Points of Entry/Points of Departure: On Andrea Geyer and Katya Sander's *Meaning is what hides the instability of one's position*

> I. *You never look at me from the place I see you*
> or
> *A prologue while riding a train*

> I was sitting alone in my *wagon-lit* compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing gown and a traveling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet, which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance.[1]

This succinct story—detailing the author's dawning recognition of self-other *misrecognition*—appears within a lengthy footnote very near the end of Freud's famous essay on the "uncanny." Written in 1919, the essay has received its fair share of attention—quoted endlessly for its articulation of human beings' ambivalent urges toward the hidden, the dangerous, and the convulsive. Yet, one of the most striking characteristics of Freud's uncanny is its relationship to place, or, perhaps better said, its illumination of the ways in which the contextual situatedness of a body has everything to do with how it is

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[1] In Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition* of his works, volume 17, pps. 219-56. All my further citations of Freud are culled from this essay.

(and is not) read. The scene above, in which a fatigued
Freud unwittingly (and somewhat aggressively) confronts
himself, occurs in a very particular—yet particularly
difficult to define—space: the sleeping car of a moving
passenger train. The *wagon-lit* is designed for two
simultaneous modes of travel, its *raison d'etre* that of
securing geographical passage to predetermined destinations
during its passengers' unconscious hours. Which is to say,
the *wagon-lit* encourages its occupants to experience travel
as they would a dream, moving through and over space,
through and over borders, with a fluidity not ordinarily
experienced.

Indeed, to be aboard a moving train even while awake
is to be *nowhere* (and yet *precisely* so), to be, quite
uniquely, *en route* and thus, unmarked by any definitive
relationship to definitive geographical coordinates.
During train travel, one can no longer assume any stable
relationship (epistemological or phenomenological) to the
territory literally passing beneath one's own feet. While
one is, by matter of (these days increasingly complicated)
course, labeled either "resident" or "alien" with regard to
the land occupied (however temporarily) by their body, the
train offers a literally liminal instance in which,
regardless of their status when standing still, *everyone*

aboard—to make a bad Hitchcockian pun—assumes the status of "stranger." It should be, then, no surprise that Freud takes the train—one mode of technologically advanced modern travel born of the 19th century—as site extraordinaire to stage an uncanny encounter. Here, the self is, momentarily anyway, grappled with as radically other, and this on account of what can only be described as unstable footing, an unmooring from any illusion of secure rootedness, any fiction of proper place.

The "uncanny" is, after all, a rather simplified English rendition of the German *unheimlich*, a term which can be more dumbly—but probably more accurately—translated as "unhomely." "Homely" and its ostensible opposite, "unhomely" shouldn't be confused with more recent connotations of bland, unattractive physiognomy (though following this trajectory would itself be telling, particularly given Freud's unkind judgment of his own unfamiliar reflection)[2] but, instead should be read rather literally: homely, as in *home*. That the most familiar (*heimlich*) and the most startlingly unfamiliar (*unheimlich*) should be intimately, even inextricably, entwined, is of utmost importance to Freud. Indeed, the *unheimlich* is, as

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[2] The impulse to read someone's moral character from their physical attributes is, of course, long-standing. An example of such "reading in" and a particular site of its instantiation will be taken up later in this essay.

he puts it, part and parcel of the *heimlich*, the ostensibly negative term so deeply nestled into the positive as to be arguably constitutive of it. After a long etymological investigation genuinely uncharacteristic of the majority of Freud's writing, he concludes that *heimlich*'s very meaning can only be ascertained by appealing simultaneously to what would appear a pair of incompatible definitions. On the one hand, he demonstrates, *heimlich* can be seen as the epitome of what is "familiar and agreeable," yet, on the other it stands for all that is "concealed and kept out of sight." Such a strange correspondence of seeming opposites within a single word propels the psychoanalyst's theory of the uncanny while, furthermore, placing any secure notion of "home" and the "familiar" (read: linked by dwelling place) deeply in question. "Thus," Freud concludes, "*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*."

