

Interviewed by Jonathan Thomas

— Jonathan Thomas: I thought maybe we could begin by discussing the interview as a form. You selected the interview as one of your primary modes of writing early on, initially as a journalistic tool when you were writing for **Paris Lettres**, **Les Lettres françaises**, and **L'Etrave** in the 1960s, but eventually the interview became a way for you to work outside of existing academic protocols and expectations after you landed a job teaching at Columbia University in 1972. You've said in the past that you're interested in the interview's literary and dramatic possibilities; you've produced book-length interviews with thinkers like Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard, and your 1984 interview with Dr. Jacques Latrémolière, the assistant psychiatrist who administered shock therapy to Antonin Artaud (and talked about God with him) at the asylum in Rodez, in the South of France, in the mid-1940s — that interview has been presented on the page, on the stage, on the radio, and for a while, even the Berliner Ensemble wanted to perform it.

I'd like to return to this topic later, so we can touch on the impetus behind your decision to present your work in these different artistic mediums. But you've also described the interview as a process of disappearing, of becoming something else, of becoming an artist or whomever it is you're interviewing *through* them, by using their language to talk in a way that you couldn't. Your aim, it seems, is

to become a medium, for instead of talking about your subject you attempt to enact it in a performative way. This calls to mind Artaud, who through his work *became* Abelard and Uccello and Heliogabalus and Christ and Van Gogh. "Leave your tongue, Paolo Uccello, leave your tongue, my tongue, my tongue, shit, who is speaking, where are you?" Or for Rimbaud: "*Je est un autre*" (I is someone else). In your way you became Artaud at different moments with your use of language and voice on the page, or when you had your head shaved on stage in the Poetry Project performance directed by Chris Kraus in 1985.

I want to ask you about your thoughts on the interview as a form with these different potentials, since we're now here communicating from within it, but to also get at a certain process that will take us into the terrain of Artaud's delirious world, since your book **Mad Like Artaud** was just translated and published by Univocal and since you just finished a video project about Artaud called **The Man Who Disappeared**, I wonder if you could talk about this process of disappearing and becoming, not so much as a malady, but as a method, since it characterizes the life/work of other philosopher/artists and fanatics who have played a key role in your thinking over the years (Bataille becomes Nietzsche, Simone Weil becomes a factory worker, a hunger artist, and so on).

— Sylvère Lotringer: Okay, so you push me a bit towards madness,

right? I think I will take this literally. I was divided. On the one hand, and it depends what time of my life we're talking about, but on the one hand I was actively doing things. On the other, I just wanted to disappear. It's difficult for me to talk about it now, for I'm not in the same frame of mind. But at that time it felt as if every day that I lived, I was glad that nothing had happened.

— Thomas: What years of your life are you thinking about?

— Lotringer: I guess it's mostly after I arrive in New York in 1972. These are effects, if you want, of what I experienced as a child, as a Jew, living through Word War II. Basically I felt like I wanted to keep a low profile. Or I could bring this back to Marcel Duchamp and **The Blind Man**, to the process of disappearing as an artist. For him it was a method, and for me it became a method too, but it was basically a feeling that it was amazing that I was still alive another day. I'm already dead, I thought at the time, so every day that I live, I survive it. This gave me a lot of freedom, because if I disappeared it didn't matter. It's very difficult to explain. But I was kind of tormented in a sense. I wanted to leave no trace. To make interviews was a positive way of doing this.

People will never know, as you know, how difficult it is to make interviews, how much you have to work on them. Latrémolière is an exception. It came exactly that way. But Ferdière [Dr. Gaston Ferdière, the head psychiatrist at Rodez, who



I interviewed in 1984] was another thing. I had four or five hours of discussion and from that I extracted what was really happening, what I didn't see on the spot as I was sitting across from him. So my relation to the interview also comes from various directions. The simplest one is that, when you create a magazine, you have to get material. Interviewing people means you have access to some well-known people, people you're interested in, and there are a number of benefits to that. First, you have a piece to publish in the magazine. Secondly, you meet someone interesting and you learn something from them. And thirdly, no one knows how much work you put into it. So in a sense I enjoy the fact that people didn't know how much I worked, because I didn't present myself; I was secondary. There is something attractive about being secondary or being invisible. But being invisible, yes, it meant that I could really relate to other people and bring them out in a way. Or maybe I brought out in them something I wasn't quite capable of doing myself? Maybe I was playing against something that I've experienced but wasn't totally in control of? It's very difficult to figure out. On the one hand, I was very extroverted. On the other, I wanted to be dead. That was it. And there was no conflict between the two. In a sense, the interview became a way of going from one to the other. I could become this, and I could become that.

