

# The Anamnesis of Matter

## Lyotard and the *Immatériaux*

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### 1. “La matière en notre effort fait son anamnèse”

In 1983, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard got involved in the preparations of an exhibition that eventually opened at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris under the title *Les Immatériaux* [The Immaterials] in March 1985.<sup>1</sup> A few weeks later, during a seminar organised in the Centre Pompidou on the occasion of this exhibition and dealing with “the notion of matter [*matière*] in contemporary philosophies”, Lyotard made a comment whose re-reading forms the topic of this contribution to the *Therapy of Things*.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of his talk, entitled “Matter and Time”, Lyotard spoke about how the new technologies signalled a new blow to “human narcissism”, after the displacements of anthropocentrism associated with the names of Copernicus (cosmos), Darwin (life), and Freud (sense). The “techno-sciences”, Lyotard said, teach the

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- 1 An earlier version of this text was presented at the workshop *Therapie der Dinge? Materialität der Psychoanalyse in Literatur und den bildenden Künsten*, at the Institutes of German and English/American Studies of Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf on 3 December 2021. I'm grateful for comments on this version by participants of the workshop, and by Corinne Enaudeau and Sergio Meijide Casas. – For *Les Immatériaux*, see Antonia Wunderlich: *Der Philosoph im Museum: Die Ausstellung Les Immatériaux von Jean-François Lyotard*. Bielefeld: transcript 2008; and Yuk Hui/Andreas Broeckmann (eds.): *30 Years after Les Immatériaux: Art, Science & Theory*. Lüneburg: Meson Press 2015.
  - 2 Lyotard held his talk on 26 April 1985, on the third of three evenings of a seminar series organised by Christian Descamps under the overall title “Architecture/ Science/ Philosophie”. The other two evenings dealt with the modern and the postmodern in architecture (24 April), and the notion of the proof in contemporary science (25 April); see *CNAC Magazine*, March–April 1985, 15. The text of Lyotard's lecture was included under the title “Matière et temps” [Matter and Time] in the essay collection *L'Inhumain*. Paris: Galilée, 1988 (Engl. ed. *The Inhuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), and it was also published in an edited volume that derived from the seminar series, *Matière et philosophie* (Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1988). The handwritten manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet is dated 26 April 1985.

contemporary human that the complexification of mind is not a genuinely human domain, but it is a quality of matter itself; the human is neither origin nor result of this technical complexification, but its “transformer” (Lyotard), understood in the sense of a quasi-technical interface.

This view can cause joy or despair. [...] Perhaps it [i.e. this view of the human as transformer] is enough, in all sobriety, to give us reason for thinking and writing, and a love of matter. Matter in our effort makes its anamnesis.<sup>3</sup>

This is an astonishing claim about the epistemological status of the exhibits. Coinciding with the early days of what would become Actor-Network-Theory, this short sentence encourages us to look not only at the efforts of Lyotard and his co-curator Thierry Chaput, and the project managers at the Centre Pompidou, together with various internal and external advisors, towards what became *Les Immatériaux*, but to consider matter itself, including the things inside and outside the exhibition galleries, as bringing about the meaning that could be gleaned from this experience and experiment.

## 2. Anamnesis

In his writings, Lyotard uses the term “anamnesis” frequently, yet nowhere does he provide a clear-cut definition of the term, which is why we have to reconstruct a critical understanding of what it might actually mean for ‘matter to make its anamnesis’. – An important set of references comes from a text published, like the aforementioned lecture, in 1988, in a book called *L’Inhumain [The Inhuman]*. A year after *Les Immatériaux*, Lyotard participated in a symposium organised by Bernard Stiegler, where he spoke about anamnesis and the technical media in a lecture entitled “*Logos and Techné, or Telegraphy*”.<sup>4</sup>

Lyotard derives the concept of anamnesis from Freudian psychoanalysis, and from Sigmund Freud’s description of the psychoanalytic techniques in particular. In a text from 1914, to which Lyotard occasionally refers, Freud distinguishes between the three techniques of remembering, repeating, and working through (*Erinnern*,

3 “*La matière en notre effort fait son anamnèse*” (Lyotard: *L’Inhumain*, 55). The English translation of the phrase in *The Inhuman* (1988/1991, 46) is “... performs its anamnesis”, a phrasing which is here avoided, given Lyotard’s critique of the notion of “performativity” (see his *La Condition postmoderne*, 1979).