My essay begins with this, a lengthy transgression *a la* (and by way of) Freud because it marks a kind of primal scene for what follows. The elder statesman of the unconscious knew full well that in narrativizing his own experience with the uncanny, he could drop a number of

clues for his readers. His staging of the "foreign" within the "familiar" is crucial—one does not, *cannot*, he seems to suggest, posit an "other" without reference to the "self." Further, to set the scene on a speeding train is to align such a staging, not coincidentally, with that inherent instability of place uniquely experienced as one moves across literal borders. Yet, more pragmatically, the train offers Freud a particularly *modern* site, rife with the implications of technology and industry, and modern, too, in that any notion of "identity" obtains a heretofore unthinkable alignment with the unstable and the nomadic: aligned with the perils (and sometimes pleasures) born of the *unheimlich*. Indeed, while he hardly names the circulation of the "foreign" within the famil(y)iar to be an idea born of modernity (rather arguing it a long history of manifestations), one can make a case that his articulation of *unheimlichkeit* depends on—is even born of—new modes of encountering not only "others" but oneself. And this mode of encountering is one that operates, as I stated at the very beginning of this essay, through a process of intersecting *recognitions* and *misrecognitions*: put another way, through all manner of *readings* and *misreadings*.

Flash forward to today. But bring along (and reconsider) a
number of the ideas laid out in the first section: 1)
definitions whose meanings develop in the direction of
ambivalence, exposing oppositions as crucial connecting
points; 2) the notion of home (*heim*) as it pertains (and
doesn't pertain) to actual land and real places; 3) staged
encounters between self and "other"; 4) stakes and mistakes
of recognition; 5) the sites upon which today's *wagon-lit*
illuminations occur, exposing our inability to aptly
identify even ourselves; and 6) operations of reading and
misreading, to say nothing of speaking-misspeaking and
hearing-mishearing. Mine is not an essay about trains but
an essay about airports: sites through which human bodies
are gauged, filtered, noted, and either permitted or
disallowed passage. More precisely than that, this is an
essay which contemplates the figure of the airport as it is
contemplated by Andrea Geyer and Katya Sander in their
collaborative work, *Meaning is what hides the instability
of one's position*.

It is that work's title (one that, by emphasizing
position, necessarily emphasizes *place*, *site*, and *location*)
that prompted me, counterintuitively perhaps, to start not,

however, with plane-travel but rather with train-travel, a day-to-day mode of transit that seems inherently *placeless*, gorged with and in some ways even fully defined by time. Train-time is liminal-time; necessarily experienced as a kind of suspension, its minute-by-minute duration abstractly marks the continually shifting space between a *here* and a *there* (referring to both by being neither). At first, it seems the same could be said of plane travel as we glide at some thirty-thousand-odd feet above the earth, *en route* to locations as far as halfway around the globe. Yet the connotations of air travel are quite different from those on the ground, implicating escalated modes of abstraction and, thus, escalated methods of monitoring and management. Where a train can be (and sometimes is) stopped and checked at borders—between states, between countries— air travel demands that such exercises are performed ahead of time, are rendered *precautions* carried out in advance and, importantly, on and around the bodies of passengers. In the airport, every traveler is required to perform rites of passage before they are given access to the literal *right of passage* afforded by flying.

Indeed, it is less the airplane itself than the airport that registers the effects of borders and their passage. The airport itself takes on the function, if not

the actual status, of a border: something to be passed through and, more importantly, something that demands and even produces identities through such passage. The airport attests to the contemporary imbrication of technology and movement, temporarily displacing border from place altogether, or, more accurately, impossibly addressing it before and after but never during the fact. One flies over borders that have already been registered—have already been *cleared*—by way of passports, visas, and itineraries. These borders have been internalized by the very bodies that—for all kinds of reasons—request passage through them.

Given the radically new connotation of the word "homeland," it is perhaps not a stretch to posit that the airport takes on the role of enforcing (and indeed creating) systems of ordering that are based on (and indeed create) ideologies of fixed territories. It is just before and just after their flights that passengers are eyed, X-rayed, swabbed, and sniffed, their positions assessed, affirmed, acknowledged, prompted, and processed. Bodies are treated as proof-of-themselves, documents to be read as belonging to and constituting presumably fixed geographic territories. Yet, the airport's system—one that can be seen as a microcosm of the general operations of the nation-state—posits absolute identities and territories because

these are always threatening to reveal themselves as inherently *un-absolute*. Every time a body "proves" itself, earning right of passage, it also reveals the incomplete, even improvised, code by which it is understood. Every code, however perfected, is always already scrambled, misread, or simply approximated to another. The airport— proxy for all borders—is itself predicated on a kind of willfully confused identity, relating itself to myriad destinations without being one itself. Seeming to operate less as a "place" than a kind of "pre-" or "post-" place, its function is to regulate movement, territories, and identities that are, of course, never absolute and therefore impossible to fully regulate.