But that wasn't the original impulse. I guess I was just curious and I was interested to see all these people and excited to be able to exchange some views with them. To be a journalist became a way of amassing material. And there was something else, too. The tape recorder was the only way you had to keep a record of anything. I mean I took pictures with a camera, but that wasn't enough. The interview became a bit like time crystallized. I was fascinated by the fact, and I still am, that when I push play on the recorder I can feel someone exactly like it was at the time. Of course my voice is there, kind of lost. I'm there struggling with English, trying to ask questions. It's like lost time. Time was going too fast, and I couldn't retain anything of it. There was probably some anguish about it, as if I thought, I have to catch it, because this I will never see again.

We don't usually pay attention to the present, but the present was going so fast. I didn't want to slow it down but I thought the audio tapes

of interviews could be like icebergs, things you could go to in order to recreate the space and everything that was happening there, at the time, in your mind — and to recreate yourself, too. It was fascinating. The interview was my way of discovering things. That's why I say *to dramatize*. This was before I read Artaud's mental dramas. Interviews were like mental dramas because I wanted to come prepared, but in general terms. I wanted to be able to discover. And I wanted the interview to somehow be this developing thing so that you turn around and realize that something you talked about before suddenly had another entry. It's like a perspectivist approach. I was trying to decipher what was going on and to discover it with another person, and then somehow to bring them to realize things that they may not have thought before. It was a process of discovery, and it's exciting, *as you know*.

(laughter)

And then it's extended. I remember going to Montreal with Chris Kraus, when we did some performances at Les Foufounes Électroniques. It was kind of a punk bar there. I had the idea of extending the interview. I already did something like this with my friend in Germany: I made self-interviews.

Thomas: I read that you performed a self-interview called "Confessions of a Ventriloquist" in Montreal, at the Urban Poetry Festival.

Lotringer: I wrote that for my German friends, as a forward to a book of interviews with artists from New York. There it was kind of fun. I took two tape recorders with me and I was asking questions and the tape recorders were asking questions to themselves and to me — it was like a dance. I was dramatizing myself, but through that. It was at Les Foufounes Électroniques.

Thomas: Were there other performances that night?

Lotringer: We showed **How to Shoot a Crime** (1987) for the first time, because we actually edited it in Montreal. We didn't have any money. But I thought it was kind of fun to extend, you know. I mean, I'd never performed before. At that time to perform wasn't much, but I performed in Berlin, where again someone shaved my head, and made a drawing on my head.

Thomas: Was this another staging of **I Talked About God with Antonin Artaud**? Or **Artaud Intime**?

Lotringer: Yes, well that was first at St. Mark's Church. Chris Kraus was directing it. That's how

we met. She was directing that.

Thomas: **I Talked About God with Antonin Artaud** at St. Mark's Church in the East Village, in 1985. That's how you met?

Lotringer: Well, yes, for the second time. I met her in 1982-83 when she was a theater director. I mean it was very downtown. It was in whatever room was available and all that. She did something on Dada.

Thomas: **Readings From The Diaries of Hugo Ball**?

Lotringer: Hugo Ball, yes. She sent out a few invitations. She hadn't been in town for very long, from New Zealand, and she invited five people and I was one of those. I was the downtown person she wanted to meet, and I met her at the time. We dated briefly, and then... Is that how it happened? No, I think I went to a play, to **Disparate Action/ Desperate Action** [1980], and that's where I met her for the first time. And then I think we met again when there was a cocktail reception at the French Embassy. She also was invited for whatever reason, and I arrived for champagne wearing pilot's overalls. Chris figured out that I wasn't all together, and she was trying to establish a contact. Then she said, maybe I have a chance? I didn't know that at the time, but I was kind of, you know, smoking lots of dope and doing lots of things. I couldn't care less about the way I was dressing or what I was doing. It was a free time.