4 See *L’Inhumain*, 57–67 (Engl. ed., *The Inhuman*, 47–57). On the notion of anamnesis, see also Jean-François Lyotard: *Anamnesis: Of the Visible* [1993]. In: *Theory, Culture and Society* 1 (2004); and Julie Gaillard: *Recherche II: Anamnesis*. In: Christoph F. E. Holzhey/Arnd Wedemeyer (eds.): *Re-: An Errant Glossary. Cultural Inquiry* 15, Berlin: ICI Berlin, 2019, 11–23.

*Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten*). From these, Lyotard takes *Durcharbeiten*, perlaboration, as a cue for the anamnestic process in which something that has been forgotten is brought back and worked through, against the resistance of the unconscious.<sup>5</sup> This emphasis on the resistance against remembering derives from Freud, as well as the alternative trope that anamnesis often has to search for something that has not been forgotten because it actually never became conscious. Freud uses the example of a childhood experience which was not understood at the time and which was therefore not consciously registered, something that would be understood or become meaningful only later, *nachträglich*.<sup>6</sup>

Lyotard repeats this thought in different variations, applying it especially to the mnemonic or retentional faculties of the new, electronic media. “The point [of anamnesis] would be to recall what could not have been forgotten because it was not inscribed. Is it possible to recall if it was not inscribed?”<sup>7</sup> But the anamnesis that Lyotard has in mind does not only search backwards in time, but also sideways and forwards:

Anamnesis works over the remains that are still there, present, hidden near to us. And with regard to what is not yet there, the still to come (*l'à-venir*), it is not a matter of the future as such [...] but that which is still awaited with incertitude: hoped for, feared, surprising, in any case unexpected. It will come; but the question is: what will come? [...] If there is an enemy (the obscure primitiveness of the [Lacanian] Thing, indifferent perhaps, a power both threatening and cherished), that

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5 See Sigmund Freud: *Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten* [1914]. *Gesammelte Werke* Bd. 10, 126–136 (“Man muß dem Kranken die Zeit lassen, sich in den ihm nun bekannten Widerstand zu vertiefen, ihn durchzuarbeiten, ihn zu überwinden, indem er ihm zum Trotz die Arbeit nach der analytischen Grundregel fortsetzt. Erst auf der Höhe desselben findet man dann in gemeinsamer Arbeit mit dem Analysierten die verdrängten Triebregungen auf, welche den Widerstand speisen und von deren Existenz und Mächtigkeit sich der Patient durch solches Erleben überzeugt. [...] Dieses Durcharbeiten der Widerstände [...] ist [...] jenes Stück Arbeit, welches die größte verändernde Wirkung auf den Patienten hat [...]”, ch. 19–20).

6 See Freud: *Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten*, ch. 5 and 7.

7 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 54. And 55: “It makes sense to try to recall something (let’s call it something) which has not been inscribed if the inscription of this something broke the support of the writing or the memory. [...] there is a breaking presence which is never inscribed nor memorable. It does not appear. It is not a forgotten inscription, it does not have its place and time on the support of inscriptions, in the reflecting mirror”. See also Jean-François Lyotard: *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants: Correspondance, 1982–1985*. Paris: Galilée, 1986/1988 (Engl. ed. *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982–1985*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press 1992/1993, 80).

enemy is inside each one of us. The labour of ‘working through’ is to find the idiom that is least inappropriate to it.<sup>8</sup>

In Lyotard’s usage of the concept, the anamnesis works against a resistant force, but it also brings forth a resistance, a resistance based in writing, *écriture*, and directed against the effects of techno-science which Lyotard identifies as “breaching” and “scanning” (*frayage, balayage*). In his 1986 lecture, he says:

We envisage this writing as passing or anamnesis in both writers and artists (it’s clearly Cézanne’s working-through) as a resistance (in what I think is a non-psychoanalytical sense, more like that of Winston in Orwell’s 1984) to the syntheses of breaching and scanning. A resistance to wily programmes and coarse telegrams.<sup>9</sup>

Lyotard made the comment about matter making its anamnesis in the context of the claim that the human is a mere transformer of meaning – a realisation that should, as he said, “give us reason for thinking and writing, and a love of matter”.<sup>10</sup>

Thinking and writing are here to be understood in the sense of various forms of reflexively engaging with the world. Lyotard recognises in this extended understanding of writing “the uncontrollable contingency of *Écriture*”,<sup>11</sup> and affirms that, in his view, the necessary form of anamnestic resistance is offered “only [...] [by] writing, itself an anamnesis of what has not been inscribed. For it offers to inscription the white of the paper, blank like the neutrality of the analytical ear”.<sup>12</sup>

This anamnesis by *écriture* is enacted in literary and philosophical writing, as well as in the visual arts and in science – all of which form important aspects of the exhibition, *Les Immatériaux*, to which we will turn shortly.

What is significant in Lyotard’s treatment of this coupling of *écriture* and anamnesis, is that he often speaks about how writing performs the anamnesis upon itself. As in our key phrase of ‘matter making its anamnesis’, this self-reflexivity is a recurring figure of thought. For instance, the works of the artistic avantgarde are a

8 Lyotard: ‘What is Just?’ (Ou Justesse), conversation with Richard Kearney [1994]. In: Kiff Bamford (ed.): *Jean-François Lyotard: The Interviews and Debates*. London: Bloomsbury 2020, 157–158.

9 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 56–57 (transl. modified, AB). Lyotard thought skeptically about the resistant potentials of the new technologies to support the *Durcharbeitung*: “is the passage possible, will it be possible with, or allowed by, the new mode of inscription and memoration that characterizes the new technologies? Do they not impose syntheses, and syntheses conceived still more intimately in the soul than any earlier technology has done? But by that very fact, do they [the new technologies] not also help to refine our amnesic resistance?” (*Inhuman*, 57).

10 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 46.

11 Lyotard: *The Postmodern Explained*, 91 (dt. 115, 125).

12 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 56.

“perlaboration of the modern with regard to its own meaning”.<sup>13</sup> About the sciences, Lyotard observes an analogous form of self-reflection: “The sciences have [...] gone through, and are still going through, their ‘perlaboration’ [...]”.<sup>14</sup> And elsewhere: “[...] science is in its turn a complexification of matter, in which, so to speak, energy itself comes to reflect itself [...]”.<sup>15</sup>

An allusion to such a self-presentation and self-reflection of the exhibits can also be found in co-curator Thierry Chaput’s introduction to the *Petit Journal* exhibition guide – a trace of the prevalence of this trope in curatorial exchanges during the preparation of *Les Immatériaux*. Describing the general atmosphere of the show, Chaput writes:

Laid out in harsh grey tones, illuminated by a peculiar light, allowing ideas that were unforeseeable an hour, a day, or a year ago to float, suspended, unsystematic yet rigorously ordered, ‘immaterials’ exhibit themselves partway between seeing, feeling, and hearing.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Exercises

After this exegesis, I come to the more experimental, or perhaps clinical part of my presentation, in which I want to examine the notion of anamnesis in relation to a small number of examples taken from the exhibition.

We have seen that Lyotard approaches the notion of anamnesis in two modes, on the one hand as the psychoanalytical work, the *Durcharbeitung* that the analysand has to do in order to confront and work through what has been forgotten, an exercise in ‘digging and remembering’ against the resistance offered by the unconscious. And on the other hand, anamnesis as the self-reflexive and resistant process of *écriture*, actualised in the practice of writing, or of thinking, or in the practice of selecting and putting objects on public display in an exhibition. In our reading of the notion of ‘matter making its anamnesis’ and in its application to the effort of the exhibition, we focus on this second, exploratory mode of anamnesis, whose reading by Lyotard owes as much to Sigmund Freud as it does to Walter Benjamin.