Though Marc Augé has famously argued the airport to be a *"non-place,"* it can also be seen, quite differently, as an *überplace*: a simultaneous compression and evacuation of "place" that effectively abstracts (both magnifying and nullifying) the conception of time (which it is designed to "pass" and which is ostensibly all that is on anyone's mind).[3] Indeed, for Augé, one efficient way to define such an example of ever-expanding *"non-place,"* (which, he argues, crops up with alarming rapidity and operates in

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[3] Marc Augé, *non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, trans. John Howe. London; New York: Verso, 1995. All quotes from Augé are taken from this volume.

line with the commodifying, capitalist appetites of

globalism) is to liken it to a *passage*. Bodies pass through

it (whether a shopping mall, conventional hall, or

corporate plaza) without any kind of affective exchange.

Where, Augé writes, "a place can be defined as relational,

historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which

cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or

concerned with identity will be a non-place." For Augé,

then, "non-place" can be experienced only temporally,

though that mode of temporality is one that is semi-

conscious, dream-like.

And yet, while Augé's formulation is compelling, it

also glosses over a crucial point. While hotel rooms or

mini-marts or highway on-ramps may well be devoid of the

kind of emotional, contractual, or mnemonic richness that

we (imagine we) experience when walking in a historic

public square or conversing in our homes or even learning

in our classrooms, it is hardly true that the sites Augé

singles out as "non-places" can't also be seen as invested

in aspects "relational, or historical, or concerned with

identity." To take the airport as the most overt example

and to intentionally twist Augé's words somewhat—relations,

history, and identity are nearly *all* such a space is

designed to be concerned with. Entering the airport, one is

rendered a kind of living document, whose pages, it is true, are read rather cursorily and are unfortunately rewarded (with the gift of inattention) for bland content.

But Augé's formulation renders the airport little more than a kind of clinically experienced (if spectacularly endowed) *time*, spent processing papers, catching glimpses of CNN, sitting in linked plastic lounge chairs (or, if a first class traveler, kicking back in a private lounge) until boarding a plane bound *somewhere*. The transitional space of the airport effectively becomes just one part of a continual journey taking course over several stages. Yet, seen differently, while time does seem to loom large in the airport, it doesn't so much usurp place as exacerbate it. When I say that the airport is an *überplace*, it is because the very fabric of its hyperbolized time becomes interwoven with the physical space itself. Travelers experience time as *the* element that both links them to *and* separates them from the world outside the airport. Clocks hang everywhere but always mean either *hurry* or *wait*; everyone looks to the information screens instead, since arrivals and departures rather than minutes and hours matter here. And, instead of marking a kind of simultaneity (it is 3:00 in New York and 9:00 in Geneva) time becomes a kind of destabilization—and then remaking—of meaning. Symbolic rather than literal,

time is desynchronized in the airport, where a person can't

figure whether to orient herself in relation to where she's

been or to where she's been, since for all intents and

purposes, she's neither. In the *überplace*, time becomes an

envelope, an environment, a monument to its own calcified

transience. It gives the strange illusion of walking and

going nowhere (one remembers that the etymology for *place*

links it to the Latin *planta*, or "sole of the foot").

Recognized as *über-*, rather than *non-*, the airport

takes on any number of associations, many of them deeply

epistemological. Bodies do not simply *pass through* here,

phantom presences that are gone as quickly as they arrive:

rather, they quite literally leave traces, from barcodes

scanned on passports, to names entered in computers, to X-

ray stills of the interiors of luggage, to say nothing of

dozens of video and photographic images captured by hidden

and not-so-hidden cameras. That is to say, travelers enter

the airport precisely to provide *evidence* of relations,

histories, identity and, having done so, to establish a

readable narrative: "this body, coming from here and going

to there" is recognizable and, indeed, categorizable,

according to these principles of organization and

standardization. Indeed, the advances in identity

technologies will soon outmode paper trails comprised of

tickets, driver's licenses and boarding passes. Using body,
face, and fingerprint recognition systems, soon a person
will become a literally readable documentation of herself—
her history, citizenship, and agendas linked immanently to
physical characteristics that have been gathered and filed.
Every distinguishing feature of an individual becomes a
word, a punctuation mark, a verb. There is little visible
left unnoted, unnamed, unwritten (only the psychic life
remains inaccessible, at least for now).