But to come back to the question of the interview, when I arrived in New York and started doing things, the interview was already a tool I had. That was the only tool. It's transportable, and you can create a multiplicity of things with it. And it was some sort of writing that you can do without getting spotted or rewarded for it. There was always a feeling I had that I didn't completely want to come out, you know? I was pretty much pleased to remain invisible. At the same time, I was doing things that were making me visible. I couldn't avoid it in a way. It was very difficult and complicated in my mind.

Thomas: This is going to bring us back to Artaud, but I'm wondering if you attended the 1972 Artaud/Bataille colloquium at Cerisy, which was organized by Philippe Sollers and **Tel Quel**?

Lotringer: Yes. To set the scene, in 1969 I came back from Australia and I got a job at Swarthmore, only that job collapsed with the rebellion on campus, at the time of the Kent State killing, and soon after they shut off the



academy, meaning no more money for the university. I was then catapulted to Cleveland, to teach at Case Western Reserve. They asked me, or I suggested, to take students to France for the summer. It was a way of going to France and also a way of catching up with what had happened to France while I was living in Turkey. Things had moved; it wasn't the new critique any more, it was semiotics, etc. I had some entry to this when I took classes with Roland Barthes, but there were all these figures I didn't know. There was Genette, there was Lacan, there was Bataille, and there was also Artaud.

So yes, I attended, because I took students from Case Western Reserve to Cerisy as part of a program I arranged, to attend this colloquium. At the same time I have to say that it was a very elitist little place in a castle in Normandy. The New Novelists and the **Tel Quel** group were all going, so at the same time, I happened to meet a lot of people. Some of them I already knew. I knew Kristeva from Lucien Goldmann's class, and the people from **Tel Quel** I had already met before. I had read the first issue of **Tel Quel** when I was living in Edinburgh, and I was in touch with some of them at the time. I was already introduced, but I wanted to go to Cerisy to catch up and to see what was happening.

It was an interesting colloquium in many ways, first of all because I really discovered Artaud there, from Kristeva and Sollers. There were all these games going on, and the people who were gathered were a very fashionable group doing in France what I would do later in the States, you know, introducing a lot of things at the same time that don't always go together. And there was also Denis Hollier who I met at Cerisy. He was a Bataille specialist. We became great friends and I invited him to teach at one of my summer schools. The first one was in Nevers, I think, like the town in Marguerite Duras's **Hiroshima mon amour**. The second summer school was in Vichy — another reference. But each time I was taking the students to this chateau at Cerisy. So Denis Hollier came and taught Bataille and Artaud. Catherine Clément, who was a specialist in both Levi-Strauss and Lacan, was giving another class that summer. And another friend who I knew as an anthropologist was giving a class on Levi-Strauss, too. I didn't know much about Levi-Strauss at the time, and I didn't know much about Bataille. So it was like I was retraining myself.

I was already living in the States, which means I was not part of the day-to-day intellectual life in France. So I created this for myself in small ways. That's what I would do later when Columbia hired me, at Reed Hall, by Montparnasse. I invited Félix Guattari, I invited Catherine Clément, I invited Serge Leclair, a Lacanian psychoanalyst. It was a mixed group of people and I took their classes, especially Félix's. He became a very good friend. And the idea kept on. So I said to him, okay, why don't you come to the States? He was all up for it, so that's how it started.