The *Immatériaux* exhibition was installed on the main gallery floor of the Centre Pompidou. Around sixty individual ‘sites’ were arranged in a labyrinthine space, each site with its own theme, and clustered according to several, overlapping organisational principles. In the texts accompanying the exhibition, Lyotard made

13 Lyotard: *The Postmodern Explained*, 80 (dt. 105).

14 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 173f.

15 Lyotard: *Inhuman*, 45 (“l’énergie elle-même vient se réfléchir”, *L’Inhumain*, 54).

16 Thierry Chaput: *Entrée en matière. Les Immatériaux, Petit Journal*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou 1985, 2 (emphasis added, AB). (“... Les Immatériaux s’exposent entre voir, sentir et entendre.”)

no comments as to which of the exhibits or sites might actualise such an auto-anamnesis of matter in particular; we can therefore only speculate, and attempt a translation.<sup>17</sup>

We focus here on the aspect of ‘surface’, a theme that frequently features in Lyotard’s writings on aesthetics.<sup>18</sup> Given the diversity of the exhibits, it would equally be possible to approach our methodological question on the anamnesis of matter, alternatively, by investigating the ways in which the exhibition treated the status of the human body (e.g. in the sites *Théâtre du non-corps*, *Nu vain*, *Corps éclaté*, *Les trois mères*), or the related theme of skins and clothes (e.g. *Deuxième peau*, *L’Ange*, *Toutes les peaux*, *Vite-habillé*), or the ways in which the exhibition addressed the questions of authorship (e.g. *Toutes les copies*, *Peintre sans corps*, *Architecture plane*, *Tous les auteurs*, *Labyrinthe du langage*). – From sites like these, manifold “micrologies” and “lines of resistance”<sup>19</sup> could be extracted for further perlaboration.

However, for this brief clinical session on the theme of the surface, let us look at the sites *Surface introuvable*, *Trace de trace*, and *Corps chanté*.<sup>20</sup>

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- 17 Part of such a speculation could also be the historical question whether Lyotard would even have said the same thing, used a similar phrase, in a different context, such as the “techno-materialist” talk, “*Logos and Techné*, or Telegraphy” (1986), a year and a half later.
- 18 See for example Jean-François Lyotard: *Economie libidinale*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974 (Engl. ed. *Libidinal Economy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), and Jean-François Lyotard: *Beyond Representation* [1974]. In: Herman Parret (ed.): *Writings on Contemporary Art and Artists. Miscellaneous Texts I: Aesthetics and Theory of Art*. Leuven: Leuven University Press 2012, 116–145, esp. 125 (“There is only surface.”).
- 19 Lyotard frequently refers to such “micrologies” (a term used by Adorno for Benjamin’s methodology) and “lines of resistance”, for instance in the letters of *The Postmodern Explained* (1988/1992).
- 20 For other sites related to the notion of surface, see for instance *Profondeurs simulée*, where holographic works by the artist Doug Tyler showed three-dimensional depth as a technically induced, visual effect. Or the dual presentation of an Egyptian bas-relief at the beginning and the end of the exhibition, first, in the *Vestibule d’entrée*, as the original stone with its flat yet ‘substantial’, carved line drawing, and then, in the *Vestibule de sortie*, its photographically multiplied, fractalised, virtualised and projected re-presentation. See the site *Ombre de l’ombre* [Shadow of a Shadow] where the only exhibit was a work by the American artist Joseph Kosuth, entitled *One and Three Shadows* (1965). And the site “*Infra-mince*”, where in one of the displayed short texts about the notion of the “infra-thin”, the French-American artist Marcel Duchamp speaks about the “non-depth” of a shadow (“The shadow has no thickness.”). Marcel Duchamp: *Notes*. Ed. by Michel Sanouillet and Paul Matisse. Paris: Flammarion 1999, 20f.