While the airport is arguably tethered between
previous and future *destinations*, experienced only by way
of semi-conscious temporality, it can alternately be
thought as *all* place, as nothing *but* place, with so many
signposts directing its temporary inhabitants to a variety
of anticlimactic, highly regulated and instrumentalized,
internal destinations. Indeed, it is interesting in this
light to consider from where Augé borrows his nomenclature
the "non-place." In Michel de Certeau's *L'Invention du
quotidien*, the author coins the phrase "non-place," and
uses it, like Augé, to refer to spaces that are, in his
view, emptied of affective culture. Where, for de Certeau,
"*space is a practiced place*," the "non-place" has been

totally emptied of its "spaceness," which is to say, its

ability to be transformed by those who utilize it.[4]

Yet, de Certeau does not actually stress temporality

as the primary defining feature of the "non-place" in the

way that Augé does. Quite differently (as Augé

acknowledges) de Certeau suggests that a place slips out

from inside itself (rather like a ghost from the shell) due

to a linguistic operation imposed upon it: that of *naming*.

To lean upon a proper name, he insists, is to experience a

pre-written narrative rather than make oneself available to

the effects of first-hand experience (which would manifest

itself not as *text* but as *speech*).[5] Proper names are quite

forceful "injunction[s] coming from the other (a

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[4] See Augé's discussion of de Certeau in his *non-places* and
also Michael de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*,
trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley; Los Angeles: Univ. of
California Press, 1984, especially Chapter IX, "Spatial
Stories," pp. 115-30.

[5] I am purposely using my own ambivalent prefix—*über*—to
discuss the airport because I am neither privileging nor
denouncing it. If there is a privileged term for de
Certeau, it is *space* for *space* does not obey the law of the
"proper" in the way that *place* does. This complicated
argument can't be glossed but for this purpose, I will mark
the difference as: a *place* can be seen as univocal,
(fictionally) stable, while *space* acknowledges, indeed
proceeds by way of univocality, vectors, intersections. As
de Certeau puts it (p. 117), "space is like the word when
it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity
of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon
many different conventions, situated as the act of a
present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations
caused by successive contexts." In other words, it is the
word *spoken* rather than *written.*

history...)" as he puts it. And such injunctions are working on us all the time: we are typically given over to experiences that have *already been written* because they bear less risk of evading classification; because they bear less risk of disrupting holistic illusions. The emphasis on *proper name* can be seen as primary—even overdetermined—in the space of the airport, where a different, if no less injunctive, mode of identification is the preface to every interaction.

Perhaps it is fitting that in this *überplace* (always with its very strangely proper/memorial name of its own, whether JFK, Roissy-Charles de Gaulle, or Schiphol) bodies can best be seen as sites of inscription, pulled out of (but accountable to) their everyday practices, asked to present themselves (name themselves) as verifiable data to be read and processed. Each body assumes that contradictory space of being marked as both universal and particular, imagined as the same as all the other *Xs* and yet distinct from the *Ys*. The airport, like the nation state (and all hegemonic forces) relies on the fiction of the universal in order to produce the fiction of the individual. Indeed, as Ernesto Laclau has persuasively argued, it is the antagonism that arises from the friction between these seeming polarities that produces subject positions at all.

The "universal," he argues, is no more than an empty space

filled from time to time with various contingent

particulars as they attempt to assert their own overarching

status. Yet, the "universal" can be seen as not only

conferring power and visibility but as perpetually

destabilizing it, too, since its definition necessarily

persists in flux. This flux of universality, as it were,

allows for readings of subjectivity but also misreadings

(and subversions of readings), as well.[6]

It is to this process of readings/sifting/sorting of

bodies that Geyer and Sander's *Meaning is...* attends,

interpellating the viewer—who has now herself become

alternately the *read* and the *reader*—into the process. An

orderly assembling of travelogue snapshots taken neither in

front of famous monument nor at family fête, *Meaning is...*

offers views from inside a space normally deemed

unremarkable if instantly recognizable. Here, escalators,

signage, corridors, elevators, passport control stations,

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[6] For more on the relationship between individual and
universal subjectivity, see Ernesto Laclau,
Emancipation(s), particularly the essay titled
"Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity."
London; New York: Verso, 1996 and Judith Butler, Ernesto
Laclau and Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony,
Universality*. London; New York: Verso, 2000. Laclau's
notion of the "universal" as kind of absent center toward
which all "particulars" nonetheless refer can also be
thought here nicely with regard to the airport, itself a
different kind of empty center.

stairs, bag-check and endless "services" signify the list
of tasks to which one must attend before (and after) being
permitted to sit and wait to board the aircraft. Geyer and
Sander's images, unceasing and accumulative, are taken
of/taken in airports. Chosen from hundreds of carefully
framed images each different from (but somehow the same as)
the last, these blend into a kind of fabric of function:
where you need to walk to be checked in, who you need to
talk to about your seating assignment, where you should
wait to be called, what you must fill out here before going
over there.