Thomas: Correct me if I'm wrong here, but I asked about the 1972 Cerisy colloquium to raise a question about Artaud's reception. I mean of course there are many Artauds, and people make of him what they will. But what's interesting in this case is that the colloquium was framed in what would then be associated with the Maoist language of revolt — it was titled **vers une révolution culturelle**. And yet in 1927, in a piece titled "In Total Darkness, or The Surrealist Bluff," Artaud makes it clear that his fall-out with Breton and the Surrealists had everything to do with their decision to align with the French Communist Party by embracing a program for revolution that Artaud claimed was at odds with the spirit of the Surrealist adventure. "The whole root, all the exacerbations of our quarrel," he explains, "turn on the word 'Revolution.'" Likewise, when he goes to Mexico City in 1936, a year after his supposed reconciliation with Breton, he reiterates his beef and again denounces "the revolution invented by Marx" as "a caricature of life." Bataille actually quotes Artaud as saying "Believe me: we need to create a Mexican fascism." On the other hand Artaud was fascinated by the communism he says he found existing in a feeling of spontaneous solidarity among the Tarahumara Indians, who also gave him the cruelty he sought, and he went on to write about his experience with them for twelve years, throughout his stay at Rodez, until his death at Ivry in 1948. So I'm curious about the framing of Artaud in the context of that important colloquium, which was partly about **Tel Quel** shifting the discourse around the legacy of Surrealism in the post-war period, partly an instrumentalizing of Artaud to redefine political and intellectual ends, it seems, but perhaps this moment and the work that grew out of it also played into a splitting within the 20th century

Marxist tradition, which has something to do with the fate of dialectical thinking in the wake of 68, or at any rate marks a desire to get outside the restrictions of political and intellectual systems.

Lotringer: I didn't know so much about Maoism. The Mao thing was in the early 70s and actually I missed most of it. And I have to say that I didn't pay attention to it because I thought it was too much. The **Tel Quel** people, they were in the Communist Party and under some feeble excuses they dropped out of the Communist Party mutely, and so I thought, enough. But you're right, at the time they were Maoists.

Kristeva gave this article on Artaud which is actually probably the best thing she wrote and was the nucleus of work she put together later. It was psychoanalytical. It was all about the fact that Artaud hadn't really passed the abject exam; the first phase, the fecal phase, he didn't absorb it and was repulsed by it and was constantly reiterating the cut. All this was new terminology. It had nothing Maoist about it, and her talk was very well received. Philippe Sollers gave a paper after that that was a bit of a mimic of Artaud, only it wasn't very well received so he spent the whole night raiding the girls' dorms to compensate for it.

The idea of having a French Mao was stupid. I never took them seriously, like when Sollers organized travel to China. How imitative of you of the Surrealists, I thought. It was an abomination. Lacan promised he would go but he didn't. Roland Barthes was depressed about the gay situation in China. The only one who was comfortable was Kristeva, who was writing about how great it was to restrain the Chinese feet. For me, they lost all credibility, not culturally, but politically at the time. So I didn't pay attention to what was going on. On the other hand there were people like Bernard Henri-Lévy inviting workers to his apartment to talk about rebellion in the factory. There were a few people who were emotionally connected to that, because it had to do with workers and people who were being oppressed. This I respected. But the rest, this was the worst aspect of French intellectualism that was going in neutral. May 68 was an attempt to change things. But this salon reiteration of the Surrealist movement didn't appeal to me at all.

So no, I think the revolution was over. I think my relation to Artaud maybe took off a bit at this colloquium, but it went immediately



somewhere else for me. First of all you can't avoid identifying with Artaud, identifying with his wounds. Artaud is a kind of trap, a black hole. There is no doubt that I started teaching Artaud and becoming half-crazed because I couldn't teach Artaud in my right frame of mind, so I was taking drugs before; I had to be in a certain sensibility to do it. That helped. I was trying lots of drugs at the time. I never knew what drugs were before I arrived in New York, and that was the time. So Artaud was part of that, the violence of it or the rejection of so many things. I was trying at that time to remain at Columbia without being part of Columbia. So I was defining my attitude in relation to it, seeing how far I could go. I was very tempted to be fired, but at the same time I wasn't crazy enough to be fired from Columbia. Columbia had some sort of attraction, not for me but for people outside. It made it very easy for me to meet artists and all that. I felt like the only academic in the States to be interested in this sort of thing, of going into the art world.