Fig. 1: Exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, site *Surface introuvable* [Elusive Surface].

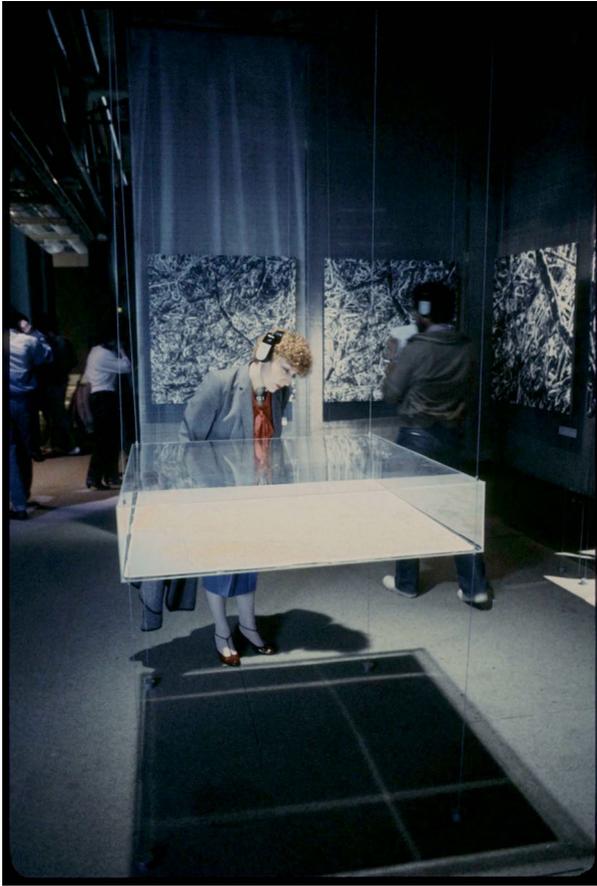


Photo Jean-Claude Planchet. Courtesy Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Georges Pompidou. [CCI\_147\_0281]

The site *Surface introuvable* [Elusive Surface] showed different views of a topographical map and its paper support: a three-dimensional relief representing the territory of France, a foldable map made of paper, and the same paper prior to printing (Fig. 1). Moreover, there was a microscopic image of the paper taken with an electron microscope, and the visual output of a rugosimeter, which measures the roughness of surfaces. Each of the exhibits was the same size. The site highlighted the fact that there is no surface *per se*, and that depending on the scale and the distance of the observation, the seemingly flat paper support of the representation can appear as porous and complexly profiled as the territory it represents. The auto-anamnesis

of matter can here be understood as an effect of the comparative reception of the different instances of map and paper, oscillating between surface and relief, absolute flatness and porous depth.

Fig. 2: Exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, site *Trace de trace* [Trace of a Trace].



Photo Jean-Claude Plancher. Courtesy Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Georges Pompidou. [CCI\_147\_0189]

The site *Trace de trace* [Trace of a Trace] explored the relationship between light and trace as they manifest on the photographic surface (Fig. 2). *Trace de trace* presented a selection of photographs extracted from police archives, documenting the locations where accidents and crimes had taken place. The photographs derived from an exhibition and book project by Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan, called *Evidence* (1977). The ‘surface-effect’ pinpointed in these forensic documents, created by the chemical reactions effected by light touching the surface of the film, is a semiotic ‘superficiality’: what these images show, the intention with which they were made, and what they signify, all of these semiotic dimensions are subject to interpretations that cannot escape the fundamental ambiguity of the photographic trace.<sup>21</sup> As exhibits, these photographs constitute a critical interrogation not only

21 On the question of the ambiguous authorship of images, see also the site *Peintre sans corps*, where the four canvases of the work *Explosion* (1973) by the French painter Jacques Monory

of the photographic medium, but also of the actuality of the past events whose material traces the images document.

