

Yannick Haenel - *The Arrival of Light* (excerpts)

Caroline Duchatelet, *Films video 2008/2014* Ed. Villa Saint-Clair - Translation : Heather Allen

(...)

In front of these films, we wait for the light like hunters, thirty thousand years ago, at the entrance of a cave. We are in darkness. The darkness shudders, there is a glimmer, slow and fragile; light progresses, in a slow un-burrowing. We keep watch, faces turned toward the first light.

The attentiveness and the wait are one and the same. Such is the correlation implied when watching these films: We find ourselves in the same position as the person who filmed the wait for light. To wait is to keep watch. And watching means leaving ourselves open to the arrival of light.

Through the attention she pays to dawn — to the moment when time becomes light, when light dawns —, Caroline Duchatelet turns her eye toward that place which is forever vanishing, that is imperceptible, that escapes boundaries; to a place that is an origin. The word “origin” bothers me, as it leaves no room for thought. It is often little more than a perverse fantasy of History. It needs to be tempered — to be given that meaningful fragility that unfolds on the edge of the visible; only then can the word be used again. To me, it is a sort of fossil/locale: a place where light would emanate from what might be called “the dawn of time.” This “origin” is the opposite of a fixed date — it is a coming. It can take place at any time: appearing on a Neolithic wall or a wall from the Quattrocento; out of a laurel bush in Rome or the contours of a room with an unmade bed.

Light does only this: It arrives. It does not belong to historical time. It spreads, breathes, circles, diffuses, recedes and returns. And when the vast interiority of light unfolds, it is called time. We rarely appreciate time unto itself. That is to say, we do not listen to it, and unfortunately so: for to listen to time is to see. To listen to time makes possible the arrival of light. We think that we see light, but we open our eyes only to turn away from time. So we don't really see anything; perhaps we are barely alive. If I were one day able to prefer light to myself, if I were able to desire it for itself — to love it — then I would see. In the end, it is as simple as that: the love of time. I will improvise a definition: light is the love of time. Light knows how to love time, and I wouldn't be all that surprised if time knew how to love light.

The films of Caroline Duchatelet are just that: brief clearings, silent interstices where we can experience light that loves time and time that loves light.

This experience is akin to a certain kind of discretion, to the flourishing of nuance: It is the art of modesty. What if modesty were that place from whence it is possible to listen to light in time? Such a place, which pushes past space by a glow gathered up, would coincide thus with that embracing fragility that we call modesty.

To look at these films is to somehow partake in the likelihood of modesty. When this happens to me, I seem to stop wanting — in other words to stop forcing. It seems that time is there: I am with

time, without anything standing between its immensity and myself. In this case, even the verb “to be” seems excessive. As proposed by Heidegger, we should say: “Time takes place.”

The glow is discreet. The light floats, like a breath. In this territory that Caroline Duchatelet examines by candlelight, with the patience of those who dream of primordial caves, there is no beginning and no end, only the quiver of breath and dust. A gathering presence.