So yes, Artaud was part of what I discovered at that time. I was teaching Surrealism and Dada. Surrealism I didn't like so much; Dada, yes. Artistically the Surrealists weren't interesting, except maybe Dali. I like Dali's delirium and his writing on delirium. I've always been fascinated by the idea of delirium. Some of my living in New York at that time was fairly delirious, not in a schizophrenic way, but there were no limits. You can go anywhere you want and take any risk that you can. Just don't think about tomorrow. That was part of my thing also: that every day's the end of it. I didn't want to see the consequences. I was ready for anything and Artaud came in that context. Artaud was sounding something that affected me. In a way I understood his refusal of Marxism; I understood how painful it must have been to be Artaud.

Thomas: Before the Ireland experience depicted in your new video, **The Man Who Disappeared**, Artaud was reading the early Christians, the **Cabala**, the **Egyptian Book of the Dead**, and studying Assyrian incantations. He went off to Mexico in search of myth and cruelty, and then to Ireland to disappear, searching for the last of the Druids and a fix of whatever he could score. Meanwhile in Paris, Bataille, Roger Caillois, Pierre Klossowski and others were forming the Collège de Sociologie, a real boys' club obsessed with the meaning of virility...

Lotringer: And death.

Thomas: And death. Like Artaud, they too were interested in primitive myths and the role of the sacred in contemporary society. Theirs was a sacred sociology, and as with Artaud, there was a violence that penetrated their imagination. What do you think about these sacred and violent artistic/intellectual projects in relation to what was then burgeoning as fascism? Because by this time, at the end of the 1930s, the battle was on the move.

Lotringer: It's a paradoxical involvement. I couldn't get directly to this violence and this kind of affect and emotion. I worked out a detour. For me, Artaud was Artaud and his problems were his problems. I didn't want to identify with them. I wanted to use him as a key to open this realm of violence, of sacrifice, etc., but I didn't want it for myself. I wanted to understand where it's coming from, and I took them more as a ride. They were my Christian extremists; they were going to the extreme. I luckily didn't go to the extreme, but they opened that door. I was protected against it at the same time because I'm no Christian and I'm not an extremist in that way. It gave me the possibility of getting too close to things that affected me, but with a distance, in that I'm not them. I don't have to go all the way back to the primitive in order to strengthen the religion that was failing at the time. But they had their own purposes and I had other purposes. All of them were breaking away from the church by becoming more Christian than the Christians. That's where the source of their violence was. Between the two World Wars, France stopped being an agricultural country and people moved to the cities; it was not a full-fledged industrial country at the time, it was 80 percent agricultural. When peasants moved to the city, they were no longer harnessed by the priest, by the church, by the family. They were loose. So religion lost a lot of its authority when the masses moved to the cities. Artaud and Bataille were part of that movement away from the territorial grounding of the church.

Maybe for people it's mixed up, like I was identifying with what their purpose was. Their purpose was not my purpose. It was like going to the war with a screen. They were taking all these emotions; emotionally I was not ready to accept them directly. It was too emotional. I closed off a whole year of my life and they were the means by which I had access to what had affected me

most. And I didn't have to involve myself in it personally. I just turned that into an analysis of France at the time, what was happening in France, the occupation, the extermination. It was just too much for me to deal with directly. So they were my messengers. They were my yellow canaries. They allowed me to do a lot of emotional work that I wouldn't be able to do. I never wanted to go into psychoanalysis, and for good reason. I thought that what I experienced and what made me so traumatized in a way had nothing to do with me. It didn't belong to me. I wanted to plumb, in a way, where it's coming from and how everything had happened. But my interest in these figures is also about people who forged concepts that were capable of matching these events, and the events were not the same. But through the pain that they had, I found something of the pain that I couldn't express. Artaud and Bataille were the least I could hold onto to learn something of the situation.

Thomas: They offered what Ernst Bloch called an anticipatory illumination, or maybe a perversion of it, from the dark side.