Fig. 3 + 4: Exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, site *Corps chanté* [Sung Body], video compilation *Clips à la loupe*, by Christophe Bargues and Jean-Paul Fargier. Screenshots.



As a third example, the site *Corps chanté* [Sung Body] showed on several video monitors an edited programme of music videos in which the images of the singing and acting bodies of the musicians were electronically manipulated, revealing these images to be synthetic (Fig. 3, 4). The representations of the human bodies are simulations, surfaces mapped onto shapes without substance.<sup>22</sup> The video compilation *works through* the different aggregate states of bodies as they appear by grace of the new media which call into question the distinction between the living and the simulacral. Again the exhibit can be taken to offer an anamnesis both of the fate of the human body under the postmodern condition, and of the electronic medium in which it manifests. The surfaces of the body and the technical medium act as ‘transformers’ in this perlaboration.

#### 4. Conclusions

This short sequence of exhibits can give us a sense of what Lyotard meant when he said, a few weeks into the exhibition period, that “matter in our effort makes its anamnesis”: the effort of presenting and viewing the exhibits instantiates the complexification of matter – in our case with regard to the aspect of surface – which

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are partly painted by hand, and partly covered in a technical process of photographic reproduction.

22 See also the morphing of fruit and vegetables in the computer animated film *Gastronomica*, projected in the site *Arôme simulé*.

surpasses the control of either the curators or the visitors, both of whom become witnesses of an anamnesis that matter performs upon itself.

Lyotard reminisces, in the months after the exhibition, about the collaboration with the core team members at the CCI, and broadens this notion of anamnesis to cover not only individual exhibits, but the exhibition as a whole. He recounts the weekly team meetings and says:

That secret emotion when one of us brought to a meeting (as one brings a dream to the analyst) some new idea, some principle of exploration, a way of arranging things, a sketch for one of the sites or the discovery of some pertinent object. It could be a detail or an overall idea, since no one was particularly responsible for the thing as a whole. [...] But the real preparation takes place first and foremost in the field of sentiment, in search of lost time – I mean the world in which we live. This anamnesis demanded by the exhibition in return made it seem like a friend to you, unbearable to others, undecidable in the eyes of most.<sup>23</sup>

This type of anamnesis is hardly the laborious and painful struggle against unconscious blockades that Freud's patients have to work through. It is much closer to the digging and dreaming Walter Benjamin deals with in the short texts of the *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, where the slumbering childhood memories are occasionally and unexpectedly revealed. Lyotard explicitly referred to Benjamin's texts as a source of inspiration in a talk about the notion of resistance in George Orwell's novel 1984.<sup>24</sup> For Benjamin, forgetting is not associated with trauma and unconscious repression; the looming drama is that of the future to come (i.e. the present and its imminent catastrophies), and the dominant sentiment is a longing for the past. The work of

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23 See Jean-François Lyotard: *On a Collaboration/D'un travail* [1986] (republished in 2021 as *Les Immatériaux* Research, Working Paper No. 6, on [https://www.les-immateriaux.net/working-papers/\[18.05.2023\]](https://www.les-immateriaux.net/working-papers/[18.05.2023])). Lyotard continues: "[...] Yes, we certainly worked! But the secret of the exhibition is that it worked on us. Each one of us differently, singularly, but it worked on us all. It worked on us as a horizon works on the navigator, or as words as yet unwritten work on the writer. [...] Claude Simon said [...] [that] the profession of writer [...] consists in trying to start a sentence, continue it, and finish it. For us, the exhibition was the difficulty of this sentence, and the horizon of words, of sites, lighting, and colours that called it forth. (Such was our presumption, that it was calling us.) An indeterminate form, conceptually elusive, towards which only sentiment, when interrogated, spied upon (this is the anamnesis), purged, cleansed of interests fantastic and otherwise, can lead the way, by revealing which means will fail to translate it. A singular fidelity, a probity in regard to something indeterminate".

