti in time. Haiti in space. Haiti in relation to the viewer. where
is Haiti? in a frame. behind a lens. unstill.

**the film is in black and white. opening shot. the landscape. the
sound of breeze and chirping birds. the light of the day paints
the sky a creamy fog and there is a field with hints of grey.**

the shores of a nation. sharing a proximity of shores. a shore's
proximity is as much.

approach and the very air ceases to rise and join. as a fog marks
the edge. island due east abounded in gold. in pearls and spices.
the island resembled what lay in the interior.

Hayiti.

to lay eyes on. Tainos. caney. cacques. gold. **out of focus rusted
barbed wire cuts across the frame from one end to the other.
there is a field. the blades of grass bow in unison. it is a subtle
movement.**

African slaves were brought to Haiti.

16th century. Vodouisants. created by deities of bondye (bon dieu)
of subordination. veneration of the dead. obliteration a receptacle.
watcher watching. to gaze leaning inward towards the tangible
visibility. **leaves in the foreground take up a third of the camera
frame. there is a pathway. there is a house in the background.
there is a fence.** series of exposures. snap shots. very short
intervals. successive movement. the optical illusion of movement.
this woman walks towards the camera. the figure. what relations
hold? what implications hold between? between itself and the
viewer. as always projected onto a body. **she continues to move
towards the camera.** viewing the collections of a history. **gazing
into the camera a smile opens across her face. one arm sways at
her side at the same pace as her step. her arm rests in balance on
top of her head.**

gestures of resistance. one's gaze. power in looking. denied rights
to gaze. the slaves had looked.

camera cuts. these women in white are walking together at various depths and angles. their pace quickens as the hill slopes downward. a combination of letters in such a relationship that each one is real. and everyone is simultaneously an element. in more than one linear series. the light through the prism shifts. the screen is getting darker. a page. the turn. viewing history from here. in the vanishing distance. increasing footage. **the narrator speaks, “there is a Kreyol expression to walk together. where life is hard people depend upon and help each other.”** French vocabulary and African syntax. history arrives and departs. arrives and departs. the thread is disintegrating between departures. a simultaneous fusion. as a means for African slaves and French masters to speak. as a means to be told. as a means to be erased. as a means to entangle. Saint Domingue.

Kreyol upon the shore. delirious shore. shore a ritual. shore a witness. shore a telling. shore a voyeur. shore an object. shore a proximity. a static obscurity at the shore.

frozen between the line and the break.
fathom territories.

these four women walk in a single file line down a distant path. altering the remains 20,000 ft. of 16mm film. to grasp matter. rites of initiation. the issue of flesh. **these four women become specks in relation to the mountainous range.** stillborn from the chaos. by the fact that it is not land that defines the shore. the stillness. in itself. is no different than the stillness. it manifests in movement. in an object moved.

les invisibles.

the narrator continues, “Haiti amalgamated different tribes in a common religion known as Voudoun.” the first god called Maori. Mwuetsi. Massassi. Morongo. again the first. Nunon/Bouclou. Mawa/Lisa. **the landscape fades out into a stark title page. the sound of drumbeats as text appears on screen *Divine Horsemen, the Living Gods of Haiti.*** a process by which divinity evolves out of the flesh itself. **a tree with thick extensive roots. the camera pans vertically up the contortion of the trunk. branches and leaves.**

the spirit of the lord god is upon me. the spirit of the lord god
is upon. the spirit of the lord god is. the spirit upon. to preach
good upon. tidings to bind. to proclaim. liberty and the opening.
upon the opening proclaiming the liberty of the brokenhearted.
captives. captives and the opening. prison. captives to preach
good tidings.
the meek that are bound to proclaim. to the bound.

reaction or deformation. ruins. forms of nature in infinite
mutations. horizontally imitation. observation. experimentation.
reflection. it the end of it.

fathom the mirror.

territories must be bodies. invasion might be gestural. to be whole.
to be dismantled. within it nothing is first. being watched. being
filmed. to view is to look inward towards the self. (negative film)
finding divinity. a reimposed identity.

**the narrator speaks, “in Haiti a divine spirit is called a loa. Legba
is a loa who is the link between the visible mortal world and the
invisible immortal realms. he is the means and avenue between
them. the vertical axis of the universe.” Legba’s vever appears on
screen. the vever is chalk white with a vertical and horizontal axis
drawn on the ground to invoke the loa.**

yellow fever. 28,000. Toussaint. Dessalines. glory and terror.
September 16th 1802. November 1803. January 1804. blood for
blood. 16th century. 1940s. 1961. 1804. 1804. 1792. 341,933.
the survivors. the islands. [slaveholders]

in a real sense the detached observer. the desired end. **his body
bends in frame. the back of his head hovers over the ground.
his feet spread for balance. he holds a plate of flour in one hand
while tracing Legba’s vever onto the ground.**

“look!”

drawing a circle collectively. invisible threshold. **the narrator
continues, “the crossroads is always the juncture where
communication between worlds is established.”** twenty-four
different images per second. of mingling universes. **this man is
in the foreground surrounded by the congregation. he is tracing
Legba’s vever in the air.** constituting an essence. viewing position
and angle. onlooker. and in terms. reveals.

the camera returns to him bent in frame with a plate of flour. the camera pans the tops of trees and then returns to his bend as he continues to draw a circle around the vertical axis of Legba's veve. history has exposed them to each. as a point of intersection. field of images.

looking resists. looking revises. looking interrogates. looking invents. to be stared at. looking at one another. looking back.

behind this man dancing sits four drummers. the crowd stands behind the drummers. the dancer moves through the space horizontally.

imprisoned by images. illuminated by images. archived by images. practice of images. negation by images. subtext of images.

persists relentlessly. shaking abandon. see the sweat. **both of these dancers kiss the ground.** dangers arise in the terminology. reveals the underlying acute complexity. **in frame is a slender wooden post. this is the center post. the camera pans from the sparse thinness of its top.** reality passes. directly through the lens. to be immediately recorded. on film. expression of a face. **these ends of skirts. these hands resting on these bellies. the shadow of trees. the light breaking up the shadow.**

in the hands. remains in the hands.

the camera moves towards the ground where the post is staked. illusion of self. slow motion shape. historical terms of a subject. a reality created. holding the camera. failure to observe. the lens can be focused. comes into existence. human-eye. face to face. pause. **this drummer has a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth.** sudden thing with the rhythms. surrender. drumbeat by drumbeat.

vanquished

La Place is the priest's apprentice. La Place is carrying a sword. there are two flag bearers. they stand next to one another a few feet apart with their backs to La Place. these flag bearers inch backwards maintaining their formation. they all begin to lean together. these flag bearers are on either side of La Place. their shoulders are touching. to indicate both. *a mock battle.* forceful illumination. **this priest circles them and shakes his rattle.**