Lotringer: Yeah, but their sacrifice was not exactly what I was interested in, because theirs were very calculated, very controlled. But, it was a ritual. There was a group of men who were there and they develop a bond because they were confronted with death. Some element of that interested me. I took it more as an attempt to create some sort of an organic bond in a world where this bond had dissipated in such a way that, yes, it degenerated into fascism and fanaticism, the masses running into each other, the whole distraction. For me, Artaud and Bataille, Simone Weil, you know, all the emotional tribe, they had anticipated what was going to happen and they tried to forge little cells where a vaccine was being invented, a bit like the plague. It was a counter-plague, but if they managed to be contaminated in a ritualistic way, then it could go viral and counter the whole wave of massacres and violence that was going over the world. So I think they were creating little laboratories, using whatever is at hand. Artaud and Bataille were both Christian, and they thought of becoming priests, just like Hitler and Stalin. They were all in cahoots for this Christianity, attempting to compensate with a Christianity that might go beyond it. So I followed suit. I went on my horse and said, okay, just show me the way. I can go there and take what I need and face



the unfaceable. I needed to have people who had their own itinerary that led them in the same direction, but I couldn't take it. It was too much for me.

—— Thomas: In a previous conversation, you told me about how, at a certain point in the 1960s in France, you found that you were able to "beam" your interests in different ways. You could make a program for French TV, you could write a piece for **Les Lettres françaises**, or you could organize talks by writers and intellectuals for the Maison des Lettres. We could also enumerate to say that you teach and give lectures, write essays, interview people, make publications and books, performances, films, videos, radio projects, etc. So I'm interested in this idea of beaming your interests in these different ways, but also in relation to the different ways in which they get mediated through distinct formal parameters.

—— Lotringer: It's also that you're constantly part of multiple things, a multiplicity. It's like you change your identity according to where you're involved and what you're involved with. I guess it's not that I wanted to have several options but several realities at the time. And there are overlaps. It's like interviews. With interviews there are a multiplicity of reasons that I discovered *a posteriori* for doing one thing. I discovered this along the way because at one point it was the only medium that I had, and I discovered that it opened up so many doors. First of all it's a journalistic approach and I took the journalistic approach in the area where people were not journalistic at all, at the time. Nowadays there are lots of books of interviews. But the interview is a journalist's tool and a very simple one. I adapted it in order to have a more direct presentation of what theory was, because I realized that people were going to fetishize theory. That's what happened in the early 80s and I thought, that's not exactly what I wanted. I didn't want people to use it as a means of promotion, as part of their career. I just wanted them to *do* something with it. So I thought, okay, what I want to do is have live contact with people who think, who don't always think on paper but who think all the time; I want to think with them in a way that people could understand better because it's in a format that people were used to. That was one of the main reasons for doing the book [**Pure War**] with Virilio, the interviews with Baudrillard, etc. I was also aware that I was not just doing critique in relation to the philosopher.

I wanted to break down this kind of dichotomy, you know?

I was always interested in interventions. We have an intervention series at Semiotext(e), which developed when some friends from Australia interviewed Mumia Abu-Jamal, a journalist and one of the Black Panthers who was arrested in Philadelphia. And I thought, well, who else is talking about the Black Panthers? It was amazing that no one at the time was talking about the Black Panthers. Even the blacks were not interested in them. And lots of them were in jail. I thought there was something to be done and we're equipped to do it because we can decide anything we want. We don't have to get authorization from the publisher or this or that. We see the possibility of intervening somewhere and we just do it. And that was a very powerful instrument, something that made Semiotext(e) very different. It also didn't have any editorial committee. Bureaucracy is everywhere, you see, and that was a way of avoiding bureaucracy because we didn't circulate manuscripts among us, or between a group of people. That's what **Critique** was doing. Whenever an article was a bit, you know, provocative or something they would circulate it among people. That's what they did with Foucault. We didn't have to do that. We knew each other, we trusted each other, and we just went right to it. Cutting down all these things also meant that we didn't have rivalries and things like that. We're friends, that's all.