24 "Ligne de résistance", lecture delivered on 3 October 1984, published in *Traverses* 33/34 (1985), and in *The Postmodern Explained* (1988/1992). See Walter Benjamin: *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1950/1975. – For a reflection on the methodological foundations of these writings, see Walter Benjamin, [*Ausgraben und Erinnern*]. In: B. Linder / N. Werner (eds.): *Berliner Chronik. Werke und Nachlaß, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 11.1. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2019, 35–36.

remembering is laborious, and like the digging and reporting of the archaeologist, it should be done carefully and patiently, but it is also the source of enjoyment – not dissimilar, perhaps, to Lyotard’s good-humoured comment that the realisation that the human is a mere ‘transformer’ should inspire “thinking and writing, and a love of matter”.

Related to Benjamin’s metaphor of the archaeological excavation is a paradoxical figure of thought that also infused Lyotard’s notion of the anamnesis, namely the disclosure of a yet hidden future.<sup>25</sup> Lyotard occasionally captures this unhinging of time, this a-chronicity in the Freudian term of *Nachträglichkeit*, but also in the more open, Benjaminian phrasing of, “*on ne le sait que plus tard*”, “*dies weiß man erst später*”.<sup>26</sup>

Another dimension of the notion of ‘matter making its anamnesis’ resonates with both Benjamin and Freud, and with what was at the time an emergent notion in Lyotard’s thinking, namely the notion of the “inhuman”: the anamnesis marks the departure from the framework of consciousness. Lyotard conceptualised the human as “transformer” (*transformateur*) – a transformation that was the result of “the uncontrollable contingency of *Écriture*” and that was enacted in the encounter with matter, a *matière* whose self-reflexive anamnesis evolved without the conscious work of a human subject, but on the affective surfaces constituted by the *visiteur.e.s-transformateur.e.s* and their experiences of confusion and inquietude.<sup>27</sup>

25 See *Berliner Kindheit*, 46f.: “Eine Todesnachricht” (“*wie ein vergessener Muff in unserm Zimmer ... so gibt es Worte und Pausen, die uns auf jene unsichtbare Fremde schließen lassen: die Zukunft, welche sie bei uns vergaß.*”; “*Wohl aber habe ich an diesem Abend mein Zimmer und mein Bett mir eingeprägt, wie man sich einen Ort genauer merkt, von dem man ahnt, man werde eines Tages etwas Vergessenes von dort holen müssen.*”, 47), “Der Fischotter” (“... *An solchen Orten scheint es, als sei alles, was eigentlich uns bevorsteht, ein Vergangenes.*”, 57). See also Lyotard’s remark on anamnesis in: “What is Just?” (Ou Justesse), quoted above, fn 8.

26 Lyotard: *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, 135 (dt. 116).

27 Both Lyotard and Benjamin recurrently refer to Marcel Proust’s *Recherche*; see Walter Benjamin: *Das Passagen-Werk*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. V. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982, K 8a, 1, on the *mémoire involontaire* and “the loss, concealed in an object”. Other aspects of this comparison could be (a.) the emphasis that Benjamin, unlike Lyotard, puts on the ‘collective’ dimension of memories and dreams (*Passagen-Werk*, K 1, 4; K 1a, 6; L 1, 3; L 1a, 1; L 1a, 2); (b.) the aspect of ‘childhood’ which is prominent not only in Benjamin’s *Berlin Childhood*, but also in the *Passagen-Werk* (K 2, 2), and which is a crucial trope in Lyotard’s analysis of the postmodern (see especially *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, and *L’Inhumain*); and (c.) the modernist notion of ‘awaking’ (*Erwachen*) which Benjamin deploys as a metaphor for overcoming the dreamlike bourgeois and capitalist mentality of the 19th century (*Passagen-Werk*, K 1, 1 [*Technik des Erwachens*]; K 2, 4 [*Das kommende Erwachen steht wie das Holzpferd der Griechen im Troja des Traums*]), and which seems opposed to Lyotard’s rendering of the postmodern condition.