    Yet, rather than simply documenting stray shots from
so many unidentifiable locales and locations, the
photographs collected in *Meaning is...* have an internal
structure of their own, snapped as a number of sequential
series so that there is a kind of temporal progression that
takes on the activated feel of a flip-book, whereby static
images become, in however rudimentary a fashion, animated—
put into a kind of motion. These aren't narratives, but
rather snippets, as though decontextualized dialogue
overheard when passing by two people standing on the
street. A man walks toward a central elevator, his feet
covering the ground of several steps over several frames; a
snippet of closed doors that do not open but which we get

closer to. Nearly filmic sequences, these are images that

expand beyond the border of the photographs in which they

are contained, not only temporally aligned with what comes

directly before and after but almost allegorically too.

III. *Indetermination and determination of the subject*
or
Globe-trotting

> At the airport—Orly—I followed the flood of passengers
> on their way to show passports. After examining mine,
> the young woman from immigration to whom I had handed
> it asked me a question. My address in France? My
> destination? Since I hadn't been listening (my eyes
> were fastened on the revolver she was wearing on her
> hip), I replied evasively, noncommittally. She looked
> up at once, her eyes suspicious. Are you making fun of
> me? she said. Not at all, I said. She handed back the
> passport with a snap. Move along, she said, and don't
> forget you're in a foreign country here.[7]

So many tasks to fulfill before one is afforded entry to

the plane. Checking in, checking on, checking through,

every passenger is assigned ways of providing and thus ways

of proving one's identity, which, aptly performed, will

acquire one the right to move. Yet, rather than

contemplating this burden of proof and its implications,

some passengers are encouraged to feel protected, looked

after, and securely identifiable. The person you are

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[7] Section 42, Chapter III (Paris) from Jean-Philippe
Toussaint's novel, *The Bathroom*. New York: E.P. Dutton,
1985.

looking for is not me, which means I, too, will keep my eye

out for them. Once papers are officially in order, meaning

is assigned and—however fictively—identity is stabilized,

rationalized, quantifiable, and above all, rendered

relational, hierarchical according to strictures of race,

class, ethnicity, gender. These are not stated but they are

understood in the way that all such rules are.

   Geyer and Sander's images of airport scenes (the weird

combination of banal, beautiful, terrifying and exhausting

that airports themselves can be) are inlaid and overlaid

with text. The inlays: every airport is, of course, simply

brimming with words. Arrivals, departures, gate numbers,

information desks, duty-free shopping, elite lounges, air

train this way, taxis that way, get your forms ready for

customs, what terminal are you looking for? These signs and

monitors can give clues as to where in the world the photos

we're looking at were shot, with words like "Ankomst"

making geography somewhat, though not always entirely,

clear. However, there is no sign—in any airport anymore it

seems—not accompanied by the English translation

("Arrivals" for the above, for instance). The overlays: a

kind of schizophrenic semi-fictional script inserted

vertically into the pages by the artists, so that while one

reads the text *in* the airport (signs, directions, etc.) the

book is turned one way, and when one reads the texts *on* the airport (phrases, statistics, dialogues appropriated by the artists), the book is turned ninety-degrees, thereby disallowing any linear progression or, on the other hand, making overt the truth (concealed as best as possible in the airport) that there are many layers of heterogeneous discourse in operation here. To this end, the overlays mix airport directives with pragmatic exchanges between travelers and airport/government employees/enforcers and ruminations on the effects of what has been deemed a "globalized" culture. Sometimes these distinctions complicate, and other times illuminate one another, and printed on/in the pages of Geyer and Sander's book, distinctions between speech act and text also become purposefully confused.