So it's always the directness. The interview is something direct as opposed to going through the process of writing. I was always a writer who was a bit diffident of writing, because it has a tendency of pushing people away, because they don't understand. I always told my students, look, this is a book by Deleuze. Open it at random and just start reading, and if you don't understand, that's fine, because you don't start from the beginning. Always start in the midst of things. It's like with a cat. You can let the cat come to you; don't just go for the cat. You let theory seep in your mind and you can look around and look at concepts somewhere and slowly you get attuned to it in a way that is much deeper than just reading at the beginning, because then you're being led by someone else. If you appropriate theory, then you do something with it; if you let yourself be taken in by it, then they appropriate you. It's kind of different, you see.

So it's a more experiential vision of things, and journalism was a way of doing it. It was like, okay, we're going to start with things very direct and simple. Many friends I had were trying to quote from theory or go with Lacan's rat writing, intimating that they belonged to this cult club. I never wanted to have a niche that people desire, which would be exclusive.

—— Thomas: Maybe you're like Victor Frankenstein?

—— Lotringer: (laughs) Yes.

—— Thomas: But whether it's this idea of beaming your ideas through these different mediums or whether it's presenting the diversity of interventions you've made with Semiotext(e), both of these gestures imply a desire to communicate in different modes and with diverse audiences.

—— Lotringer: Yes, but not playing one against the other. It's like the famous *and and and* from Deleuze: you juxtapose worlds that don't go together. This applies to my experience of geographical places as well. I would leave the clubs in the East Village and then I would arrive in the mountains and there were mountain women dancing. You live not in a series of contradictions but a series of worlds, side by side, and you balance one against the other. Seeing trappers, real trappers come in from Canada in the winter. I mean these people were coming from the eighteenth century, they were entirely dressed in furs, they had their guns. There was this whole male bonding thing going on. It was such a different thing, being in the East Village and being upstate in these mountains which provided the setting for **The Last of the Mohicans**. So it's always that: juxtaposing the university against the art world, juxtaposing radical academics and activists, constantly trying to de-territorialize the one position to make things much richer.

If we go back to the interview, the interview is something like a tool, an ironic tool, because the university is defined by the curriculum vitae, your achievements of the year and all that. I learned that very early on when I was at Swarthmore. That's what the academy is about. It's not about what you publish but about how much you publish. It was all predicated in advance. So I said, okay, I'm going to make interviews but I put interviews in my curriculum vitae that will be circulated all through the country, so that they couldn't say that I wasn't publishing. I was publishing but I was perverting the idea of publishing because when you do an interview it's not



something that's supposed to be personal. So I knew that they didn't like the idea, but I like to be playful within the constraints of a certain definition. You play with it and you turn it into something else. You say okay, this is an academic essay, this is an interview — you just put together things that don't go together. That's the idea.

It's what I learned from the artists downtown. And it's like the film I'm working on now, **The Perfect Crime**, which puts together two different voices that don't go together. One bounces back against the other. It's what Deleuze called resonance. It's not like you are influenced by something, you just enter into a field of resonance because one thing bounces with the other. You put Artaud in the context of the Second World War. There is something then

that you can lead from one to the other. You bounce them back in relation to an environment so that what they do takes on a different meaning. You can change something without having to criticize it. That's why I go back to this idea of the interview. The interview was a way of not criticizing, of not commenting upon, you know — everything that's academic. Everything is always *on* something, but I want to have the thing itself, and then another thing itself, and another thing itself, but I don't want to provide a commentary. The commentary is sometimes useful, when it's historians who do their work, when they give you facts and documents. Then that makes you think. But if you only comment on the knowledge of others, then you're just parasitic. Then you've built your own

career out of depending on other people. You become indebted, and I don't think that's a very productive position to be in. I'd rather say I like this, and I like that, and I like that, and then I let them resonate. It's like with painting, when you have yellow in a painting and suddenly you put some red in it, well, then the yellow doesn't have the same quality. They bounce against each other and another kind of figure can be seen. But you won't have to verbalize it, you don't have to explain it, you just do something. For me, theory was a matter of *doing* something. The world is getting more and more complicated and dangerous and that's why people should have tools in their hand, tools to think, and tools to know what to do.