Flipping, I slow to read a text within an airport, part of a sequence in a departure terminal. There are people with bags, pushing carts, making their way toward a juncture: for gates between C-10 and C-40, an arrow advises you to take a left, for C2-8, to go straight. A minimal illuminated sign advises and translates itself:

God rejse
Have a pleasant flight

I turn the book sideways to read what has been inserted by Geyer and Sander on the left-hand page alongside what I've

just described. A photo of the backs of travelers

attentively scanning the departure and arrival announcement

screens. In small italicized font reads:

Automatic recognition of a person by their body—their distinctive anatomical (e.g., face, fingerprints, iris, retina, hand geometry) and behavioral (e.g., signature, gait) characteristics—and then linking that body to an externally established identity forms a powerful tool. It can help tightly bind a traveler to his or her identity. Unlike other identification methods, such as identification cards or passwords, biometrics are less easily lost, stolen, or guessed.

Throughout the book, there are orders or physical descriptives, sprinkled almost invisibly into the images they imbricate:

<div align="right">

[turn]
[stop]
[move]
[following]
[moving away]

</div>

And their placement is almost as important as what they do

(and do not) say. It is as though they are understood to

under-gird or motivate so many of these images, which

themselves need give only a small hint of a context to be,

nonetheless, entirely recognizable to all of us—who can

read the scenarios so easily. Some text appears as fact but

barely represses its own suppressed content. The boldface

type does not help:

TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS ARE INTENDED TO PROCESS LARGE NUMBERS OF PRE-SCREENED TRAVELERS QUICKLY SO THAT INSPECTORS CAN DEVOTE MORE TIME TO TRAVELERS WHOSE RISK IS UNKNOWN.

There are questions that seem straightforward but aren't:

- Can you identify yourself?
- Nationality?
- Do you have verifiable income?
- What is your position?
- That'll be all.

And explanations that can be interpreted in all manner of ways:

When X-rays interact with matter, they generally do one of three things:
1. They pass through the object.
2. They are absorbed by the object.
3. They are scattered from the object.

And there are ruminations that are succinct but poetic

embodiments of operations that extend well beyond the

airport:

- Borders are smart now.
- Borders are not only outside anymore. They are inside; inscribed in each body. The shape of a star, or an airline map; like an explosion.

It's arguable that one hardly knows oneself outside the

prescribed identities secured through the rituals of place

and custom—these calcified and imposed through geographical

and imaginary borders. Yet, if the oft-repeated notion that

borders are disappearing is at all credible, perhaps this

is so only in the sense that distinct borders, like

heimlich and *unheimlich*, seeming opposites, grow toward one

another, developing in the direction of ambivalence.

Indeed, as the anonymous speaker in Geyer and Sander's

Meaning is... speculates, perhaps borders don't get erased,

but instead write themselves into and onto bodies, no longer assuming linear form but becoming crystalline, rhizomatic, florescent.

Geyer and Sander's project allows for a kind of articulation (and disarticulation) of those every-more omnipresent imperatives to *write* the body into order. This is not a postmodern impulse; as Foucault has most famously shown, such procedures of writing the body into (and out of) order have been in effect (if in different manifestations) at least since the "new age of penal justice" emerged in the 18th century. Yet, Geyer and Sander's *Meaning is what hides the instability of one's position* operates less to distinguish *which* bodies are most vehemently marked and mismarked, read and misread (though obvious examples of this can't help but assert themselves), but rather to show how *every* body is marked and mismarked; read and misread; spoken and misspoken—rendered part of a system that serves to reduce individuals to information in the interest of organization and expediency. As the artists' title plainly states, *meaning* (perhaps de Certeau would call this the "proper name"), however, doesn't serve to reveal so much as to conceal those contingencies that, in actuality, produce the subject. Indeed, as Geyer and Sander's layers of language (culled from written, the

memorized, and the extemporaneous) reveal, the more cohesion language strives for, the less it is able to attain. As de Certeau has put it, in another context, "I shall assume that plurality is originary; that difference is constitutive of its terms; and that language must continually conceal the structuring work of division beneath a sym-bolic order."[8]

By documenting the proceedings of a specific *überplace*—the airport—Geyer and Sander call attention to all the minutiae that together do the unifying work of what de Certeau calls symbolic order. It is easy to see how barely-concealed stratifications and divisions constantly threaten to disrupt such symbolic work, and yet this seems not to weaken the system but almost to feed it. Still, focusing on the body *as* discourse, *as* information, *as* text allows for breaches and thus, for *wagon-lit* moments—here not on a train but instead while waiting for a plane.[9]

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[8] de Certeau, p. 133.
[9] It is interesting that de Certeau actually sees trains as sites of *immobility*. In his Chapter (VIII) on "Railway Navigation and Incarceration," (pp. 111-14) he states, "Nothing is moving inside or outside the train."